

September 23, 2010

TO: **Representative Marko Liias**

FROM: **Joni Earl, Chief Executive Officer**

SUBJECT: **Requested information**

The following are Sound Transit's responses to your inquiry about how we coordinate with other agencies and make service delivery decisions. As the only regional transit authority in Washington State and one of the largest public works projects in the nation, Sound Transit has a unique story and perspective to offer. We appreciate the opportunity to further educate the panel on what and how we do business with our many partners. We welcome any follow-up questions you may have on these or other areas of interest.

#### **I. Coordinating services with others**

In the early 1990s, the Washington State Legislature authorized King, Pierce and Snohomish counties to create a single agency - the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit). Our mission is to plan, build and operate a high-capacity regional transit system to improve mobility for Central Puget Sound. In 1996, the region's voters approved the creation of Sound Transit and the initial phase of the system, called "Sound Move." In 2008, the voters approved an \$18 billion expansion plan, known as Sound Transit 2. Our two voter-approved plans are building over 50 miles of Link light rail, 81 miles of commuter rail, extensive ST Express bus service, including over 40 capital infrastructure projects to support the local and regional network of bus service in the region.

Sound Transit added a new dimension to the existing bus transit system and was a catalyst for developing a more integrated regional system by connecting the major population and employment centers across the three counties. We partner and coordinate extensively with King County Metro, Community Transit, and Pierce Transit. In fact, half of our board members in each county also serve on the local transit governing body. We contract with the three agencies to operate and maintain our ST Express bus services and with King County Metro to operate and maintain our Link light rail system. We all work together to achieve an efficient, effective integrated system. Examples of coordination include:

- Service Planning, including joint coordination of service changes 3 times per year
- Regional fare policy and single regional fare media (ORCA), also including Washington State Ferries, Everett Transit and Kitsap Transit
- Service operations and facilities maintenance
- Customer services including marketing, regional trip planning and fare media sales
- Partnerships to seek state and federal funding for projects and services
- Good Neighbor Policy for joint use of park and rides and transit center facilities
- Partnerships on capital projects, including joint funding
- Shared purchase options for bus purchases

- Law enforcement and security operations
- Transportation Integration Group providing staff-level coordination among partner agencies
- Monthly General Manager meetings to discuss transit and coordination issues

Sound Transit also currently works with private providers to make arrangements for selective use of our transit facilities. As an example, Sound Transit has an existing agreement with Microsoft Corporation to provide access to the Overlake Transit Center in Redmond, and we are in discussions about use of other facilities. We believe these arrangements can benefit the public and advance our goal of moving more people. However, it is critical these decisions be made on a case-by-case basis at the local agency level to ensure federal funding is not jeopardized and we continue to maximize the use of our facilities for our customers.

## **II. Coordinating with the activities of the WSDOT and the Public Transportation Division**

With the Secretary of Transportation serving on the Sound Transit Board, the state has direct involvement in our planning and policy decisions. As a large service and construction agency, Sound Transit has many opportunities to work with the Washington State Department of Transportation as we deliver our projects and services. This coordination helps integrate the high-capacity system with the state's overall transportation system, providing benefits to all. Sound Transit and WSDOT actually have several agreements, including an Umbrella Agreement for our Capital Program and a complex and fiscally responsible Land Bank Agreement that guide our work. Examples of our extensive interaction with the state include:

- Investing more than \$1 billion in track and signal improvements which directly benefit freight traffic and the state's Amtrak Cascade services
- Investing more than \$500 in the state's HOV system with direct access ramps and the I-90 Two-Way Transit and HOV project (R8A)
- Contracting with WSDOT to design and manage construction of ST funded facilities that become part of the state highway system
- Partnering on capital projects such as multi-modal stations, including ferry terminal transit access and coordination
- Partnering on federal grant applications including high speed rail dollars
- Negotiating access to state right-of-way, multiple air space leases for facilities
- Applying for state Regional Mobility Grant dollars
- Joint planning to leverage resources on connected projects such as the extension of Sounder Commuter Rail to Lakewood and the Point-Defiance Bypass Project
- Coordinating to provide transit service as mitigation during state construction projects such as the 2009 closure of I-5 lanes in Seattle
- Partnering on the SR 520 Bridge and HOV Replacement Project to integrate transit into the solution for traffic management across the bridge and through adjacent neighborhoods
- Partnering on the I-405 HOT Lane project to evaluate the feasibility of utilizing transit and HOV direct access ramps in the corridor as a component of the high occupancy toll lane system

### **III. Making decisions about service delivery**

Our Board of Directors approved a Long-Range Plan in the mid-90's as a blueprint for addressing the projected growth in the region. The Plan identified transit service technologies in major corridors throughout the region, which then served as a guide for future phases of voter-approved transit projects. The original plan was reviewed and updated in 2005, to reflect extensive analysis of the region's growth in the coming decades and how the regional transit system might best accommodate that growth. Using that unanimously approved plan, Sound Transit worked with the public and communities throughout the region to set priorities for Sound Transit 2 (ST2). The voter approved plans - Sound Move and ST2 - now guide our project and service delivery program.

Each year, Sound Transit prepares an annual update on the development of its express bus, commuter rail and light rail services. Developed in close coordination with the agency's proposed budget and long-range financial plan, the Service Implementation Plan (SIP) describes service additions and revisions proposed for the upcoming budget year, together with preliminary proposals and financial estimates for the subsequent 5-year period. It also includes a detailed report on the status of each bus and rail route and performance objectives for the coming year, including ridership and productivity targets.

Because funding available for Sound Transit service is limited, there is a need to obtain optimum efficiency and effectiveness out of each component of the system while maintaining or improving the quality of service. Since 1998, Sound Transit has used its Service Standards and Performance Measures to help plan and manage Sound Transit service. The Board-adopted standards provide guidelines for the service evaluation and service change process and help measure performance of customer service, efficiency, reliability, ridership, availability, cost-effectiveness and safety. Detailed guidelines also ensure that Sound Transit bus routes reflect the characteristics of a high speed, limited-stop regional system.

Sound Transit works with the local jurisdictions and our transit partners within our district as we plan and implement our projects and services. At the regional level, we participate in Puget Sound Regional Council planning efforts by serving on several committees including the Regional Staff Committee, Transportation Operators Committee, Regional Freight Mobility Roundtable, Regional Project Evaluation Committee, Seattle-Tacoma-Everett FTA Caucus, Special Needs Transportation Committee, and the Transportation Policy Board.

Sound Transit strives to keep the public, policy-makers and our riders informed of service and project decisions through an extensive outreach program that includes marketing, open-houses, public meetings, rider newsletters, websites, surveys and other mediums.

Please let me know if you have further questions.

cc: Barb Gilliland  
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