

*03/05/2026 Rider Experience and  
Operations Committee Meeting Written  
Public Comment Submissions*

Submissions

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## *Paul Sweum*

**Note: The attachment referenced in this comment can be found at the end of this document.**

Please find the attached PDF to include as comments for ST's Rider Experience and Operations Committee meeting taking place tomorrow, March 5, 2006. Thank you kindly.

*"Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle you know nothing about." -Wendy Mass*

Paul R. Sweum,  
Designer & Fabricator

**AZWAglassworks**

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## Betty Lau

Dear Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair Walker, Vice-Chair Prince, and members Balducci, Fain, George, Mosqueda, Parshall, and von Reichbauer,

Here are some ideas for inclusion in the Rider Experience & Operations work plan:

1. How will Sound Transit help the disabled community during FIFA, whether it's reporting incidents or having wheelchairs shoved out of the way or manhandled aboard light rail trains. These horror stories have been shared with Sound Transit staff, but so far, they have declined to say what they plan for safe passage of disabled riders.
2. A lot of feedback has been given regarding how deaf-blind, blind and the sight impaired can tell which direction light rail trains are going from vibrating poles to tactile and braille maps. Please provide periodic reports on progress of these suggestions and others made by the ST Citizens Accessibility Advisory Committee so that members know their feedback is being acted on. And if not, why not. Currently, it's as though the feedback/suggestions from the disabled community are going to Never-Never Land.
3. Finally, with all the apps being developed and the mismatch of the International District Chinatown station name with the neighborhood name, confusion can be eliminated if Sound Transit corrects the station name to align with City Ordinance 119297: Chinatown International District before FIFA. Councilmember Kettle brought it up at the last Council meeting, but Sound Transit has many staff who haven't gotten the message because I continually see internal references to "ID" or "IDC" in ST documents.
  - Especially confusing for those with cognitive/neuro-divergent issues and others with disabilities trying to find their way to or from Chinatown International District
  - 700,000 FIFA visitors will be just as muddled if not more so for those who speak Arabic, Persian, French and other non-English languages.
4. Ultimately, the rider experience will permanently worsen if the N&S of CID stations are built. Hardest hit from this disconnect are the disabled and south region riders trying to go north and Eastside riders trying to get to the airport. It should be in your work plans to do something about it that does not impinge on the national register Chinatown Historic District. The flaws of the split stations outlined by VMS and HNTB reports to Sound Transit cannot be ignored.

Thank you.

Betty

Transit Equity for All

## *Brien Chow*

Public Comment: Sound Transit FIFA 2026 Planning & Station Naming

Dear Rider Experience and Operations Committee Chair Walker, Vice-Chair Prince, and members Balducci, Fain, George, Mosqueda, Parshall, and von Reichbauer,

As Sound Transit presents its FIFA 2026 planning updates today, I urge the Committee to hold the agency accountable for the residents and small businesses of the Chinatown-International District (CID). Large-scale international events bring immense pressure to our transit hubs, and the current plans leave several critical gaps:

### **1. Language Access and Support for CID Small Businesses**

We need concrete details on how Sound Transit will support non-English speaking residents and business owners.

FIFA planning must include multilingual wayfinding and on-the-ground ambassadors who can communicate effectively with the local community to mitigate the impacts of massive tourist surges.

### **2. Safety and Dignity for the Disabled Community**

The disabled community has shared harrowing accounts of "horror stories" on light rail, including wheelchairs being manhandled or shoved aside during peak congestion.

#### **\* The Ask:**

Sound Transit must move beyond acknowledging these incidents and present a formal Safe Passage Plan for disabled riders during FIFA. This should include specific protocols for incident reporting and dedicated boarding assistance during high-volume windows.

### **3. Station Name Alignment (City Ordinance 119297)**

There is a persistent, unnecessary confusion caused by the mismatch between the station name and the neighborhood it serves. Correcting the station name to Chinatown-International District is not just about clarity for tourists using apps; it is about alignment with City Ordinance 119297.

#### **\* Note of Thanks:**

I want to thank Councilmember Kettle for correctly identifying that this change is a straightforward fix. It is time for Sound Transit leadership to act on this "snap" correction before the eyes of the world are on our transit system.

The CID should not be a "pass-through" for FIFA fans at the expense of its residents' safety and identity. I look forward to seeing these concerns addressed in today's presentations.

***Brien Chow***

Co-Founder Transit Equity for All  
FOR MORE INFORMATION... [linktr.ee/TransitEquityforAll](https://linktr.ee/TransitEquityforAll) MFo4th

*Paul Pitkin*

***Note: The attachment referenced in this comment can be found at the end of this document.***

Comments attached and will be shared in person at the meeting.

Thank you.

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March 4, 2026

**SoundTransit Board of Directors**

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**Re: Service disruption element missing in the agency's 2026 Service Plan**

Sound Transit Board members and Staff:

I have reviewed both of your 2026 Service Plan documents – the *2026 Rail Service Plan* and the *2026 Service Plan ST Express Bus Plan Draft* – and I have comments involving a significant matter with potential effect on both documents.

***In short, there is no element in either plan addressing service disruptions.***

After an examination of both documents, I see no mention of how service disruptions are addressed, nor any sort of proposed framework for such events (planned or unplanned), nor any reference to another document under the agency's umbrella. Zero text, zero mention.

Why is public input on advanced service disruption planning necessary?

First, patterns of disruption management for Sound Transit show a need for improvement – indicating solutions aren't meeting success – making public input that much more necessary:

- Disruption notifications are unpredictable and inconsistent... reduced to basic alerts about a “bus bridge” with vague and unhelpful information, coupled with a history of delays and unreliability. Many passengers are not adequately notified of a service disruption plan – assuming they know what to look for (or expect) in the first place.
- Transit system confidence... the agency speaks to its mission of improving resiliency in the face of knowing disruptions are inevitable; part of this is about managing expectations and building confidence in system reliability for passengers – so they're ensured they'll be able to get to their destinations within a reasonable time-frame – by having an opportunity for input on what their “Plan B” is when it's deployed.
- Current system expansion... by Spring 2026, the agency will be operating three Link lines with a combined length of over 62 miles. While Sound Transit reports on improvements to reliability, the need for these critical measures highlights the ongoing challenge of maintaining service, especially during a period of expansion.

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- An opportunity for direct public feedback to advanced planning... referencing a disruption service element in the plan would help to improve and fine-tune the agency's disruption framework. **I'm not referring to one-way input through a survey – we need REAL AND ADVANCED ENGAGEMENT with the agency's disruption element in its service planning.**

So, I ask again – why isn't this included in the document?

Specifics regarding current Sound Transit works aside, transit agencies have a responsibility and requirements to meet in seeking advanced public input on service disruption policy:

- The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) mandates that recipients of Federal funding create opportunities for public participation – especially during advanced planning, in anticipation of significant service changes, or during project development.
- It is typical (and often required) for transit agencies to seek public input on service disruptions... particularly for planned changes, major construction, or significant service alterations. While agencies use public meetings, surveys, and focus groups to gather feedback to ensure community needs are met during disruptions – some proposed framework to this effect should be called out in a service plan – with opportunity for public comment.
- Informing decisions on the backstop framework to address disruptions... public input helps agencies understand how passengers are affected, allowing them to improve mitigation strategies.
- Proactive vs Reactive... while emergency disruptions (during the event itself) may limit consultation, advanced service disruption planning facilitates opportunities for feedback and improvement.

Again, this is about improving the backstop framework of our transit system when the “Plan A” goes down.

The following may not be the best example, but it's the best protracted deficient service element under the agency's umbrella that I can think of – and it should be no secret:

For years – yes, literally years (as in before Covid19) and leading up to today as I write this – there's been an extreme disconnect (in terms of actual distance) between the 550 ST express route and the CID. So far in the 2020s, if someone from Chinatown wants to get to downtown Bellevue – they're literally required to walk 4 blocks to reach the closest 550 stop at S Washington St & 2nd Ave Extension before the route maintains its course south on 4th Ave to hit the freeway entrance at Edgar Martinez Drive and cross the I-90 bridge – since a stop at S Jackson St & 2nd Ave Extension is no longer provided. ***As far as I can tell, this has been going on for over half a decade, which is absolutely unacceptable.***

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Construction issues/excuses (announced, perceived or real) don't matter, and it doesn't matter that the opening of the Link 2 Line is incoming – this situation has severely hindered access to Bellevue and the Eastside for disabled folks and those in the CID – many of whom are elderly and with limited mobility. The agency should be fully aware of all these variables beyond any shadow of a doubt. Granted, savvy passengers may know to catch the 554 along Jackson St in the CID, and transfer onto the 550 on Mercer Island – but that sort of awareness is (and should be) the exception – and such bus transferring gymnastics shouldn't be necessary in the first place, as they represent an extreme solution to a system's accessibility problem and lack of awareness (or unwillingness) to resolve it in the first place. I fail to understand how the agency came up short on resolving this, and for such an extreme duration of time.

This is where an opportunity for public feedback – a real, meaningful policy engagement on a disruption element in the agency's service plan – should have taken place. Had there been such an opportunity for solutions to address this problem (assuming this disconnect involving the 550 ST express route had been adequately acknowledged in the first place) perhaps the agency could have arrived at a better fix for the issue – or at least there could have been a meaningful conversation about it.

Instead, the matter has literally rolled through the current decade ignored, with passengers left scratching their heads. Moreover, they've been left with no meaningful opportunity for feedback in a formal, interactive policy development process in which their voices are heard.

***This is not only unacceptable, it represents negligence and a failure to act.***

This is about how to improve. *In my experience, the best ideas and solutions aren't with staff and decision-makers – they come from the back of the room.* If there's no disruption element in a service plan to comment on, how does the public – a.k.a. the taxpayers – help to inform and improve the transit agency it funds?

In conclusion, I'm confused on why disruption planning wouldn't be shared with the public in a document with "service plan" in its title. While much of this is about transparency and managing expectations, it's also about assisting a sector of the transit agency that's broadly recognized as needing to maintain a focus on continued service improvement.

A section on disruptions in a service plan doesn't necessarily need to be protracted and fleshed out with extensive nitty-gritty details – but it should at the very least be informative for transit staff in terms of improving disruption execution in deployment of its backup plans, and informative to the public through the opportunity for feedback and by laying out a roadmap of expectations.

As a transit advocate, I'm an ardent supporter of this agency – in its goals and objectives, and as an everyday citizen I've gone to bat for it on many occasions – including with the

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Federal government, in Olympia, and in the Ruth Fisher Boardroom through written and oral comment. There's a long list of things the agency has done right, and many goals the agency leadership and staff have accomplished through resilience, determination and hard work – and in the face of seemingly impossible headwinds. However, out of that support, sometimes moments emerge where I feel a need to speak up and turn the screws a bit to challenge aspects along the way, as I've done at times in the past.

That said, we can all do better by working together on addressing improvements for Sound Transit where it's needed... and today, I'm asking the Board to direct staff to call out a service disruption element in future proposed drafts of the advanced planning for your service plans – with an opportunity for public comment on such content – and in this letter I've listed my reasons why, with examples.

When you float ideas – and give stakeholders an opportunity to poke holes in them – the result is a better, stronger product emerging on the other end.

As always, thank you for your time in reading, listening and considering.

Respectfully and with gratitude,

*Paul R. Sweum*

**Paul R. Sweum**

Cc: Others TBD

Good afternoon, Board members,

I'm Paul Pitkin, Director of Fund Development for the Rainier Valley Community Development Fund. We are a certified Community Development Financial Institution focused on advancing equitable economic opportunity.

Our organization exists because of transit construction. When light rail came through the Rainier Valley, our community partnered with Sound Transit and the City of Seattle to create a solution — one that would help small businesses survive disruption and remain part of the neighborhood's future. That continues to be our purpose: ensuring that infrastructure investment does not unintentionally weaken the communities it is meant to serve.

Over the past year, we've appreciated ongoing dialogue with Board Members as well as Sound Transit staff under Dow Constantine's leadership. We've also recently begun working with Sound Transit to bring technical assistance to businesses seeking Sound Transit contracts and are working with Sound Transit's Office of Civil Rights to continue dialogue with communities previously affected by light rail construction.

On February 18th, we brought together West Seattle business owners, community advocates, elected officials, and Sound Transit staff at the Washington State Black Legacy Institute. I want to thank Board Member Teresa Mosqueda and Councilmember Rob Saka for being present and engaged in that discussion. We welcome broader Board participation moving forward.

What we heard was straightforward. Community members want a seat at the table to help safeguard West Seattle's cultural character during this period of change.

We believe growth and community preservation are not competing goals. With intentional partnership, they can reinforce each other. The Rainier Valley Community Development Fund is excited to continue to work alongside Sound Transit to ensure inclusive, lasting prosperity for the communities we both serve.

Thank you for your time,

Paul Pitkin

Director of Fund Development

Rainier Valley Community Development Fund