



July 2024

City Line Celebrates One Year of Service



Riders boarding City Line on opening day, July 15, 2023

One year ago, City Line launched, ushering in a new era of connectivity, sustainability, and community pride for the Spokane region. The six-mile route is Eastern Washington's first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, connecting Spokane's historic Browne's Addition and Spokane Community College by way of downtown Spokane and the University District, including Gonzaga University.

Opening day on July 15, 2023, was marked by festivities and block party celebrations at five different City Line station locations. These celebrations featured live music, free food and promotional items, and family activities. Over 4,400 riders showed up on the first day of service, packing the entire fleet of cutting-edge, zero-emission buses.

"It was an amazing experience for City Line's first day," recalled Carly Cortright, STA's Chief Communications & Customer Service Officer. "There was something for everyone, whether you wanted to learn more about the bus technology and service, or if you wanted a cool souvenir, or just great food. People showed up for a truly

memorable moment in our region's history.”

Three days later on July 18, a ceremonial ribbon cutting was held at Gonzaga University, featuring a stage of guest speakers, including STA's CEO E. Susan Meyer, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee, former Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Deputy Administrator Veronica Vanterpool (currently acting FTA Administrator), Washington State Senator Andy Billig, Spokane County Commissioner and current STA Board Chair Al French, former Spokane City Mayor Nadine Woodward, former Spokane City Council President and STA Board Chair Lori Kinnear, and Gonzaga University President Dr. Thayne McCulloh. In addition to the crowd of several hundred people, other federal, state, and local officials attended to represent the many partners that made City Line a reality.

Over a decade of meticulous planning and extensive collaboration with community partners went into City Line. The distinctly branded black and lilac, battery-electric coaches are complemented by the bus stations which pop with vibrant color and custom artwork created by local Spokane artists.

STA secured a historic \$53.4 million grant from the FTA as well as more than \$7 million in grants from Washington State for City Line's design and construction as well as the acquisition of its all-electric fleet of 11 buses, and the project is expected to come in more than \$10 million under budget.

However, the bus line's most distinguishing feature is its next-level service. On weekdays, buses arrive every 7.5 minutes during morning and afternoon peak hours and every 10 minutes during midday. 15-minute service is offered on weekday mornings and evenings and most Saturdays and Sundays. During early morning and late at night, City Line operates 30-minute service.

“Achieving the full implementation of City Line has involved the dedicated effort of many people,” said STA's Chief Operations Officer, Brandon Rapez-Betty. “STA has delivered on its promised service to the community, and we're very pleased at how successful the route has proven to be in connecting people to where they need to go.”

The route features near-level boarding at the stations, off-board ticketing and fare validation, and monitors displaying real-time estimates of departure times. Onboard monitors display where the bus is along the line, letting riders know when to get off the bus. Custom Braille wayfinding signage is also included at each station, improving ADA accessibility.

The route passed 500,000 rides in April, and within its first full year since launch, the route served 730,892 individual rides. In that time, the route became one of the busiest routes in STA's system. The volume of activity demonstrates the value City Line has brought to local mobility to multiple key destinations in Spokane.

“Those ridership numbers are a fantastic milestone that demonstrates STA's strong ridership recovery and validates our expectations for the route,” observed Karl Otterstrom, Chief Planning & Development Officer at STA.

STA has recovered its ridership faster than larger transit agencies across Washington State as well as the US. In December 2023, STA was one of nine agencies in the country to return to and exceed 2019 ridership for certain months. City Line's ridership has significantly contributed to the strong recovery.

The launch of City Line brought a decade-long vision for sustainable development, transportation, and connectivity to reality. The overwhelming response from the community over the past year has been positive and excited, not only for City Line, but also for the future.

“We are so immensely grateful for the support and trust placed in us by the community we serve,” said Meyer. “City Line truly launched a new beginning for transit in the region.”

Meyer continued, “I like to call City Line the ‘golden line.’ Not only has it connected the community to opportunity, but it will be the launching pad for future successful transit development in the Spokane region.”

With City Line completing a year of service, STA looks ahead to its next major improvements to the region’s transit, especially **Division Street BRT**, a proposed 10-mile route between downtown Spokane and Mead that will launch with the anticipated completion of the North Spokane Corridor in 2030.



Evaluating Candidate Initiatives for *Connect 2035*



Candidate initiatives for STA's next 10-year strategic plan, *Connect 2035*, have been screened, sorted, and evaluated in preparation for bundling into packages that will be presented to the STA Board of Directors in September. Once complete, STA's strategic plan will outline initiatives, capital projects, routes, and programs that will improve and expand transit service to the region over the next 10 years.

During the screening and sorting process, the objective was to organize and advance potential initiatives that aligned with STA's strategic goals. The screening and sorting process was covered at a workshop meeting for the Board on June 5. The result of this step produced a list of candidate initiatives for further evaluation.

The goal of the current evaluation phase is to now assess the impact and cost of the candidate initiatives across a range of key outcomes. Initiatives were scored against outcome criteria to determine their impact and cost-effectiveness, which were then placed into outcome categories and plotted based on impact/cost.

Following the evaluation process, the initiatives will be placed into alternative packages, which prioritize and sequence those initiatives and investments over the next 10 years. These alternative packages will then be presented to the Board and public for additional feedback beginning in September and prior to the final selection of one package.

As part of the effort to inform stakeholders and the public, STA has produced a series of four videos explaining the evaluation process with examples of candidate initiatives that align with the agency's strategic goals. The videos provide an opportunity for Board members to stay current on the planning process in preparation for their September 4 workshop. The videos will be available to the public in early August.

The four videos will cover an overview of the evaluation process, the evaluation results, a cost/benefit analysis, and a preview of the next steps leading into the packaging phase.

Following the September 4 workshop, a community survey will run through

Benefit Area (PTBA) to ensure diverse perspectives are included in shaping STA's policies and services.

The CAC serves as a focused and informed forum for public input. Members bring their personal perspectives, as well as those of the groups they represent, while learning about the complexities of public transportation planning and operations. The committee provides a structured environment for thoughtful discussions with STA staff. CAC members are also expected to share information back with their networks, serving as an educational arm of STA and reaching out to the broader community. They act as a bridge between the public and STA, bringing community suggestions and feedback directly to the organization, helping STA stay connected to the people it serves and adapt its services to better meet community needs.

Applications are being accepted until August 31, 2024. The CAC will review applications and make recommendations for those moving forward in the process at their September meeting. Interested individuals can apply [here](#). CAC members must reside within the PTBA although the residency requirement may be waived for consistent users of bus, Paratransit, or Rideshare services. STA strives for varied geographic and socioeconomic representation on the CAC and seeks applicants with demonstrated lived experience.

For more information, [visit here](#).



Updated Elements to Comprehensive Plan Set for Initial Review



STA's comprehensive plan, Connect Spokane

Selected elements of STA's comprehensive plan, *Connect Spokane*, have undergone revision and are available for review on STA's website [here](#).

First adopted in 2010, STA's comprehensive plan sets out the vision and policy framework to guide decisions made by the Board of Directors over a 30-year-plus period. This framework informs more immediate policy documents, such as STA's current 10-year strategic plan, *STA Moving Forward*, and the six-year *Transit Development Plan*.

As a living document, the comprehensive plan was last updated in 2022. Updates are made to incorporate lessons from the agency's operational experience and adapt to the region's changing needs. Conversations with and feedback from the Board, stakeholders, and the wider community inform revisions to policies. With the anticipated adoption of STA's next 10-year strategic plan, *Connect 2035*, the updates ensure that future proposed projects, plans, and initiatives will be in alignment with the comprehensive plan's policy framework.

Some changes pertain to updating policy definitions and including greater specificity around policies, such as transit-oriented development and its relationship to local economic growth. New tables and maps for envisioning the future extent of STA's High Performance Transit network will be included. Proposed mobility-on-demand project criteria and improved mechanisms for gathering public input to widen STA's reach to the community are included in the update. Finally, existing Title VI policy and other related policies have been placed in a new section entitled "Transit Equity and Inclusion."

"These policy changes help strengthen STA's ability to adapt programs and services as the region grows and the community's expectations evolve over time," commented Karl Otterstrom, Chief Planning & Development Officer at STA.

STA plans to provide additional opportunities for community input, including a community survey in August gauging reaction to the policy updates.

A revised draft will be presented to the Planning & Development Committee at their September 4 meeting. A public hearing will be held at the Board meeting on September 19, and a final draft will be presented to the Board for adoption at their October 17 meeting.



Congratulations to the 2024 Local Rodeo Winners



Left photo, from left to right: STA CEO E. Susan Meyer, Fixed Route 1st Place Winner Gabe Fernos, Fixed Route Rookie of the Year Kurtis Peone, and Fixed

Right photo: Paratransit 1st Place Winner Mikkel Piper

Dozens of participants and supporters, made up of STA Coach and Paratransit Operators, Supervisors, volunteers, and family and friends, gathered together on June 22 for the annual, local Roadeo.

A portmanteau of “road” and “rodeo,” the contest combines knowledge, skill, and professionalism with a bit of fun and the chance to win cash prizes. For drivers, the competition involved 10 obstacles on a timed course. While the obstacles are the same for both Coach and Paratransit drivers, the course is made smaller for Paratransit van drivers to make it equally as challenging as for a bus driver.

The 1st place winners at STA’s Roadeo advance to the State Roadeo in the Tri-Cities this August and, if triumphant, the International Bus Roadeo held annually by the American Public Transportation Association. In addition to the driving segment, the state-level competition includes a series of diagnostic tests for maintenance crew to complete.

STA Chief Operations Officer Brandon Rapez-Betty offered congratulations to all the winners and participants.

“The annual event was fun for everyone,” said Rapez-Betty. “I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the Facilities & Grounds team who prepared the event, the Maintenance team who prepped the vehicles, STA Safety Manager Stephanie Crawford, and the volunteers who spent their day spotting, running, judging, and scorekeeping. But also, I would like to extend a thank you to the friends and families who came out to cheer the participants on. The Roadeo isn’t the same without their support for their loved ones and the agency.”

This year’s 1st place winners include Gabe Fernos from Fixed Route (who was also the winner of the 2014 International Bus Roadeo) and Mikkel Piper from Paratransit (who also took home “Paratransit Rookie of the Year”). Fernos and Piper are headed to the State Roadeo alongside STA’s Maintenance team participants Chris Rasmussen, Alex Clark, and Jaden Immonen.

Fixed Route Division	Operator
1st Place	Gabe Fernos
2nd Place	Trevor Ribic
3rd Place	Scott Leinen
Rookie of the Year (first time participant)	Kurtis Peone
Paratransit Division	Operator
1st Place	Mikkel Piper
Rookie of the Year (first time participant)	Mikkel Piper

This story has been updated to include the full list of winners.



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