

# Stakeholder Summary Report

Chief Executive Officer

Sound Transit

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Your Path to Performance

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# Summary of Activities

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The following report presents the results of the stakeholder outreach process for the **Chief Executive Officer** for **Sound Transit**.

## Stakeholder Group Discussion Framework

### Introduction

The Board of Directors for Sound Transit contracted with CPS HR Consulting to recruit the next leader for the organization. The selection process for the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is designed to engage a broad array of stakeholders in an effort to find the candidate who is the best fit for the organization and the community.

Each of the individuals included in this report was identified as a key stakeholder within the selection process. We asked them to provide us with input to guide the recruitment materials and selection process.

### Background

The CEO plans, administers, directs, oversees, and assumes full responsibility for directing the activities of the Agency and is accountable to the Board of Directors for the overall performance of the Agency in carrying out Sound Transit's mission. This position is responsible for developing an organizational culture to ensure successful implementation of voter-approved Sound programs and for leading the Agency's Executive Leadership Team (ELT). This position provides policy guidance, advice, and counsel to the Sound Transit Board of Directors regarding strategic policy and problem solving and assumes responsibility for implementing policy decisions made by the Sound Transit Board of Directors.

In August of 2020, the Board of Sound Transit adopted a 5-year Strategic Business Plan. This plan is focused on 5 priority areas:

- Designing and delivering high-quality and safe services.
- Deploying performance-based and community centric capital programs.
- Cultivating a diverse, inclusive and high-performing workforce.
- Transform core business processes and practices.
- Ensure financial stewardship exists in all decision-making.

CPS HR spoke with the following stakeholders:

## Staff Outreach

Group	Name
<b>CEO</b>	Peter Rogoff
<b>Chief of Staff</b>	Brooke Belman
<b>DCEO</b>	Mary Cummings Kimberly Farley
<b>People Focus</b>	Julie Honeywell Jonté Robinson
<b>External Focus</b>	Andy Izquierdo Ann McNeil
<b>Legal Focus</b>	Desmond Brown
<b>Project &amp; Service Focus</b>	Russ Arnold Don Billen Kimberly Farley Moises Gutierrez Juan Higuera Andy Izquierdo Leslie Jones Ron Lewis Jonté Robinson Suraj Shetty Jason Weiss David Wright
<b>Administration Focus</b>	Kathy Albert Ruth Bowman Mary Cummings Ryan Fisher Moises Gutierrez Juan Higuera Andy Izquierdo Robin Murphy Ted Lucas Jason Weiss
<b>Employee Resource Groups</b>	Christopher Adams Kennedy Dresh Kent Keel Alex Ko Gwen McCullough Elizabeth Oder Amna Parson Alex Pizzaro Jonté Robinson Olivia Rother Sanjay Samuel Sara Zeglin

	*there are potentially other participants not identified at the start of the meeting
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## Board Outreach

Group	Name
Board Chair	Kent Keel
CEO Selection Committee	Selection Committee Members

## Discussion Framework

Facilitators used the following questions and thought starters to provide the foundation for the conversations that encouraged engagement for participants to share their knowledge and opinions.

- When reaching out to potential candidates, how would you capture the selling points for this opportunity? i.e., Location, Salary and Benefit Package, the Quality of the team, etc.
- What will be the new CEO's biggest challenges? How can the new CEO leverage assistance to overcome these challenges?
- What kind of past career experience will best serve the new CEO to be successful?
- How would you like to see the new CEO manage accountability for the team?
- Are there actions that should be taken immediately after the CEO's appointment that will help build credibility for the new CEO and/or Sound Transit?
- Below is a list of ALL important skills/traits. However, we would like to hear from you as to the prioritization of these items. To the best of your ability, provide us with the list from 1 to 5, with 1 being the most essential.
  - Strong technical knowledge of light/heavy rail passenger transportation.
  - Proven, sound financial management skills.
  - Ability to motivate the team and outside stakeholders.
  - Understanding and experience in accessing public funding resources (grants, etc.)
  - Engages others to create transparency and joint ownership.
- What else would you like to share and ensure that it is considered in the selection process?
- Do you know anyone with the right experience, skills, or attributes that we should reach out to?

## Analysis of Responses



*The facilitators invested 15 hours connecting with over 30 key stakeholders over a 10 –day period. There was a strong alignment from the diverse stakeholder groups. Much of the feedback focused on bringing strong overall leadership qualities to the role of the Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The image above demonstrates some of the most frequently cited characteristics, skills, or experiences identified by the stakeholder groups as necessary for the CEO’s success.*

### **Defining the Opportunity**

There was a strong recognition of the current level of talent, knowledge, and passion within the Sound Transit team. With this established organizational knowledge, the opportunity to lead the team will allow for a high-performing organization.

Stakeholders expressed the opportunity of leading the largest capital investment projects in the nation served as an attractive feature of the job. Sound Transit is building the future of how residents of Puget Sound will navigate their local travels while raising the quality of life within the region.

The commitment that has been made by the organization to lead in the work of anti-racism was expressed as an opportunity for the future CEO to lead cultural change. The discussions focused on the internal organization and the people and communities that are served by Sound Transit. The work of building inclusion and diversity was an extraordinarily strong message in all the sessions.

The conclusion of the numerous assets associated with the CEO role was that it is an opportunity to conduct legacy work that can define a professional’s career as well as transform Sound Transit’s service area for generations.

## ***Knowledge and Experience***

The feedback provided less focus on transportation experience than on overall leadership within the public sector. Experience within the private sector was also valued and discussions included that the ideal background would include both areas of expertise. Stakeholders talked about transferrable leadership skills, such as: the ability to motivate and inspire others, to be inclusive of all stakeholders, to convene and collaborate with diverse parties, to be self-reflective, and to hold all to a common standard.

While knowledge and experience of rail and bus operations was determined to be an asset, feedback also expressed the value of overall capital construction experience. Stakeholders shared their thoughts about the future of Sound Transit including the transition from building the system to operating the system. A background and experience in leading an organization to this next step would be a huge asset for the organization.

Another underlying theme was the need to have a focus on the customer experience. Stakeholders shared the importance of including the impact on the users of the system in the decision-making process. There was considerable discussion of consistently considering the customer in operational designs/decisions.

Stakeholders acknowledged the need for solid fiscal management. They feel a responsibility to the voters who acted to support the Sound Transit system. They indicated that the knowledge of industry-related funding was less important, and that this skill should be sought after when recruiting the next Chief Financial Officer (CFO). There was considerable discussion of the importance of the new CEO will have to quickly bring on a CFO.

We gained significant feedback regarding the need of the future CEO to understand the history and culture of the Pacific Northwest. Stakeholders expressed the need of the future CEO to be able to manage the nuances within the complexities of leading the organization. While they did not need to reside in the Puget Sound region, it was essential for the individual to learn of the pathway to Sound Transit's charge to build a regional integrated system.

## ***Communication Skills | Board Management***

There was no skill set that was more often discussed than the need for exceptional communication and relationship management skills. All stakeholders recognized the challenges of the diverse community needs that are represented within the 18-member Board and how success may be achieved through effectively communicating with the Board and community leaders. Participants within the stakeholder groups spoke repeatedly about transparency, collaboration, and engagement. But most often we heard about the need to **listen**. We consistently heard that the future CEO would need to be able to actively listen and follow-up to the messages that are delivered.

The need for effective communication skills also was identified regarding the internal organization. Staff want to have clear expectations, be informed of operational decisions, and be provided regular feedback/accountability.

We also heard about the need for a sense of humor; the ability to bring a sense of fun and lightness to the work when appropriate.



### ***Ability to Lead from Sound Transit's Core Values***

Stakeholders shared their commitment to the established Vision, Mission and Values. They felt that it will be essential for the future CEO to bring the core values into the regular business of Sound Transit. The values capture their vision for the organization, but stakeholders acknowledged the need for leadership to integrate them into actions. They talked about the need for leadership to be able to guide staff and board members in practicing the values on a daily basis.

1. **Collaboration:** We share each other's successes and challenges and invite involvement of all toward achievement of common goals. We are one agency; no single department defines our business.
2. **Passenger Focus:** We always start with our passengers' needs and work back from there. They are the focus of everything we do.
3. **Inclusion & Respect:** We foster a culture where everyone is treated fairly, where diverse perspectives are welcomed, and every voice is heard.
4. **Safety:** We ensure the safest transit trip and work environment for every rider, employee, and contractor, each and every day.
5. **Integrity:** We build trust by keeping commitments and taking ownership—demonstrating honesty, accountability, and transparency throughout.
6. **Quality:** As stewards of public resources, we do our best work every single day and take great pride in the efficient, sustainable, and equitable delivery of our services and projects.

### ***We Want It All!***

This final category is less easily defined but was quite pervasive throughout all the interviews with stakeholders. One stakeholder defined the broad skills, attributes, and experience needed in the new CEO as that of a unicorn – a magical creature that doesn't exist. Participants acknowledged that they provided their *wish list* in the sessions and that it was not likely that there is one single candidate to perfectly meet their desires. However, it was clear that we are asked to recruit a leader with the following talents:

- Exceptional ability to listen and to conduct follow-up
- A passion to build and advance an anti-racism agenda
- Ability to convene and collaborate stakeholders
- Commitment to keep stakeholders informed
- Integrity – operate in the best interest of the public

## Proposed “Ideal Candidate Profile” Statement

Authentic. Passionate. Collaborative. Committed.

These are words that describe the next Chief Executive Officer of Sound Transit. Guiding an exceptional, industry-leading organization like Sound Transit requires incredible leadership skills, such as collaboration, communication, teamwork, conflict resolution, creative thinking, and empathy. The CEO will be intimately involved in cultivating the Sound Transit culture that channels innovation through a comprehensive understanding of the agency’s past, progress in the present, and opportunity in the future. This means prioritizing people over programs – from Sound Transit employees to area residents to board members and especially to riders – in a collaborative, equitable, inclusive, and transparent manner for all. The CEO should have experience building complex regional and political relationships with a variety of stakeholders and be driven to deliver results that meet their expectations. Past experience collaborating with sovereign tribal governments would be particularly noteworthy and desirable.

The CEO should have experience leading a complex organization, preferably with some level of public sector expertise. That leadership does not mean the candidate was previously in the top executive role in their past organizations, but has developed and demonstrated the skills necessary to lead Sound Transit. Past experience in public transportation is helpful, but is certainly not required. Candidates with previous experience in capital construction programs in either the public or private sector would find a very familiar environment here. Most importantly, the CEO will exhibit a passion for public service and will work to infuse that passion throughout the organization.

## Appendix A – Public Comment Received



January 26, 2022

Dear Sound Transit Board of Directors,

On behalf of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and our 2,500 members, I am writing to share the leadership qualities and attributes that we believe are important for Sound Transit's next CEO. The Chamber has long been a champion of Sound Transit and as such we encourage the Board to ensure that the search agency conducts outreach with external stakeholders in the CEO selection process.

The next Sound Transit CEO will make decisions that will impact our region for years to come. Because of this, we believe the incoming Sound Transit CEO must demonstrate the ability and experience to:

#### Drive Agency Culture

- Champion transparency and meaningful public engagement in the agency's processes and decision-making to build trust and confidence in program delivery and operations
- Embrace a culture of accountability and steward public dollars responsibly
- Work collaboratively with the Board of Directors to build consensus and for timely decision making
- Establish trust-based relationships that enable an internal culture that supports employees, encourages innovative approaches to problem solving, and centers race and social equity within the agency

#### Be an Exceptional Partner

- Build collaborative and inclusive relationships and demonstrate a willingness to partner with, not just work alongside, external stakeholders including other transit agencies, the business community, regional job centers, communities near stations, developers, and those served by transit
- Drive and direct collaborative agency working relationships and coordination with interjurisdictional partners to ensure timely delivery of the Sound Transit capital programs

#### Embrace Challenges and Complexity

- Be intentional about agency risk appetite and risk tolerance; recognize tradeoffs and proactively manage them with an approach that balances financial, legal, technical, and operational needs with community needs, preferences, and sense of urgency; effectively communicate with Board and public about risks, uncertainties, and opportunities and how the agency is addressing them
- Manage a complex capital program delivery and financial plans, including encountering challenges and developing strategies to address them
- Provide strategic leadership, thought partnership, and vision in approaching policy, communications, government relations, and problem solving
- Manage during a crisis in a way that supports agency employees, is open and transparent with the public and Board, and proactively identifies lessons learned

Deliver Results

- Improve customer service, with the goal of being the most customer-focused agency in the country, centering equity during the rider experience, safety, and fare enforcement in light of recent operational challenges and 25 new stations opening by 2024
- Ability to access federal, state, and local dollars
- Be innovative and creative while also considering regional implications of decisions
- Prioritize integrating transit-oriented development in collaboration with station area housing stakeholders, other transportation providers, and the community

We appreciate the Board's time and consideration of the importance this person will play in the future of our region. We stand ready to partner and work with you in any way we can.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rachel Smith".

Rachel Smith  
President & CEO



**Date:** December, 2nd 2021  
**To:** Sound Transit Board and Leadership  
**From:** Transportation Choices Coalition  
**Re:** CEO Search

Dear Sound Transit Board and Leadership,

We want to thank outgoing CEO Peter Rogoff for his many years of service to this region. Under his leadership, SoundTransit has delivered important transit service and adopted policies and projects that have advanced the Puget Sound's transit system through incredibly challenging times.

Leadership transitions are important moments for all organizations, and as partners committed to the success of regional transit service we want to express our priorities for the Sound Transit Board as you seek a new leader. Transportation Choices Coalition and our partners bring key values for hiring a new CEO - delivering voter-approved regional transit service as fast as possible, advancing racial equity, partnering with community, and transformatively planning for the future in all decision making processes.

- **Search Process.** We hope that the board and the recruiting firm conduct a national search that looks in unconventional places and includes those with lived experiences around transit, and with an emphasis on historically underrepresented communities and backgrounds. Equity staff and The Office of Civil Rights, Equity, and Inclusion should be included in any hiring processes/committees.
- **Sound Transit should commit to hiring a new CEO with a strong background and experience in racial and social equity.**
  - As Sound Transit continues to grow, any new CEO must be committed to using Race and Social Justice as a decision making lens to ensure Sound Transit is a tool for undoing harm and advancing racial equity throughout the region. A new CEO must be dedicated to Sound Transit's adopted equity policies, advancing existing work underway to establish an Anti-Racism Strategy, support the Office of Civil Rights, Equity and Inclusion, maintain and grow employee affinity groups, fully fund racial equity training for all staff and leadership, and champion the use of Racial Equity Toolkits.
  - We seek a CEO committed to expanding engagement with low-income communities, people of color, immigrants and refugees, and people with disabilities earlier in and throughout the planning process.
- **Sound Transit should commit to hiring a new CEO with a strong background and experience in multimodal access, affordable housing, and equitable TOD.**



# Transportation Choices



transit for all

minimum, yet we would like to see access as a priority that strives for excellence. We prioritize a CEO that invests in holistic, accessible access to high capacity transit via biking, walking, and rolling.

- We also want a new CEO who is ready to *Minimize and Fight Displacement*. A background in community development and land use rooted in the nuance of displacement is critical as the Puget Sound continues to grow. Sound Transit is a national leader in investing in affordable housing, and a new CEO should continue to work directly with the community to understand the anticipated impacts from infrastructure investments as well as the appropriate mitigation that retain community and maintain cultural cornerstones and businesses..
- A new CEO should be committed to *Prioritizing Affordable Housing* and building equitable transit-oriented developments as a critical role in preventing displacement and fighting climate change. Investment into Transit Oriented Development and multimodal access to high capacity transit centers should be a priority!
- All riders deserve to be safe when they choose transit, and we need a CEO that can ensure their safety. This includes safe traveling, improving emergency response procedures, safe local mode integration and design (in particular around intersections where trains and cars can meet), safe biking, rolling, and walking access to stations, and all riders should be safe from harassment.
- The new CEO must be able to work well with local organizations who advocate for riders, as well as local government authorities to ensure good inter-jurisdictional coordination. We need a CEO who is willing to prioritize and cultivate those relationships with longevity in mind in
- **Program Realignment.** The new CEO must be ready to engage with the current realignment plan, and be able to adhere to the Joint Proposal's timeline to deliver projects with minimal delay. Equity cannot be sacrificed to cut costs and a new CEO must continue to ensure that projects are delivered to all communities on time. We also are eager to see a CEO that aggressively pursues new revenue opportunities; with additional funding from the Federal Government through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, there is ample opportunity for a CEO to ensure financial solvency of Sound Transit for the future.
- We need a CEO that is visionary, and can **plan for the future**, including incorporating resilience to climate change and other unanticipated system stresses as a decision-making lens, and considers future land use that serves the needs of communities and connects Washington together. When evaluating decisions or projects, they should *always* make **equity, climate, and safety** top considerations. They should also be proactively thinking about the **rider experience**— building better communications with riders during emergencies, building better procedures to reintroduce service after emergencies, ensuring equipment including elevators and escalators are functioning consistently, and ensuring that riders have a seamless and



We would like to thank the Board for the opportunity to express priorities we hear from the community. A new CEO is more than just a new leader for Sound Transit, this person leads critical decisions that will impact the Puget Sound region for decades to come. We appreciate the opportunity to share our values as a priority for a new CEO, and look forward to working with them to achieve great and impactful outcomes for the people in this region.

In Solidarity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Sutherland", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Matthew Sutherland  
Advocacy Director

On behalf of  
*Transportation Choices Coalition*