

Summary Minutes

Board Retreat
November 13, 2025

Call to order

The retreat was called to order at 2:01 p.m. by Chair Dave Somers.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chairs
(P) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive	(A) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember (P) Ryan Mello, Pierce County Executive

Board members	
(P) Nancy Backus, City of Auburn Mayor (P) Angela Birney, City of Redmond Mayor (P) Shannon Braddock, King County Executive (A) Cassie Franklin, City of Everett Mayor (P) Christine Frizzell, City of Lynnwood Mayor (P) Hunter George, City of Fircrest Councilmember (A) Bruce Harrell, City of Seattle Mayor (P) Julie Meredith, Secretary of Transportation	(P) Ed Prince, City of Renton Councilmember (A) De'Sean Quinn, King County Councilmember (P) Kim Roscoe, City of Fife Mayor (A) Dan Strauss, City of Seattle Councilmember (A) Peter von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember (P) Kristina Walker, City of Tacoma Councilmember (P) Girmay Zahilay, King County Council Chair

Katie Flores, Board Administrator, announced that a quorum of the Board was present at roll call.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Somers opened the retreat by welcoming the Board, Sound Transit staff, and members of the public to the retreat. He thanked King County for hosting the Board at the Chinook Building. He thanked Alex Krieg, Enterprise Planning Deputy Executive Director, for his work leading up to today and introduced Ariel Taylor, Acting Government and Community Relations Deputy Executive Director, and Calli Knight, Agency Chief of Staff, who will be filling in for Alex as he recovers from an illness.

The purpose of the retreat is for Sound Transit Board members to come together to ensure that Sound Transit continues building a mass transit system that is affordable, achievable, and sustainable for the region. Today is a moment to reaffirm a shared commitment to deliver on the promise of regional transit. Looking ahead to the opening of the Federal Way Link Extension and the Crosslake Connection, Chair Somers noted that these projects represent a Puget Sound region that can do hard things when working together. This spirit will guide the Board as it takes on the challenges ahead.

In August, the Board adopted a set of principles to guide the Enterprise Initiative and remain the foundation as priorities are set for the ST3 program and future investments. Chair Somers asked each subarea to begin identifying the projects and outcomes that matter most to each community. The collective input will allow the Board to give clear direction to staff on refining an affordable, achievable capital program. The materials for today include information on subarea projects, budgets, cost estimates, and other technical details to support discussion.

This retreat is structured to continue the conversation that the Board and agency leadership has been having for most of the year, in particular at the last Board retreat in May. Chair Somers added that he expects many follow-up conversations that will build from today as there is much more work to come.

Chair Somers asked Board member Braddock if she had any inviting words. Board member Braddock welcomed the Board to the King County complex and highlighted the importance of discussion among the Board, both as a whole and in small groups.

CEO Constantine thanked Board member Braddock and King County for hosting the retreat and thanked all Board members for their attendance. He noted that at the last retreat, the agency introduced the Enterprise Initiative and discussed the importance of being proactive in setting the agency toward long-term stability and success. Unlike previous efforts, the Enterprise Initiative will not solely focus on the capital program, but will comprehensively address the operating and finance portfolios, as well. CEO Constantine remarked that the agency is no longer primarily a transit construction firm but is now operating a rapidly maturing system while navigating complex financial realities. Today, 150,000 people depend on Sound Transit's regional transit service per day.

Today, three hours will be devoted to diving deeper into the Board's shared principles and goals for this work. CEO Constantine added that from here on, the focus will sharpen and the pace will quicken as staff focus on supporting the Board and providing the tools needed for innovative problem solving and decision-making. He invited all to take reassurance in the agency's history: just 16 years ago, there was no light rail and, in just 23 days, the 1 Line will extend into a 41-mile system as the second longest light rail line in the county. The 1 Line will have more ridership per mile than any light rail line except Boston's green line. Looking ahead to welcoming the World Cup to region next year, CEO Constantine reminded the Board that the system will be further expanded to 63 miles of light rail with the Crosslake Connection.

Chair Somers asked Ms. Knight to introduce the ice-breaker activity. Ms. Knight asked Board members to pair-up around the table and discuss which holiday side dish the Enterprise Initiative could be and why.

Enterprise Initiative comprehensive framework review

Ms. Taylor and Ms. Knight began by reminding the Board of the action to adopt the Enterprise Initiative principles, Motion No. M2025-36. They also highlighted some of the criteria and information sets that the Board may find useful to evaluate against the principles, including ridership, completion of the spine, travel times, centers served, existing & projected population/employment, vehicle miles travelled reductions, and system performance. The principles and information will form the basis for discussions about trade-offs and performance. Ms. Knight asked if there were any initial thoughts from Board members.

Board member Prince reminded the Board that a 2021 motion deferred significant parking investments and asked the agency to be creative in ways to increase parking and system access improvements. He highlighted that Renton has been a partner to help accelerate necessary access projects and stressed that similar partnerships with other jurisdictions would be beneficial.

Board member Birney toured the West Seattle Link Extension planned alignment to get a better understanding of the project and its local impacts. She stressed the importance of looking beyond the direct station areas when measuring the full impact of projects.

Vice Chair Mello, noting the current federal funding landscape, asked that when truly difficult decisions are brought, the solutions prioritize carless residents and those who rely on transit.

Ms. Knight highlighted that the process to help inform the Board will ensure that the framework is inclusive of collaborative community engagement, trust-building transparent governance, and data-

driven decision-making. Phase 1, which will run through 2025, aims to share clear information through existing channels and demonstrate that the agency is proactively addressing challenges through the Enterprise Initiative. Phase 2 in the first quarter of 2026 will create focused spaces for engagement and questions to inform Board decision-making and gather feedback to inform additional updates and changes. Phase 3, in the second quarter of 2026, will see the agency engage with the public, passengers, and partners on the potential path forward on an updated System Plan and new Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.

Ms. Knight walked through how the Board and its Committees will share responsibility and jurisdiction for guiding the Enterprise Initiative. The Board will ultimately decide how to allocate and maximize Sound Transit's resources to support achieving the objectives and outcomes envisioned in ST3. Key trade-offs and considerations include ensuring the agency's ability to deliver high-quality service while advancing ST3 projects and incorporating post-pandemic travel behaviors and considering the implication of changed technology and mobility patterns.

The Executive Committee will oversee the Planning & Policy workstream and revisit existing planning assumptions and policy direction. The committee will summarize changed conditions, confirm modal service levels that inform fleet and facility needs, update existing and create new policies, and create new plans and guidelines for project and service implementation. Key trade-offs and considerations the committee will face include existing agency policy constraints, recognizing some changes are outside Board control, and revisiting assumptions to ensure maximum flexibility in service and project delivery.

Vice Chair Mello noted that permitting authority is often a key pinch point that affects Sound Transit's ability to efficiently implement projects. He suggested that more authority may need to be requested from the State Legislature but also recognized that local support could be helpful in the short run.

Chair Somers mentioned that Snohomish County and local cities have examples of streamlined joint permitting processes.

Board member George expressed excitement to learn more about how the agency projects ridership assumptions and how those figures will affect assumptions.

Board member Birney added that most communities have been undergoing comprehensive plan updates and encouraged collaboration to align agency and local priorities. She also asked if information would be restricted by Committee. Ms. Knight responded that all Board members will receive the information and be offered opportunities to familiarize themselves with the workstreams of other committees.

The System Expansion Committee will oversee the capital delivery workstream and continue development of cost savings opportunities and strategies to deliver ST3 as quickly and efficiently as possible. The committee will identify, validate, and incorporate cost savings opportunities within individual projects and across the capital program, assess and recommend the pursuit of innovative delivery strategies, and develop a revised capital program in collocation with the other workstreams. Key trade-offs and considerations the committee will face include cost challenges that require reconsideration of project scope, sequencing of projects and overall program, and best approaches to advancing projects through the baselining milestone.

Board member Roscoe stressed that each community affected by trade-offs be invited to the discussion and leveraged to support informing others. She noted that it appears the Sound Transit and Board members are already doing so, but there will be larger, more significant changes that will need to be communicated as the Enterprise Initiative progresses.

Jessyn Farrell, representing Board member Harrell, added that North King County will likely see a lot of pressure in regard to the capital program and asked for continuous touch points on phasing and schedule implications.

The Rider Experience and Operations Committee will oversee the service delivery workstream and ensure delivery of reliable service and identification of opportunities to provide existing and future services as efficiently as possible. The committee will recommend investments necessary to support overall system resiliency, develop a service delivery opportunity register, and support work related to a revised ST3 capital program with updated service assumptions and create a network plan and service guidelines to guide implementation. Key trade-offs and considerations the committee face will include potential for new and unplanned investments, balancing upfront capital costs and service disruptions against long-term savings, and resiliency and reliability considerations related to need for and timing of a new downtown Seattle transit tunnel.

Board member Walker asked how necessary improvements to the current Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel are being weighed during the Enterprise Initiative and noted that the Service Delivery Opportunity Register will really come into fruition at the back-half of the Enterprise Initiative. Ms. Knight responded that more conversations are needed to bring the timeline forward to align as much as possible.

Board member Braddock recommended finding a way to protect the dollars needed for residency and state of good repairs. Ms. Knight responded that ST3 did include direction to prioritize the state of good repair program.

Board member Birney noted that At-grade safety could require expensive improvements and request that the information be included in the conversation of potential outcomes. Ms. Knight added that there is continued work with the City of Seattle to keep working on the Board-approved At-grade Crossing safety plan.

The Finance and Audit Committee will oversee the finance workstream and ensure overall program affordability and pursue opportunities that maximize agency financial capacity. The committee will assess overall program affordability and develop and recommend opportunities to expand agency financial capacity. Key trade-offs and considerations the committee face will include balancing revenue enhancement opportunities against the Board's principle to protect public investments with fiscal integrity and acknowledge that some opportunities may require Board action or rely on action by other levels of government.

Board member George asked if there are any current concrete proposals identified by the finance team for legislative requests. CEO Constantine responded that since Sound Transit doesn't receive funding directly from the State government, the goal of any legislative request would be to further leverage Sound Transit's local revenues.

As the Enterprise Initiative advances through next year, Ms. Knight explained how all the workstream pieces will come together. First, iterative processes will analyze and present findings on questions related to the planned second downtown tunnel, develop a revised capital program incorporating cost savings levers, and update service design assumption based on revised capital program, new ridership forecast, and other needs. Concurrent work will recommend resiliency investments and service delivery opportunities, financial enhancements, and policy changes. All of this will support the long-range planning to set a future vision that builds off the updated ST3 system plan. A "transit map" graphic showed the proposed timelines for each workstream to consider deliverables.

Board member Strauss thanked staff for the work needed to assemble and begin to manage the workstreams. He asked that staff help to interline both positive and negative trade-offs, as the Board's recent conversations have focused more on the potential negative impacts. He asked that any additional planning studies authorized in ST3 be daylighted so that they can inform what may come next after ST3. Ms. Knight noted the request as a follow-up item.

Ms. Taylor briefly explained that after a short break, Board members will participate in group breakout sessions. The Board members will be mixed across the subareas and, as cohorts, will analyze the planned projects and assumptions in each subarea and corridor. She added that there are additional materials at each table.

After the discussion, Chair Somers announced that the Board would recess for a break. No business conversations would occur until the retreat reconvenes after 12 minutes. The Board recessed beginning at 3:03 pm.

Corridor Investments and trade-offs

The Board reconvened at 3:15 pm.

The Board members were divided into three groups. Group 1 included Chair Somers and Board members Braddock, Prince, Walker, and Zahilay. Group 2 included Vice Chair Mello and Board members Backus, Birney, Frizzell, and Jessyn Farrell. Group 3 included Board members George, Meredith, Roscoe, and Strauss. Each group participated in five tabletop discussions.

At the Snohomish County subarea, the Board members received information on the current Sounder N Line service and planned expansion projects, including the Everett Link Extension and elements of the Stride Bus Rapid Transit (BRT).

At the North King County subarea, the Board members received information on the planned system expansion projects, including portions of the East Link Extension Crosslake Connection, portions of the BRT program, the Pinehurst Infill Station project, the West Seattle Link Extension, the Ballard Link Extension, and Infill Stations at Graham Street and Boeing Access Road.

At the East King County subarea, the Board members received information on the recent 2 Line openings and the planned expansion projects, including Stride BRT, the East Link Extension Crosslake Connection, and the 4 Line from Kirkland to Issaquah.

At the South King County subarea, the Board members received information on planning expansion projects, including Sounder S Line capacity improvements, elements of the Stride BRT program, Federal Way Link Extension, Tacoma Dome Link Extension, the Operations and Maintenance Facility South, and Boeing Access Road Infill Station.

At the Pierce County subarea, the Board members received information on Tacoma Dome Link Extension, Operations and Maintenance Facility South, DuPont Sounder Extension, and Tacoma Community College T-Line Extension.

Group 1

At the Snohomish County subarea, the Board members raised the importance of expecting future growth especially in regard to parking and access needs, engaging regional partners to foster east-west connections, and looking ahead to beyond ST3. When asked about priorities in the subarea, the Board members mentioned completion of the light rail spine, expansion into underserved communities, connections to employment centers, and ensuring operational safety is not sacrificed when considering cost-savings measures.

At the North King County subarea, the Board members noted that the Enterprise Initiative will have a large focus on this subarea's capital costs, but the importance of planning for future extensions, such as from West Seattle to Burien, should not be forgotten. They also raised the important connections that will be facilitated between Stride BRT and Link light rail, and inquired into the possible impacts of pausing work, rethinking the construction approaches, or removing the need for a second downtown tunnel.

At the East King County subarea, the Board members raised the importance of parking and access improvements, future planning studies for additional Link expansion, and leaving clear intent for future agency leaders. The Board members questioned what the future regional population will look like when the 4 Line is constructed and whether any of the currently planned stations may no longer be the best for regional connectivity.

At the South King County subarea, the Board members inquired into the project history of the Boeing Access Road Infill Station and raised the possibility of focusing on increased service, not longer trains, for the Sounder S Line capacity improvements.

At the Pierce County subarea, the Board members noted the need for additional coordination with local jurisdictions to leverage the projects and maximize investments, including in station-area planning and multimodal connections. Additional clarity on future service expectations for Tacoma Link was requested.

Group 2

At the North King County subarea, the Board members inquired into possible financial tools aside from sequencing, ridership projections for both the West Seattle Link Extension and Ballard Link Extension, the comparisons between projected subarea revenues and costs, and potential future expansion that is contingent on ST3-funded projects. The Board members also noted the importance of attempting to understand the regional connectivity of the system, as pure ridership numbers don't say much about who is utilizing a station and for what purpose.

At the East King County subarea, the Board members raised the importance of parking and access improvements to support upstream use of the projects, coordination with local jurisdictions comprehensive plans to right-size investments, and addressing rising costs related to operations and the 4 Line.

At the South King County subarea, the Board members noted the in-construction parking and access improvements at Sounder stations (ST2 projects) and highlighted a desire to increase Sounder S Line trips to maximize the capital investments. They also discussed implementing parking-monitoring technology to help riders plan to utilize local transit connections, approaching Sounder maintenance partners to expand maintenance capacity, and reviewing additional cost-savings for the Boeing Access Road Infill Station and Operations and Maintenance Facility South.

At the Pierce County subarea, the Board members noted the important partnership with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, raised community concerns about premature rerouting of ST express routes with Link Extensions, and noted the importance of identifying future job and population growth centers in planning beyond ST3 for both Link and Sounder. They also remembered that ST3 was not supported by a majority of the Pierce County Sound Transit District, so building a base of support for future Initiatives will be critical.

At the Snohomish County subarea, the Board members raised the importance of coordinating with cities and local leaders to ensure plans align and making efficient connections between population and job centers. When asked about priorities in the subarea, the Board members mentioned mitigating impacts to underserved communities, connections to employment centers, and ensuring operational safety is not sacrificed when considering possible at-grade portions.

Group 3

At the East King County subarea, the Board members noted the relatively firm financial position of the subarea given the long-lull between finishing Stride BRT and starting construction on the planned 4-Line. It was requested that more information be provided regarding the breakdown of project funding to

have a better understanding of how debt will play a role for each subarea. The Boardmembers also noted that having updated projections for the 4 Line would be helpful.

At the South King County subarea, the Board members highlighted the importance of envisioning the Tacoma Community College extension as the true end of the spine and the potential operational trade-offs that will come to the 1 Line should the agency need to pivot away from a second transit tunnel. Using the Boeing Access Road Infill Station as an example, the Board members also pondered building extensions to the termini and building in certain stations as infill projects. When asked about priorities, the Board members did not want to see Sounder service limited as a main contributor to the Enterprise Initiative's deliverables.

At the Pierce County subarea, the Board members highlighted the fanfare for Tacoma Dome Link Extension and the everyday support for Sounder S Line service, as well as the potential economic benefit of extending Sounder to DuPont. They also mentioned the need to build support for Sound Transit projects in Pierce County, while noting a priority to ensure multimodal offerings that keep Pierce County connected to SeaTac Airport and King County/Seattle and to avoid infill stations on this project, which would add time to the trip between Tacoma and Seattle via Link.

At the Snohomish County subarea, the Board members inquired into whether Sounder N Line service has pushes for additional service like Sounder S Line service, how ST Express restructures will impact riders alongside Link extensions, and future planning for extending beyond Everett and ST3. They also discussed that the Everett Link Extension is currently trending to be affordable, pending conversations on the provisional station; the Board members highlighted the potential for financial partnerships.

At the North King County subarea, the Board members inquired into the decision to split the environmental review of the West Seattle Link Extension and Ballard Link Extension, whether building to the planned termini and backfilling stations could aid with affordability, and where future studies may suggest are natural extensions beyond ST3. They also raised the importance of doing tours of the planned alignments to better understand the landscape, updating ridership numbers based on city-approved zoning updates, and reanalyzing the impacts of remote work to long-term studies.

Debrief and discussion

Chair Somers thanked all the Board members for their participation in the exercise to discuss priorities at the subarea level. These conversations will be helpful to staff as they advance the work of the Enterprise Initiative. As shared earlier, staff provided a map on how the Board will get to decision points, including updating the System Plan and Long-Range Plan in 2026. He opened the floor for Board members to share their thoughts from the discussions, while he highlighted the interplay among changes that occur in different subareas.

Board member Roscoe opined that having as much information as possible will only benefit the Board and its decision-making. She noted that in Group 3, she agreed with Board member Strauss's earlier point about potentially moving up planning studies meant to plot the course after ST3.

Board member Birney enjoyed hearing different regional perspectives on each subarea.

Board member Backus thanked the many staff members in attendance who helped to support the discussions. She noted that there are many unknowable changes that have occurred since ST3 was passed. While the flexibility of the program has been strained, the agency still has room to spare and address the upcoming challenges.

Vice Chair Mello appreciated seeing the differences planned in the system across the region and how the Enterprise Initiative is already setting up some changes that can be managed at the staff level, such as the new approach to the Operations and Maintenance Facility program. He added that while the

capital opportunities are easier to see, he needs more support to see how service delivery opportunities could play out.

Board member George also thanked staff for their support and remarked that these retreats are ideal opportunities outside of the regular Board meetings to highlight details. He also asked the Board to permit themselves to think through the dramatic changes between 2016 and today. He highlighted transit as a vital economic tool for the region.

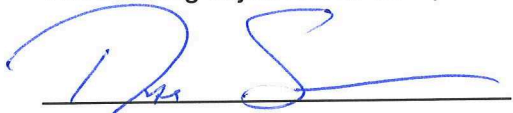
Chair Somers noted that, unlike the 2021 Realignment, the Board is aiming not to pause current project progress as time is money. He asked staff to begin to draw up plausible, affordable scenarios that the Board can review and react to in order to build understanding of what the Board could do via the Enterprise Initiative. By engaging with these scenarios, Chair Somers hopes the Board will understand the true systemwide and sub-area tradeoffs.

Next meeting

The next regular Board meeting would be held on November 20, 2025, 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. in the Ruth Fisher Board Room and as a virtual meeting via Zoom.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:01 p.m.



Dave Somers
Board Chair

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on December 18, 2025, AJM.