Preliminary Initiatives Memorandum

June 2, 2024

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Introduction

Connect 2035 articulates Spokane Transit Authority's strategic roadmap for bus, Paratransit, and Rideshare service through 2035, with a clear vision supported by goals and strategies. It builds on the successes of our previous strategic plan, STA Moving Forward, to address emerging needs and continued investment in equity, sustainability, and community growth. Ultimately, it enables us to identify priorities for the next 10 years and beyond—all while building and strengthening relationships with and within the community.

This memorandum presents preliminary initiatives that have been developed based on input from the community, engagement with STA employees, conversations with STA Board members, technical analysis, and best practice research. Preliminary initiatives are organized around Connect 2035's three strategic goals:

1. Elevate the customer experience,
2. Leading and collaborate with community partners to enhance the quality of life in our region, and
3. Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of the region.

Within each goal, the preliminary initiatives are grouped into recommended actions, building off the potential actions identified during Phase 1 of the strategic planning process. Each preliminary initiative has been categorized as a:

- Core investment – an initiative that delivers on a major organizational commitment or is essential to enable future growth of STA's network and services.
- Enhancement – an initiative that involves one-time investments (e.g., a capital investment or timebound pilot project) or can be delivered in a cost-neutral manner. STA can leverage its available resources to deliver these initiatives. Some enhancements are considered network optimizations, which are near-term, cost-neutral service updates developed based on public input, market conditions, and existing ridership patterns.
- Enhancement+ - an initiative that involves ongoing, recurring costs (e.g., new bus routes or significant increases in service frequency or duration) and will require a new funding source to sustainably deliver.

Following the Board Workshop on June 5, the project team will begin evaluating the preliminary initiatives to assess their individual impact and cost to inform Board prioritization and packaging.

Goal 1: Elevate the Customer Experience

1. **Recommended Action:** Provide a seamless trip-planning, payment, and wayfinding experience designed for customers' ease of use

Enhancement:
- 1.1 Enhance existing STA Connect App to include trip planning, real-time arrival information, and service disruptions/detours
- 1.2 Expand Wi-Fi availability and charging across entire fixed route and paratransit fleet
- 1.3 Increase educational efforts to raise awareness of service information in languages other than English and ability to request translations into any language
- 1.4 Assess the need for location-specific signage in languages other than English
- 1.5 Improve accessibility for blind and low-vision riders
- 1.6 Increase real-time information displays showing upcoming stops, estimated departure times, and any service disruptions in STA service.

2. **Recommended Action:** Implement near-term service adjustments to better serve new travel patterns and developments

Enhancement (Network Optimization):
- 2.1 Provide additional evening and/or weekend service on high-performing routes
- 2.2 Update service in Spokane Valley: add new connections to Argonne Park-n-Ride, I-90, and employment centers
- 2.3 Optimize routes to better align with observed demand for transit
- 2.4 Adjust and/or extend routes to better serve important destinations and employment centers

3. **Recommended Action:** Further expand hours of service and increase frequency to better meet demand

Enhancement+:
- 3.1 Extend bus service to 12:30am across the system from Monday to Saturday
- 3.2 Increase weekend service frequency on additional high-performing routes
- 3.3 Increase service frequency in the West Plains
- 3.4 Increase service in southwest Liberty Lake with the completion of the Appleway Park-and-Ride

4. **Recommended Action:** Expand STA's High Performance Transit Network

Core:

    4.1 Implement the Division Street Bus Rapid Transit project (dependent on state and federal funding)

Enhancement:

    4.2 Transform Route 33 - Wellesley to High Performance Transit (infrastructure)

Enhancement+:

    4.3 Extend Division St. BRT to a potential new transit center in Mead
    4.4 Upgrade Division BRT to 10-minute service on weekdays
    4.5 Extend Route 90 - Sprague to the Appleway Park-n-Ride to meet new demand and development activity
    4.6 Upgrade Route 61 - Highway 2/Fairchild to a High Performance Transit Route (service + infrastructure)
    4.7 Create a coordinated I-90 bus corridor between Liberty Lake and Spokane Airport
    4.8 Secure dedicated ROW for transit along I-90
    4.9 Update Route 28 - Nevada to High Performance Transit (service + infrastructure)

5. **Recommended Action:** Work to improve travel times and the reliability of STA services

Enhancement:

    5.1 Create a spot improvement program to identify and address locations that slow service or cause unreliable travel times
    5.2 Upgrade bus stops to enable all-door boarding throughout the system
    5.3 Work with municipal partners to implement transit signal priority on the High Performance Transit Network

6. **Recommended Action:** Extend bus service into new areas of ridership demand within the PTBA

Enhancement+:

    6.1 Extend service into E area of the PTBA (East Hillyard)
    6.2 Extend service into NW area of the PTBA (7-mile)
    6.3 Extend service into NE area of the PTBA (Mead)
    6.4 Extend service into S area of the PTBA (Latah Valley, Thorpe Westwood)

7. **<u>Recommended Action:</u>** <u>Expand STA services into the wider region to better serve growth and demand</u>

Enhancement+:

7.1 Expand the PTBA to reflect adjustments to the Urban Growth Area that may be made in 2026
7.2 Expand the PTBA to reach new areas of residential and employment growth
7.3 Extend the duration of the planned pilot to North Idaho

8. **<u>Recommended Action:</u>** <u>Invest in improvements to make it safer and easier to walk, bike, or use micromobility to access STA services</u>

Enhancement:

8.1 Implement a "Transit Access Program" to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to bus stops and transit facilities in partnership with municipalities
8.2 Develop a bike and scooter parking strategy for STA stations and transit centers

9. **<u>Recommended Action:</u>** <u>Develop on-demand mobility services connecting to fixed-route service for areas and times of day not served by fixed-route bus</u>

Enhancement:

9.1 Implement a Mobility On-Demand pilot in one of the following geographic areas:
   o Airway Heights to the Recreation Center
   o Downtown core between 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights
   o Five Mile Prairie
   o North Spokane Valley/Millwood/Northwood
   o Liberty Lake
   o Latah Valley
   o Mead
   o North Hillyard
   o Southern Spokane Valley

Enhancement+:

9.2 Based on results of the on-demand pilot and available funding, implement additional Mobility On-Demand pilots or permanent services in areas identified above

10. **Recommended Action:** Invest in safety-enhancing features and programs throughout our vehicles and facilities, including the Plaza

Enhancement:
10.1	Add hard-wired lighting at high-ridership stops on high-performance transit lines
10.2	Install lighting at all sheltered stops
10.3	Invest in amenities at the Plaza to improve the user experience and enhance safety
10.4	Launch a marketing and communications campaign emphasizing rider safety
10.5	Evaluate transit officer deployments to increase response times
10.6	Pilot a safety ambassadors program with trained personnel on buses and at facilities
10.7	Implement a safety-app and/or safety call button (I.e., "See something, say something")

11. **Recommended Action:** Enhance stations and stops to improve the transit experience for riders of all abilities

Enhancement:
11.1	Work to update bus stops and transit stations to meet ADA requirements
11.2	Launch a bus stop improvement program addressing lighting, shelters, and real-time information
11.3	Partner with municipalities, business districts, and others on public art and placemaking initiatives at/near STA stations and stops
11.4	Identify priority locations for mobility hubs (i.e., incorporating other mobility services and amenities at STA facilities) and implement hubs at the highest priority locations
11.5	Install shelters for all stops with more than 25 daily boardings

12. **Recommended Action:** Adapt paratransit and rideshare offerings to provide more flexible, on-demand service

Enhancement:
12.1	Launch an inclusive Mobility On-Demand pilot program geared towards older adults and people with disabilities to test same-day scheduling for paratransit trips
12.2	Implement online scheduling for paratransit trips
12.3	Pursue inclusive planning for non-emergent medical transportation needs
12.4	Expand marketing and communication efforts to advertise rideshare to night shift workers
12.5	Pilot new user interface and in-vehicle technology to enable rideshare users to book and pay for trips on-demand

Goal 2: Lead and collaborate with community partners to enhance the quality of life in our region

1. **Recommended Action:** Strengthen STA's community engagement capabilities by deepening partnerships with community-based organizations and building avenues for continuous engagement and feedback

Enhancement:
   1.1 Establish a CBO network to support and strengthen STA's community engagement efforts focused on underrepresented communities
   1.2 Continue commitment to local communities by partnering with community-based organizations to mutually build each other's capacity in engagement efforts

2. **Recommended Action:** Develop new avenues to regularly engage riders and the general public around STA's services

Enhancement:
   2.1 Start an annual State of Transit event to inform broader community about STA's successes and impact
   2.2 Grow STA's Insight Network to gather regular input and feedback from engaged riders

3. **Recommended Action:** Expand employer and institutional partnerships to promote ridership and increase access through STA's UTAP and Employer Sponsored Bus Pass programs

Enhancement:
   3.1 Expand outreach to employers to educate about the benefit of transit and STA's service options
   3.2 Collaborate with Commute Smart NW to increase programs and educational efforts geared towards transit within the Commute Trip Reduction program
   3.3 Support regional economic development efforts to attract new employers to the region with information about the availability and benefits of public transit.

4. Recommended Action: <u>Ensure fares continue to be affordable</u>

Enhancement:
4.1 Pilot a mobility wallet and universal basic mobility program (e.g., free STA monthly pass and additional funds for other mobility options) with health and human service providers (a permanent program would require new funding sources)
4.2 Pilot an eligibility-based fare program for riders experiencing low incomes (a permanent program would require new funding sources)

Enhancement+:
4.3 Implement fare capping for non-Connect card users (e.g., tap with credit card or phone)

5. Recommended Action: <u>Leverage partner relationships to promote ridership and provide access to more people</u>
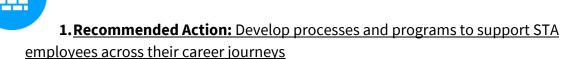
Enhancement:
5.1 Partner with Realtors, developers and property management companies to incentivize transit usage among residents, particularly along high-performance lines
5.2 Work with Visit Spokane, hotels, and event organizers to develop incentives and enhance information for visitors and less frequent riders to use transit
5.3 Engage with school districts outside the City of Spokane to identify how STA can help meet students' transportation needs
5.4 Work with school districts to provide educational resources to students on how to use the bus system and bus etiquette
5.5 Collaborate with Washington State Parks on potential transit connections to the region's outdoor recreation
5.6 Work with event organizers to integrate transit fare into event tickets
5.7 Start a community vehicle share program to help organizations meet special transportation needs
5.8 Expand marketing of the Community Access Pass Program
5.9 Increase programs teaching new riders to use the bus, including partnerships with CBOs

6. Recommended Action: <u>Help foster transit-oriented development across the region</u>

Enhancement:
6.1 Fund station area TOD planning efforts in partnership with municipalities
6.2 When acquiring right of way for transit purposes, evaluate benefit of acquiring complete parcels for potential development
6.3 Partner with municipalities on housing supply and allocation analysis and incorporate future housing allocation into network development

Goal 3: Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of the region

1.Recommended Action: Develop processes and programs to support STA employees across their career journeys

Enhancement:

1.1 Establish a formal, comprehensive organizational development program to expand training and professional and leadership development opportunities, performance assessment and succession planning across the organization
1.2 Improve communication with STA employees
1.3 Create an employee engagement and total rewards strategy to recruit and retain STA talent
1.4 Make targeted investments in staffing to expand competencies in support of strategic internal and external initiatives.

2. Recommended Action: Invest in new technologies and systems to better serve our customers

Enhancement:

2.1 Upgrade our Computer-Aided Dispatch / Automatic Vehicle Location systems to enable more accurate real-time information
2.2 Increase transparency by developing user-friendly, public-facing dashboards for key performance indicators and making it easier to access and use publicly available data
2.3 Purchase a customer relationship management system to improve customer service issue resolution and tracking

3. Recommended Action: Continuously work to reduce STA's environmental impact

Core:

3.1 Implement the zero-emission vehicle transition plan

Enhancement:

3.2 Invest in renewable sources such as solar or wind for powering transit facilities and charging stations for electric vehicles at STA facilities
3.3 Work with partners (SRTC, Avista) to expand access to public electric vehicle charging at STA facilities

3.4 Collaborate with other transit agencies and the Washington State Transit Association to advocate for more state funding to support the transition to zero-emission vehicles and associated infrastructure requirements.

3.5 Adopt procurement policies that prioritize eco-friendly materials, vehicles, and equipment for ongoing operations/maintenance

3.6 Implement green infrastructure practices (e.g., green roofs, rain gardens/stormwater retention, permeable surfaces) at transit hubs and P&R facilities to mitigate impacts of extreme weather as practicable.

Enhancement+:

Develop and implement a plan to transition paratransit, rideshare, and non-revenue vehicles to zero-emissions as practicable as vehicle technologies and options evolve

4. **Recommended Action:** Integrate new technologies into STA's fleet to enhance safety and the rider experience

Enhancement:

4.1 Implement telematics in all STA fleet vehicles (revenue and non-revenue) to increase safety, efficiency, and opportunities for expanded operator training

5. **Recommended Action:** Create an outstanding environment for bus operators

Enhancement:

6.1 Accelerate and expand investments and access to high-quality comfort stations for operators along STA routes

6.2 Upgrade operator break room and amenities

6. **Recommended Action:** Update and expand STA's facilities to meet the region and agency's needs

Core:

7.1 Implement the Facilities Master Plan

7. **Recommended Action:** Continue work to monitor and preserve long-term opportunities for rail in the Spokane region

Enhancement:

8.1 Evaluate opportunities for high-capacity transit, appropriate service modes, and the greatest corridors of opportunity