

**SOUND TRANSIT
STAFF REPORT**

MOTION NO. M2003-11

ST Express Route 586 Tacoma – U District

Meeting:	Date:	Type of Action:	Staff Contact:	Phone:
Executive Committee	2/6/03	Discussion/Possible Action to Recommend Board Approval	Agnes Govern, Director Regional Express	206-398-5037
Finance Committee	2/6/03	Discussion/Possible Action to Recommend Board Approval	Mike Bergman, Project Manager Regional Express	206-398-5358
Board	2/13/03	Action	Jim Moore, Project Coordinator, Regional Express	206-398-5045

Contract/Agreement Type:	3	Requested Action:	3
Competitive Procurement		Execute New Contract/Agreement	
Sole Source		Amend Existing Contract/Agreement	
Memorandum of Agreement		Contingency Funds Required	
Purchase/Sale Agreement		Budget Amendment Required	

4 Applicable to proposed transaction.

OBJECTIVE OF ACTION

- Approval to continue operation of demonstration Route 586 through September 27, 2003.

ACTION

- Authorize the Executive Director to continue operation of demonstration Route 586 and to use schedule maintenance hours for additional trips from the schedule maintenance line item in the budget to operate the route through the summer of 2003.

KEY FEATURES

- Authorizes the Executive Director to continue operation of demonstration Route 586 between Tacoma and the University District in Seattle through September 27, 2003. This route will be re-evaluated as a part of the 2003 Service Implementation Plan.
- Route 586 is very popular with the passengers. Customer service reports this route has a higher ratio of commendations about the service than any other ST Express routes. A large number of riders are employed in the University District in Seattle.
- ST Express Route 586 provides a 30% travel timesavings over other transit options of taking Route 590, 591, 594 or Sounder to downtown Seattle and transferring to King County Metro express service to the University District.

- Staff recommends that the 1:35 PM trip departing the University District be discontinued June 7, 2003, and restarted again at the fall schedule change on September 28, 2003, if service continues. Staff also recommends that additional peak hour trips be added on June 7, 2003, to accommodate a growing market and better serve the employee market to the University District.
- Based on the number of passengers who formerly rode the Seattle Express, staff will evaluate ridership trends on the Seattle Express and suggest modifications for September 2003.

BUDGET IMPACT SUMMARY

Project Description: ST Express Route 586: Tacoma – U. District Express.
Current Status: Route 586 is in current operation as a demonstration route.
Projected Completion Date: N/A

Action Outside of Adopted Budget:	Y/N	Y	Requires Comment
This Line of Business	N		
This Project	N		
This Phase	N		
This Task	N		
Budget amendment required	N		
Key Financial Indicators:	Y/N	Y	Requires Comment
Contingency funds required	N		
Subarea impacts	N		
Funding required from other parties other than what is already assumed in financial plan	N		

N = Action is assumed in current Board-adopted budget. Requires no budget action or adjustment to financial plan

BUDGET DISCUSSION

Budget for the proposed action is included within the operations and maintenance phase of the Pierce subarea bus program budget. The Adopted 2002 Service Implementation Plan (SIP) in Pierce subarea has a total budget of \$6.3 million in schedule maintenance hours. This action would require under \$200,000 in 2003. The 2003 Adopted Budget includes sufficient budget for this action and committing these funds will not endanger any other project elements that are to be funded out of the respective elements of the budget.

REVENUE, SUBAREA, AND FINANCIAL PLAN IMPACTS

The proposed action is consistent with the current Board-adopted budget and is affordable within Sound Transit’s current long-term financial plan and the subarea financial capacity.

M/W/DBE – SMALL BUSINESS PARTICIPATION

N/A

HISTORY OF PROJECT

The Tacoma – U. District Express began service on September 30, 2002, as a demonstration service to see if a viable transit market existed between Tacoma and the University District in Seattle. The Board adopted this route as a demonstration project as a part of the 2002 SIP on May 9, 2002.

Service began on September 30, 2002, with three morning trips northbound and four afternoon trips southbound. Currently the last day of this service for this route is June 6, 2003. Staff was asked to return to the Board so a decision can be made whether to continue with Route 586.

Staff conducted a preliminary operational analysis (Attachment A) that shows Route 586 is very popular with the passengers. In addition, this route performs at the highest rating according to the ST Express Service Standards and Performance Measures.

With the large percentage of passengers being employed in the University District, staff is recommending service should continue through the summer with some peak hour enhancements.

Prior Board or Committee Actions and Relevant Board Policies

Motion or Resolution Number	Summary of Action	Date of Action
R2002-07	Approval of the 2002 SIP	5/9/02

CONSEQUENCES OF DELAY

If the Board should decide to continue Route 586, staff needs to know on February 13, 2003, to inform Pierce Transit that Route 586 will continue.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP AND COOPERATION

Sound Transit worked with Pierce Transit in data collection and coordination of the service between Tacoma and the University District. Pierce Transit has also granted Sound Transit an extension for the deadline for the June service change to allow the Board time to make a decision concerning Route 586.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Sound Transit worked with Pierce Transit and conducted passenger surveys on January 8, 2003. The result of the passenger survey is a part of the Preliminary Operations Analysis, which is attached (Exhibit A).

LEGAL REVIEW

MB 1-22-03

SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M2003-11

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority to continue operation of demonstration Route 586 and to use schedule maintenance hours for additional trips from the schedule maintenance line item in the budget to operate the route through the Summer of 2003.

Background:

The Tacoma – U. District Express began service on September 30, 2002, as a demonstration service to see if a viable transit market existed between Tacoma and the University District in Seattle. The Board adopted this route as a demonstration project as a part of the 2002 SIP on May 9, 2002.

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Staff conducted a preliminary operational analysis (Attachment A) that shows demonstration Route 586 is very popular with the passengers. In addition, this route performs at the highest rating according to the ST Express Service Standards and Performance Measures.

With the large percentage of passengers being employed in the University District, staff is recommending that service should continue through the summer with some peak hour enhancements.

Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority to authorize to continue operation of demonstration Route 586 and to use schedule maintenance hours for additional trips from the schedule maintenance line item in the budget to operate the route through the summer of 2003.

APPROVED by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof held on February 13, 2003.



Ron Sims
Board Chair

ATTEST:



Marcia Walker
Board Administrator



**ST Express Bus
The FastBus**

Tacoma – U. District Express Preliminary Operational Analysis

February 6, 2003

Background

The Tacoma – U. District Express began service on September 30, 2002 as a demonstration service to see if a viable transit market existed between Tacoma and the University District in Seattle. The Board adopted as a part of the 2002 Service Implementation Plan when staff presented the Board with three options for these resources:

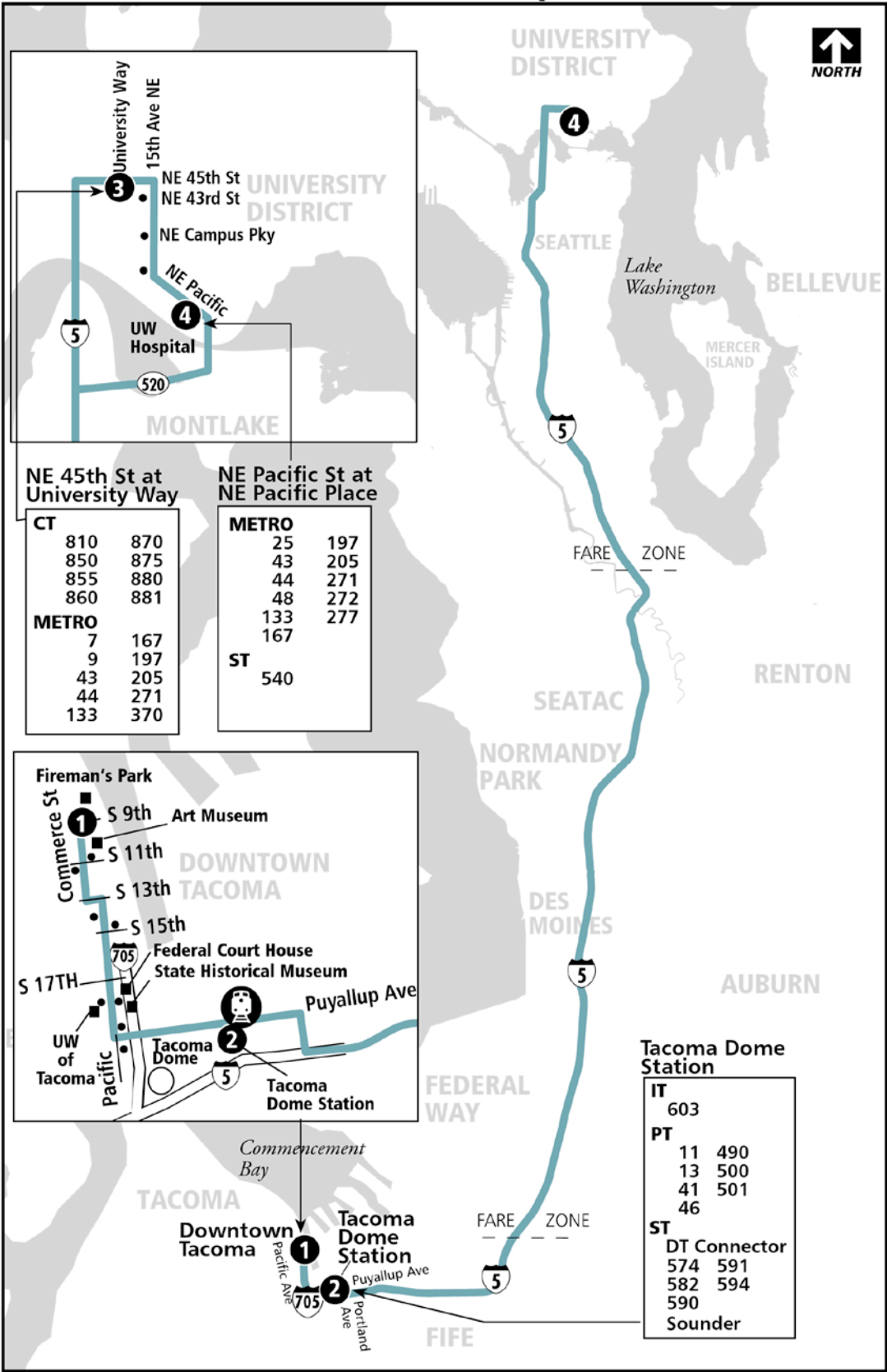
- Roy “Y” Park-and-Ride to downtown Tacoma
- Tacoma to Bellevue
- Tacoma to University District

Based on the larger size of the U. District market, staff recommended the U. District alternative for the demonstration route. The Board approved this on May 9, 2002

Service began on September 30, 2002 with three morning trips northbound and four afternoon trips southbound. Currently the last day of service for this route is June 6, 2003. Staff promised to return to the Board so a decision can be made whether the service should continue.

When the route was approved for demonstration, Sound Transit worked with Pierce Transit and the University of Washington (UW) to create a marketing promotion strategy. A specially designed bookmark was mailed to geographically targeted UW students and faculty to inform them of the new demonstration route and the route was included in the UW Transportation Guide and transportation newsletter. Promotional activities included street teams (in Tacoma and the University District), transportation fairs, and public events, including the Puyallup Fair.

Route 586 Tacoma – U District Express



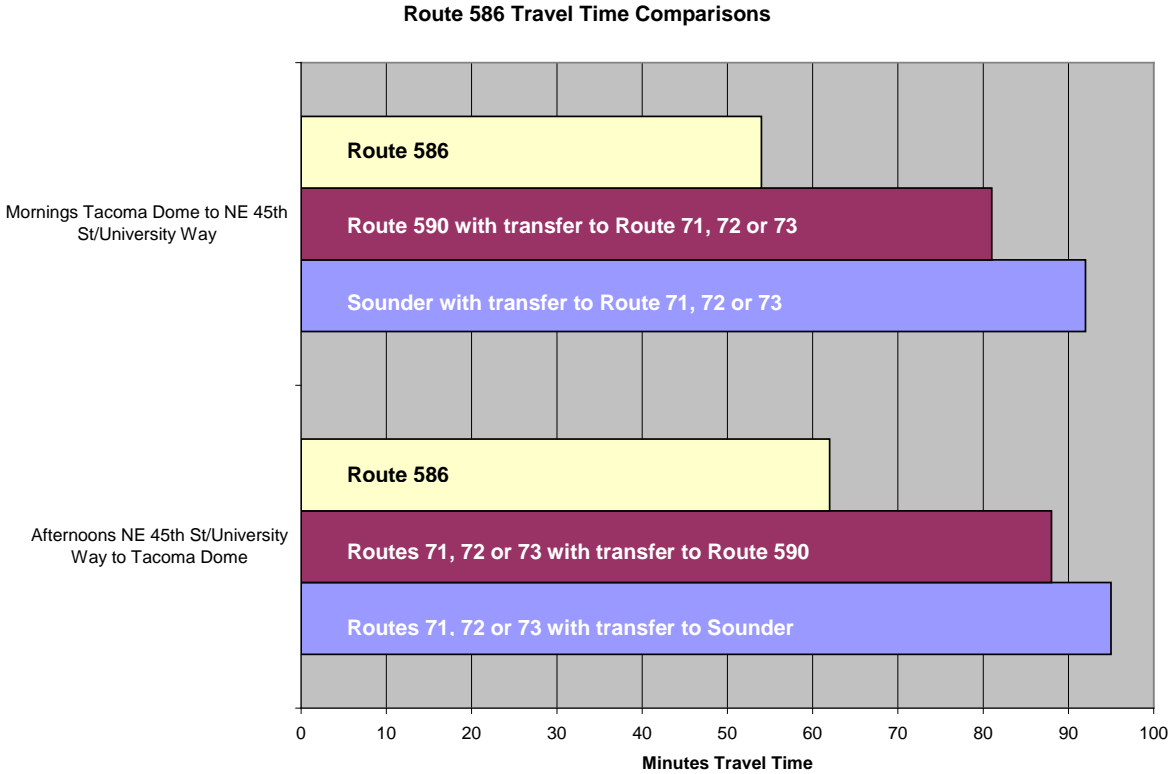
Ridership

Pierce Transit provides monthly reports that include ridership on each of the routes they operate for Sound Transit. Since the first day of service, this route operates at "Good" using the ST Express Service Standards and Performance Measures.

	Total Boardings	Boardings per Revenue Hour	Boardings per Trip	Average Weekday Boardings
September 2002	162	19.80	23.14	162
October 2002	4,409	23.42	27.38	192
November 2002	3,240	19.80	23.14	162
December 2002	3,001	17.46	20.42	143

Time Savings

Passengers of Route 586 save time with this service over the previous options of taking either Route 590 or Sounder and transferring to Metro Routes 71, 72, or 73. In the afternoon, travel times are reduced by at least 30%.



Survey Analysis

On January 8, 2003, staff conducted an on-board survey of all trips on Route 586. Staff handed out 236 surveys, of which all but two were returned. Four surveys were not completed. To avoid double counting, the surveys were designed so if a passenger filled out a survey that morning, they did not have to complete a survey again. But they were allowed to provide additional comments if they so chose. Overall, 149 individuals completed a survey either in the morning or afternoon. 110 individuals filled out a survey while taking one of the three morning trips. Of the 39 people who completed a survey on an afternoon trip, 67% rode Seattle Express to downtown Seattle and transferred to a King County Metro route to the University District. In addition, passengers were provided a space to make comments. These comments are available upon request.

Number of Trips per Week

This survey question tells staff how many riders surveyed use the service frequently. 91% of the respondents ride 3 or more times per week.

	Number	Percentage
Total number of responses	149	
Five times per week	105	70%
Four times per week	17	11%
Three times per week	15	10%
Two times per week	4	3%
One time per week	6	4%
Less than one time per week	2	1%

University District Destination

The surveyed inquired about the destination of the riders once they arrived at the University District. Almost all people answered a location in the University District or on campus. One person continued to the Roosevelt District and another continued to University Village.

Once in the University District, 85% of the people walked to their final destination. The remainder transferred to another bus or found alternative ways to their University District destination.

Pierce County Origin

The survey asked people to identify the closest intersection and zip code to their residence.

	Number	Percentage
Total number of responses	136	
Tacoma	97	71%
Pierce County within Sound Transit service area	15	11%
Lakewood	11	8%
Thurston County	6	4%
Pierce County outside Sound Transit service area	5	4%
Seattle/University District	2	1%

Mode of Travel – Pierce County

This question was asked to determine how people accessed Route 586 in Pierce County. On surveys to the University District, the question was asked, “How did you get from your origin to this bus?” On the return trips, we asked “How will you get to your final destination from the bus stop/park-and-ride in Tacoma?”

	Number	Percentage
Total Number of people answering this question	145	
Private vehicle	114	79%
Transfer to/from another bus	14	10%
Dropped off/picked up	8	6%
Walk	7	5%
Bicycle	2	1%

Of the 14 people who transfer to or from another bus in Pierce County, 11 different routes were listed by the passengers who stated which route they transferred to or from.

How Trip was Made Prior to Route 586

This question was to determine how people made this trip before Route 586 existed. Over half of those who responded used to ride Route 594 and transfer in downtown Seattle to King County Metro service to the University District.

	Number	Percentage
Total Number of people answering this question	146	
Route 594 and transfer to Route 71, 72, or 73	85	58%
Private vehicle	39	27%
Route 197 from Federal Way	11	8%
“I would not have made this trip.”	8	5%
Other bus routes	2	1%
Sounder and transfer to Route 71, 72, or 73	1	1%

Vehicle Availability

This question determined the number of people who chose to not drive, but take Sound Transit instead.

	Number	Percentage
Total Number of people answering this question	144	
Yes, car available	102	71%
No, car not available	42	29%

How Would You Make Trip if Route 586 Did Not Exist

The survey asked what the passenger would do if Route 586 did not exist today.

	Number	Percentage
Total Number of people answering this question	148	
Route 594 and transfer to Route 71, 72, or 73	93	63%
Private vehicle	39	26%
"I would not have made this trip."	8	5%
Route 197 from Federal Way	5	3%
Carpool	2	1%
Sounder and transfer to Route 71, 72, or 73	1	1%

Main Purpose of Trip

The survey inquired whether people were traveling for work, school, medical appointments or some other reason.

	Number	Percentage
Total Number of people answering this question	147	
School	82	56%
Work	53	36%
School and work	11	7%
Medical appointment	1	1%

We also asked the students if they plan to attend the University of Washington this coming summer. This question was asked to gauge the level of ridership if the Route 586 operated during the summer. 58% of the students said they plan to attend this coming summer.

Method of Payment

The survey also had the passengers state their method of paying the fare. Most riders use a U-Pass for their fare. PugetPass and FlexPass account for 10% of the fare media. Only 3% of the riders paid with cash.

Age

Passengers were asked to respond to which age group they were in. Most responded to the 18-25 age group. No people who answered this question were over 65.

	Number	Percentage
Total Number of people answering this question	145	
Under 17	2	1%
18-25	65	45%
26-40	41	28%
41-64	37	26%
65 or over	0	0%

Suggestions

The survey asked passengers if they could add a trip to Route 586, what time would that bus arrive in the University District and what time would it depart the University District. Since any time could be put down, the results were varied. However, certain time segments did receive more responses than others. Staff summarized the responses and found 28% of the respondents said they would add a trip that arrived in the University District between 8:31 AM and 9:00 AM. 18% said they wanted a southbound trip departing the University District between 5:30 PM and 5:59 PM.

How did you get to the U. District this Morning?

Some passengers ride Route 586 in the afternoon but find alternative ways of getting to the U. District in the morning. 70% of the riders use Routes 590, 591, 592, or 594 and transfer to King County Metro in downtown Seattle. 8% take Metro and 14% did not answer the question.

Marketing

The survey asked, "How did you first hear about Demonstration Route 586: Tacoma/University District-Seattle?"

	Number	Percentage
Total number of responses	148	
From family or friend	39	26%
UW mail packet to students	35	24%
Sound Transit website	30	20%
Get Ready to Ride guide	15	10%
Other	15	10%
Transit information display	9	6%
Television or newspaper	5	3%

Of the 15 people who chose other, they specified co-workers or students (3); seeing the bus on the street (3); through their Employer Transportation Coordinators (3); Sound Transit drivers (2); Sound Transit street team at the Sounder station (1); radio (1); bus stop information (1); and, from a Sound Transit survey on bus usage (1).

Customer Acceptance

For the time period from September 1 through December 31, Sound Transit received 45 comments from 27 individuals on Route 586. Comments are available upon request.

Comment Type	Number of Comments
Commendation	14
▪ Operations	1
▪ Service Related	13
Complaint	11
▪ Operations	5
▪ Service Related	6
Suggestions	19
▪ Customer Info	1
▪ Operations	1
▪ Service Related	17
Other Comments	1
▪ Operations	1

Infrastructure Improvements

At this time, Regional Express has no infrastructure improvements planned for this route. Pierce Transit is planning to enhance the bus information and signage along Commerce Street in downtown Tacoma.

Future Changes

With the current Service Implementation Plan, the existing Route 586 would be discontinued in June 2003.

Conclusion

Route 586 is very popular with the passengers. With a large percentage of passengers being employed in the University District, service should continue through the summer. However, staff recommends the trip departing the University District at 1:35 PM be discontinued from June 7, 2003 and start again at the fall shakeup on September 29, 2003. Staff also recommends that additional peak hour trips be added on June 7 to accommodate a growing market and better serve the employee market to the University District.

In addition, based on the number of passengers who formerly rode the Seattle Express, staff will evaluate ridership trends on the Seattle Express and suggest modifications for September 2003.