



March 2024

STA Hosts Regional Transportation Open Houses



Above: Members of the public conversing at one of STA's recent open houses

STA is hosting a series of open houses across Spokane County in collaboration with regional transportation partners. The open houses, which started earlier this month and run through April 9, aim at fostering community engagement around key transportation projects in the region and providing an excellent venue for residents to learn more about current STA projects, future initiatives, and upcoming developments. Attendees have also been able to interact with representatives from local municipalities and other key stakeholders to learn about infrastructure investments.

“We are excited to invite the community to join us for these open houses as we continue to work with our partners to improve transportation for everyone in Spokane County,” said Karl Otterstrom, STA Chief Planning & Development Officer. “These events are an essential platform for us to engage with the public, gather feedback, and ensure that our services meet the evolving needs of our region.”

Open houses at the Spokane County Library – Spokane Valley branch and the

Northeast Community Center have already concluded. Agency partners expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in these collaborative efforts to present to and engage the community.

“These events have provided a great opportunity to hear ideas and concerns directly from community members throughout Spokane,” said Lois Bollenback, Executive Director of the Spokane Regional Transportation Council. “Hearing directly from citizens allows us to make more informed decisions that better fit the needs of the communities we are working to serve. We also appreciated sharing projects we’re currently working on, including a safety action plan and reducing commute trips.”

In addition to sharing information on STA’s next strategic plan, *Connect 2035*, STA project managers were able to answer questions about their individual projects in the vicinity of the open houses.

Brian Jennings, Deputy Director for Community Development at STA, observed, “Having some of the open houses at public libraries is providing additional exposure to the public who otherwise may not have been aware of the various developments in the region’s transportation.”

Two more open houses remain, one at the Spokane County Library in Airway Heights and the other at the STA Plaza downtown (further details below).

Ongoing public outreach for *Connect 2035* includes focus groups and meetings with community-based organizations and local businesses. A public survey is anticipated to launch in mid-spring that will touch on different aspects of transit, riders’ experiences using transit, what improvements riders would like to see, as well as opportunities to deliver on initiatives over the next decade.

To stay up to date on the latest developments and outreach efforts for *Connect 2035*, sign up for emails at spokanetransit.com/connect2035. Any questions, suggestions, or feedback to share about *Connect 2035* may be directed to connect2035@spokanetransit.com.

Upcoming Open Houses:

All upcoming events may be found at: spokanetransit.com/openhouse

Open House (West Plains) — March 28

4 pm - 6 pm

Location: Spokane County Library – Airway Heights, 1213 S Lundstrom St, Airway Heights

Partners: Kalispel Tribe, Spokane Tribe, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, Spokane County, Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC)

Access this location via STA Route 61 Highway 2/Fairchild line with a stop at Hwy 2 @ Lundstrom.

Open House (Downtown Spokane) — April 9

4 pm - 6 pm

Location: STA Plaza, Ground Floor Rotunda, 701 W Riverside Ave, Spokane

Partners: City of Spokane, SRTC

STA Plaza is served by multiple lines. Find your preferred route using the [Plan Your Trip](#) tool.



Construction Nearing Completion on Cheney Line Amenities



Above: A bus serving Route 6 Cheney arrives at STA Plaza Bay 10

The final phase of construction for the Cheney High Performance Transit (HPT) Line is wrapping up. This current phase of improvements was outlined in the *Cheney Line Infrastructure and Alignment Plan*, approved in 2020, with initial design work that began in 2018. With the completion of stop improvements, STA will have reached the culmination of its multiphase project to enhance the Cheney HPT route and stops, which started with the Four Lakes and Eagle Station projects.

Improvements were made to the majority of the stops along the corridor and covered the installation of utilities, underground electrical and drainage components, along with concrete and asphalt work. Stop improvements also meet ADA accessibility standards.

HPT amenities at high-ridership stops have also been installed. These amenities include benches, leaning rails, trash receptacles, as well as one of the most visually striking aspects of HPT lines: the HPT markers which feature the blue and green wave wrap, digital displays, and wayfinding signage.

Similar to City Line's lilac and black markers as well as those installed on the

Monroe-Regal Line, the HPT markers signal an enhanced and more frequent level of transit service through major corridors of the Spokane area.

“This work was initially proposed in both STA’s comprehensive plan, *Connect Spokane*, and our first strategic plan, *STA Moving Forward*,” commented STA Chief Planning & Development Officer, Karl Otterstrom. “It forms an important step in developing regional connectivity between the Spokane area and Cheney as well as Medical Lake and Four Lakes.”

The project plan was supported by the City of Cheney, Eastern Washington University, the West Plains Chamber of Commerce, as well as the Spokane Regional Transportation Council. Public outreach conducted in 2019 and 2020 included round tables, virtual open houses, surveys, and panels.

As the Cheney project comes to a close, work on the next HPT line (Sprague Line for Route 90) has already commenced.



Connect and Interact



Above: STA staff standing in front of the interactive displays at a recent STA open house

As part of ongoing outreach efforts for its next 10-year strategic plan, *Connect 2035*, STA has produced six interactive displays inviting the public to reflect and provide feedback on different aspects of using public transit.

The displays ask the rider five questions about their experiences using transit and to

note with provided stickers what aspects are working well, what needs improvement, and what ideas the rider might have. The questions range from trip planning, waiting at bus stops and transit facilities, riding, and more.

“It’s another method STA is using to engage the public,” remarked STA’s Deputy Director for Community Development, Brian Jennings. “It’s a good way to get people to think about their journey and focus feedback on specific aspects for potential improvement.”

The displays have been available at the regional transportation open houses that STA has been hosting from March through April 9. After the open houses conclude, the displays will remain at STA Plaza for the public to continue offering feedback.

Jennings emphasized the importance of public involvement as STA formulates its next strategic plan, which will outline initiatives, capital projects, routes, and programs that will improve and expand transit service to the region through 2035.

“We’re hopeful that the wide range of engagement STA has been conducting will lead to useful insights on our system,” Jennings said. “We want the public to get involved and let us know what they would like to see as our region continues to develop and grow.”

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Transit in Development



Above: A City Line bus waiting at STA Plaza Bay 9

STA is kicking off expanded public outreach efforts as part of the revision and adoption process for its *Transit Development Plan* (TDP) for 2025 – 2030.

Tasked with delivering public transportation in a geographic area known as the Spokane County Public Transportation Benefit Area, STA develops and maintains multiple policy documents outlining goals, objectives, and initiatives. At the highest level, STA's comprehensive plan, *Connect Spokane*, sets out the vision and policy framework to guide decisions made by STA's Board of Directors over a 30-year period. More intermediary, its strategic plan, *STA Moving Forward*, outlines strategies and objectives over a 10 - 15 year range. Finally, its TDP establishes a "mid-range tactical framework," which translates those policies, strategies, and objectives into an implementation plan for capital improvement projects and service developments over the next six years. The TDP also reviews STA's financial forecast in order to anticipate more accurately the services that the Agency can provide in the short term.

Washington state law requires transit agencies to renew their TDPs annually, which is then shared with the Washington State Department of Transportation for reporting purposes. Previously, a mandated public hearing would precede the document's adoption by the Board. However, this year, in addition to the public hearing, STA is pursuing deepened outreach efforts with external stakeholders and the public with the goal of more thoroughly assessing regional needs, trends, and proposals to improve transit service.

"It is a newer approach," commented STA's Chief Planning & Development Officer, Karl Otterstrom, "which we believe will yield productive feedback on key programs and aid STA in following through on its commitment to provide safe, inclusive, convenient, and efficient public transportation."

On April 10, an overview of the TDP will be presented to the Citizen Advisory

Committee, a group comprised of qualified volunteer citizens, the purpose of which is to increase public awareness of and participation in STA functions and ensure Agency accountability.

Following this meeting, STA will provide additional updates and hold an open house on the TDP. STA is also preparing to host a virtual public meeting, leading up to the scheduled June 20 public hearing. While these meetings will be mainly oriented toward external stakeholders, members of the public are welcome to attend and learn more about the TDP's progress. Finally, STA's Planning & Development Committee will make a recommendation to the Board to adopt the final TDP plan at the Board's July 25 meeting.

For more information and the latest updates on the TDP, please visit spokanetransit.com/tdp.



National Transit Employee Appreciation Day



Above: A Transit Employee Appreciation banner placed on STA's skywalks

On Monday, March 18, STA joined transit agencies across the country in celebrating National Transit Employee Appreciation Day to honor dedicated transit individuals for all the work they do to provide transportation services and opportunity for all.

From drivers to maintenance staff, dispatchers to customer service representatives,

facilities & grounds workers to information support specialists, every member of STA's team plays a crucial role in moving Spokane.

"We've all risen to the challenges of the post-pandemic era to keep service running," said STA Chief Operations Officer, Brandon Rapez-Betty. "Truly, everything and everyone is important, and it takes a 'systems thinking' approach to ensure everyone moves together in harmony."

A stark reminder of the importance of STA's service to the community came during the fires in Medical Lake last August. Washington State Patrol had requested buses for an emergency, Level 3 evacuation of Medical Lake and Four Lakes. In addition to any and all available drivers and spare vehicles, buses serving the area were quickly rerouted to evacuate residents out of the danger zone. Live news coverage of the fire reported information published minutes earlier by STA staff, who had posted messages on multiple media distribution channels to spread awareness of STA's evacuation assistance in Medical Lake. The cross-departmental work in coordination with Washington state and Spokane County agencies was remarkable and swift, contributing to no staff or evacuee injuries during the process. After the fires, STA provided no-cost transportation assistance for evacuees within the service boundary area.

STA is proud to celebrate and commend the unsung transit heroes who make access and opportunity possible for the local community.



St. Patrick's Day Parade



Above: An STA bus driving in the St. Patrick's Day Parade with a large crowd

On Saturday, March 16, STA participated in this year's St. Patrick's Day Parade. Sponsored by the Employee Advisory Council, the Agency brought a bus for staff and families to ride as well as candy to hand out along the way. With favorable weather and a strong turnout, the parade was an exciting opportunity for STA to join in on the festivities.

The parade route went south along Washington until Main, then over to Howard and Wall before going around the River Park Square Mall to the Monroe Bridge. Due to the large number of vehicles and groups of people attending, the parade lasted significantly longer than in previous years.

An STA staff member who has attended the parade for many years happily noted that the turnout has been returning to pre-COVID numbers and that staff ran out of candy.

As a vital partner in the region's social and community fabric, STA values participating in annual festivities and events, such as Bloomsday, the Lilac Parade, Hoopfest, Valleyfest, and more.

STA looks forward to the remainder of 2024's celebrations, especially the upcoming 50th anniversary of the Spokane World's Fair, Expo '74, which will commence Saturday, May 4.





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