

## Executive Summary:

The Service Implementation Plan (SIP) is Sound Transit's annual update on its express bus, commuter rail and light rail services. The SIP describes service additions and revisions planned for the upcoming budget year, together with preliminary proposals and financial estimates for the subsequent five-year period. It also includes a detailed report on the status of each bus and rail route and performance objectives for the coming year, including ridership and productivity targets.

**The Draft 2009 SIP was developed assuming no Sound Transit 2 ("ST2") program.** However, the service changes proposed in the SIP provide the baseline for future ST2 planning and implementation. Sound Transit Board action on the Draft SIP is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 11, 2008. With voter approval of ST2, funding for the first phase of ST2 express bus improvements will be included in a separate provisional amendment to the agency budget. In early 2009, staff will develop an updated 2009 SIP that incorporates specific ST2 express bus improvements, and will submit the update to the Board for their consideration in the April/May 2009 timeframe.

The most significant component of the Draft 2009 SIP is the opening of Central Link light rail, the largest single expansion of transit service in the region's history. Following almost six years of design, construction and testing, the successful launch of Link is a major goal for the agency in 2009. Other elements of the Draft 2009 SIP include proposed changes to ST Express bus routes in the Eastgate area and the implementation of a new Sounder connector bus route serving Auburn Station.

### ST Express Bus

During 2008, express bus service improvements were implemented to support two new park-and-ride facilities, Lakewood Station and South Everett Park-and-Ride. Additional buses delivered during the year increased the total fleet from 228 to 240 vehicles. In Pierce County, seven older 42-seat buses were replaced by new 57-seat models. Despite these improvements, unprecedented demand for transit service resulted in peak period overcrowding on several ST Express routes. In many cases, Sound Transit's service standards for passenger loading are exceeded, with many customers standing for 20 minutes or more. A key challenge for 2009 is addressing overcrowding on ST Express routes. Schedule efficiencies, optimizing bus assignments, sharing resources with Sound Transit's partner transit agencies and promoting ridership during off-peak times are some of the approaches that will be used to meet this challenge.

In East King County, changes to Eastgate-area routes are proposed to speed service, improve efficiency and provide more frequent midday service to the new Issaquah Transit Center. **Route 554 Issaquah-Seattle, Route 555 Issaquah-Northgate and Route 556 Issaquah-U District-Northgate** would be revised speed service. Travel time savings from this change would permit increased midday service on **Route 554** to Issaquah with no increase in cost.

Since most Sounder park-and-rides are at capacity, Sound Transit staff has continued to work closely with partner agencies to expand connections between buses and Sounder trains whenever possible. An example of this is the **Route 497 Lakeland Hills Shuttle**, a new Pierce Transit connector bus route between Auburn's Lakeland Hills neighborhood and Auburn Station planned to begin operation in February 2009. A true partnership, this route would provide guaranteed connections to and from Sounder trains and would be jointly funded by the City of Auburn,

Sound Transit and Pierce Transit during its first year of service. The partnership agreement will be submitted to the Sound Transit Board in a separate action. Sound Transit's share of the service funding is estimated to be approximately \$117,000.

Chapter 1 provides a list of proposed 2009 bus service changes requiring Sound Transit Board approval. A complete description of all ST Express bus routes and proposed bus service changes is included in Chapter 2.

## **Sounder Commuter Rail**

Ridership on Sounder commuter trains continued to build during 2008, significantly improving productivity and cost efficiency performance measures. The new Mukilteo Station opened on the **north line** (Everett-Seattle) on May 31, and a fourth round trip train was successfully implemented between Everett and Seattle in September. September also saw the launch of a seventh and eighth round trip on the **south line** (Tacoma-Seattle), coinciding with completion of the Tacoma-Seattle track and signal improvement project. Board approval of the 2008 SIP authorized the start-up of a ninth round trip train, but implementation was delayed by the need to expand yard storage space in Tacoma. The ninth round trip is now planned for June 2009, and the entire fleet of Sounder cars and locomotives will be in service at that time. Other service changes planned for 2009 will focus on schedule refinement and optimizing connections with ferries on the north line. **Route 599 Lakewood-Tacoma Dome**, a temporary bus route implemented in September 2008 to provide guaranteed connections with south line trains at Tacoma, will continue as a way of building ridership for the planned extension of Sounder service to Lakewood. This service is funded from the ST Express budget.

A complete description of Sounder service changes for 2009 is included in Chapter 2.

## **Tacoma Link**

In February 2008, early morning and Sunday service was reduced on Tacoma Link to fund extended weeknight service. Light rail service now operates until 10 p.m. six nights a week. At first, Sunday boardings dropped significantly, and the initial night ridership was modest. More recent data shows that there has been an overall increase in ridership. More details on the results of the 2008 change are included in the Tacoma Link section of Chapter 2. No service changes are proposed for 2009.

## **Central Link**

Under construction since 2003, **Link** will open for passenger service in two phases. In mid-2009, service will begin operating between Westlake Station and Tukwila International Blvd. Station, about 1.7 miles north of Sea-Tac Airport. By the end of the year, light rail service will extend to the SeaTac/Airport Station. This station will be connected to the airport terminal via an overhead pedestrian bridge and walkway through the airport garage. The station is designed and situated to permit future extensions of light rail service farther south.

Before the extension to Sea-Tac opens, a temporary bus shuttle will transport light rail passengers to and from the airport. Once trains are running to the airport, the shuttle will be discontinued. The shuttle will operate under a purchased transportation service contract that will be presented to the Sound Transit Board as a separate motion.

The Link opening represents a huge increase in transit capacity in the corridor. Each two-car train can carry as many as 400 passengers seated and standing, and frequent service will minimize wait time at stations. Separated right-of-way and signals that provide priority over other traffic at

intersections will provide fast, dependable service all day and in all kinds of weather. Changes to King County Metro routes planned in coordination with the start-up of Link service are expected to reduce overcrowding and provide new cross-town bus connections that otherwise would not be possible. Ridership on the initial Westlake-Tukwila segment is projected at about 15,900 weekday boardings, increasing to about 26,000 boardings in 2010 following the opening of Airport Link and the full implementation of connecting bus service.

Chapter 2 includes proposed initial service levels for Link, including headways by time of day and hours of service. Board approval of the 2009 SIP would authorize these service levels to be implemented, consistent with the operations plan and costs described in Sound Transit's Proposed 2009 Budget.

### **Preliminary Service Plans for 2010 - 2014**

In addition to specific 2009 service proposals for Board consideration, the SIP describes preliminary 2010-2014 service plans. These out year plans were developed assuming no Sound Transit 2 (ST2) program, and implementation is driven by completion of the final *Sound Move* capital projects, planned changes to partner agency service and projected operations and maintenance funding available in each subarea. Service levels, ridership and fare revenue estimates shown in the SIP for 2010-2014 are used to develop the agency's Long-Range Financial Plan. Here is a preliminary summary of service proposals during this time period:

#### **2010**

- Implement non-stop express bus service between Federal Way and downtown Seattle during off-peak hours, replacing King County Metro Route 194 service.
- Modify Lakewood-SeaTac bus route (574) to connect with Link at SeaTac/Airport Station and increase service levels to offset the deletion of King County Metro Route 194 service between Federal Way and the airport.

#### **2011**

- Everett-Seattle (510) and Ash Way-Seattle (511) bus routes modified to serve the new Mountlake Terrace Freeway Station and park-and-ride garage.
- Revise West Seattle-Bellevue route (560) to avoid duplication with King County Metro's planned West Seattle "Rapid Ride" service.

#### **2012**

- Sounder commuter rail service extended from Tacoma Dome Station to South Tacoma and Lakewood; temporary bus routes 593 and 599 discontinued.

#### **2013**

- Coordinated improvements to East King County service with the start-up of King County Metro's Bellevue-Redmond "Rapid Ride," which could include enhanced service on ST Express Route 550 (Bellevue-Seattle).

Additional details on preliminary "out year" plans are included in Chapter 3.

## **Accessible Services**

With the commencement of Central Link service in 2009, Sound Transit will have a paratransit obligation under provisions of Federal regulations. This service, operated for Sound Transit under contract with King County Metro, will provide rides to eligible persons with disabilities within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of the Central Link alignment.

Sound Transit will continue to plan and implement actions and programs under *United We Ride in Puget Sound*, the Regional Special Needs Transportation Plan. The complete Plan is available at: <http://www.soundtransit.org/x1873.xml> or by e-mailing [accessibility@soundtransit.org](mailto:accessibility@soundtransit.org).

Sound Transit received New Freedom Program grants from the Puget Sound Regional Council to implement two projects from the Plan. The Volunteer Transportation Programs and the Bus Buddy/Travel Ambassador Programs will continue to be funded through December 2009. At that time the funding will be assumed by local special needs transportation coalitions.

Sound Transit will complete testing and report to Congress on the Remote Audible Infrared Signage program, which received an FTA grant of \$1.98 million.

## **Quick Guide to the 2009 SIP:**

*Chapter 1* summarizes the service changes proposed for implementation in 2009 that require Sound Transit Board action.

*Chapter 2* includes a description and performance summary of Sounder, Link and each ST Express route, with detailed background information for each 2009 SIP service change.

*Chapter 3* describes preliminary plans for 2010-2014.

*Chapter 4* includes estimates of ridership and fare revenue for all three transit modes through 2014, and a description of the modeling and assumptions used to develop the estimates.