



Summary Minutes

Executive Committee Meeting September 19, 2024

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:33 p.m. by Committee Chair Constantine 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) Dow Constantine, King County Executive	(A) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive

Board Members	
(P) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(A) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor
(P) Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember	(P) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor
(P) Bruce Dammeier, Pierce County Executive	(P) Kim Roscoe, Fife Mayor
	(P) Julie Meredith, WSDOT Secretary Alternate

Katie Flores, Board Administrator, announced that a quorum of the Committee was not present at roll call. Chair Constantine called for reports to be heard while waiting for additional Committee members to arrive.

Report of the Chair

Committee Chair Dow Constantine acknowledged the opening of the Lynnwood Link and welcomed new riders to the Sound Transit system, while thanking staff and other parties for their work in bringing this project towards completion.

CEO Report

Goran Sparrman, Interim CEO, provided the CEO report.

Recent Service Disruptions on the 1 Line

CEO Sparrman reported that two separate significant disruptions occurred on the 1 Line last week, both near University of Washington station. He noted that one disruption was an infrastructure failure, while the other was a vehicle problem. Mr. Sparrman noted the importance of having a robust and reliable system, and that these kinds of service interruptions are not acceptable. He stated that a root cause analysis is under way, with the infrastructure analysis being almost complete. Mr. Sparrman thanked staff for their support of riders during the disruption while noting the agency's ability to connect with many passengers through various official channels, as well as social media.

West Seattle Link Extension Final Environmental Impact Statement and Cost Pressures

CEO Sparrman noted that a presentation would be given later during the committee meeting, but wanted to call out the progress the agency had made on implementing governance and project development strategies that will assist in future projects. He highlighted that DCEO Terri Mestas is already looking to apply cost control measures to the WSLE project.

Public comment

Chair Constantine announced that public comment would be accepted via email to meetingcomments@soundtransit.org and would also be accepted in-person and virtually.

The following people provided written comments:

Johannes Heine	Marilyn Kennell
Donna Popich	Jan Roberts
Martin Westerman	

The following people provided in-person comments:

Luz Barefoot	Beth Boomgard-Zagrodnik
Keith Edwards	John Niles

The following people provided virtual comments:

Marilyn Kennell	Kim Schwarzkopf
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Board Administrator Katie Flores confirmed that a quorum was now in attendance with the arrival of Board members Bruce Dammeier and Angela Birney.

Business items

Final Committee Action

June 6, 2024, Executive Committee meeting minutes

It was moved by Board member Balducci, seconded by Board member Roscoe, and carried by the unanimous vote of all Board members present that the minutes of the June 6, 2024 Executive Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2024-55: Extending the appointment of Goran Sparrman as Sound Transit's interim chief executive officer until May 15, 2025.

Chair Constantine provided remarks regarding the motion. He noted the work that Interim CEO Sparrman has done thus far in his role and that his continued work as Interim CEO will provide stability as the agency works through important reorganizational efforts. Chair Constantine also noted that as the work towards the selection of a new permanent CEO progresses, Board members will have various opportunities to engage in the process.

Board member Dammeier expressed his satisfaction with Interim CEO Sparrman's work and thanked him for his leadership.

It was moved by Board member Balducci, seconded by Board member Roscoe, and carried by the unanimous vote of all Board members present that Motion No. M2024-55 be approved as presented.

Reports to the Committee

Annual Sustainability Progress Report

Jamie Brinkley, Sustainability Manager, provided the report. Ms. Brinkley provided an overview of the agency's sustainability priorities, its progress on goals established in the 2019 Sustainability Plan, and highlights from the agency's work in 2023.

Ms. Brinkley noted the agency's progress towards completing 2091-2024 short term sustainability goals, with 71 percent of goals complete. She also noted that the agency has achieved 86% of its 2023 sustainability targets.

Ms. Brinkley provided an update on the agency's short-term 'People' goals, including building staff awareness to integrate equity, meeting or exceeding workforce diversity goals for construction contractors, and certifying key staff to green design professional accreditations. She noted that the agency had made great strides in increasing awareness in equity, had exceeded goals for how many people of color are on Sound Transit job sites, and that the agency continues its efforts to train staff on sustainability accreditations. She also highlighted that the agency had hosted its third equity summit in 2023, with 450 staff attending, as well as that the agency had signed the Equity in Infrastructure Pledge in August of 2024.

Ms. Brinkley also provided an overview of the agency's progress on its short-term 'Planet' goals, with the agency exceeding its goal to reduce greenhouse gasses by 10%, noting the agency had reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by 31% in 2023 and other air pollutants by 5%-30%. She also highlighted that the agency had exceeded its goal to reduce water usage by 10%, with the agency reducing its water use by 16% in 2023. She also noted that the agency continues working towards achieving carbon free operations, with the agency's goal to achieve carbon free facilities by 2030, and a carbon free fleet by 2050. As part of that work, she highlighted that the agency has begun using renewable diesel in part of the ST Express fleet, which significantly reduces greenhouse gas and sulfur oxide emissions. Ms. Brinkley also noted that the agency continued to offset significantly more greenhouse gas emissions than it produced, with the agency offsetting more than five times its operations emissions through ridership, equivalent to the burning of 21 million gallons of gasoline in 2023.

Ms. Brinkley highlighted the agency's work on its 'Prosperity' goal by increasing the number of projects that include a climate change vulnerability assessment, including the Tacoma Dome, West Seattle, and Ballard Link Extension projects. She also noted that the agency has exceeded its goal of diverting 50% of office waste into recycling or composting, with the agency diverting 70% of office waste – and 39% of waste agency wide – in 2023. Ms. Brinkley also noted that the agency has seen significant growth in its procurement methods that utilize green methods.

Ms. Brinkley further elaborated on the agency's new green building standards, noting that all facilities projects must now require LEED for Transit – Gold certifications and all corridor projects must include Envision – Platinum certifications. She highlighted that Bus Base North is the first project designed to the Platinum level, and that work to reduce the amount of embodied carbon in concrete led to a decrease of emissions by 30% in the Puyallup garage project, which will become a new standard for future projects. Ms. Brinkley also highlighted that participation in Washington state's Clean Fuel Standard program had generated one million dollars in agency revenue in 2023, and that conservation projects have totaled nearly \$8.5 million dollars in savings over project lifetimes.

Presentation on the West Seattle Link Extension Final Environmental Impact Statement

Terri Mestas, DCEO Chief Capital Delivery Officer, and Jason Hampton, High-Capacity Transit Development Manager, provided the presentation. Ms. Mestas provided information on the West Seattle Link Extension (WSLE) project, and the evolution of the project's costs, while Mr. Hampton provided a detailed view of the results of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

Ms. Mestas explained the background of the West Seattle Link Extension, as one of the projects authorized in the passage of the ST3 ballot measure in 2016. She noted that the goal of the extension was to provide fast, reliable light rail connections in the SODO, Delridge, and West Seattle neighborhoods, with a 4.1-mile-long segment consisting of four new stations. Ms. Mestas also noted the primary benefits of the completed project, including a reduction in travel time between Alaska Junction and downtown Seattle by 50%, a resilient service that can operate if the West Seattle bridge is closed, and future capability for extensions further into West Seattle as identified in the agency's long-range plan.

Mr. Hampton explained where the WSLE project is, with it being currently at the end of the planning phase, with the design phase being the next step. He discussed the planning process, which included a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), public comment period, and the Board selection of preferred alternatives for study in the FEIS. He also noted that the FEIS is complete, and will be formally published on Friday, September 20, 2024.

Mr. Hampton provided an overview of the community engagement efforts during the environmental review process, including community briefings, communication with property and business owners, while the Station Area Planning team has worked in coordination with partners in the community, King County Metro, and the City of Seattle to advance early design work for station areas and transit-oriented developments. He specifically highlighted the over 5,000 comments received during the DEIS public comment period, which was noted as being a significant amount of engagement compared to the norm for this process. Mr. Hampton further noted the high level of engagement in the station planning efforts, conducted in the Fall of 2023 through the Spring of 2024, which resulted in over 1,200 completed surveys by members of the public.

Mr. Hampton highlighted the development of the Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) in partnership with the City of Seattle, identifying key outcomes for focus areas and system-wide goals, which included enhancing station area mobility and access, bus-rail integration, and equitable transit-oriented development. He also noted that public comments and feedback were incorporated into the RET, which will be published later in September 2024.

Mr. Hampton provided examples of how the WSLE would impact community's travel ability across the region. He highlighted how connecting West Seattle into the regional light rail network would increase people's access to opportunities, jobs, education, and other services. Mr. Hampton also utilized Westwood Village as an example of the compounding effects of light rail coverage, and that while the area would not have a dedicated station, the access improvements from the WSLE project would still greatly increase their ability to travel across the region.

Mr. Hampton highlighted that the project would also have significant transit-oriented development opportunities, with more than 1,000 new units of housing being possible in the West Seattle area alone.

Mr. Hampton provided details into the different preferred alternatives studied in the FEIS. He noted that all alternatives for the SODO area would include the construction of a new station that would serve as a transfer point in the future and noted that the preferred alternative included a pedestrian bridge between the two stations, as well as a grade separated overpass for S. Lander Street to eliminate conflicts between automobile traffic and Link trains at the existing crossing.

Mr. Hampton explained the different profiles for the alignment across the Duwamish River, noting that each alignment would include a new connection to the already existing Operations and Maintenance Facility Central complex. He also highlighted changes in design from the DEIS allowed for the preferred alternative to be modified, allowing the alignment to remove previously planned in-water piers on that segment.

Mr. Hampton gave information on the Delridge and West Seattle Junction segments, which he noted were intertwined due to the former segment determining what options were available for the latter. He highlighted the wide range of differences between the alternatives, varying from at-grade to tunneled to elevated segment in the Delridge segment. Mr. Hampton also highlighted that the preferred alternative would have the lowest residential and park impacts for the full alignment, while having a higher business impact than some other alternatives. He also noted that there was one alternative studied that had fewer residential and business impacts compared to the preferred alternative but would also eliminate the Avalon station from the alignment.

Mr. Hampton provided an overview of estimated ridership figures for the WSLE, noting that total daily boardings for the entire extension are projected to be about 24,000-27,000 riders. He highlighted that SODO would see the largest share of daily boardings due to it being a transfer point between lines, that Delridge would see approximately 5,400 riders, with 90% of its ridership come from bus transfers from areas further south on the peninsula, Avalon being heavily dependent on the final selected alignment for Alaska Junction, and Alaska Junction itself having similar ridership to Delridge.

DCEO Mestas provided an overview of the cost evolution of the project. She noted that the 2023 Finance Plan, which was based on figures from the DEIS, had a projected cost of \$4.0 billion in FY2023 dollars, but that this figure did not factor in any impacts caused by high inflation, supply chain issues, and the pandemic. In the FEIS, the project cost grew to \$5.1-5.6 billion in FY2024 dollars, and included new updates due to continued design progression and updated Right-of-Way changes. The 2024 Preliminary Engineering estimate included a cost of \$6.7-7.1 billion in FY2024 dollars. Ms. Mestas noted that this cost increase was due to the stage having more design work, approximately 30% design compared to 10% in the FEIS, and included a bottom-up basis, instead of the comparative model used in the 2023 Finance Plan and FEIS. She also highlighted that the preliminary engineering estimate was a more accurate reflection of current market conditions and constraints.

Ms. Mestas provided further detail into what occurs in each phase of development in the WSLE project. She noted that the comparative approach is usually used in the Planning and Environmental stage of the project, with many cost savings and value engineering opportunities being implemented during the design phase. She also emphasized that the value engineering opportunities are focused on being able to provide the same level of service capacity and performance with different methodology, as opposed to compromising service or scope of the project.

Ms. Mestas elaborated on the drivers of the increase between the DEIS and FEIS, including the change in design of the Duwamish segment to move piers out of the river, enhancing access to Delridge Station, changes to the Alaska Junction Station profile, and additional environmental mitigation. She also highlighted the drivers for cost increases in Preliminary Engineering compared to the FEIS, which was mainly due to progressing from 10% to 30% design, as well as the change in methodology from comparative estimates to a bottom-up approach.

Ms. Mestas then provided a final summary on cost drivers, with 22% of the increase being due to changes in market conditions, specifically limited labor and contractors pools leading to decreased competitiveness in the bidding process; 39% being due to the continued progression of design from 10% to 30% and the change to a more accurate estimating methodology; 26% from delays in the planning and environmental review process; and 13% from increased indirect costs in professional services, such as architectural, engineering, and contract managing firms.

Ms. Mestas provided a broader national context for the project, highlighting specific areas of the market that are outside the agency's control. Materials such as cement, asphalt, and concrete saw significant increases in cost since the pandemic, while strong growth in non-residential infrastructure spending has put additional cost pressures on the market. She also noted that there are very few firms that are

available to take on mega projects, which also contributes to a less competitive and more expensive contracting market.

Ms. Mestas highlighted the different opportunities available for cost saving measures, with the agency identifying both program level and project level items, such as collaborative delivery strategies, offsite construction to limit disruption and construction times on build sites, prefabrication of modular station components, value engineering opportunities, and strategic right-of-way acquisitions.

Ms. Mestas gave an overview of the timeline of WSLE project next steps, which included the adoption of the project to be built decision later in the year, a funding request to advance design engineering early next year, followed by funding requests for construction once the agency had advanced through the entire design process. She also provided further detail on what the project to be built decision entails, noting that it is required to allow the project to enter the design phase, and that this decision would not negatively impact the agency's ability to advance other projects in the expansion program.

Chair Constantine highlighted that there is a continued enthusiasm by residents for the WSLE project, noting that recent polls showed that 72% of respondents in the Duwamish peninsula want the light rail system built. He emphasized the importance of delivery this and other projects that were approved by voters in the ST3 package as soon as possible to bring the benefits of the regional transit system. He also noted the benefits of the project: a nearly 50% reduction in commute time to downtown Seattle, new opportunities for transit-oriented development, and an additional travel option between West Seattle and the rest of the city.

Chair Constantine noted his disappointment in the rising cost estimates for the project, but noted the importance of not becoming paralyzed, and that the agency needs to push forward to continue to evaluate and determine the tradeoffs of projects, and to ensure that the agency's projects are shovel ready when the market conditions are most favorable.

Chair Constantine shared his outlook on the progress made by the agency over the past year, and noted that he was working on a motion to bring to the full Board that directs the agency to develop a work plan to advance analysis to improve the financial plan, progress from agency reforms, pursue ways to drive down capital costs and inform decisions on the WSLE project and others in the ST3 program.

Board member Balducci echoed her agreement with Chair Constantine's remarks and added that she was happy that the Committee was being presented with these challenges after the agency had had the experience of realigning after the COVID-19 pandemic. She also noted the importance of understanding what things can be changed and what things are outside of the agency's control, while looking forward to seeing what options are available for cost savings as the WSLE project moves forward. She also highlighted a section of the presentation that showed how the WSLE would increase mobility for people in West Seattle, and how important that is in changing people's lives.

Board member Dammeier asked for clarification on the what the project to be built decision commits the agency to moving forward. DCEO Mestas responded that the decision would only authorize funds for moving the WSLE project into design.

Chair Constantine further asked for clarification on the timeline for a request for construction funding. Ms. Mestas responded that it would come later, in approximately two years.

Board member Dammeier shared his concerns about cost escalation and what impact that would have on the system as a whole. He also echoed Chair Constantine's sentiments about delivering on voter-approved projects, but also noted that the voter-approval included an initial cost estimate that must also be kept in mind. He also recalled his views on how the agency has previously let projects be delayed and over budget, while also sharing his thanks for the agency undergoing a culture shift to take cost pressures more seriously.

Board member Dammeier also noted his view that the agency should prioritize on delivering projects and ridership, and to not focus on expanding scope. He further shared his concerns about how this may impact parts of the system to the north and south as time goes on but remains hopeful that programmatic reforms would help deliver better certainty and cost stability on future projects.

Board member Harrell thanked DCEO Mestas for her transparency in her report and echoed the sentiments shared by other Committee members in being committed to deliver a safe and successful transit system for the region.

Executive Session – None

Other business – None

Next meeting

Thursday, October 3, 2024
10:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Boardroom and Virtually via Zoom

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m.



Dow Constantine
Executive Committee Chair

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator

APPROVED on November 7, 2024, HRR