



Summary Minutes

System Expansion Committee Meeting December 12, 2024

Call to order

The meeting was called to order at 1:34 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/livestream-video>.

Roll call of members

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

Board Members	
(A) Nancy Backus, Auburn Mayor	(A) Bruce Harrell, Seattle Mayor
(A) Angela Birney, Redmond Mayor	(P) Jim Kastama, Puyallup Mayor
(P) Cassie Franklin, Everett Mayor	(P) Dave Somers, Snohomish County Executive
	(A) 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

Chair Balducci announced that she would skip the Report of the Chair to allow time for the large number of people present for public comment.

CEO Report

Interim Chief Executive Officer Goran Sparrman provided the report.

Activation Update

CEO Sparrman stated that there are no activation-related updates to share this month.

Stride BRT NEPA and Grant Updates

Earlier this year, the Stride BRT program was awarded a \$69.8 million Reconnecting Communities Grant to support improvements at the Renton Transit Center and Tukwila International Boulevard stations, which are both part of the S1 line that will run between Bellevue, Renton, Tukwila, and Burien.

In order to obligate the funding, Sound Transit coordinated with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Washington State Department of Transportation to complete an environmental review and NEPA determination. In late November, the FTA issued a letter confirming the Tukwila International Boulevard station’s NEPA Categorical Exclusion, which allowed Sound Transit and FTA to execute the first ever Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods grant in the country.

CEO Sparrman thanked Sound Transit's federal partners at US Department of Transportation and FTA for their work to review and approve the grant agreement.

Tacoma Dome Link Extension DEIS publication date

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension project will be officially published tomorrow, December 13, 2024. A 60-day extended comment period will run through February 10, 2025, and Sound Transit will be hosting an online public hearing and in-person public meetings in January.

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:

MaryKate Ryan, on behalf of Historic South Downtown
Howard Greenwich, on behalf of Puget Sound Sage
Bill Hirt
Ava Chiong-Bisbee
Jacqueline Wu

In-person Verbal Public Comments:

Betty Lau
MaryKate Ryan
Howard Greenwich
Mei Fang Zhu
Chiang Hwu Lin
Yu Ying Chou
Hui Lan Huang
Ru Juan Ma
Meilani Mandery
Rachtha Danh
JM Wong

Virtual Verbal Public Comments:

Jason Greenland – not present during the meeting

Business items

For Committee Final Action

Minutes: November 11, 2024 System Expansion Committee meeting

It was moved by Vice Chair Roscoe, seconded by Board member Kastama, and carried by unanimous voice vote that the minutes of the November 11, 2024 System Expansion Committee meeting be approved as presented.

Motion No. M2024-79: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a contract modification with Tube Art Displays, Inc. to revise the term of the contract through project completion and incorporate NE 130th St Infill Station signage fabrication and installation services in the amount of \$550,000, with a 10 percent contingency of \$55,000 totaling \$605,000, for a new total authorized contract amount not to exceed \$14,382,288.

Candace Toth, Deputy Director of Wayfinding & Signage, gave the staff presentation. She was joined by Taylor Carroll, Acting Deputy Executive Project Director, as a representative of the NE 130th St Infill Station project.

Chair Balducci inquired if this is the only contract that will be needed to fulfill signage and wayfinding needs for the station. Ms. Toth confirmed that is correct.

Chair Balducci asked why this specific work scope was not included in the original signage contract and what is triggering the need for Committee approval, given the relatively small funding request. Ms. Toth explained that the NE 130th St Infill Station project was not yet baselined at the time of the original signage contract's execution. Due to not having the full baseline budget for the project established, its scope of work was removed from the original contract and planned to be reintegrated at a later date. She also answered that the CEO's contracting authority is capped at \$10,000,000, which is why Committee approval is required.

Chair Balducci suggested that staff look at potential process improvements to streamline contract execution.

It was moved by Vice Chair Roscoe, seconded by Board member Kastama, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-79 be approved.

For Recommendation to the Board

Motion No. M2024-80: Authorizing the chief executive officer to execute a funding agreement with King County Metro Transit (Metro) for Metro to contribute \$50,000,000 to Sound Transit in support of delivering the Renton Transit Center as part of the I-405 Stride Bus Rapid Transit project.

Alex Krieg, Director of Access, Integration, and Station Area Planning, gave the staff presentation.

Chair Balducci thanked both staff from Sound Transit and King County Metro for their continued collaboration.

It was moved by Vice Chair Roscoe, seconded by Board member Kastama, and carried by the unanimous voice vote of all committee members present that Motion No. M2024-80 be forwarded to the Board with a do-pass recommendation.

Reports to the Committee

Report from the Technical Advisory Group

CEO Sparrman highlighted that the current scope of work related to the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) is ending. Today's presentation will be the final quarterly report from the TAG.

He thanked the Board for bringing on the TAG which will have a lasting impact on delivering transit to the region for decades to come. Following the TAG's assessment, recommendations, advice, and support, the agency is making meaningful changes to the way it conducts business. Over the last year, the agency has reformed Capital Delivery organizational structures, reimagined the relationship with the construction industry and contract management to become an Owner of Choice, restructured the entire agency, and reset the partnership with FTA. All of these outcomes are associated with the agency-wide effort to implement the TAG recommendations. He thanked the many staff members who have been instrumental to integrate this work into the culture of the agency.

CEO Sparrman thanked the TAG members for their efforts and noted that TAG members Grace Crunican, Ken Johnsen, Roger Natsuhara, and Charla Skaggs have agreed to continue supporting the Capital Delivery Department and DCEO Mestas as Capital Program consultants.

Ken Johnsen, TAG Vice Chair, first noted that there are no slides for today's report. Mr. Johnsen thanked Chair Balducci for her initial push to contract with outside experts to conduct a deep-dive review

into the system expansion program. He briefly summarized the six recommendations that came out of the TAG's initial engagement with staff. Mr. Johnsen also highlighted that good work was done in 2023 to act on the recommendations, but it was not happening fast enough.

In 2024, Mr. Johnsen noted that the implementation work accelerated with the hiring and onboarding of interim CEO Sparrman and DCEO Mestas. Specifically, Mr. Johnsen highlighted that bringing together existing staff and additional outside capacity has pushed the agency forward. After meeting with staff earlier this week to review upcoming 2025 work, Mr. Johnsen stated that the TAG was impressed with the work done over the last year, and that it seems like the agency is reinvigorated compared to when the TAG's work began.

He agreed with CEO Sparrman's comment about the TAG's scope of work being completed and added that staff have internalized, and continue to make, improvements.

Chair Balducci stated that she has seen this TAG work make incredible impacts to the agency. She opined on the 2021 Realignment decision to pull the delay lever in response to revenue shortfalls during the COVID-19 pandemic. While necessary to meet financing requirements, pushing projects out further does add to overall project cost and means less service for the region for longer. She stated that this effort to see how the agency can work to accelerate projects has been deeply impactful. Chair Balducci thanked the TAG members for their work and effort.

Status of Implementing the Technical Advisory Group recommendations

Brad Owen, Executive Director in Capital Delivery, gave the report on behalf of DCEO Mestas. Mr. Owen echoed the previous thanks to the TAG members. He noted that the TAG and Capital Delivery leadership held a workshop earlier this week to look over the work completed to date and plan ahead for the work in 2025. Today's TAG implementation report will focus on partnerships.

While the initial TAG Recommendation was focused on Sound Transit's relationship with the Federal Transit Administration, Mr. Owen added that the work under the partnerships initiative also includes local partners and authorities having jurisdiction (AHJs). The Agency recently completed its 100th quarterly meeting with the FTA and celebrated 25 years of partnership. He added that candid feedback from the FTA in light of the TAG recommendations has been helpful and well-received.

One of the developments is the introduction of an agency quarterback to provide visibility and continuity as the principal liaison between the two agencies. The introduction and development of the Project Management Information System (PMIS) will also help to support transparency and streamline collaboration with the FTA. As more work is undertaken by Sound Transit, there will be more robust reporting that is necessary, and the PMIS will help to standardize and collate all the necessary information to meeting reporting requirements. As an example, Mr. Owen described a sample of a NEPA milestone tracking function that will be integrated into the PMIS.

The same principles that are guiding the renewed FTA partnership will also be applied to the agency's interactions with local Authorities having Jurisdiction (AHJ). Staff intend to engage early to set expectations, goals, and resource needs, have regular, ongoing coordination meetings, conduct formal and informal "over-the-shoulder" reviews, and develop consistent permitting strategies across the region.

Pivoting to focus on upcoming Key Performance Indicators (KPI) related to the TAG implementation initiates, Mr. Owen highlighted that the implementation of the PMIS is expected to start in Q1 2025, which will coincide with extensive staff training on the software and the reiteration of timely decision-making. Additionally, the cost workplan directed by the Board during discussion on the West Seattle Link Extension project will be tracked in the PMIS.

Chair Balducci asked about what reports the committee can expect in the new year as TAG implementation reports wind down as a special topic. Mr. Owen responded that he would take that question back to staff for additional discussion.

Tacoma Dome Link Extension Draft Environmental Impact Statement Publication update

Chelsea Levy, Acting Executive Director for Planning, began the presentation by noting that today's report will provide an overview of the alternatives studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE) and review the key finding and differentiating characteristics in each of the project segments. The DEIS will be officially published tomorrow, initiating a 60-day extended comment period through February 10. No action is requested today. She invited Curvie Hawkins, Tacoma Dome Link Extension Project Director, to continue with the presentation.

Mr. Hawkins briefly summarized the TDLE project's scope, including the forecast service date of 2035. The extension is planned to include for stations and about 10 miles of almost entirely elevated light rail guideway between Federal Way and Tacoma. The project also includes two parking facilities and a light rail-only bridge crossing the Puyallup River. The TDLE project will work toward completing the light rail spine to Pierce County, connecting the region to employment, services, and education opportunities in Pierce County and the Puyallup Tribe's reservation, and is expected to serve as many as 36,000 daily riders.

Mr. Hawkins outlined the project's schedule to date, noting the Board initially selected the alternatives for study in the DEIS in 2019. During the study effort, new information came to light in 2022 that warranted the Board adding an additional alignment along SR 99 in Federal Way and additional station options in Fife in 2023. As next steps, the Board is expected to confirm or modify the alternatives for study in the Final EIS in 2025, with publication of the document planned to occur in 2027, followed by the Board selecting the Project to be Built and the FTA issuing a Record of Decision. Before diving into the DEIS findings, Mr. Hawkins summarized that the EIS informs Tribal Nations, agencies, and the public of a project's potential impacts on the transportation system, the natural and build environment, and outlines mitigation strategies.

Mr. Hawkins added that there are five notable consideration that will require attention from the Board and staff in order to identify a durable preferred alternative for the Final EIS in the spring: highly sensitive cultural resources identified in consultation with the Puyallup Tribe, newer alternatives added in 2023 along SR 99 in south Federal Way, no current preferred alternative west of the Fife Station area, the highly complex engineering and construction task associated with the Puyallup River bridge crossing, and trade-offs from temporary and long-term impacts to the Tacoma Dome station area, which will be the region's most transit-connected hub.

Beginning in the Federal Way Segment, Mr. Hawkins reminded the Committee that the Board selected the South 336th Street Alternative for the Operations and Maintenance Facility South (OMFS) project, which includes a 1.4-mile segment of light rail guideway. The segment was included in the OMFS Record of Decision and remains in the TDLE EIS.

In the South Federal Way segment, there are four alignment alternatives – two along I-5 and two along SR 99. The SR 99 alternatives were added in 2023, and there is currently no preferred alternative in this segment. Both of the I-5 alignments (SF Enchanted Parkway and SF I-5) impact known highly sensitive cultural resources which the Puyallup Tribe has stated no amount of mitigation would be sufficient to resolve impacts in this area. The SF I-5 alternative would have the most stream impacts and the SF Enchanted Parkway alternative has the most residential displacements, including the potential displacement of the future King County Emergency Shelter.

The SF 99-West alternative primarily travels on the west side of the roadway and would have the second most residential displacements, mostly to a mobile home and RV park in Milton. The alternative would require challenging acquisitions and mitigations in the northern section and require temporary

closures/lane reductions on Pacific Highway during construction (and would permanently restrict left turns at the Pacific Highway/70th Avenue E. Intersection). The Porter Way Design Option would reduce business displacements but would increase permanent impacts to wetlands and streams.

The SF 99-East alternative primarily travels on the east side of the roadway until it reaches S. 373rd St. where it transitions to the median. The alternative would have the fewest residential displacements but the most wetland impacts, and has the same number of business displacements as the SF 99 West alternatives. It would also require permanent left-turn restrictions on Pacific Highway south of S. 373rd St. The Porter Way Design Option would reduce business displacements but would increase permanent impacts to wetlands and streams.

Showing a table comparing the information for the alternatives in South Federal Way, Mr. Hawkins provided an explanation of how to read the graphics that will be used for each segment. Mr. Hawkins reiterated the key finding related to the highly sensitive cultural resources associated with the I-5 alternatives. He then moved to the South Federal Way station options.

The SF Enchanted Parkway station would be north of S. 352nd Street and includes a design option spanning the road. The station's proximity to the intersection could create some potential traffic conflicts with buses accessing the station. The SF I-5 alternative would be along I-5, just north of Enchanted Parkway. It has the least opportunities for nonmotorized access, transit connections, and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) due to its location.

The SF 99-Enchanted station would be just north of S. 352nd Street. Residents to the south of the station would have to cross more streets with heavier traffic to reach this option and the station's location would create potential traffic conflicts with buses accessing the station. The SF 99-352nd station performs the best for nonmotorized access, transit connections, and potential for TOD.

Summarizing the South Federal Way Station options, Mr. Hawkins stated that either of the I-5 oriented stations would connect to alignments that impact sensitive cultural resources. The SR 99 guideway alternatives and station options could be mixed-and-matched.

The Fife Segment includes three elevated alignment alternatives and three station options. In 2019, the Board identified a preferred alternative for the station and the alignment east of the station, and in 2023, the Board added two additional station options to study outside of the Fife floodplain. There is currently not a preferred alternative west of the station area.

The Fife Pacific Highway alternative travels primarily along the south side of Pacific Highway, until just west of the Port of Tacoma Road. This alternative would have the most business displacements, particularly at the Fife Business Park and on the south side of Pacific Highway, including displacement of the Pick Quick Drive-in which is important to the community and is also identified as an eligible historic resource. This alternative would require temporary access restrictions and roadway/lane closures of Pacific Highway during construction which could create access challenges to businesses.

The Fife Median alternative would travel primarily along the median of Pacific Highway E on an elevated guideway until near the Port of Tacoma Road. This alternative would have the least business displacements and avoids Pick Quick. However, it would require the most construction restrictions and closures on Pacific Highway, which would create access challenges for businesses during construction.

The Fife I-5 alternative would travel along the north side of I-5. This alternative would minimize roadway closures during construction compared to the other alternatives. There would be visual impacts to some residences and views of businesses from I-5 would change. This alternative would have the most impacts to ecosystems resources.

Moving to the three station options, the Fife Station option is the most consistent with the Fife City Center plans, minimizes business displacements, and minimizes roadway closure during construction. The 54th Avenue and 54th Span station options have more business displacements and would have

more traffic impacts during construction because of their proximity to the busy 54th Avenue E. roadway. The Preferred Alternative Fife Station option generally performs the best against the criteria.

The Tacoma Segment includes a light rail-only bridge over the Puyallup River, a station in the vicinity of Portland Avenue, and a station in the Tacoma Dome Area. The DEIS evaluates one alignment to cross the river and two bridge design types: a long span and an in-water piers design. Both designs involve trade-offs. The long span will be approximately 60' higher than I-5 and will impact the view of the Mt. Rainier from the tribe's ceremonial grounds. The in-river pier design has a lower profile but requires a pier in the river, impacting fish and treaty fishing. Mr. Hawkins provided visual representation of the visual impacts and acknowledged the Tribal Sovereignty of the Puyallup River. He noted that close coordination with the Tribe in this area will be key.

Shifting to the Portland Avenue options (Portland Avenue and Portland Avenue Span), Mr. Hawkins noted that they have generally similar impacts. The Span station option performs better for passenger experience while the Portland Ave station option performs better regarding construction impacts and transit access.

As the project nears the Tacoma Dome area, there are four alignments and corresponding stations in this area. In 2019, the Board identified Tacoma 25th Street-West as the preferred alternative. The station is on 25th Street, west of G Street. Tacoma 25th Street-East station is also on 25th street but is east of G Street. Both alternatives on 25th Street minimize business displacements; however, businesses would have access restrictions during construction due to temporary closures of E. 25th Street. These alternatives would also require a temporary full-closure of the T-line and the L Street Bridge. The Tacoma Close to Sounder option was added by Board direction in 2019. This alternative provides the greatest opportunity to create a seamless multimodal hub for transit service; however, it has the most business displacements and requires temporary relocation and rebuild of the existing Amtrak and Sounder stations. The 26th Street option minimizes construction impacts but has the least opportunity for multimodal integration due to its distance from Amtrak, Sounder, and the T-Line.

Among the Tacoma Segment alternatives, the Tacoma Close to Sounder option is the highest performer, with the least construction access and utility impacts. However, it does require rebuilding the Amtrak and Sounder stations and relocation of the tenants at Freighthouse Square. Staff are aware of the complexities of Amtrak and Sounder operations and recent investments at Freighthouse Square and would continue to coordinate with the associated entities.

As the presentation wrapped-up, Mr. Hawkins noted that letters were mailed to every potentially affected property owner in November. The letters provided more details about the project, and how to connect with Sound Transit to get more information. Property owners are also invited to attend webinars which will explain what it means to be potentially affected by TDLE and to introduce the property acquisition and relocation process at a high level. Other property owner engagement activities include in-person briefings as-requested and potential door-to-door outreach.

Mr. Hawkins previewed upcoming public engagement during the comment period which starts tomorrow, December 13, 2024 and runs through February 10, 2025. For the duration of the comment period, staff will have an online open house, where people can learn more about the project and provide written comments. Staff will also hold one virtual and three in-person public meetings.

Chair Balducci asked for an additional re-iteration of the next steps timeline, mostly for scheduling a tour for her and additional Board members to familiarize themselves with areas of potential impact. Mr. Hawkins noted that staff would welcome any Board member requesting an alignment tour. He noted that the extended 60-day comment period would provide some additional time for those to occur. Mr. Hawkins stated that the Board will be asked in the spring to confirm or modify the alternatives for study in the FEIS. CEO Sparrman committed to directing staff to coordinate with Board members on planning an alignment tour. Chair Balducci noted it may be best to wait until after the comment period closes and the comments can be compiled to schedule a tour.

Executive session - None.

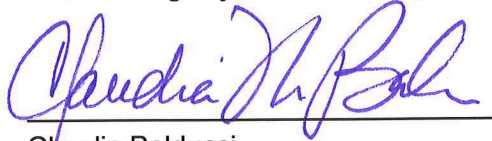
Other business — Chair Balducci thanked Executive Leadership, Capital Delivery Leadership, Board Administration, and the Audio-visual team for all their support of the Committee over the last year. She also praised the improvements to the Board room completed in the summer.

Next meeting

Thursday, January 9, 2025
1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Ruth Fisher Board Room & Virtually via Zoom

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.



Claudia Balducci
System Expansion Committee Chair

APPROVED on January 9, 2025, AJM.

ATTEST:



Kathryn Flores
Board Administrator