

Summary Minutes

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Meeting December 5, 2024

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m. by Committee 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/meeting-videos>.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Kristina Walker, Tacoma Councilmember	(P) Ed Prince, Renton Council President

Board Members	
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(A) Dave Upthegrove, King County Council Chair
(P) Christine Frizzell, Lynnwood Mayor	(A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember
(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor	(P) Girmay Zahilay, King County Council Vice Chair

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

Report of the Chair

None.

CEO Report

Interim CEO Sparrman provided the CEO Report.

Updates on Operational Challenges

CEO Sparrman highlighted that a presentation will be given later in this meeting to discuss the recent December 3, 2024 service disruption, and what steps are being taken to mitigate system reliability issues going forward.

Activation Update

CEO Sparrman noted that activation efforts continue smoothly, but that there were no new updates to provide.

Public comment

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

There were no public comments given.

Business Items

For Committee final action

November 7, 2024, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Board member Birney, seconded by Committee Vice Chair Prince, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that the minutes of the November 7, 2024, Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution R2024-27: (1) Adopting new rates of fare for ST Express bus service, and (2) superseding the rates of fare established in Resolution No. R2023-37 with the rates of fare established by this action as shown in Attachment A.

Chad Davis, Director of Fares, provided the presentation on Resolution No. R2024-27.

Board member Frizzell asked why Sounder still operates on a distance-based fares system while the rest of the agency's services have moved to flat fares. Mr. Davis responded that staff has not moved forward on analysis for changing Sounder fares at this time, but that the idea is open for consideration.

Chair Walker noted that a public hearing was held on the morning of December 5, 2024, on this action. She noted that while no public comments were received at the hearing, that members of the public may sign-up to provide comment at the December 19, 2024, Board meeting via the Sound Transit website.

It was moved by Committee Vice Chair Prince, seconded by Board member Frizzell, and carried by the unanimous vote of all committee members present that Resolution No. R2024-27 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Addressing Link Operational Challenges

CEO Sparrman provided opening remarks for the presentation. He emphasized the seriousness of operational issues, and the importance and necessity of the work staff is undertaking to address them. He described the development of a robust work plan that will identify, assess, and fix problems that have been occurring, as well as combining the efforts of four Tiger Teams to create a comprehensive approach to address short-, medium-, and long-term solutions.

CEO Sparrman noted the strong partnership between the agency and King County as this work is underway, noting that this presentation will be covering what both sides of the partnership know, what's being done in tandem with the agency's partners, as well as provide early detail on action items. CEO Sparrman then introduced Agency Oversight DCEO Moises Gutierrez to begin the presentation.

DCEO Gutierrez noted that this presentation is meant to summarize recent service interruptions, describe the known causes, and describe how staff is addressing each issue. He also noted that immediate, near-, and long-term workplans to improve resilience, reliability, safety, and passenger information for the Link system will also be discussed, and that no action is required at this time.

DCEO Gutierrez provided an overview of how the system operates, describing how power is sent from transmission lines to the Traction Power Substation (TPSS), distributed through the Overhead Catenary

System (OCS) to each Light Rail Vehicle (LRV) through their pantographs, and then circulated back into the TPSS through return current in the rail. He also noted that the TPSS and the OCS also run the signals throughout the system, as well as the fans and alarms in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel. DCEO Gutierrez further elaborated on the safety measures that are required differing outage types, providing examples of operations needing to be suspended in case of broken signals, to the entire tunnel requiring a closure if the ventilation systems fail at one station.

DCEO Gutierrez provided details on the workplan framework, describing the two different facets: Operating Systems and Passenger Support. Operating systems consists of three teams, each handling specific areas of interest: Team 1 for LRV Reliability Improvements, Team 2 for Traction Power and Train Control Improvements – which both are focused on implementing immediate repairs and near-term improvements – and Team 3 working on a Comprehensive System Review, which will result in near- and long-term improvements. Passenger Support is being assisted by Team 4, which will work to implement immediate and near-term improvements to Outreach and Communications.

DCEO Gutierrez gave information on the timeline for the workplan, which is divided into three phases: System Assessment, Immediate Repairs and Near- and Long-term Solution Prioritization, and Near- and Long-term Solution Implementation. The System Assessment phase will take place from December 2024 – January 2025, and will consist of maintenance records reviews, site inspections, field testing, system modeling, stakeholder interviews, and design requirements. The second phase will take place from December 2024 – March 2025, and will consist of new and existing service repair prioritization, updating maintenance procedures, and maintenance training. The third phase will take place from April 2025 to January 2026, and will include contractor procurement, system improvement implementation, software update implementation, and updates to agency requirements and standards.

Service delivery DCEO Russ Arnold provided information on passenger impacts from service disruptions and immediate work taking place to improve rider experience. He provided information on how passengers are currently assisted in disruptions, including real time disruption monitoring from passenger information coordinators, rider alerts, train operator announcements, fare ambassadors and security personnel deployments to disruption areas, and the ability to deploy emergency staff ambassadors in the case of serious disruptions.

DCEO Arnold explained how service interruptions compare to overall operations. He noted that that link light rail has had 6,500 operating hours as of November 24, 2024, and of that, 376 were service disruptions, totaling 5.8% of operating hours. DCEO Arnold provided additional detail on the known causes of service interruptions, which are broken into 5 main categories: Siemens LRV brake systems, Siemens LRV communication systems, traction power rail return, traction power overhead catenary system, and train control signals.

King County Rail Division Director Evan Inkster provided additional information on immediate repairs underway to improve service reliability and resiliency. Mr. Inkster highlighted the installation of new signage between Capitol Hill and University District to assist operators, inspection and adjustment of OCS wire tension in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, and cleaning of the rails in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel as immediate fixes that are underway that will help improve reliability of Link Light Rail.

Board member Frizzell asked if the agency is seeing a higher number of disruptions following the opening of the Lynnwood Link Extension. DCEO Arnold responded that these disruptions are correlated with higher rider loads, which have increased since the opening of Lynnwood Link.

Board member Frizzell further asked if there is information on the cause relative to aging hardware or issues in new infrastructure in the Lynnwood Link Extension. DCEO Gutierrez responded that staff is undertaking a comprehensive analysis to determine the cause of these issues and that further insights will be shared at future committee meetings as more information is gained.

Board member Frizzell asked if the 2-Line is experiencing similar rates of disruption in comparison to the 1-Line. DCEO Arnold responded the agency is experiencing similar levels of disruption on the 2-Line and that the causes of these disruptions are being comprehensively studied as part of this effort.

Board member Birney requested that future presentations provide additional information on the agency's current maintenance program and asked to what extent our current vehicles responsible for disruptions when considering the agency's efforts to procure new vehicles in the future. DCEO Arnold responded that information on root causes and vehicle contribution to disruptions will be further discussed and included in future reports to the committee. Mr. Inkster added that the agency does currently have a robust maintenance program and that due to delays in the completion of the I-90 connection to the 2-Line, unique maintenance strategies have been employed to maintain operations.

Committee Chair Walker asked how a disruption is experienced from a passenger's perspective. DCEO Arnold explained that once a vehicle has stopped for longer than usual, the train operator would provide an announcement giving additional information. Concurrently, Fare Ambassadors would be deployed to the area to help assist passengers with wayfinding and additional information about the disruption. Riders elsewhere in the system would be alerted through text or e-mail rider alerts, as well as through audio messages in stations via the Passenger Information Management System. While riders are being informed, the train operator conducts troubleshooting to fix the problem. If the issue cannot be resolved, the train is moved to the closest station to deboard passengers, and a bus bridge is requested until the train can be moved off the line.

Fare Ambassador Update

Marie Olson, Passenger Experience Executive Director, and Tanya Starke, Acting Passenger Success Deputy Director, provided the report.

Ms. Starke provided information on fare inspections and compliance, noting that 2.83% of riders have been inspected over the past quarter, with 91% percent of riders inspected being fare compliant. Of the 9% non-compliant riders, 3.5% presented identification during the documentation process. She provided further information on overall non-fare boardings, which has seen a positive trend over the past few months.

Ms. Starke explained the current state of the Fare Resolutions Program, highlighting that 98.5% of interactions are only at a warning level, and that 5th and beyond interactions account for .97% of those documented. She noted the different forms of resolutions methods and noted that 5th interactions and beyond are civil infractions, with the agency reserving the right to refer those to the district court.

Ms. Starke gave updates on the platform inspection pilot, noting increases in perceived safety from staff when compared to other job duties. She also highlighted future observational studies of passenger behavior to ensure equity across inspection types, as well as continued improvements in data collection as part of the Fare Ambassador app.

Board member Birney asked for clarification between the rates of compliance as shown in inspection data versus the Fare Resolutions program. Ms. Starke explained that the inspections were on a shorter timescale than the resolutions program, with the resolutions program having data shown for the last year.

Board member Roscoe asked what the timeline looks like for the Fare Ambassador program to reach the Board set target of ten percent of all ridership inspected. Ms. Olson responded that based on current trends, it appears that the ten percent target may be unattainable.

Board member Frizzell asked how and if riders who do not present ID are factored into the resolutions program data. DCEO Arnold responded that the agency does not currently have a means to track riders who do not present identification.

Passenger Impact Program

Pamela Wrenn, Service Delivery Deputy Project Director, provided the report.

Ms. Wrenn gave detail on upcoming disruptions in Q1 of 2025. The Downtown Seattle transit tunnel will be closed for multiple weekends in January and February for 2-Line signal and electrical systems integration testing. The tunnel will be closed from January 10 – 12, 2025, January 17 – 19, 2025, February 14 – 16, 2025, and potentially February 22 – 23, 2025, as a contingency. During these weekends, a bus bridge will be implemented between Capitol Hill Station and SODO station, with 10-minute headways between buses and 15-minute headways between trains on either side of the closure.

Ms. Wrenn also provided detail on construction work for the NE 130th Infill Station roof. Between January 4 and February 27, 2025, trains will be single tracking through the NE 130th Infill Station area between 7:00 p.m. and 4:30 a.m.

Ms. Wrenn also described rescheduled work to repair the OCS between UW and U District stations. The 1-Line will be closed between Capitol Hill Station and U District Station on February 1 – 2, 2025, with a bus bridge being established to shuttle passengers along that portion of the alignment. Further details on the bus bridge and headways will be presented at a future meeting.

REO Metrics

Raj Cheriell, Essential Data and Analytics Director, and Andrea Trepadean, Construction and Employee Health and Safety Director, provided the report.

Mr. Cheriell provided an overview of topics covered in 2024, which included operations and security at Tukwila International Boulevard Station, a 2023 year-in-review, vertical transportation, ridership, customer comments, vehicle availability, and vehicle crowding and parking.

Ms. Trepadean provided information on passenger and transit worker assaults. She reported that there have been 142 transit worker assaults on Link between January and September 2024, averaging to 2.2 assaults per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles. The number of assaults has dropped by 50% from January to December, and the rate decreased by 71% over the same period. In the same January to September 2024 period, 99 passenger assaults occurred on Link, averaging to 1.5 assaults per 100,000 vehicle revenue miles. While the number of assaults peaked in March 2024, the number and rate has continued to decline throughout the rest of the year. Similar trends were seen across all modes and services.

Board member Zahilay asked if any analysis had been done to determine the cause of the decline of transit worker and passenger assaults. Ms. Trepadean responded that analysis work is ongoing, and that steps are being taken to determine what factors are impacting changes in assaults across the agency's services. DCEO Gutierrez added his commitment to further analyzing and determining the causes of assaults on agency services in 2025.

Board member Birney asked how our data compares to other transit agencies. Ms. Trepadean noted that data on transit worker assaults is a new requirement, therefore making comparisons difficult until more data is collected.

Executive session – None.

Other business – None.

Next meeting

Thursday, January 16, 2025 ****NOTE DATE****

1:00 to 3:00 p.m.

Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom.

Adjourn

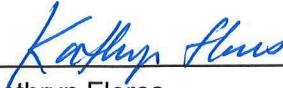
The meeting adjourned at 2:42 p.m.



Kristina Walker

Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores

Board Administrator

APPROVED on January 16, 2025, HRR.