

Motion No. M2025-27

Approving the East Link Extension Service and Fare Equity Report

Meeting:	Date:	Type of action:	Staff contact:
Rider Experience and Operations Committee Board of Directors	06/05/2025 06/26/2025	Recommend Final action	Daphne Cross, Chief Economic Development and Civil Rights Officer Adrian Mejia, Title VI and Equity Program Manager

Proposed action

Approve the East Link Extension Service and Fare Equity report.

Key features summary

- According to FTA guidelines, Sound Transit must conduct service and fare equity analyses prior to implementing new starts and major service or fare changes to ensure planned changes will not disproportionately affect members of a group identified by race, color, or national origin.
- The East Link Extension SAFE included analysis of the following:
 - Service Changes;
 - Assessment of potential adverse effects to minority and low-income populations; and
 - Public outreach to inform the decision-making process.
- The service equity analysis concluded the East Link Extension benefits the entire population in the service area, of which the minority population is above the system average. The low-income population in the East Link Extension service area is smaller than the low-income population in the Sound Transit district, but the analysis found no adverse effects exceeding the policy threshold. Accordingly, there are no disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens.
- As there are no fare changes associated with the implementation of the East Link Extension, nor service changes that would impact the fares that riders will pay, a fare analysis was not necessary.
- The SAFE analysis concluded the proposed changes to transit service comply with Title VI regulations.

Background

As a result of schedule delays and service impacts to East Link and to Lynnwood Link Extensions, the Board adopted Resolution No. R2023-06. That resolution authorized an option to open an eight-station portion of the East Link Extension in 2024. The remainder of East Link, which crosses I-90 and includes Judkins Park and Mercer Island Stations, is expected to open in late 2025. Altogether, the entire East Link Extension will offer passengers reliable, traffic-free trips between the east side and Seattle and includes 10 stations from Seattle's International District to Judkins Park, across I-90 to Mercer Island and South Bellevue, and through downtown Bellevue and the Bel-Red area to Redmond Technology Station.

Fiscal information

The East Link Extension scope and project budget includes budget for startup and opening expenditures.

Title VI compliance

Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states: No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Sound Transit receives federal financial assistance to design and build the regional transit system through grants primarily awarded and administered by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the U.S. Department of Transportation. As an FTA grant recipient, Sound Transit cannot, on the basis of race, color or national origin, either directly or through contractual means:

- Deny an individual any service, financial aid or benefit provided under the program to which he or she might otherwise be entitled;
- Make distinctions in the quality, quantity, or manner in which the service or benefit is provided; or
- Segregate or separately treat individuals in any matter related to the receipt of any service or benefit.

As a part of its ongoing Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must continue to ensure that it complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which protects individuals from discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin in any program receiving federal funds.

Included among the Title VI obligations, Sound Transit must submit a Title VI Program for FTA approval, every three years, which requires inclusion of equity analyses conducted by Sound Transit.

Public involvement

In late 2022, Sound Transit announced service delays, shifting focus to outreach for the East Link starter line, anticipated to open in spring 2024, with full project completion in 2025. Sound Transit's Community Engagement team played a key role in keeping project neighbors informed and involved. During the alternatives analysis, they facilitated four public meetings, gathering 300 scoping comments. Throughout environmental review, 28 open houses and workshops resulted in 1,887 public comments on 24 project alternatives.

During design, open houses and stakeholder briefings provided opportunities for input on cost-saving ideas, with 575 attendees contributing 571 comments. During construction, Sound Transit staff engaged over 10,000 community members at events. When the COVID-19 pandemic halted in-person engagement, they adapted by creating virtual outreach options. A virtual booth launched in late 2020 attracted over 10,000 unique page views and 115 survey responses. Virtual office hours provided updates on project status, safety testing, and transit services, extending into early 2022 due to high participation.

To reach diverse communities, Sound Transit partnered with local organizations to distribute translated materials in multiple languages. They collaborated with Bellevue to produce a light rail safety video in seven languages. Throughout the project, Sound Transit ensured accessibility by translating all public-facing materials into Korean, Russian, Somali, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Time constraints

This document requires Board review prior to the commencement of East Link Extension revenue service.

Prior Board/Committee actions

Resolution No. R2023-24: Authorizing the chief executive officer to implement the phased opening of the East Link Extension via the East Link Starter Line using funds authorized in the approved budget for the East Link Extension, inclusive of \$6 million authorized by Resolution No. R2023-06.

Resolution No. R2023-06: Authorizing the expenditure of up to \$6 million from the East Link project budget, to be funded by the East King subarea, to complete the work necessary to further develop the option to open a portion of the East Link Extension from South Bellevue Station to Redmond Technology Station (East Link Starter Line). This work will inform a final action to be considered by the Board in Fall 2023 on whether to open the East Link Starter Line for revenue service in Spring 2024.

Resolution No. R2022-19: Established when the agency conducts equity analyses as required by the FTA and applies to major service changes, fare changes and siting of maintenance facilities.

Environmental review – KH 5/19/25

Legal review – MT 5/23/25

Motion No. M2025-27

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority approving the East Link Extension Service and Fare Equity report.

Background

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The East Link Extension SAFE included analysis of the following: Service Changes, assessment of potential adverse effects to minority and low-income populations, and public outreach to inform the decision-making process.

The service equity analysis concluded the East Link Extension benefits the entire population in the service area, of which the minority population is above the system average. The low-income population in the East Link Extension service area is smaller than the low-income population in the Sound Transit district, but the analysis found no adverse effects exceeding the policy threshold. Accordingly, there are no disparate impacts or disproportionate burdens.

As there are no fare changes associated with the implementation of the East Link Extension, nor service changes that would impact the fares that riders will pay, a fare analysis was not necessary. The SAFE analysis concluded the proposed changes to transit service comply with Title VI regulations.

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Motion

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that the East Link Extension Service and Fare Equity report is approved.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on June 26, 2025.



Dave Somers
Board Chair

Attest:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator