

*08/07/2025 Rider Experience and
Operations Committee Meeting Written
Public Comment Submissions*

Submissions

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Chris Machielse

Hi REO Committee,

Writing to share my comments about the need for better rider communication and more agile operations after experiencing the significant PM rush hour service disruption on July 8.

Unforseeable disruptions like this will unfortunately happen, but Sound Transit needs to communicate more details sooner with riders so they can make alternate plans, and consider more agile operations that limit the impact of delays to the entire system. I boarded at UW Station with an active service alert on the Transit app informing me of 15 minute delays - with that delay in mind I expected the train to still be the fastest way for me to get to Northgate. Instead, my train dwelled for 10 minutes at UW Station, and then another ~40 minutes at U District Station with no rider communication beyond automated announcements, and our driver once coming on the PA to tell us we were waiting for our turn to single-track past Shoreline South. Only later in the evening was it made clear that there was a full power outage/blockage at that time in Shoreline, meaning no trains were able to proceed during that time.

On the communication front, though I am sure our train operator was following a protocol to periodically do the automated "we are experiencing a delay, but the train will be moving shortly" announcements, this was not sufficient given the circumstances, and actively misleading as we did not move "shortly." **Communications to riders need to emphasize the severity of the delay** - for example, merely specifying the delay will be over 15 minutes would be enough information for some riders to decide they are better off seeking some alternate route. These real-time communications need to be improved to be more useful for riders to plan accordingly.

On the operations front, ST must bring more agility to operations during surprise

disruptions- in this instance, northbound trains should have started turning back at Northgate much sooner so that all other northbound trains were not forced to dwell at every platform south of Northgate for nearly an hour. Another example if we had been single tracking with 15-20 min delays would be to turn back every other train just before the affected area of the tracks to maintain headways < 10 minutes south of the disruption. Without implementing more agile operations, we are headed for even larger disruptions after the number of trains between Downtown Seattle and Lynnwood doubles to once every 4-5 minutes with the completion of the 2 Line. There should be a low threshold to temporarily start turning trains back when there is a blockage so that trip pairs outside of the disrupted area can continue to be served at frequent headways. With our "spine" based system, riders have few alternatives when the spine stops moving, so keeping as much of the system moving as possible is essential.

I encourage the Board to have staff develop a detailed postmortem of this event, and include ways that Sound Transit can improve communications and operational agility into the broader system reliability and resiliency workstreams to minimize delays and keep riders moving through as much of the system as possible when unexpected track blockages occur. And I look forward to riding the 2 Line when the I-90 bridge is ready for service!

Thanks!

Chris Machielse