

**Report of
Citizen Oversight Panel
North Shore Alternatives
Task Force**

September 27, 2012

Introduction



- Sounder North was a commitment made to the voters of Snohomish County.
- Riders have grown to appreciate the service and citizens value having both train and bus service as alternatives.

Introduction (cont.)



- Sounder North is running below capacity and has high costs.
- At the same time, Snohomish bus riders experience overcrowding during the peak and are standing in the aisles.
- COP sees this as an inefficient and inequitable allocation of resources.

History



- \$258 million was spent to purchase easement from BNSF.
- More than \$300 million total has been spent on stationary assets.
- Despite these very substantial investments, additional funding may be needed to fully realize the benefits.

Current Conditions



- Ridership is less than half of the Sound Move projections for 2010.
- The operating cost of moving a passenger from Everett Station to King Street Station (Seattle) on Sounder North is more than six times that of moving the same passenger by Regional Express bus.

Principal Conclusions



The status quo may not be sustainable.

Sound Transit should undertake proactive efforts to continue to bring costs down and to build ridership.

Performance Metrics



- Total Ridership
- Operating Cost per Rider
- Farebox Recovery Rate

Principal Recommendation



Work with staff to develop a set of specific targets and actions to be taken if targets are not met by a specified date.

Possible Triggered Actions



- Reduce Passenger Cars per Train Set (now 3)
- Reduce Number of Daily Round Trips (now 4)
- Shift Resources to ST Express

Ridership Improvement



- Work with BNSF on Reliability
- Implement Targeted Advertising
- Improve Schedule Alignment
- Explore Fare Reductions
- Provide More Parking
- Enhance Ped/Bike Access
- Build Additional Stations

Doing Nothing is Not an Option



- Sounder North needs attention if it is to survive.
- We urge the Board to work with staff to select strategies to improve ridership and to set explicit targets with consequences if the targets are not met.