



Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting February 13, 2025

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:31 p.m. by Committee Chair Balducci and was available for viewing in person and online.

The meeting was recorded and can be found at <https://www.soundtransit.org/get-to-know-us/board-directors/meeting-videos>.

Roll call of members

Chair	Vice Chair
(P) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor

Board Members	
(P) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(P) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor
(P) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
(P) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor	(P) Dan Strauss, Seattle Councilmember

Alejandro Monzon, Board Relations Specialist, announced that a quorum of the System Expansion Committee was present at roll call.

Report of the Chair

Committee Membership Update

Chair Balducci noted that the Pierce County Council recently confirmed the appointment of Fircrest Councilmember Hunter George to the Sound Transit Board, replacing Board member Jim Kastama. She Thanked Board member Kastama for his service to Sound Transit and noted that the System Expansion Committee’s official membership is now 8 members, until the Board acts regarding Committee assignments.

CEO Report

Interim Chief Executive Officer Goran Sparrman provided the report.

Sounder Service Disruption Update – Noting that this is more of an operational update, CEO Sparrman informed the Committee that due to a maintenance tracking issue by Amtrak, 16 passenger cars were out of compliance with Federal Railroad Administration regulations. Those cars, while not posing a safety risk to the public, were required to be pulled from service. Sound Transit, Amtrak, BNSF, and WSDOT staff are meeting multiple times a day to manage this issue. Until the cars can be brought back into compliance, Sounder will run reduced service with reduced cars.

To keep up with information, CEO Sparrman encouraged riders to sign up for Rider Alerts.

Downtown Redmond Link Extension Opening Date – CEO Sparrman reported that the Downtown Redmond Link Extension project will open for revenue service on May 10, 2025. He thanked Board

member Somers, Balducci, Birney, and Constantine for attending the announcement event. The new extension will expand the current 2 Line from 6.5 to 10 miles. He noted that additional information on the festivities and celebrations will be forthcoming.

East Link Extension I-90 Update – CEO Sparrman shared that system integration work has been under way through the winter and recent work has focused on the connection to the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel stations and has necessitated reduced weekend service and station closures. He reminded the Committee and public that another two partial closures were planned in the coming weeks.

Federal Way Link Extension – The Federal Way Link Extension is preparing to open the new bus loop at Federal Way Downtown Station on March 29, 2025. This will provide a new location to connect King County Metro, Pierce Transit, and Sound Transit regional bus services and will integrate for seamless transfers to the elevated light rail station.

Welcome new Capital Delivery Executive Directors – CEO Sparrman introduced John Martin and Bernadette McDermott, who will both serve as Executive Directors reporting to Deputy CEO Terri Mestas. John Martin will oversee Sounder capital and State of Good Repair project. Bernadette McDermott will lead the Capital Delivery Center of Excellence, which houses several teams that play supporting roles across the portfolio of expansion projects, including Real Property, Project Development, Permitting, and others.

Capital Program Reporting – CEO Sparrman shared that the Capital Delivery Department is preparing to roll-out a new, monthly progress report in the second quarter of this year. Last summer, the agency paused the previous version of the report to ensure future reporting is standardized and aligned with industry best practices. To cover the gap, an initial report will also be issued.

Construction costs and national market trends presentation – The agency plans to bring Ken Simonson, Chief Economist from the Associated General Contractors of America, to provide a Construction Costs and National Market Trends presentation to the System Expansion Committee in the coming months, potentially as soon as the March meeting.

Board member Birney shared her excitement for the Downtown Redmond Link opening.

Chair Balducci stated her contentment with the restarting of regular reporting to the Committee. She also asked if the reporting that is sent to FTA could also be shared with the Committee. CEO Sparrman concurred with providing information to the Committee and is hopeful that the new reporting will meet the need of Board members and strike a balance between volume and clarity of the information. Ms. Mestas stated that she is also hopeful that the new reporting will be more digestible and looks forward to feedback. She also committed to circling back on sharing the FTA reporting.

Public comment

Chair Balducci announced that public comment would be accepted via email to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted verbally.

Written public comments:

Zach Thomas
Tito Kohout
Marilyn Kennell
Jan Roberts
Gale Sketchley
Martin Westerman

Brien Chow
Betty Lau
Matt Roewe
Bill Hirt
John Niles

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

Betty Lau

Brien Chow
Kathleen Barry Johnson
Ra-ta
Erin Rubin

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

Joe Kunzler

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: January 9, 2025 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Board member Birney, seconded by Board member Backus, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the January 9, 2025 System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

For Recommendation to the Board

Resolution No. R2025-03: Authorizing the chief executive officer to acquire certain real property interests, contingent on receipt of any necessary federal approvals, including acquisition by condemnation to the extent authorized by law, and to reimburse eligible relocation and reestablishment expenses incurred by affected owners and tenants as necessary for the West Seattle Link Extension project.

Clint Dameron, Acting Real Property Director, and Rhonda Thomsen, Senior Real Property Project Manager, gave the staff presentation.

Board member Birney asked if staff have an image of the properties. Mr. Dameron asked staff to pull up the prepared image.

Chair Balducci asked for some information into the process, standards, and approvals needed for early acquisitions, given that this is one of the first packages of properties for the West Seattle Link Extension. Mr. Dameron responded that the guidance for Early Acquisitions is set out by the Federal Transit Administration, with cost-savings not being a justification. He noted that two of the possible routes are for hardship, as was the case with a recent single-family home acquisition, or protective acquisition, which preempts planned development of a needed parcel. Ms. Thomsen responded that staff intends to pursue the acquisition of the parcels following the issuance of the Record of Decision (ROD), expected later this month. Should the ROD be delayed, staff will pursue the acquisitions under the corridor preservation categorical exclusion.

Chair Balducci asked if the ROD is needed for all early acquisition paths or just specific ones. Jason Hampton, High-Capacity Transit Development Manager, responded that issuance of the ROD would negate the need to request early acquisition from the FTA and Sound Transit would be able to move forward on the acquisition as normal.

Board member Birney asked what immediate impacts can be expected by the local community, given that construction is not expected to begin for some time. Mr. Dameron responded that relocations are lengthy, and the community shouldn't expect to see changes within the next year. Board member Birney asked if it is possible that Sound Transit could be the landlords of the current tenants. Ms. Thomsen responded that is a possibility as the acquisition and relocation work occur contemporaneously.

Chair Balducci encouraged staff to work with owners and tenants to provide assistance that best supports local businesses undergoing relocation. From her perspective, landowners have many more rights than tenants in these circumstances.

Board member Strauss provided insight into the surrounding community and encouraged staff to mitigate the balance between Sound Transit's needs and the community. Chair Balducci thanked Board member Strauss for his local knowledge on zoning potentials in the area.

Resolution No. R2025-03 was moved by Board member Birney and seconded by Board member Strauss.

Chair Balducci called for a roll call vote on Resolution No. R2025-03.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Nays</u>
Nancy Backus	Kim Roscoe
Angela Birney	Dave Somers
Cassie Franklin	Dan Strauss
Bruce Harrell	Claudia Balducci

It was carried by the unanimous vote of the 8 Committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-03 be approved as presented.

Resolution No. R2025-04: Authorizing the chief executive officer to acquire certain real property interests, contingent upon receipt of any federal approvals necessary for early acquisition, including acquisition by condemnation to the extent authorized by law, and to reimburse eligible relocation and reestablishment expenses incurred by affected owners and tenants as necessary for the Ballard Link Extension project.

Clint Dameron, Acting Real Property Director, gave the staff presentation.

Boardmember Strauss encouraged staff to look into options to keep the parcel activated to avoid leaving the property derelict until construction activity. He also looks forward the area being further activated once the Ballard Link Extension is built.

Resolution No. R2025-04 was moved by Board member Strauss and seconded by Board member Birney.

Chair Balducci called for a roll call vote on Resolution No. R2025-04.

<u>Ayes</u>	<u>Nays</u>
Nancy Backus	Kim Roscoe
Angela Birney	Dave Somers
Cassie Franklin	Dan Strauss
Bruce Harrell	Claudia Balducci

It was carried by the unanimous vote of the 8 Committee members present that Resolution No. R2025-04 be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2025-09: Authorizing the chief executive officer to increase certain Downtown Redmond Link Extension contract and/or agreement amounts as necessary, for a total authorized cumulative increase not to exceed \$25,000,000, all within the Downtown Redmond Link Extension approved baseline budget.

Tony Raben, Executive Project Director, and Sean Duffett, Principal Construction Manager, gave the staff presentation.

Chair Balducci offered her appreciation and congratulations to the team for their work on the project.

Board member Birney thanked the team for recapping the opportunities and challenges the project successfully navigated to deliver the project. She also thanked them for the earlier planning effort that allowed the Downtown Redmond Link Extension to follow closely behind the ST2 East Link Extension project. She also thanked the staff for their collaboration with city staff.

Vice Chair Roscoe asked if staff have any expectations, based on previous openings, to return to the Board for additional contract or budget actions. Mr. Raben stated that he has no current assumptions that any necessary follow-on work will require future Board action, should this action be approved by the Board.

Chair Balducci followed-up by noting it appears that the project will come in under budget. Mr. Raben stated that is the expectation, although there are some additional contracts, expected to be with the CEO's authority to execute, that will commit more project funds beyond this action. He estimated the final project cost to be about \$300 million under the baseline budget.

Board member Strauss expressed his excitement for the extension opening and shared his family's history in Redmond. He noted the extensive development of the area and the key successes of further connecting the city to the wider region.

Chair Balducci also shared that future action by the King County Council may further bolster the connections to Marymoor Park. She asked if there could be discussions about updating the dog policy due to the proximity of the Marymoor Park to the new station.

Motion No. M2025-09 was moved by Board member Birney and seconded by Board member Strauss.

Chair Balducci called for a roll call vote on Motion No. M2025-09.

Ayes

Nancy Backus
Angela Birney
Cassie Franklin
Bruce Harrell

Nays

Kim Roscoe
Dave Somers
Dan Strauss
Claudia Balducci

It was carried by the unanimous vote of the 8 Committee members present that Motion No. M2025-09 be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2025-10: Authorizing the chief executive officer to increase certain Federal Way Link Extension contract and/or agreement amounts as necessary, for a total authorized cumulative increase not to exceed \$60,000,000, all within the Federal Way Link Extension approved baseline budget.

Linneth Riley-Hall, Executive Project Director, and Anna Bonjukian, Senior Project Manager, gave the staff presentation.

Board member Birney highlighted the team's management to keep the project within the baseline budget, given the significant hurdles with Structure C.

Vice Chair Roscoe asked to confirm if the current projected revenue service date for the Federal Way Link Extension is about year away. Ms. Riley-Hall confirmed that. Vice Chair Roscoe asked if there was a reasoning behind the difference in timing, related to revenue service dates, between the two projects. Ms. Riley-Hall noted that the Federal Way Link Extension opted to be more proactive with its request, when compared to cumulative contingency increases for previous projects.

Board member Backus thanked the team for their efforts to keep the project moving despite complications at Structure C. She shared her excitement to have a closer access point to the Link system.

Board member Strauss added his thanks to the project team.

Motion No. M2025-10 was moved by Board member Backus and seconded by Board member Birney.

Chair Balducci called for a roll call vote on Motion No. M2025-10.

Ayes

Nancy Backus
Angela Birney
Cassie Franklin
Bruce Harrell

Nays

Kim Roscoe
Dave Somers
Dan Strauss
Claudia Balducci

It was carried by the unanimous vote of the 8 Committee members present that Motion No. M2025-10 be approved as presented.

Reports to the Committee

Capital Delivery Programmatic and Project-level Work Plan update

Deputy CEO Terri Mestas began the presentation by sharing that today's presentation will provide an update on the committee on programmatic cost-savings opportunities, as well as zoom in on project-specific opportunities for the West Seattle Link Extension. She shared that there are currently 475+ opportunities being examined. She was joined by Brad Owen, Executive Director over the West Seattle Link Extension (WSLE) and Ballard Link Extension (BLE). Ms. Mestas reminded the committee of Motion No. M2024-59, which directed staff to develop a workplan on the programmatic, financial and project level measures and opportunities to improve the agency's financial position for the capital program.

She began by showing a snapshot of the dashboard that is used to track, monitor, and report on the many cost-savings opportunities being pursued. She added that project staff have been trained on the tools, processes, and target savings to ensure consistent effort across projects.

To-date, 94 programmatic opportunities have been identified for examination, with the bulk of the opportunities falling into the Design phase, split between indirect costs and design optimization. In the Preconstruction phase, she highlighted opportunities to optimize real property acquisitions and maximize competition through strategic contract packaging. In the Construction phase, opportunities related to construction efficiencies make-up about 8% of the total opportunities.

Chair Balducci asked if the recent tariffs levied would contribute to construction costs. Ms. Mestas responded that they are still waiting to see the response, but that Ken Simonson from AGC may be able to share some information when he provides his Market Trends and Construction Costs presentation in the next few months. In the past, Ms. Mestas noted that it took about 12 months for the domestic market to stabilize and meet the demand for materials.

Ms. Mestas walked the committee through the process that her team is using to evaluate the opportunities. While most of the opportunities are still early in the process, 19% of the 94 cost-savings opportunities are currently ranked as high benefit. Some opportunities are closed since they were deemed insufficient or duplicated. Ms. Mestas showed a partial list of the 94 programmatic opportunities and stated that the presentation will cover a sample of those.

Beginning with Station Optimization, Ms. Mestas noted that the stations make up roughly 15% of construction costs, but the current estimates are about 18% for WSLE. The program has developed seven station prototypes, aiming to account for all conditions along ST3 alignments. She hopes to share more information on the cost-savings estimates from that work in the Q2 update.

Ms. Mestas stated that staff hope to return to the Board with additional updates to the Delegated Authority Policy, to build upon the work of pushing decision-making to the appropriate levels. She noted a desire to ensure the Board has the information at the project-level to exercise oversight without needing to delve into as many contracts.

Looking toward the end of a project, Ms. Mestas described an effort to streamline commissioning and handover to reduce the length of the pre-revenue phase. She highlighted potential options to use simulators to train operators.

Also in development is the implementation of an Owner Controlled Insurance Program (OCIP), which would cover General Liability including builder risk, pollution liability and professional liability. The agency has used OCIP in previous projects, but the approach would be to standardize its implementation. The target savings associated with implementing OCIP is \$25-35 million. An additional benefit of this program would be to attract a greater number of subcontractors to the projects. Chair Balducci asked if this would be money the agency invests upfront to hopefully realize cost savings through the project's construction work. Ms. Mestas stated that is the case, and that most contractors include a premium in bids to cover insurance costs.

Board member Strauss asked if the cost-savings figures were cumulative. Ms. Mestas confirmed they are cumulative.

Pivoting to focusing on project-specific opportunities, Ms. Mestas shared that there are 385 project opportunities under development across all projects in the ST3 portfolio. Of these opportunities, more than 90% are tracked within the Design Phase, split between indirect costs and design optimization. Less than 1% of the opportunities are related to right-of-way activities and market conditions, each. And 6% fall within seeking construction efficiencies. These project-level opportunities follow the same evaluation process as the programmatic opportunities, and 10% of the current cost-savings measures are ranked as high benefit. She handed the presentation over to Mr. Owen to review three WSLE-specific opportunities that amount to a target savings of \$290 million.

Mr. Owen noted that as the agency expects the Record of Decision for WSLE to be issued this month, the project is about to fully enter into the Design phase, beginning with design validation. He noted that staff expect to bring an action to the Board to approve a contract for design services to dive into design optimization work to confirm value engineering opportunities.

Discussing aerial guideway optimization opportunities, the project intends to look into converting the viaduct and Duwamish River crossing from a cast-in-place to pre-cast delivery model. This would allow for the casting to be done in a safer, controlled environment, without impacting the progress of the rest of the alignment. He added that there is an additional benefit of less community impact with pre-cast pieces. Currently, it appears that this opportunity could save about 9 months of construction time and \$60-70 million.

Still focusing on the viaduct and Duwamish crossing, Mr. Owen pivoted to optimizing the foundations and ground improvements. On top of aiming to reduce the size of the spans, he noted that additional information is needed to understand the ground conditions, and that a design contractor, once on board, will be able to help collect that data to inform potential improvements. Reducing the size of the foundations cuts back on the material needed to construct the project and could help shift place of some of the spans into less sensitive right-of-way. Total savings is currently targeted at \$100-130 million.

Speaking to station optimization at SODO, Mr. Owen explained that part of the feasibility assessment framework is to consult with internal agency partners in operations. While aiming to provide the service expected by riders, Mr. Owen shared an effort to reduce station sizes and footprints. This could have significant schedule savings and provide a safety construction environment. In the SODO area, the WSLE projects also wants to mitigate impacts to the Lander and Holgate overpass bridges. This is also paired with potentially moving the SODO station foundations from a deep foundation to a shallow foundation, assuming the station size can be reduced. The two opportunities have a combined target savings between \$100 - \$165 million.

To provide an example from another project, Mr. Owen spoke to the Operations and Maintenance Facility South (OMFS) project team's work to reduce wetland impacts. By modifying the layout and positioning of the OMFS on the selected site, staff were able to realize about \$22 million dollars in savings and reduce impacts to wetlands.

Ms. Mestas closed the presentation by sharing that she intends to return in Q2 with more details on the programmatic opportunities and financial information. Additional quarterly updates will occur in the Summer and Fall.

Chair Balducci opened the floor of questions, noting that this is just the first presentation to the Committee to keep them apprised of the cost-savings workplan efforts.

Board member Birney expressed support for the efficiencies work and also highlighted ensuring that there is space for local community input into the projects. Ms. Mestas responded that both internal and external collaboration will still ensure that the efficiencies meet operational needs and community character. Board member Birney stated her support for a balanced approach to pursuing these efforts.

Chair Balducci shared that there is also a larger financial conversation to be had under the leadership of the Executive Committee, pertaining the wholistic financial situation of the agency, beyond just the System Expansion program.

Presentation on feedback from the Ballard Link Extension Draft EIS scoping period

Sandra Fann, Ballard Link Extension Project Director, began the presentation and introduced Stephen Mak and Emily Yasukochi, High-Capacity Transit Development Managers, will be supporting this presentation. She noted that the presentation will cover feedback from the National Environmental Policy Action (NEPA) scoping period for BLE. No action by the committee is being requested, and the feedback does not indicate a need to add any new alternatives to the BLE Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Ms. Fann briefly summarized recent project work related to the new NEPA DEIS.

Ms. Fann explained that the BLE project is currently in environmental review and expects to complete that work in 2026. Staff are aiming to publish the BLE DEIS later this year, which will be followed by another formal comment period and opportunity for the Board to confirm or modify the preferred alternative. In 2026, the Final EIS is expected to be published, and the Board will be asked to select the project to be built.

The current BLE DEIS will build upon the 2022 West Seattle and Ballard Link Extension DEIS with analysis of new alternatives and project refinements. The NEPA scoping period is the first step in the process. Ms. Fann emphasized that the work is not being redone from scratch, as comments received during from previous project milestones and comment periods will be carried forward. Ms. Fann summarized the engagement performed during the scoping period from October 24 – December 9, 2024. A total of 166 scoping comments were received. Ms. Fann briefly reminded the committee of the current preferred alternative and other alternatives currently under review in the DEIS. Mr. Mak will cover the comments related to the CID/SODO and Downtown segments, while Ms. Yasukochi will speak to feedback received for the South Interbay and Interbay/Ballard segments. Corridor-side feedback included support for regional transit and building the project as quickly as possible, support for tunnel alignments where possible, interest in providing effective multimodal access and transit-oriented development, and concerns related to property acquisitions and construction impacts. There was also explicit interest in an extended 90-day public comment period when the DEIS is published.

In the CID/SODO segment, Mr. Mak shared that there is interest in the current CID preferred alternative station at S Dearborn Street, as well as interest in opportunities to improve accessibility and connectivity. There is also interest in siting the station at 4th Avenue to provide better access to both Sounder and the current 1 Line International District/Chinatown Station. Comments also indicated interest in removing the 5th Avenue alternatives from consideration due to impacts on the CID community. Comments also generally conveyed interest in continued study of the social and economic impacts to the area and raised concerns about displacement and neighborhood impacts during construction.

In the Downtown segment, some comments expressed concern with the current preferred alternative about potential impacts to the Washington State Department of Corrections reentry center, while other

comments expressed support for the Midtown Station 5th Avenue alternative. General comments for the Downtown segment expressed concerns about construction impacts, specifically road closures.

Ms. Yasukochi stated that in the South Interbay and Interbay segment, there was some interest in pursuing a tunnel alignment along Elliott Avenue W, as well as preparing for future extensions to the west and north. Comments in support of a tunnel underneath Salmon Bay were received, which aligns with the current preferred alternative. For the Ballard stations, comments indicated support for the current station alternative located at 15th Avenue NW, with some interest in shifting the station further to the west or seeking better connection to the existing Ballard core.

Ms. Fann re-emphasized that no new alternatives are needed, and that staff have the direction needed to continue with the DEIS. She briefly reminded the committee on the general timeline going forward.

Board member Strauss thanked the staff for the presentation and stated that the comments received are consistent with what has been stated throughout the project's environmental process. He encouraged staff to keep the project moving.

Board member Birney asked if there are any new assumptions about working with federal partners at the Federal Transit Administration. Ms. Fann responded that recent work with FTA has still been progressing, so there is no concern at this point. CEO Sparrman added that there is a lot happening at the federal level that the agency is working through. He noted that the agency is working with the congressional delegation to hopefully seek clarity.

Chair Balducci expressed interest in digging further into the rationale behind the comments received when staff returns with the DEIS.

Discussion on Draft 2025 System Expansion Committee Work Plan

Chair Balducci noted that a discussion took place on the Work Plan last month and reminded members that it is a working document that Committee members can request changes to as information comes up.

Executive session - None.

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, March 13, 2025
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room & Virtually via Zoom

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:48 p.m.

ATTEST:

Claudia Balducci
System Expansion Committee Chair

Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on _____, AJM.