Fare Gates Update

Implementation study and potential pilot

Executive Committee
12/11/2025

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Why we are here today

Respond to Board request to develop a proposal for a fare gate pilot program on the Sound Transit system

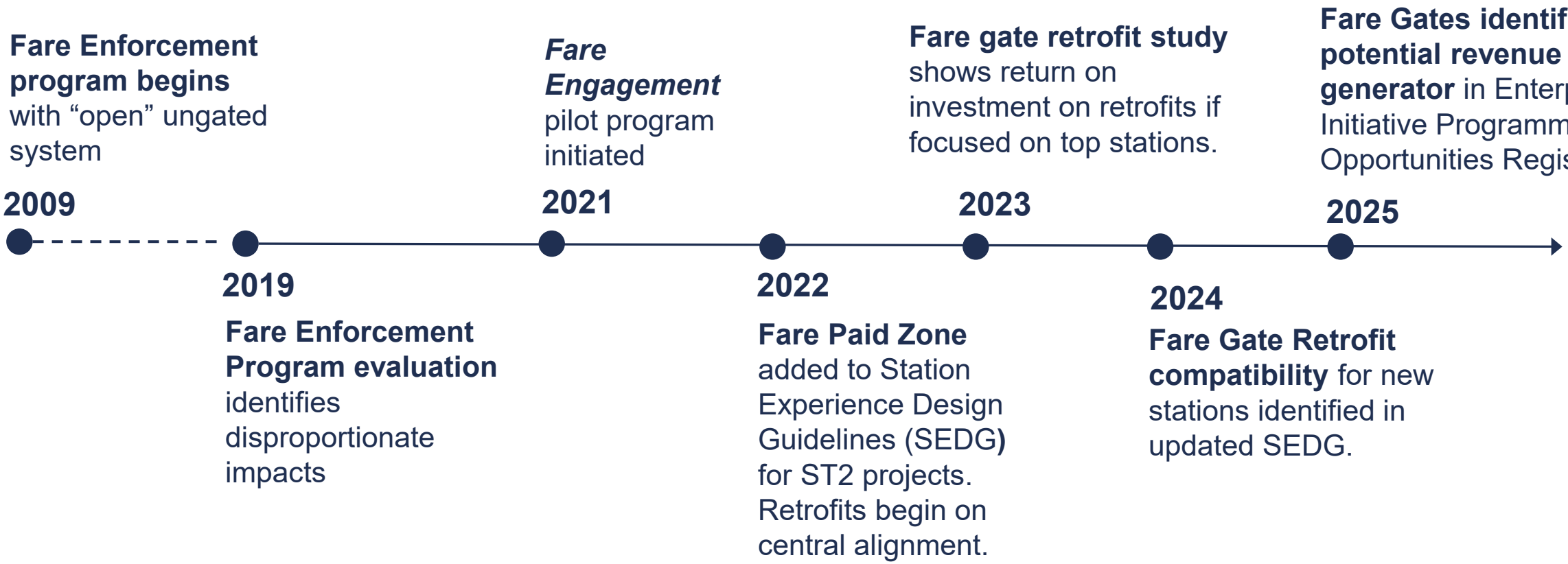
- **Identify potential benefits of fare gates**, including an overview of past analysis documenting a return on investment of fare gates and opportunities to reorient existing frontline staff programs like the Fare Ambassadors

- **Visualize sample approaches** for physically incorporating fare gates into existing and future transit stations

- **Introduce implementation study** goals and key next steps

Motion No. M2025-64 Directs the CEO to report to the Board on the findings of a Fare Gate Retrofit Implementation Study to inform future decisions regarding fare gate deployment across the system.

Sound Transit's fare compliance program evolution



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Despite ridership increases, fare payment compliance has decreased since 2019

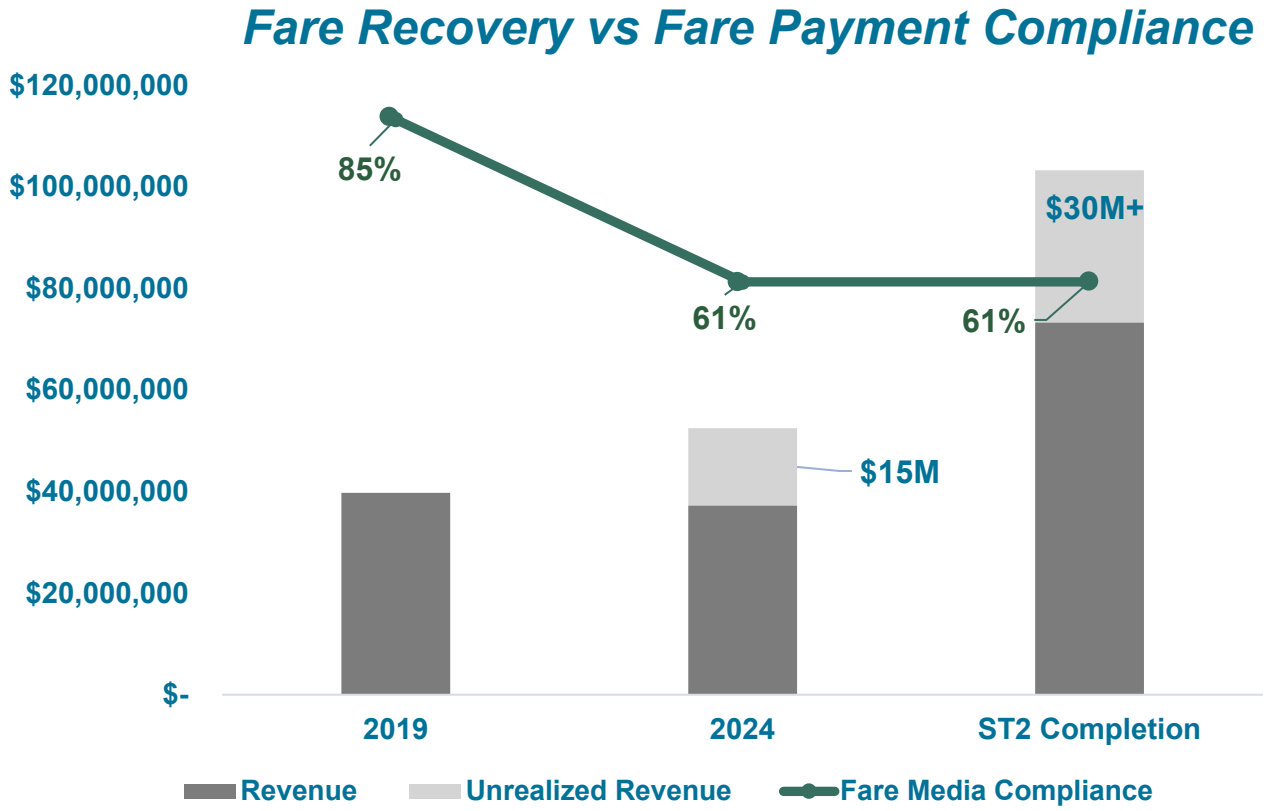
Fare revenue declined $4M comparing 2019 to 2024, while ridership increased by 5M annual boardings.

Fare payment compliance increased 5% since launch of Fare Ambassador program in 2023.

Lower fare payment compliance represents ~$15M in annual unrealized fare revenue if rates had remained at 2019 levels.*

- This could increase to **~$30M+ annually** as ridership grows with system expansion.

Next step is to analyze the impact of operating expenses on fare recovery.



* *Normalized for free youth fare, and flat fare policy*

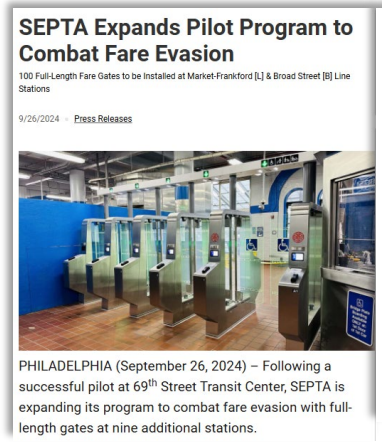
Many transit systems are taking action on fare gates

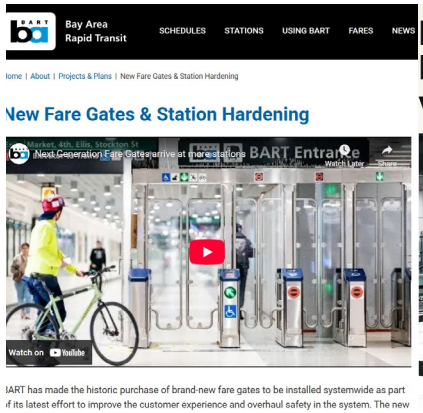
Improved fare recovery by ensuring payment by those who have the ability.

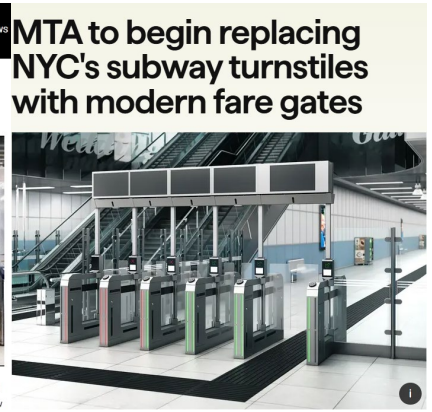
Reduced fare compliance-related conflicts with front-line staff.

Better passenger experience
- Clearer wayfinding
- **Metering** and **crowd control** for events
- Increased perception of safety

Improved ridership data collection to better serve passenger needs







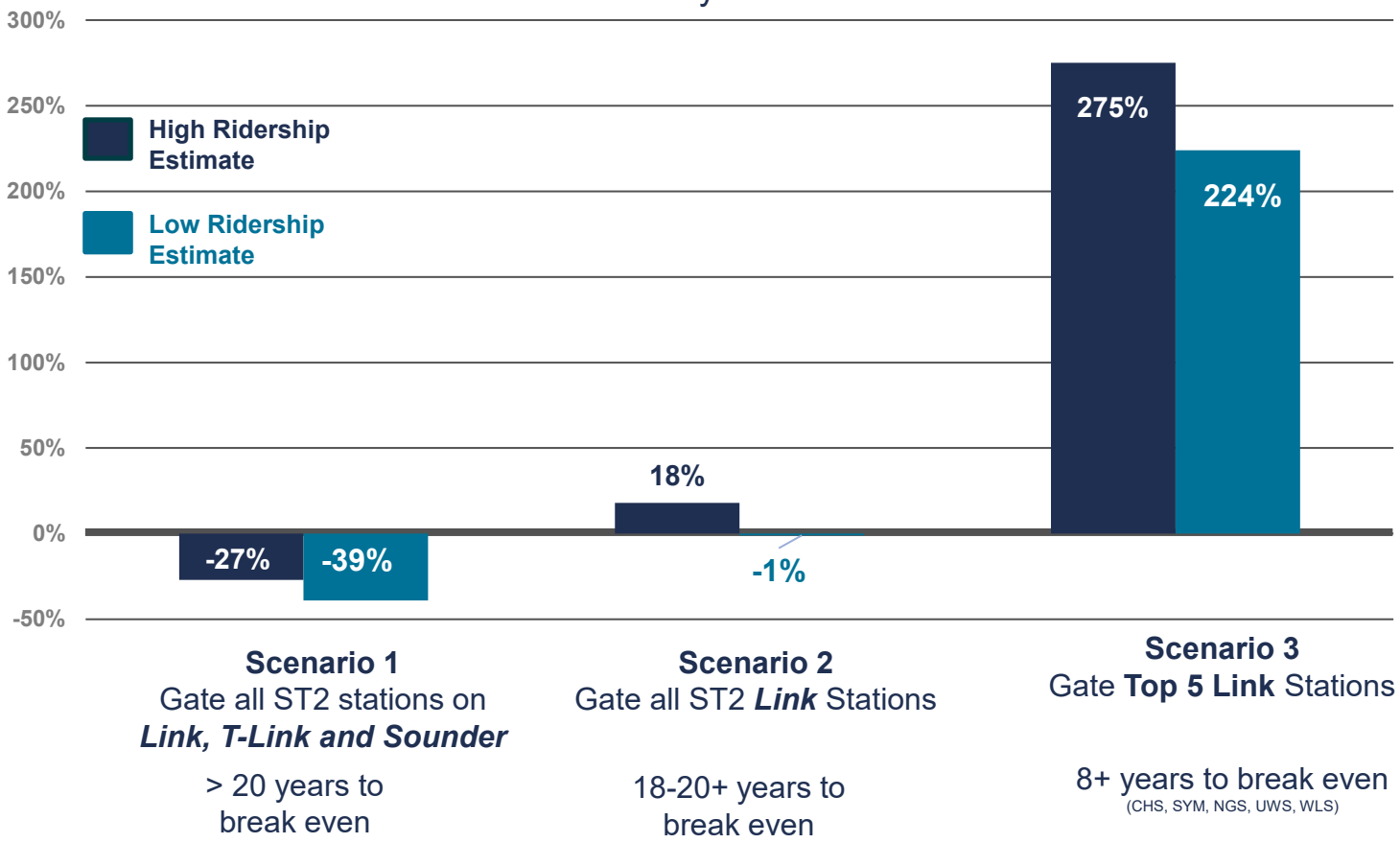
2023 Retrofit study provided useful findings to inform a new implementation study

Key Takeaways

- ✓ **For the ST2 system:** Best returns are realized from retrofitting the highest ridership *Link stations*.
- ✓ **For the ST3 system:** Retrofitting is always more expensive and disruptive than including fare gates in the initial design.

Estimated ROI in 20 years (2043)*

Assumes 85% current fare recovery

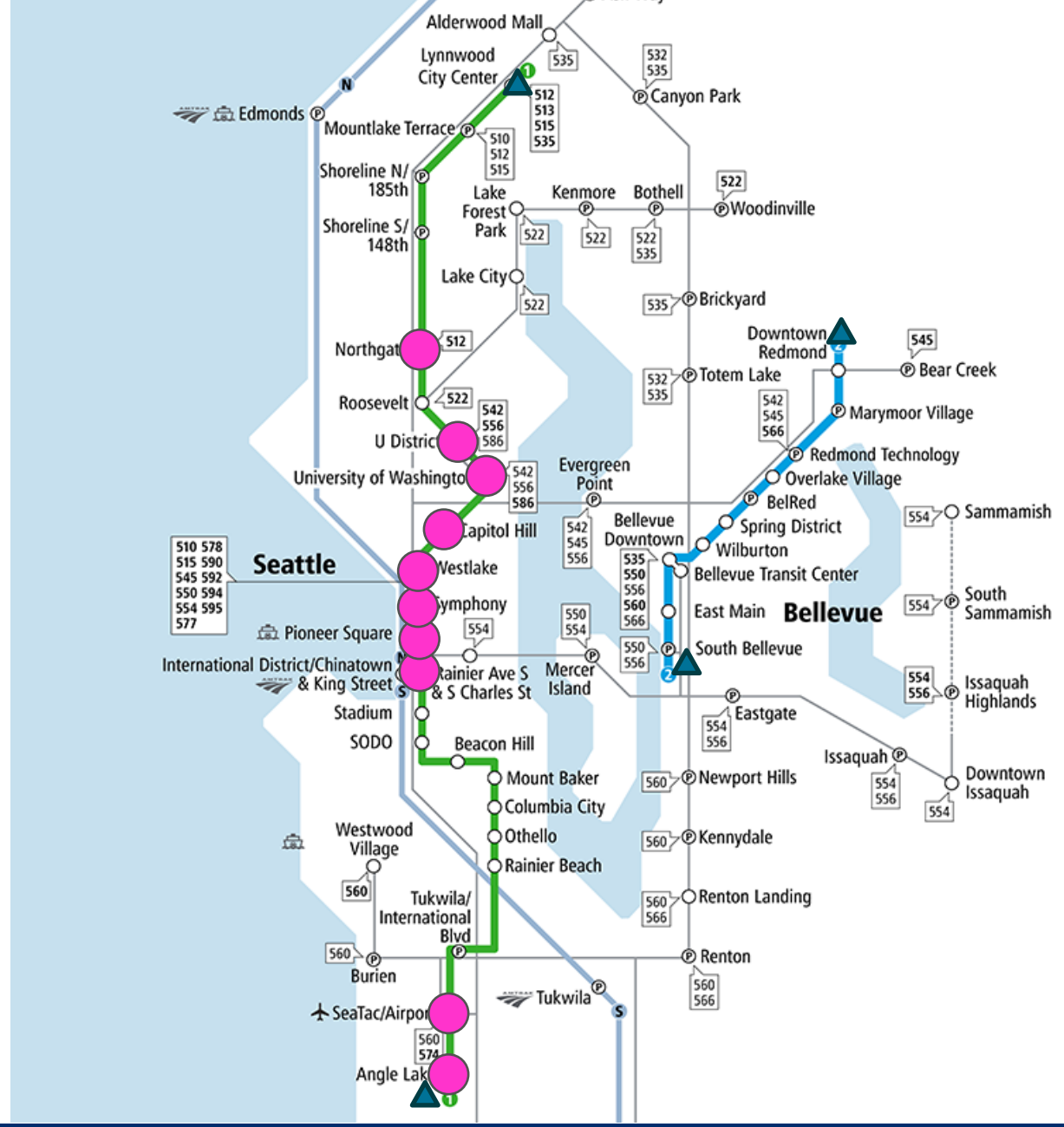


**The study assumed a relatively high installation cost: $4.28M - $6.84M per station*

Implementation Study to identify best opportunities for fare gates system-wide

The study will identify which stations to prioritize for retrofits:

- **~83% of Link passengers are traveling to only 10 different stations** in the AM peak (based on 2024 data) : ●
- The study will also consider other “quick-win” *stations as well as* ***terminus stations*** **:** ▲
- The study will identify how to **provide access control for egress** with partial implementation approach, meaning passengers could tap out to exit



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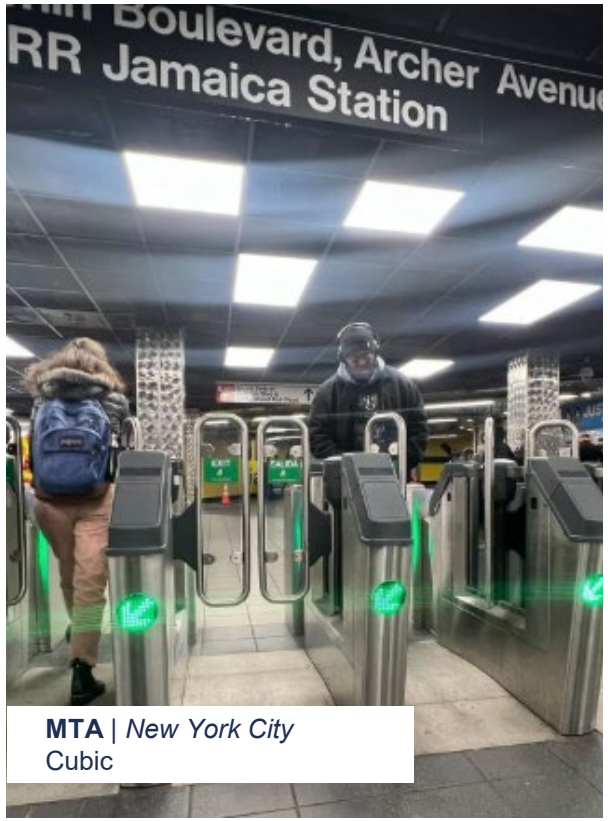
Example: Symphony Station

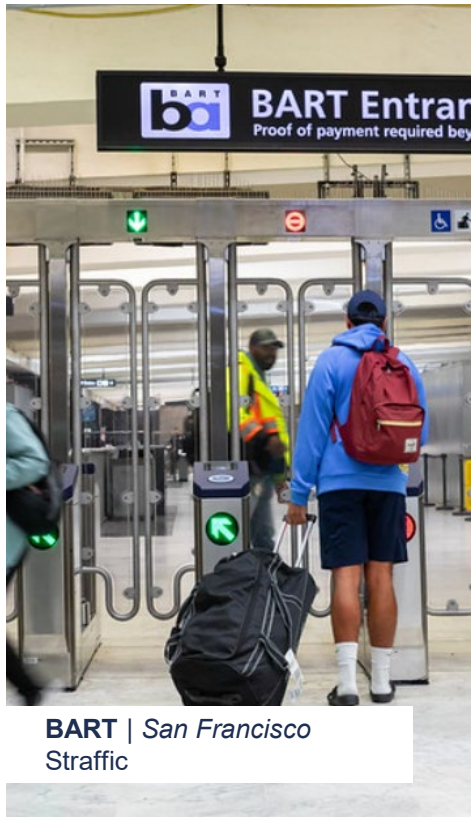
Types of Gates

BART | *San Francisco*
Cubic



MTA | *New York City*
Cubic

SEPTA | *Philadelphia*
Conduent 3D



BART | *San Francisco*
Straffic

MetroLink | *St. Louis*
Hayward

These gates show levels of increasing security, fare recovery, cost, and complexity

Peer discussion has shown us that different types of gates have been used successfully within a single system

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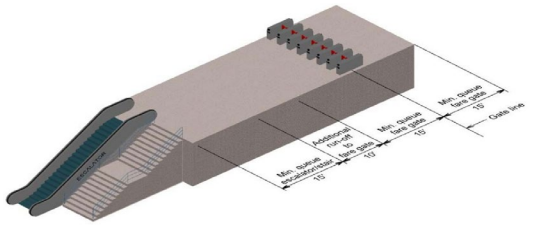
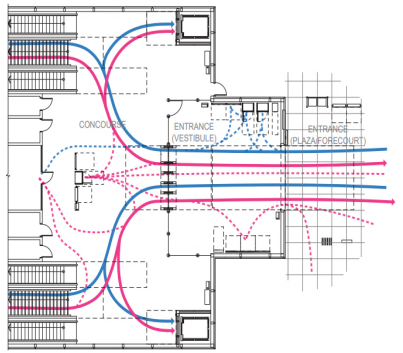
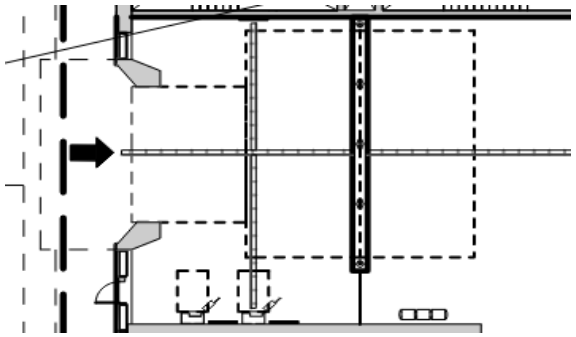
ST3 Opportunities



BART



Translink



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- 15 foot clear on either side of Fare Paid Zone
- Surge zones
- Power + data (for Orca)

Our current standard allows for relatively quick conversion to faregates for ST3 stations in planning.

Collaboration with project teams is necessary for implementation, but easier sooner rather than later.

Front-line staff could be redeployed with Fare Gates

Fare Ambassadors also provide vital passenger-support functions

FARE COMPLIANCE

- **Fare education**
- New inspection methods (platform inspections, mobile validators)
- Inspections & citations at ungated stations

~44%
of FA work hours

PASSENGER SERVICE

- System navigation (incl. accessibility)
- Disruption support
- Social services connections
- Brand ambassadors

~33%
of FA work hours

SAFETY: EYES & EARS

- Facilities & safety reporting
- Misbehavior deterrence
- Informal stakeholder coordination

>5%
of FA work hours (active reporting)

POTENTIAL FUTURE STATE
Fare ambassadors assist fare gate operations while increasing share of other critical front-line support activities (no staffing reduction)

**Remainder of work-hours spent on training, transiting the system, meetings, and office time.*

Motion No. M2025-64 directs staff to develop a proposal for a fare gates pilot program

Determine best locations for fare gates on the existing system, provide rationale, site-specific guidance, and absorb lessons-learned from peers.

Prepare for implementation of a fare gate retrofit pilot, contingent on study findings, including technological considerations, and implementation details.

We will continue to solicit feedback from the Board as we learn more about how fare gates might be incorporated into our system.

Thank you.

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