



Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting September 7, 2023

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Chair Walker and was available for viewing in person and online.

The meeting was recorded and can be found at <https://www.soundtransit.org/get-to-know-us/board-directors/livestream-video>.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Kristina Walker, Tacoma Deputy Mayor	(P) Ed Prince, Renton Councilmember

Board Members	
(P) David Baker, Kenmore Councilmember	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor
(P) Christine Frizzell, Lynnwood Mayor	(P) Dave Upthegrove, King County Council Chair
(P) Debora Juarez, Seattle Council President	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember

Josephine Gamboa, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Monthly Contract Reports

The monthly contract reports were included in members' packets for review.

CEO Report

CEO Julie Timm provided the CEO Report.

UW Study

Earlier this morning, UW released a report sponsored by Sound Transit, King County Metro, Community Transit, Everett Transit, and TriMet regarding the presence of secondhand drug smoke and residue on transit vehicles. This report was commissioned by the transit agencies late last year as a first-of-its-kind characterization study to put independent collection and assessment of data into the conversation regarding the presence of secondhand airborne and surface residue from illicit substances in community spaces; for Sound Transit that meant its transit vehicles.

The agencies had just finished briefing the press on the report on public health officials' conclusions on the health risks associated with the collected data and on what transit agencies were doing to support improved safety on the services. CEO Timm emphasized that the levels of secondhand smoke and residue from illicit substances that the researchers found were extremely low, and public health officials

who reviewed the study confirmed that transit use remained safe for staff and the riding public.

Even while this study was in its data collection phase earlier this year, the agency took steps to increase the safety of the system by increasing the number of transit security officers, and in partnership with King County Sheriff Deputies, empowered them to remove anyone from the trains and facilities who were using illicit substances. It was encouraged for riders and staff who see this behavior to call security officers who would then come to the location or train and remove riders who were using drugs. The agency was also ensuring that these officers were trained to use compassionate means when assisting people off the train and directing them to support services.

Hilltop Link Extension Opening & Ribbon Cutting Celebration

The new T Line revenue service was set to begin on September 16, 2023, and would operate at 12-minute frequencies on weekday peak periods and Saturdays, and at 20-minute frequencies in weekday mornings and nights and Sundays. The agency invited the Tacoma community to a ribbon-cutting celebration at the Tacoma Urban Performing Arts Center scheduled for 10 a.m. From 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sound Transit tour guides would be on all T Line trains engaging with riders and pointing out "Tacoma Fun Facts" along the route. The agency would continue honoring the T Line community after opening day. For the next two months, T Line stations would be wrapped in installations featuring stories and portraits of Tacoma residents. At Tollefson Plaza, Wright Park and People's Park, riders could find large installations for taking photos. Riders would also find QR codes at each new station to participate in the "Discover. Scan. Win." Tacoma-centric scavenger hunt.

LINK Repair Work at Rainier Beach and Othello Stations

Construction was on schedule for this platform rehabilitation project and was on its second phase of the project; work had moved to the second platform on the other side of the tracks at both stations. 15-minute headways system-wide would continue through September 17, 2023. Other system disruptions had caused further delays on-top of the 15-minute service frequencies. While the length of this disruption was challenging, it was necessary to ensure the safety of platforms, and staff continued to look for better methods and timeliness on real time communications to riders.

PIMS Update

Live testing of the Passenger Information Management System (PIMS) started this summer, and early results showed appreciation by riders even while it was being tested and not 100 percent accurate. Unfortunately, staff made the hard decision to temporarily turn off PIMS arrival predictions after a defect was introduced with a code release in mid-July 2023 which prevented the next 2 trains from displaying on wayside signage. This led to signs showing that the next train would not arrive for 30 minutes or more when in fact at least 2 trains would arrive prior to that time. This was a difficult defect to troubleshoot but the agency vendor was able to identify the root cause of the issue and notified staff that they developed a code fix which would be deployed on September 11, 2023. Staff was preparing to conduct additional testing in mid-September to ensure the defect was resolved, and it was anticipated to turn arrival predictions, for Link, back on before the end of the month. The vendor had identified additional steps in regression testing prior to code releases that was expected to help prevent this from reoccurring.

Monthly Ops and Safety Reporting

Beginning this month, staff would be using a new format for monthly reporting of the status of system-side operations. The Operations team had been working on the format to work towards greater transparency regarding the state of the agency's system. Staff had been targeting a roll out of monthly safety reporting for later this year as well. With the recent three assaults between passengers, CEO Timm asked the team to accelerate the timeline to get that reporting started this month. The team worked was able to fulfill CEO Timm's request, but the roll out of the reporting will wait until October 2023 committee

meeting.

Activation

CEO Timm noted that since the opening of Link extensions was anticipated to be as frequent as every six months over the next several years, staff plan to present a regular report to the committee on the status of Link extension activations. System activation includes required operational and safety testing and approvals at the end of project construction and prior to the start of revenue service. The Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension was in its final stages of activation and the agency was preparing to enter into the activation phase for the East Link Starter Line this fall. Next Spring the agency would enter into activation phase for the Lynnwood Extension.

Committee Vice Chair Prince acknowledged the importance of the safety issue related to the UW study and was appreciative of the data and active work taking place.

Boardmember Roscoe agreed with concerns while riding public transportation and witnessing drug abuse. She was pleased to receive the data and hear of the low levels. She was also pleased to see Sound Transit and the surrounding agencies acting proactively and noted it was important to receive the information and act quickly without creating unnecessary panic.

CEO Timm shared that the levels of residue in the air could be compared to a thousandth of a fraction of one grain that was in a sugar packet, so the health impacts were negligible. She did however, note the toxicity and reactions one could have from nearby smoke and that exposure was being taken in a serious manner.

Chair Walker thanked CEO Timm and staff for approaching this topic with importance and sensitivity as this topic would impact the passenger experience and asked for continued updates. Chair Walker also shared her excitement for the opening of Hilltop Link Extension and thanked the agency for providing fare ambassadors on that line.

Public comment

Chair Walker announced that public comment would be accepted via email to emailtheboard@soundtransit.org, in person, and would also be accepted virtually.

The following people provided written comments:

Jason Rock

The following people provided in-person comments:

Alex Tsimerman

Marguerite Richard

There were no virtual comments submitted.

Business Items

For Committee final action

August 3, 2023, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince, seconded by Boardmember Roscoe and carried by unanimous consent that the minutes of the August 3, 2023, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2023-75: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a one-year contract, with four one-year options to extend with Jacobs Project Management Co. to provide Operational Readiness and

Transition on-call consulting services and augment field expertise in support of activating System Expansion projects for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$12,171,311.

Randy Kroum, Deputy Director of Operations Readiness and Transition, provided the staff presentation.

Boardmember Roscoe referenced the staff report and noted the importance of knowing when to include highly qualified consultants and avoid employee burnout during the agency's upcoming expansions.

Motion No. M2023-75 was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince and seconded by Boardmember Roscoe.

Chair Walker called for a voice vote.

It was carried by unanimous consent of all committee members present that Motion No. M2023-75 be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2023-76: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract with Schindler Elevator Corporation for the modernization of the vertical conveyance assets at International District Station, in the amount of \$14,003,612, with a 10 percent contingency of \$1,400,361 for a total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$15,403,973 contingent upon Board approval of Resolution No. R2023-28.

John Carini, Deputy Director of Vertical Conveyances, provided the staff presentation.

Boardmember Frizzell asked for clarification on the dollar amounts of \$16 million listed in the presentation but with \$15 million listed in the motion language. Mr. Carini explained the contract is for \$14 million with 10 percent contingency which equaled to the \$15.4 million in the motion language and the additional funds would be for administration and project support provided internally and externally throughout the duration of the project. Boardmember Frizzell asked about the order of this action going before the resolution it was contingent upon. CEO Timm explained that the committee typically considers items within its authority first, and this motion was within the committee's authority whereas the following resolution had to be forwarded and approved by the full Board.

Boardmember Roscoe shared support towards this action given the relation to rider experience and the impact it has had on the passenger experience over the past few years. CEO Timm noted appreciation for staff's efforts to move forward effectively and financially with this program.

Chair Walker asked if this action would fund the program until 2025. Mr. Carini confirmed that was correct. She then asked if staff would return in 2025 with the next phase of vertical conveyances. Mr. Carini noted his team anticipated returning in 2024.

Motion No. M2023-76 was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince and seconded by Boardmember Frizzell.

Chair Walker called for a voice vote.

It was carried by unanimous consent of all committee members present that Motion No. M2023-76 be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2023-28: Amending the adopted budget for the Vertical Conveyance Program by increasing the total authorized project allocation by \$4,500,000 from \$22,889,520 to \$27,390,000 to fund the modernization of vertical conveyance assets at the International District Station.

John Carini, Deputy Director of Vertical Conveyances, provided the staff presentation.

Resolution No. R2023-28 was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince and seconded by Boardmember Roscoe.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Ed Prince
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of six committee members present that Resolution No. R2023-28 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Boardmember Baker joined at this time.

Motion No. M2023-77: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a three-year labor agreement with the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 758 covering Tacoma Link Light Rail vehicle operators.

John Boufford, Acting Deputy Director of Project Labor Compliance, provided the staff presentation.

Boardmember Juarez asked why Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 758 Link operators were the only vehicle operators to be managed by Sound Transit. CEO Timm replied when Sound Move was initiated, the focus was more towards construction and as it approached towards Operations, the Board decided to use King County Metro to lead the operations for light rail. She noted ST Express was operated by three partners: King County Metro, Pierce Transit, and Community Transit. When moving towards BRT Stride, there was a discussion on which partner would manage that and was still under review and may be outsourced. CEO Timm noted there were only two unions, ATU and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

Boardmember Roscoe referenced information in the staff presentation outlining that ATU workers were eligible for overtime consistent with Sound Transit policy, except now they would be eligible if they pick up an unscheduled shift. She asked if there were 21 individuals in this union and asked if the vote was 18 to 3. Mr. Boufford responded there were 24 employees. Boardmember Roscoe asked if there was a minimum number of hours to work within a month to be eligible for any version of overtime. Mr. Boufford replied the hours were by 40 hours per week. Boardmember Roscoe asked if an employee was scheduled 25 hours for a week, would they be eligible for overtime if they picked up an extra shift in that week. Mr. Boufford confirmed that was correct. Boardmember Roscoe asked if an employee was eligible for overtime if they were already scheduled 40 hours a week and if they picked up an extra shift. Mr. Boufford confirmed that was correct.

Motion No. M2023-77 was moved by Boardmember Baker and seconded by Boardmember Juarez.

Chair Walker called for a roll call vote.

Ayes

Nays

David Baker
Christine Frizzell
Debora Juarez
Ed Prince
Kim Roscoe
Dave Upthegrove
Kristina Walker

It was carried by unanimous vote of seven committee members present that Motion No. M2023-77 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

REO Metrics Presentation – Operations and Safety

Russ Arnold, Deputy CEO Chief Service Delivery Officer, provided the presentation. Mr. Arnold noted that Sound Transit was committed to being transparent with its performance statistics, particularly those that impacted the passenger experience. Mr. Arnold would introduce the new Operations Monthly Report that would share some metrics and describe the data being tracked, why staff was tracking it, what operations information it provides, and what is being done with that information.

A monthly performance report with information about the agency's performance for the foreseeable future would be prepared and included in the meeting packets moving forward. This report would supplement the system performance tracker that was maintained on the Sound Transit website and that was shared with the committee previously. The new report included many of the traditional metrics used to measure transit performance, such as on time performance, percent of trips operated as scheduled. Nearly all of these traditional metrics impact the passenger experience directly, such as trips delivery which described how likely a passenger was to see a trip arrive when it was scheduled to arrive, or indirectly, like vehicle availability, which was one of the factors affecting trip delivery.

The first two pages of the report listed overall ridership and aspects of ridership associated with each of the modes of service. Ridership was provided because it was a gauge of customer satisfaction and a leading indicator of where to set service levels. This month's ridership data showed service was 70 percent towards returning to pre-pandemic level of ridership across all modes. This return was primarily driven by substantial growth in the number of boardings being seen on Link service. Pre-pandemic Link carried about half of the boardings on Sound Transit Services. Currently, Link carried two-thirds of the boardings. Also provided in the report, was the distribution of Link boardings among stations. One finding was that Northgate and Westlake stations saw high numbers of boardings compared to any other station. About one-third of all Link boardings were made at these two stations.

With Link ridership now higher than it had ever been in the history of this service and with so many boardings occurring at a few primary stations, staff continued to monitor crowding and the impacts it was having on the service. If, or when, crowding gets too high, staff would look towards ways to expand capacity through schedule changes, such as reducing the time between trains during the busiest hours, or by ensuring the trains were four cars long during the busiest hours, even if it meant fewer cars on trains during non-peak hours.

Other key findings about ridership from the report included that while ridership on ST Express continued to grow month-to-month, it remained at 50 percent of its pre-pandemic level. However, customer comments suggested that more passengers were experiencing crowded buses than normal since the pandemic. For Sounder service, the South line carried roughly 20 times as many passengers as the North line, however, when normalized by the service provided on each line, the South line carried about four times as many passengers. Ridership on Tacoma Link remained largely dependent on whether the University of Washington Tacoma was in session. The opening of the Hilltop extension would likely impact Tacoma Link ridership both in terms of volume and seasonality. Staff would monitor that impact closely to determine how to best meet the demand occasioned by this new service.

The report also included a series of industry standard transit performance metrics. Within the Link data, targets for on-time performance and operating scheduled trips were slightly off. Some of this shortfall could be explained by vehicle availability, another metric which was below target, due to older fleet going through some major mechanical overhauls at the Eastside Maintenance Facility. However, for those vehicles that were available, target numbers were exceeded for number of miles between failures. Customer complaint data for Link was also in the report. Link saw a large drop in the number of complaints overall. A big part of this was the reductions in complaints related to service interruptions and alerts and announcements. In addition, there had been a continuous decline in the number of complaints received about vertical conveyances, which was now the lowest of the top 10 complaint categories.

The ST Express performance metrics showed that on-time performance on service operated by Pierce Transit remained below target and was trending negatively. Pierce Transit had suggested that multiple construction delays impacted the on-time performance and suggested that Sound Transit may need to consider route timing adjustments to fix this issue. ST Express vehicles were performing under target with regard to miles between failure. Customer complaints related to ST Express continued to rise at a rate above the increased ridership, with a majority of those related to the bus not being at stops when customers were expecting them. Tying customer complaint data into the ridership information that was shared previously, Mr. Arnold noted that while ridership was at half its pre-pandemic level, the agency was receiving more customer complaints related to passengers experiencing crowded buses than what was experienced since the pandemic. Staff was looking into whether crowding was more prevalent during certain times of day or on certain routes for potential schedule adjustments.

Operating partners were struggling to hire and retain bus drivers. The lack of drivers had a direct impact on the 'operated as scheduled' metric as partners were unable to operate a scheduled trip when no driver was available. The driver shortage also had a secondary impact on the crowding issue. The lack of drivers had required Sound Transit to cut the service levels originally contracted with the agency partners to provide and left agency partners operating fewer trips as ST Express ridership grows. All partners were working aggressively to hire drivers at a faster rate and working to find ways to retain personnel. ST Express staff conducted weekly meetings with these partners to address issues like this. ST Express staff also held monthly Intergovernmental Agreement performance review meetings and additional service planning meetings to collaborate on solutions.

For performance metrics on Sounder and Tacoma Link service, Sounder was within percentage points of almost all of its service targets with the exception of vehicle maintenance performance, and Tacoma Link was above target on nearly every service target with the exception of Preventive Maintenance compliance.

For vertical conveyance system performance, most of the elevators and escalators Sound Transit manages performed above target levels with the notable exception of those in the Downtown Transit Tunnel. Outside that area, there were struggles with mechanical issues on the Beacon Hill station elevators. Repairs on those conveyances were completed. Over the past few months, rather than mechanical issues, issues of misuse were the cause of elevators taken out of service. Mr. Arnold noted the Vertical Conveyance team met monthly with Sound Transit's security staff to discuss vandalism and misuse issues, and highlighted which stations and units were being affected, with specific days of the week and time of day, in an effort to drive down the number and length of these outages.

David Wright, Chief Safety Officer, noted more information on safety and security would be provided at the October 2023 committee meeting. Mr. Wright explained the security process began last year and the agency had progressed from one to four contractors. As a result of the new contractors, on-board security staff had increased by 211 percent. In correlation with having more security staff, increased unlawful transit conduct was observed and increased security allows for more action and reaction. At the end of 2022, the FTA changed the definition of assault to include non-physical assault. Non-physical assault could include yelling at someone or throwing a bottle at a train or bus. Due to this change, data would show an overall increase in assaults. In May 2023, when the agency onboarded new security contractors, there was a large decrease in number of complaints from riders relating to security as well as an increase in compliments about the increased presence of security staff on the system.

Boardmember Roscoe noted non-physical assaults were worth tracking and having as an added source of data. CEO Timm explained that was a primary reason the data was being held until the next committee meeting to avoid false perceptions of increased assault percentages due to the FTA redefinition of assaults.

Boardmember Baker asked what non-revenue elevator service was. Mr. Arnold replied that non-revenue elevators were elevators not opened to the public and were used in back of house for accessible maintenance areas.

Chair Walker thanked staff for providing streamlined data for the committee.

Passenger Impact Portfolio Plan (Future Ready Work)

Pamela Wrenn, Deputy Project Director of Service Delivery, provided the report. Ms. Wrenn reviewed the Passenger Impact Portfolio Plan (PIPP) program goals, which included coordinating and scheduling projects to minimize service impacts and integrating the activity as a regular business function. The methodology was focused on passengers as the customers, preservation of planned service and urgency to return to full planned service, minimal disruption to passengers and passenger flow, and project delivery efficiency focusing on shared disruptions and mobilizations.

The Royal Brougham Grade Crossing repair work was executed as planned. The actual headways were slightly longer than predicted and multiple projects shared the closure to reduce the number of future service disruptions in the Downtown Tunnel. Additional projects during the closure included 26kV system assessment, southbound damaged rail repair, E130/E110 plinth repair work, bond box replacement, Eastlink signal system tie-in pre-work, Central Link fiber upgrade program survey, and Westlake tunnel crown repair scaffolding removal.

The Othello and Rainier Beach Platform Repair project was currently taking place and be completed by September 17, 2023. This project would replace existing porcelain tiles with new polymer composite tiles and a coat platform edge to improve electrical safety. A majority of the tiles were cracked and broken, and they posed a safety risk to passengers and were not ADA compliant. Platform edging posed risk of electrical arcing due to damaged edge coating. Replacing this would improve passenger safety on the platform. Continuous single tracking at segments spanning both stations, 14 days per-side, was expected with 12-minute headways systemwide. Secondary work during closure included CVS overhaul switch replacement, and SDOT Safety pavement refresh and LOOK pavement markings.

Work planned for Q4 2023 was to continue switch machine repairs. This project would be scheduled for 3 Monday nights for night-time single tracking causing 25-minute headways systemwide and platform closures at Beacon Hill, Mt. Baker, Columbia City, Othello, and Rainier Beach stations. Next Steps included continued coordination of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel single tracking and weekend full closures for safety repairs for bond box repairs and rail replacement, and for East Link systems tie-in, staff would continue to deliver monthly reporting on service disruptions to this committee and continue development of a permanent office around the Passenger Impact Portfolio Plan to integrate this activity as a regular function.

ST2 Light Rail Service and passenger experience conditions

Matt Shelden, Deputy Executive Director of Planning and Integration, provided the presentation. Mr. Shelden provided a recap of what was briefed at the June 2023 meeting which consisted of Light rail fleet being capped at 214 light rail vehicles (LRVs) until early 2030s when more fleet and base capacity would become available, there were not enough LRVs to support originally planned service levels as the ST2 extensions were completed, staff committed to return with impacts and options for the Board to consider and committed to use the latest ridership estimates that accounted for post-pandemic changes in travel behavior.

Ridership estimates were updated in late 2022 as a range with high estimates trending towards pre-pandemic demand and patterns and low estimates assuming more working from home and recent changes in trip patterns to continue. Current Link ridership was trending toward high estimates and there was day to day variability within the range.

A few key analysis questions that served as a guide included: what service levels could be operated as ST2 extensions opened, what would passenger loading/crowding conditions look like during PM peak hour when highest demand and service levels occurred, and if there were projected overloads, were there mitigation options that could provide more capacity and alleviate crowding.

Link was designed as high-capacity transit to efficiently carry large numbers of riders. Service levels were designed and evaluated based on riders per LRV. Each rail car can hold up to about 200 passengers at its most crowded and a 4-car train could hold up to 800 passengers. Mr. Shelden provided a visual representation of varying crowding levels with all seats full and a certain number of riders standing. The Board adopted crowding standard was 74 seats full and up to 74 riders standing which meant people were standing but a rider could get on the car. More riders above the standard would produce challenges getting on and off or take away room to board.

Two key rail extensions were planned for 2024, the extension of the 1 Line from Northgate to Lynnwood, and the 2 Line from S Bellevue to Redmond Technology stations. With the fleet the agency would have available on the west side of Lake Washington, staff believed service could reliably operate 10-minute peak periods to Lynnwood when it opens, with a combination of 3 and 4-car trains. The 1 Line service would rely on maintaining all cars serving that line at the OMF Central facility in SoDo and storing cars overnight there and at the Northgate and Angle Lake stations, until there was access to the OMF East facility when the 2 Line was extended across Lake Washington in 2025. Service on the 2 Line would be provided with cars at OMF East and would not affect service on the 1 Line.

Mr. Shelden shared a graph that depicted where crowding could occur on the Northbound 1 Line system during the peak of average weekday afternoon rush hours based on those service levels. It depicted what could be expected on a daily basis and did not include further crowding that could happen during service disruptions or special events. In the graph, ridership was currently trending toward the high end of the forecast range. The key takeaway was that with a train every 10 minutes with 4 car trains, staff expects significant crowding northbound on Link in the afternoon peak hour, particularly between Westlake and Northgate. At the low end of forecast ridership, crowding exceeded the Board-adopted standard and would be similar to the level of crowding regularly experienced in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel (DSTT) back in 2019.

Chair Walker and Boardmember Roscoe asked if special events were included in the graph. Mr. Shelden replied that special events were not included, and the graph was based on average weekday expectations.

Boardmember Frizzell asked what PM peak hours meant. Mr. Shelden explained it was the hours following a normal work weekday approximately around 4:30 to 6 p.m.

At the high end, crowding could be severe for the entire peak hour at a level rarely observed even with special events. There was significant risk that passengers could regularly be left on the platforms. As for the Southbound 1 Line, crowding would be less severe in the afternoon, but could still see standees above the standard for a short stretch through DSTT. Crowding could be worse if 4-car trains weren't able to run the whole time.

Mr. Shelden explained the two main strategies to address crowding. The first strategy was to get as many LRVs in service as possible. As noted in the June 2023 presentation, there were several pressures on fleet now. There was fleet out of service for regular maintenance but there was also retrofitting of older Series 1 cars to be able to operate on the 2 Line, as well as continuing to bring new Series 2 into the system. The rate of commissioning those new cars was improving, but some of them were having warranty issues that required repair, which made them unavailable for service until they were fixed. Staff was working with the car builder to get those issues fixed. As that happened, more cars would be available to put into service. Staff was targeting 85 percent availability of the newer cars by the time Lynnwood Link would open in fall 2024, which was comparable to the regular availability of the Series 1 cars. This should allow more 4-car trains to be placed into service more regularly.

The second strategy was to postpone the planned restructure of Snohomish County ST Express routes to feed Link and continue providing some bus service along the I-5 North corridor until the 2 Line could be extended to Lynnwood in 2025. This would provide an alternative and could help alleviate crowding on the train, particularly between Northgate and Downtown Seattle. Four service options were under consideration with agency partners at Community Transit (CT). Option 1 was Northgate to Downtown Seattle, Option 2 was Lynnwood to Downtown Seattle, Option 3 was Ash Way to Downtown Seattle, and Option 4 was Everett to Downtown Seattle. These options were designed around observed ridership patterns on both ST express and CT's commuter routes in the I-5 North corridor, where there was significant ridership north of Lynnwood. While there was more work to do with CT, staff was leaning toward Options 2 and 3, providing bus service from Downtown Seattle to Lynnwood where 40 percent of CT local bus network with connect, and some service north of there to capture some riders before they would get on Link.

Mr. Sheldon noted that staff anticipated relief from most crowding on Link north of downtown when the 2 Line extended to Lynnwood in 2025 and could move to combined 5-minute peak period service on both the 1 and 2 Lines. The situation would change again when the 1 Line was extended to Federal Way in 2026. Staff expect to maintain those peak service levels when the 1 Line would be extended to Federal Way. However, due to the cap on the size of light rail fleet, until more cars became available in the early 2030s, that extension would require moving the 2 Line from all 4-car to all 3-car trains. With 10-minute service on each line, there will be more flexibility to respond to longer run times, fleet reliability issues, and terminal operations challenges. If none of those issues occurred, there may be ability to move to a mix of 3 and 4-car trains on the 2 Line.

Mr. Sheldon shared a graph of what northbound 1 Line crowding could look like in 2026 with those service levels. Under the higher ridership forecast, you could expect to see standing loads above the standard between Westlake and Northgate, but not to the extent expected in 2024. Going southbound, there would likely be crowding above the standard through the DSTT and toward Beacon Hill. Going to the Eastside from Seattle, under the high ridership forecast, there would likely be crowding above the standard through the DSTT and out to Judkins Park. There were no mitigation options for 2026 crowding developed. Staff would return to the Board in Fall 2023 to present those options.

In October 2023, staff would return with options for addressing crowding as the ST2 rail extensions were completed and the 2024 Service Plan would also be considered at that time. Agency partners at Community Transit, King County Metro and Pierce Transit continued to experience challenges hiring bus operators and maintainers, and changes have staff reassessing how much ST Express service could be reliably provided in the following year. That work would take additional time, so in October, staff would ask for the Board to consider adopting only the rail service plan for 2024. Staff would then return with recommended bus service plans early in 2024 after the additional work was completed. In November 2023, staff would present impact information like what was presented on the buildout of the ST3 Plan, and then early in the new year staff would present further mitigation options to consider along with program affordability impacts. Once that information was provided, staff would seek guidance about the Board's long-term service and capital priorities.

Boardmember Frizzell thanked staff for presentation and noted the importance of understanding this data and that it was what prompted the Snohomish County letter for the Board to understand the challenges with the expansion.

Boardmember Roscoe asked about the abovementioned service standards that described the agency policy standard of one rider seated and one rider standing. Mr. Sheldon explained that was part of the Board adopted service standards that was updated in 2018 and committed to providing her the Sound Transit website link. It also referenced on-time performance and other metrics that Mr. Arnold spoke to in the previous report on the agenda. It was a guideline that staff used when those levels of crowding were reached. With limited fleet, there would be limited options to address these crowding levels, but it would get easier to address when more vehicles and maintenance facilities became available. His

presentation spoke to the upcoming difficulties but also included potential options to mitigate crowding by providing additional bus service to offset crowding.

Chair Walker asked if the additional bus services as a mitigation option would then cause those buses to be overcrowded. Mr. Shelden replied that it may be dependent on service design and what the best options would be based on other partner agencies. The current pressures with hiring operators and maintainers would make additional bus service more difficult. Chair Walker noted there could be positive options when exploring additional bus service.

Boardmember Baker noted the initial plans had every other train running from Lynnwood to go East and asked if that was still planned or if anything had changed. Mr. Shelden said it was planned for both 1 and 2 Line trains to go to Lynnwood and effectively double the service levels. Boardmember Baker asked if the presented headways included both 1 and 2 Lines. Mr. Shelden replied that allowed the 10-minute peak headway to move to a 5-minute combined headway between Lynnwood and Downtown Seattle.

Chair Walker asked why extending 1 Line to Federal Way required reducing the 2 Line to 3-car service was specifically mentioned and asked if that service could eventually reach 4-car service. Mr. Shelden replied that was mentioned because of the fleet limitations until the agency received the new Series 3 vehicles in the early 2030s. Once those new vehicles were received, that would then allow 4-car train series. At that time, there would be additional service extensions and staff would be required to investigate service again to reach the service desires.

CEO Timm added the early planning for ST2 were based on planning models that were good for that time period. Staff found that many issues could cause constraints of number of vehicles available, such as biohazards on the trains, the need for gap trains if something were out of service, etc. Don Billen, Executive Director of Planning, Environment and Project Development, added there were many other factors that were better understood since the earlier ST2 planning, such as longer run times than originally projected, higher spare ratios than originally projected.

Chair Walker asked if there were plans related to overcrowding for special events. Mr. Shelden replied that the agency would prepare extra trains to run during the surge periods towards the end of certain anticipated special events. Mr. Arnold explained a few other operational methods to help with crowding such as "load and go." Meaning trains were equipped and ready to move riders out of the platforms as quickly as possible.

Quarterly Fare Ambassador Update

Sean Dennerlein, Deputy Director of Passenger Success, provided the presentation. The 6-month average fare compliance rate had been relatively stable with compliance rates slightly increased, the program inspection rate had decreased. Mr. Dennerlein expressed the data provided was based on a small sample of overall inspections in the 1 Line and Sounder and noted over 98 percent of riders were not inspected. Tacoma Link would be included in the next update. Considering that 98 percent of riders were not inspected, 1.7 percent were compliant, and 0.3 percent were non-compliant.

Compared to the data provided at June 2023 committee meeting, there was a decrease in the overall inspection rate being at 1.18 percent, with the target inspection rate being 10 percent. The decrease in inspection rate was primarily due to the proactive preparation of the expanding program. As an example, a number of supervisors, that would typically be conduction inspections, were pulled away to begin onboarding additional hires. Other causes included ambassadors taking paid time-off or being redeployed to an area that was experiencing scheduled work which caused service delays. Mr. Dennerlein emphasized a known complication related to crowded trains. Crowded trains caused difficulty for fare ambassadors to move about trains which equated to accelerated platform inspections. He explained that having more ambassadors on each train would not entirely net better results in inspection percentages and the team was investigating other methods.

Staff retention had improved by 25 percent compared to 2022. The program expected to triple in size by October 2023, meaning 49 ambassadors would be staffed. A new hiring and training plan would be launched in 2024 and expected to support approximately 74 ambassadors by Summer 2024 and capacity to grow to 140 by 2026. The inspection rates previously mentioned decreased due to number of staffed ambassadors, however every ambassador was conducting 60 percent more daily inspections. In the coming months, platform inspections, citations, and Tacoma Link ambassadors would begin.

Boardmember Roscoe shared her support of the program and asked if there were opportunities to expand ORCA payment methods in the form of more tap stations or using your mobile phone. Mr. Arnold replied that ORCA NextGen expected upcoming version which would allow riders to download an app. The Joint Board, combined transit agencies, would then investigate next steps and where to apply resources. The agency was having conversations with the Joint Board about simplifying fare structure so a rider wouldn't be required to wait to tap when exiting the service and that would be decided within the next few months. Many barrier reductions had been explored. CEO Timm noted the agency had explored the placements of tap stations on platforms and asked Mr. Arnold if the team had considered adding additional tap stations. Mr. Arnold replied that the ORCA team had looked into designing a dual sided tapper that could be accessed on either side of the equipment. This option was still being explored. Mr. Arnold explained the different priority levels other agencies had when it comes to methods of accepting fares.

Boardmember Roscoe expressed her desire to look at how other agencies were addressing fare payment barriers.

Chair Walker highlighted the high percentage individual inspection rates and retention rates and acknowledged the programs successes.

Executive session – None.

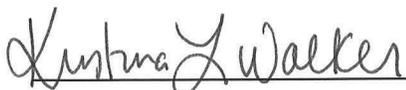
Other business – None.

Next meeting

Thursday, October 5, 2023
1:00 to 3:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via WebEx

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:07 p.m.



Kristina Walker

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores

Board Administrator

APPROVED on October 5, 2023, JG.