



Spokane Transit Authority **Strategic Plan**

November 2024
DRAFT FOR PUBLIC INPUT



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- Filipino-American Association
- Gonzaga University
- Greater Spokane Inc.
- Greenstone Homes
- Kalispel Tribe of Indians
- Latinos en Spokane
- Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center
- NAACP Spokane & I Did the Time
- The NATIVE Project
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- University District
- United Way
- Visit Spokane
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Washington State University
- West Plains Chamber
- World Relief of Spokane
- YWCA
- The ZoNE

Executive Summary

Connect 2035 articulates the Spokane Transit Authority's strategic roadmap for bus, Paratransit, and Rideshare services through 2035. The plan sets an updated vision, mission, and goals for our organization, along with a detailed set of projects and investments we will implement over the next decade to benefit riders and communities throughout the region.

Connect 2035: Our Roadmap for a Stronger Transit Future

The Spokane Transit Authority (STA) has been providing public transportation services for more than 40 years, benefiting individuals, families, and communities across the Spokane region. Whether it is connecting workers to jobs, ensuring that everyone in our communities has accessible transportation options, saving families money, or sustaining our health and environment, STA's services play a critical role in shaping a thriving, equitable, and sustainable region.

Our role in the region and the benefits our services provide have only grown over the past decade. As more people and jobs are drawn to Spokane, transit has an increasingly prominent role to play in our communities. Since 2016, with your support, we have expanded transit service to better meet our communities' and the region's needs. From our first bus rapid transit corridor project, [City Line](#), to the construction of new Park & Ride facilities, to expanded service on nights and weekends, the investments of the previous decade have increased access and mobility across Spokane County.

Connect 2035 is our roadmap for the next 10 years. As our region continues to grow in the coming years, we know STA and the services we provide must evolve alongside it. Over the last two years we have engaged with and listened to our riders, community members, non-profit organizations, businesses, and our own employees and Board members to update our strategic framework and identify the investments that are needed to continue improving transit and supporting communities.




OUR VISION

Connecting everyone to opportunity

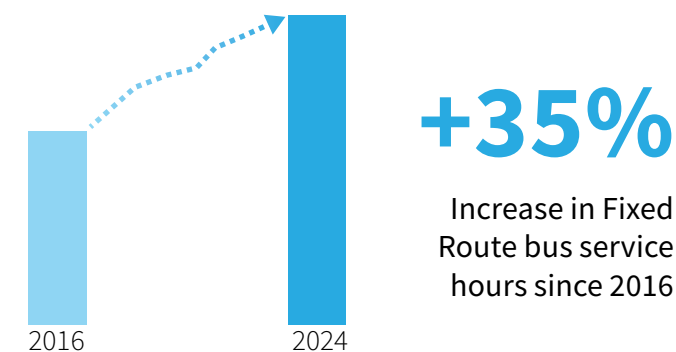
OUR MISSION

We provide safe, inclusive, convenient, and efficient public transportation services to Spokane area communities. We are leaders in transportation and a valued partner in the region's social fabric, economic infrastructure, and quality of life.

OUR GOALS

-  Elevate the customer experience
-  Lead and collaborate with community partners to enhance the quality of life in our region
-  Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of our region

Growth in Spokane Transit Service



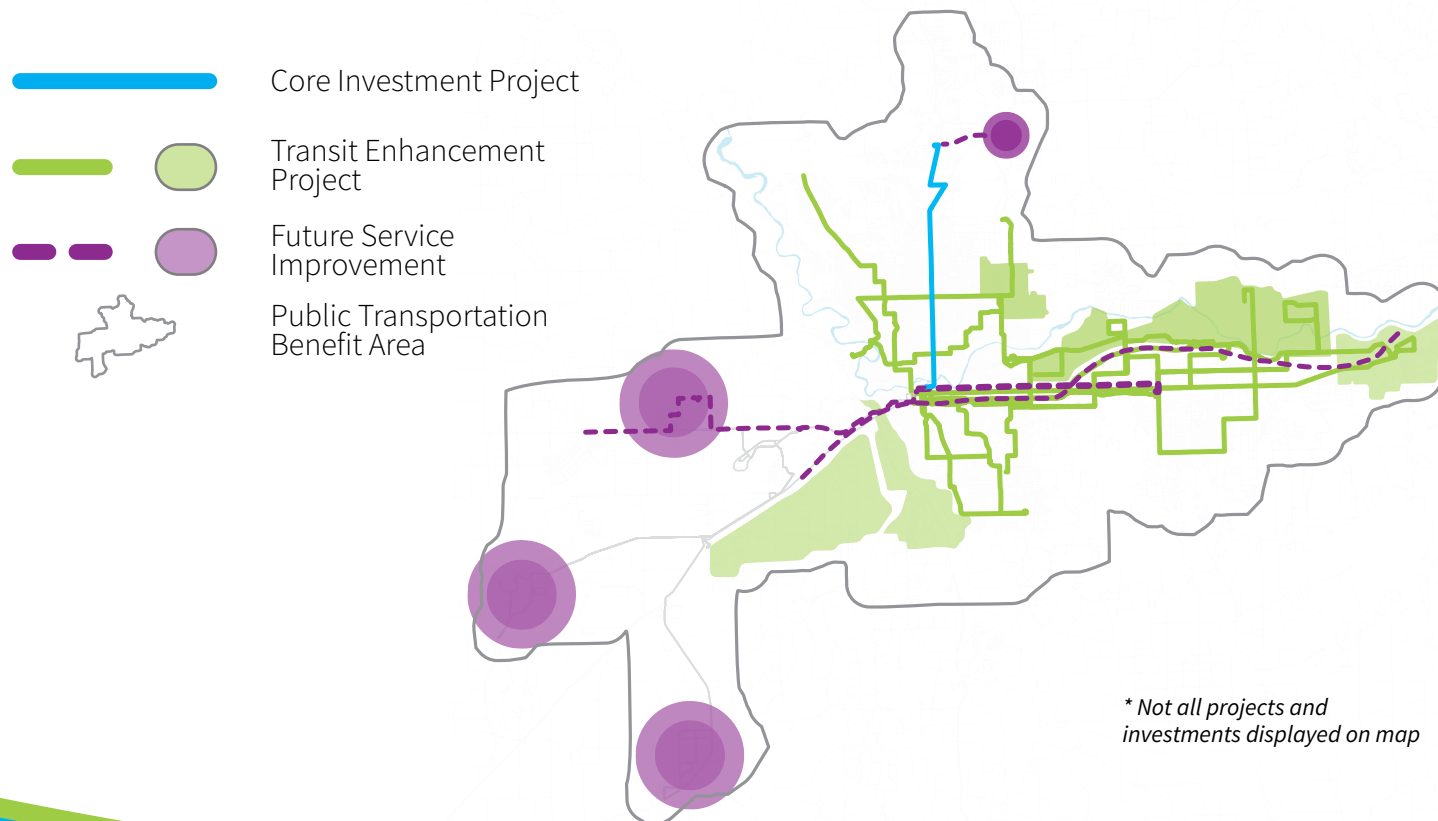
Connect 2035: Projects and Investments

Across many of the groups we have engaged with over the last two years, consistent themes have arisen: the need for more and later service on nights and weekends, continued investments around safety and security, extending service to new destinations, rolling out more High Performance Transit lines, and making transit information accessible, real-time, and accurate.

Connect 2035 consists of a detailed plan for how we will leverage our current financial position to further our strategic goals and deliver investments that benefit our riders, communities, and the overall region.

Three types of projects and investments are highlighted in *Connect 2035*:

- **Core Investments:** Major projects that will further all three of our strategic goals.
- **Transit Enhancements:** Improvements we will deliver with our existing resources to elevate the customer experience, grow community partnerships, and strengthen our organization.
- **Future Service Improvements:** Projects that respond to needs highlighted by the community and would meet growing demand; however, these will require a new, sustainable funding source to deliver.



Our Funding Landscape: Sustaining Our Investments

At STA, we put tremendous emphasis on being good stewards of taxpayer resources. We maintain a no-debt financial position and continually operate as a financially stable and strong organization, delivering high-quality transit service to the region.

Local voter-approved sales tax is STA's primary source of funding, making up more than three-quarters of our annual operating revenue. STA Proposition 1, which voters approved in 2016, increased our sales tax funding by two-tenths of a cent, to deliver more and better bus service throughout our region. Voter authorization of the added sales tax levy will be required by 2028 in order to sustain service at current levels.

As a result of our diligent financial management, STA has the opportunity to invest in our system in the coming years to better connect people across the region to opportunity.

Current Opportunities for Investment

Based on STA's strong financial position and our current assumptions about the future, STA is able to maintain the growth of the last decade while also investing in additional one-time improvements in the years ahead to benefit our riders and communities. The Core Investments and Transit Enhancements identified in this plan advance the goals of *Connect 2035* (see [Core Investments](#) and [Transit Enhancements](#)).

By maintaining our strong financial position and retaining the community's trust, **STA is empowered to deliver investments that better connect people across the region to opportunity.**

Transit in Our Region

The Spokane Transit Authority (STA) plays a crucial role in supporting our growing region as it provides efficient, affordable, and sustainable transportation options that help accommodate increasing population and job growth. *Connect 2035* will guide our organization's ongoing work to better connect people to opportunities and meet the demands of the region.

About the Spokane Transit Authority

Organized in 1980 and launching service in 1981, the Spokane Transit Authority (STA) is a municipal corporation that provides public transportation services, including fixed route, Rideshare, and Paratransit services to areas within the Spokane County Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA). The PTBA comprises the cities of Airway Heights, Cheney, Liberty Lake, Medical Lake, Millwood, Spokane and Spokane Valley, as well as portions of unincorporated Spokane County.

The Spokane PTBA encompasses an area of approximately 248 square miles and includes approximately 475,000 residents, nearly 85% of the total population of Spokane County. Spokane Transit provides safe, accessible, convenient, and efficient public transportation services to the region's neighborhoods, businesses, and activity centers.

STA operates three types of transportation services throughout the region:



Fixed Route Bus
>6.1 million 2023 revenue miles
>8.9 million 2023 unlinked passenger trips

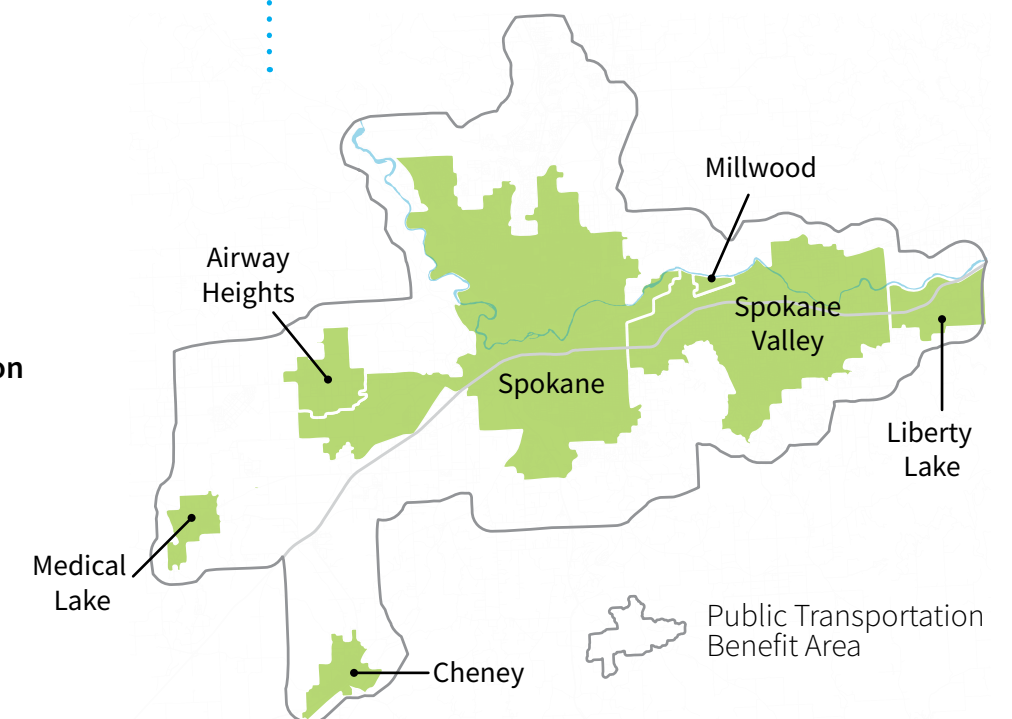


ADA Paratransit
>360,000 2023 passenger trips



Rideshare (formerly Vanpool)
>95,000 2023 passenger trips

Spokane County Public Transportation Benefit Area



Where We Are Coming From: Investing in Transit

Since 2016, with your support, we have expanded transit service to better meet our communities' and the region's needs. In 2016, voters across Spokane County supported additional funding for STA which has enabled us to:

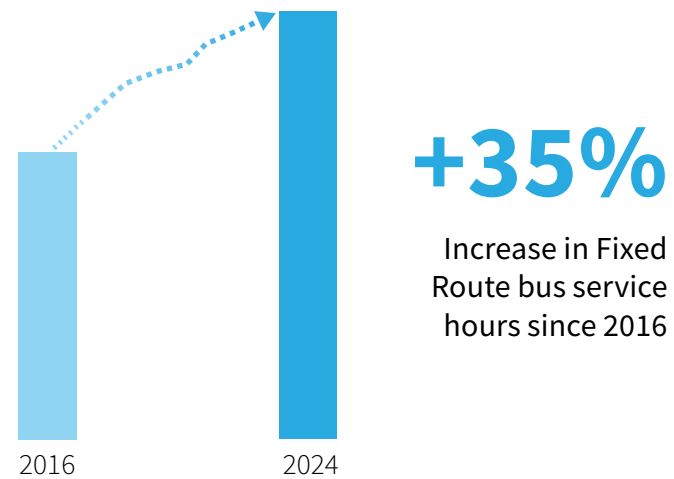
- Increase service to better meet riders' needs.
- Expand service to reach new communities and serve new destinations.
- Create new High-Performance Transit (HPT) lines to improve reliability and the customer experience on our busiest routes.

You trusted us with your tax dollars, and we've delivered. Following the approval of Proposition 1 in 2016, STA began implementing the projects laid out in [STA Moving Forward](#) in 2017.

Our goal was to deliver the full slate of projects by 2027. Out of the 32 projects, as of the end of 2024, 24 have been completed and eight are in progress.

The investments of the past decade have benefitted residents throughout the region, supporting thriving communities and giving people freedom in how they choose to get around. The projects on the following pages represent several key investments of *STA Moving Forward*.

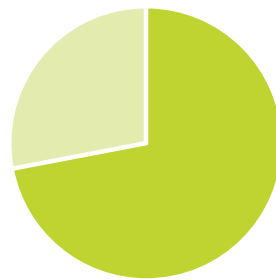
Growth in Spokane Transit Service



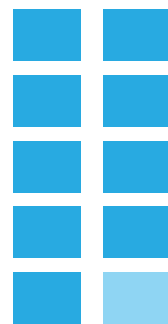
Access to Transit

72%

Of people living in urbanized areas are within ½ mile walking distance of transit



Access to Jobs



9 of 10

Jobs across Spokane County are within ½ mile of STA's bus routes — **nearly 200,000 jobs¹**



City Line: Spokane's First Bus Rapid Transit Line

City Line, Spokane's first bus rapid transit (BRT) line, was completed in the summer of 2023 and provides fast, frequent, convenient service from historic Browne's Addition to Spokane Community College by way of Gonzaga University. City Line features battery electric buses, enhanced stations, offboard ticketing, and near-level boarding; all of which add up to an accessible, high-quality ride.

A combination of funding from Proposition 1, Washington State, and the Federal Transit Administration were used on the project.

City Line was delivered \$14 million under budget and provided more than 700,000 rides in its first year.

City Line intersects with most of STA's routes, increasing connectivity to the downtown core from throughout the service area. The six-mile route between Spokane's historic Browne's Addition and Spokane Community College connects through downtown and the University District, including Gonzaga University.



Over the next 20 years, it is estimated that City Line will bring **\$175 million in economic impact** into the Spokane Region.²

High Performance Transit: Improved Service and Amenities

High Performance Transit is the flagship of STA's vision to improve the frequency, reliability and accessibility of transit, while contributing to an improved quality of life in neighborhoods and urban centers across our region.

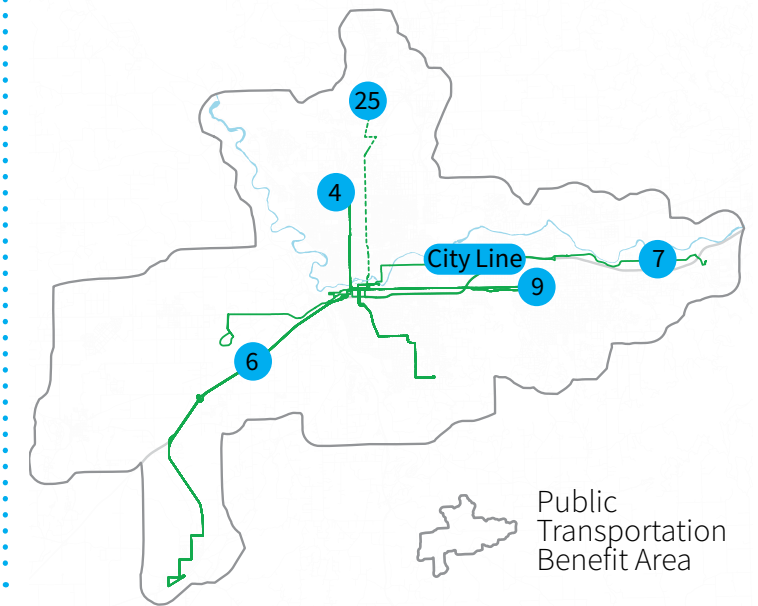
In addition to the City Line, STA has made important High Performance Transit investments in other corridors. Frequent High Performance Transit corridors have buses running every 15 minutes or better on weekdays. Regional High Performance Transit corridors feature streamlined service with 30-minute or better service during most times of the day. All High Performance Transit corridors feature enhanced stations and stops at select locations.

- Route 4 – Monroe-Regal (Frequent)
- Route 6 – Cheney (Regional)
- Route 9 – Sprague (Frequent)

STA will be implementing an additional regional High Performance Transit corridor, Route 7, in 2025. Route 7 will connect Liberty Lake and Spokane Valley to the Spokane International Airport by way of Spokane.

In addition to these corridors, STA delivered more capacity and more sheltered stops along Route 25 – Division, while working with the community to define the long-term vision for a BRT line on Division Street.

STA's Current High Performance Transit Lines



Where We Are Now: A Growing, Changing Region

Our region has grown and changed substantially over the last 10 years, creating both new opportunities and challenges.

Population and Employment Growth

More than 50,000 new residents have moved to Spokane County since 2016 and employment has also grown by more than 10%, placing new demands on the transportation system. Over the next two decades an additional 100,000 new residents are projected to move into the region.

Housing Affordability and Supply

With the cost of housing outpacing increases in supply, there is more demand for denser development with readily accessible transit.

Regional Travel Patterns

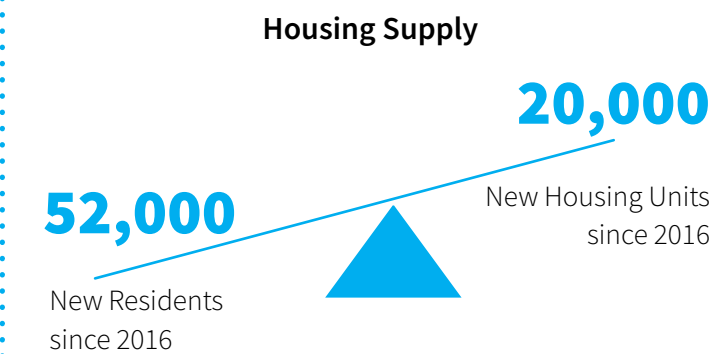
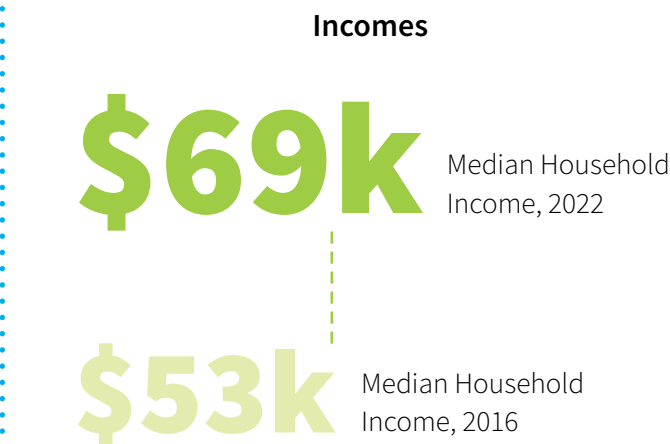
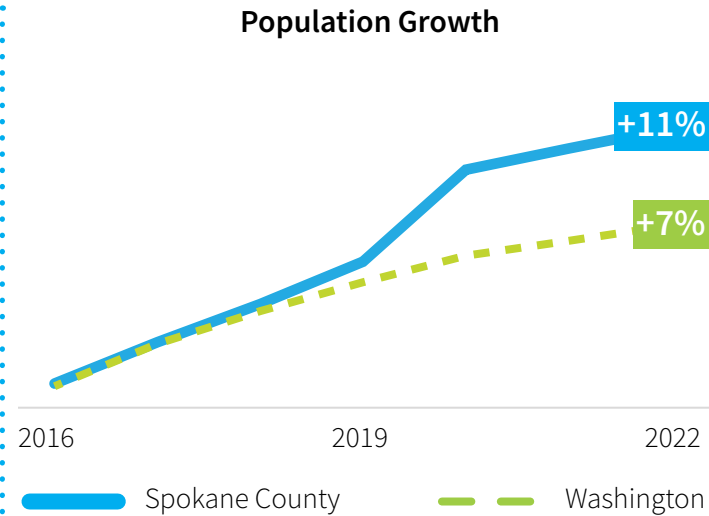
With population growth and the lingering impacts of the pandemic, shifting travel patterns will impact the role of transit in the region.

Demographic Shifts

Rising incomes, increased diversity, and an aging population are among the factors that will influence travel demand in the region.

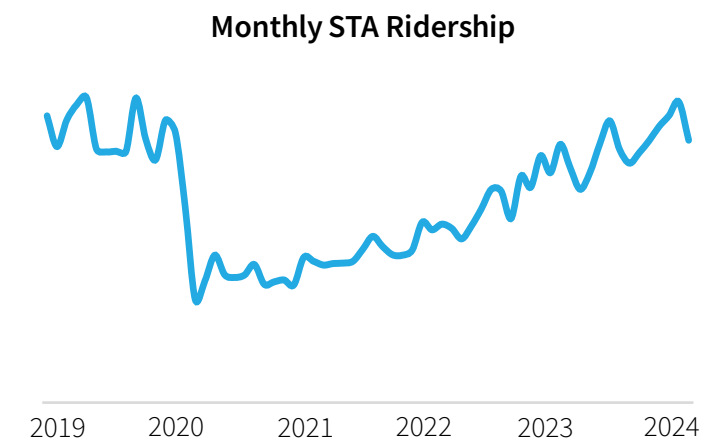
Homelessness

While poverty and homelessness have become much more prevalent across our region, transit is uniquely positioned to connect people to social services, healthcare, and job opportunities.

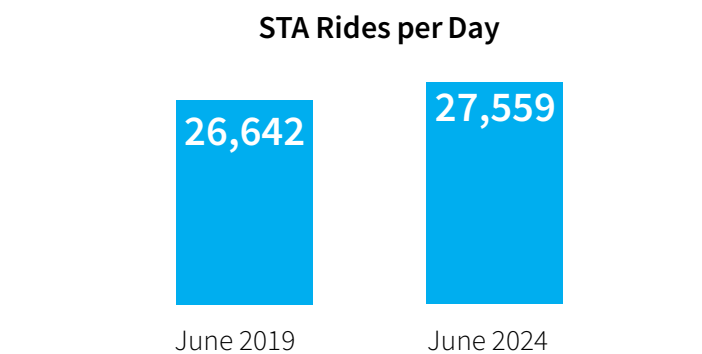


Changes in working habits and travel patterns since COVID-19 have altered transit ridership across the country, but STA continues to play an integral role in how people get around the Spokane region. Few transit agencies have steadily built back ridership to the degree we have at this point in time.

STA has steadily built back ridership since 2020.



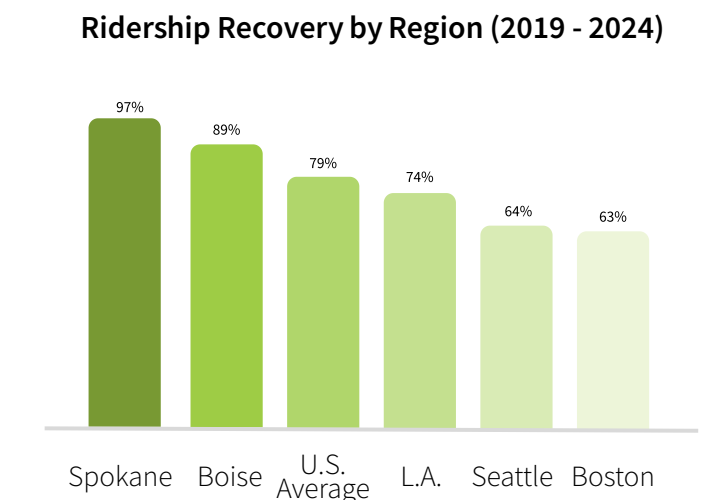
STA provided nearly 1,000 more rides on a typical day in June 2024 vs. June 2019.



Ridership for the first half of 2024 was at 97% of 2019 levels.

5.3 Million STA rides, January - June 2024

STA is in the top 10% of agencies across the U.S. in terms of ridership recovery and has outpaced most agencies across Washington.



The Value of Transit: Supporting Communities

STA's services provide benefits to individuals, families, and communities throughout our region.

Boosting Our Economy

STA connects workers across the county to jobs, providing a reliable, affordable way to get to work.

80,000

Average number of jobs Spokane resident can reach within a 30-minute transit ride.³

52%

Of all jobs in Spokane County within a 10-minute walk of one of STA's frequent routes that run every 15 minutes.⁴

Saving Our Families Money

As the price of just about everything has increased, STA continues to provide the most affordable option for getting around our region.

\$12,000

As the annual cost of owning and operating a car has climbed to more than \$12,000, families can potentially save thousands of dollars by relying more on transit.⁵

24%

The average household in Spokane County spends 24% of their budget on transportation—nearly \$14,000.⁶

Connecting Everyone

STA provides accessible transit options that meet the needs of the diverse communities throughout Spokane County — people of all abilities; young and old; longtime residents and new arrivals.



Youth Ride Free!

Youth 18 and younger ride free on STA as of 2022. Thanks to funding from Washington's Climate Commitment Act, we have improved access for young people and students throughout our region.

1,000+

STA provides more than 1,000 Paratransit trips a day, connecting residents whose disability prevents them from using STA Fixed Route buses to jobs, services, healthcare, and other daily essentials.

44%

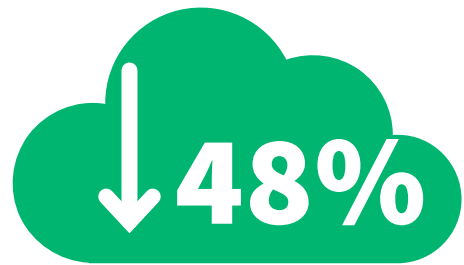
Share of STA riders that describe STA as their only form of transportation.

38%

Share of STA riders that say they rely on STA for more than half of their trips.

Sustaining Our Health & Environment

Transit is essential for a sustainable future and STA is diligently working to increase transit’s climate benefits by transitioning to zero-emission buses.



STA emits 48% less greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) per passenger mile than the average transit agency in the U.S.⁷



STA helps eliminate 57,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emission (carbon dioxide equivalent) annually — more carbon saved than if we covered all of Spokane with trees.⁸



At STA, we put tremendous emphasis on being good stewards of taxpayer resources. We maintain a no-debt financial position and continually operate as a financially stable and strong organization, delivering high-quality transit service to the region. STA has the opportunity to invest in our system in the coming years to better connect people across the region to opportunity.

Local voter-approved sales tax is STA’s primary source of funding, making up more than three-quarters of our annual operating revenue. STA Proposition 1, which voters approved in 2016, increased our sales tax funding by two-tenths of a cent, to deliver more and better bus service throughout our region. Voter authorization of the added sales tax levy will be required by 2028 in order to sustain service at current levels.

Current Opportunities for Investment

Based on STA’s strong financial position and our current assumptions about the future,

STA is able to maintain the growth of the last decade while also investing in additional one-time improvements in the coming decade to benefit our customers and communities. The Core Investments and Transit Enhancements identified in this plan advance the goals of Connect 2035 (see [Core Investments](#) and [Transit Enhancements](#)).

Supporting Continued Growth

Throughout the development of Connect 2035, we heard from many community members and riders about their interest in expanding service. We also know that our region’s population is poised to grow by 100,000 over the next two decades. Any substantive service expansion beyond current levels will require a new revenue service and supportive investments. Therefore, retaining the community’s trust in STA and our ability to effectively and efficiently deliver on our mission is crucial to any future consideration of new revenue sources (see [Future Service Improvements](#)).

By retaining the community’s trust, **STA is empowered to deliver investments that better connect people across the region to opportunity.**

Connect 2035 Strategic Framework

Connect 2035 is STA's strategic roadmap for bus, Paratransit, and Rideshare services. 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.



Our Roadmap for the Next 10 Years

Connect 2035 articulates STA's strategic framework for bus, Paratransit, and Rideshare service through 2035. It sets an updated vision, mission, goals, and strategies that will guide our organization for the next 10 years. The strategic framework also outlines the key priorities that will guide decision-making and resource allocation, ensuring that our services are responsive to the evolving needs of the communities we serve. **Continued investments in the customer experience, equity, sustainability, and our own employees are at the center of *Connect 2035*.**

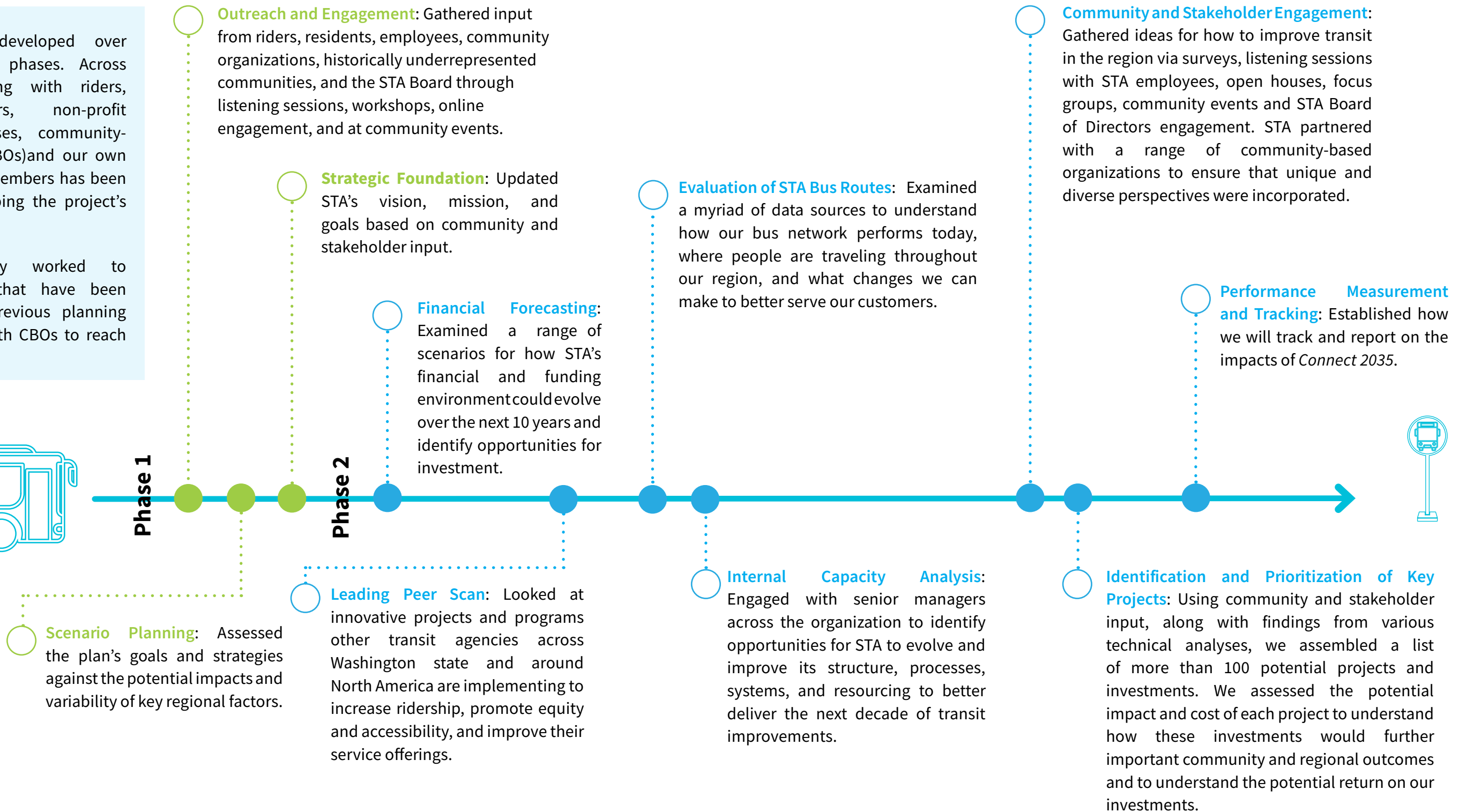
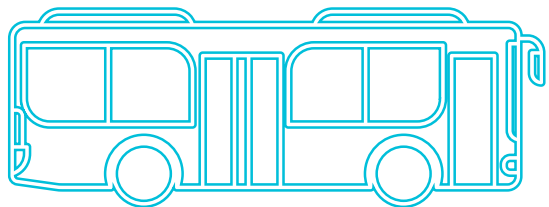
This section outlines the process that led us to *Connect 2035*, summarizes the community engagement that was critical to its development, and highlights the updated vision, mission, goals, and strategies, that will shape our system's evolution over the next decade, creating a flexible roadmap for meeting current and future mobility needs.



Connect 2035 Strategic Planning Process

Connect 2035 was developed over 2+ years across two phases. Across both phases, engaging with riders, community members, non-profit organizations, businesses, community-based organizations (CBOs) and our own employees and Board members has been foundational in developing the project's goals and initiatives.

We have specifically worked to involve communities that have been underrepresented in previous planning efforts by partnering with CBOs to reach the people they serve.



Community and Stakeholder Engagement

One of our key goals in crafting this strategic plan was to gather input from the broadest representation of our communities, especially those voices that have typically been underrepresented in planning conversations. We emphasized providing an array of ways that people could engage with the process and provide input, whether by visiting the project website, attending an open house, participating in a listening session, or taking a survey while passing through the Plaza. We also built relationships with community-based organizations and relied on their knowledge and expertise to engage with their constituents and the communities they represent. This plan is stronger because of all the time and input people across the region contributed.

Community Events & Open Houses

15 events across the region organized and attended by STA staff to meet community members and learn about their priorities for the future of transit.

Rider Forums, Listening Sessions, and Interviews

47 in-depth sessions and conversations with riders, community-based organizations, and businesses to hear about their day-to-day experiences as transit users and opportunities to better meet their needs.

Municipal Partner Events

9 meetings with boards and commissions in each municipality in our service area to provide updates and gather input on the strategic planning process.

STA Board & Employee Engagement

30+ workshops and interviews with STA's Board of Directors and employees throughout the organization to guide the entire strategic planning process.

Community Surveys

2,485 responses to three surveys that directly informed the development, selection, and prioritization of STA's strategic projects and investments for the next ten years.

13,500+

Touchpoints with riders and community members over 2+ years to help shape *Connect 2035*.

Online & Virtual Engagement

9,615 touchpoints with community members and community organizations to share information on the projects and investments.

What We Heard from Riders and Community Members



More Frequent Buses

Across surveys and conversations, riders have consistently emphasized more frequent buses as the most impactful potential improvement.



High-Performance Transit

Riders see significant opportunity for more High-Performance Transit lines—bus routes with frequent service, faster travel times, and upgraded stations and amenities.



Language Access

Having resources for riders (e.g., schedules, how-to guides) available in-language and in other accessible formats is crucial.



Safety and Security

Riders recognize the efforts STA is undertaking to improve safety and security but stressed the need for further improvements.



Expanded Service

There is a desire for more and later service on weekends and weeknights, especially for people who don't work typical Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. — 5 p.m. schedules.



Areas for New/Increased Service

Riders and community members highlighted areas that would benefit from new or increased bus service, including Spokane Valley, Latah Valley, the West Plains, Liberty Lake, and north Idaho.



Real-Time Information

Riders value real-time information on when the next bus will arrive and see opportunities to continue improving the accuracy and availability of this information.



Affordability

Riders consider STA affordable, but some also expressed a need for lower fares to reduce the burden on those experiencing low incomes.

Connect 2035 Strategic Framework

Phase 1 of *Connect 2035* was completed in 2022 and culminated with the adoption of the Strategic Framework by the STA Board of Directors.

The Strategic Framework updated STA’s Vision and Mission, established three strategic goals for the organization, and laid out a set of strategies that would be further developed into projects and investments in the second phase of the project.

Our Vision

Connecting everyone to opportunity

Our Mission

We provide safe, inclusive, convenient, and efficient public transportation service to Spokane area communities. We are leaders in transportation and a valued partner in the region’s social fabric, economic infrastructure, and quality of life.

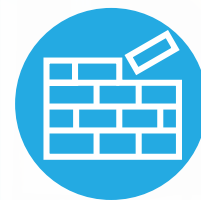
Our Goals



Elevate the customer experience



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



Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of the region

Goals and Strategies

	GOAL 1 ELEVATE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE	GOAL 2 LEAD AND COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR REGION	GOAL 3 STRENGTHEN OUR CAPACITY TO ANTICIPATE AND RESPOND TO THE DEMANDS OF THE REGION
Goals			
Strategies	<p>1.1 Expand and adapt mobility options to attract and serve more people</p> <p>1.2 Advance frequent, easy-to-use, fast, and reliable service</p> <p>1.3 Deliver an outstanding door-to-door experience</p> <p>1.4 Create a welcoming, comfortable, and secure environment for all customers</p>	<p>2.1 Collaborate to enhance access to transit</p> <p>2.2 Support community partners to amplify community benefits</p> <p>2.3 Proactively initiate partnerships to promote and help employers, service providers, and residential development to locate near high-frequency transit</p>	<p>3.1 Develop, prepare, and empower our team members</p> <p>3.2 Engage in proactive assessment and planning, and deliver strategic long-term investments most beneficial to our communities</p> <p>3.3 Exemplify financial stewardship to maintain public trust and organizational sustainability</p>

Connect 2035 Projects and Investments

Guided by what we heard from community members and our stakeholders, *Connect 2035* outlines the real work that we are committing to delivering over the next 10 years. The following projects and investments align with our three core goals and seek to strengthen transit access and equity across our region.







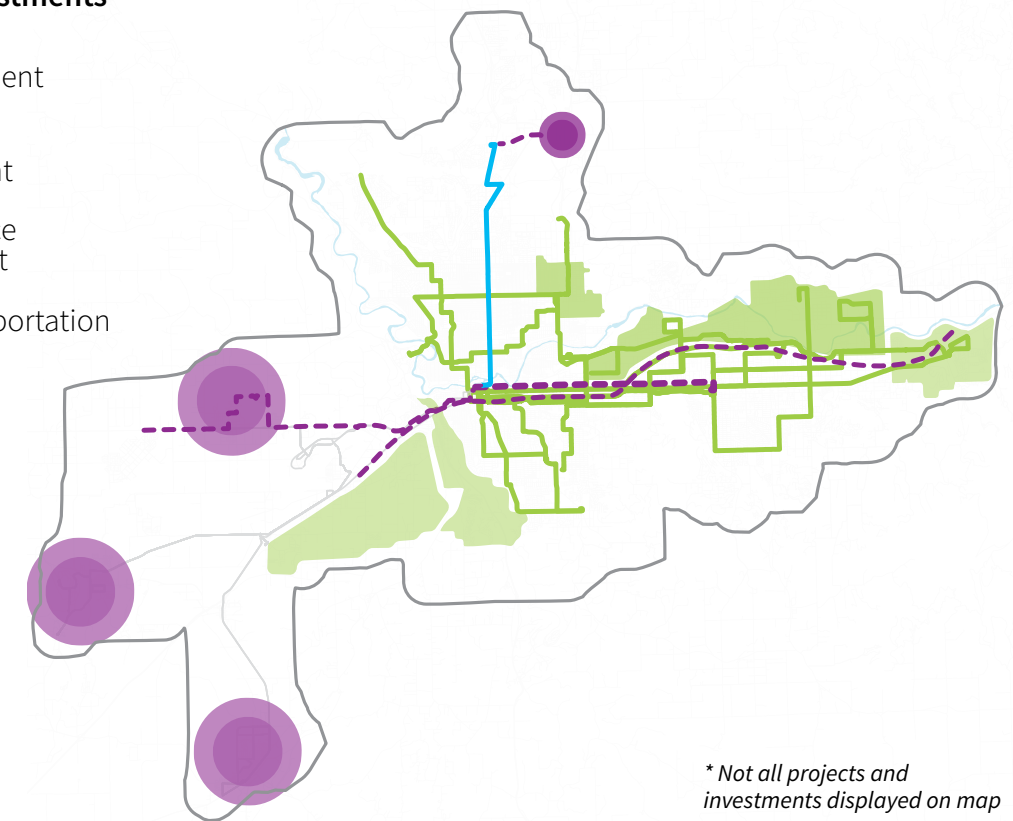
Transit Investments for Stronger Communities

As the Spokane Region grows and evolves, the role of convenient, reliable transit becomes more critical in addressing challenges such as traffic congestion, environmental impact, and equitable access to transportation. Strategic investments in infrastructure, technology, and services not only enhance the daily experience for customers, but also contribute to the economic vitality of our region by connecting people to jobs, education, and services. The following section outlines the projects and investments we will undertake over the next decade to help connect communities and shape a thriving region. The Connect 2035 projects and investment are divided into three categories:

Core Investments	Major projects that will further all three of our strategic goals and underpin our strategic direction for the decade ahead.
Transit Enhancements	Improvements we will deliver with our existing resources to elevate the customer experience, grow community partnerships, and strengthen our organization.
Future Service Improvements	Projects that respond to needs highlighted by the community and would meet growing demand; however, these will require a new, sustainable funding source to deliver.

Connect 2035 Projects and Investments

-  Core Investment
-  Transit Enhancement
-  Future Service Improvement
-  Public Transportation Benefit Area



** Not all projects and investments displayed on map*

Transit Investments for Stronger Communities

STA is planning a robust package of investments based off community engagement that will improve the customer experience, better connect communities, support our growing economy, and sustain our health and environment.

Not all projects and investments are depicted here and additional information on these projects is provided in the following section.



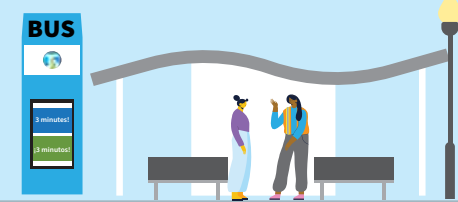
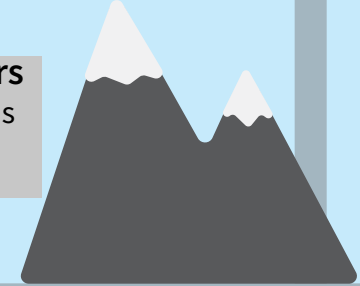
Install signage and develop new rider resources in **languages other than English**



Work with municipal partners to further **Transit-Oriented Development**



Invest in our operators by upgrading break rooms and on route amenities

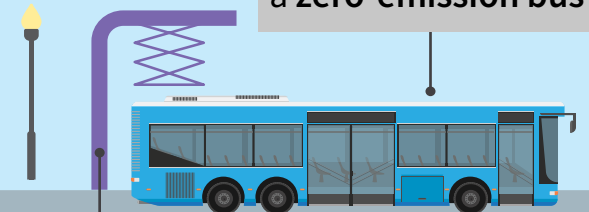


Expand our network of **High Performance Transit Lines**

Update routes to better connect to new **employment centers**



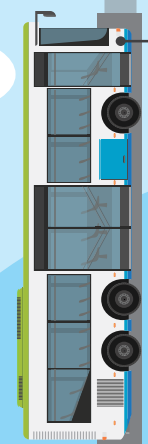
Continue our transition to a **zero-emission bus fleet**



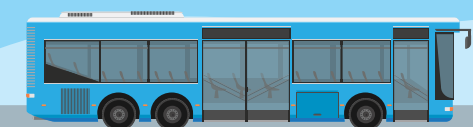
Integrate transit fares with **event tickets**



Complete the **Division Street Bus Rapid Transit** project



Run more buses on **evenings and weekends** on high-demand routes



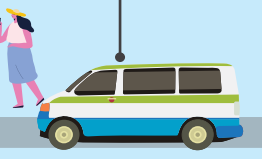
Pilot a **reduced fare program** for low-income riders



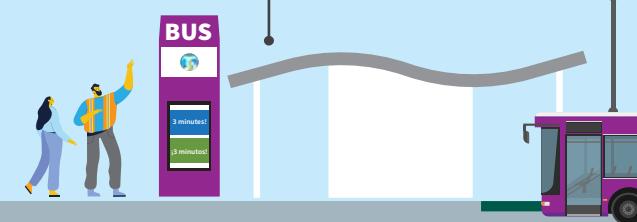
Create a **safety ambassador program**



Launch **mobility-on-demand pilots** to serve new areas



Enhance bus stops with **shelters and lighting**



Core Investments: Division Street BRT

Division Street serves as a vital thoroughfare for thousands of people traveling to their homes, workplaces, and other essential destinations.

[The Division Street Bus Rapid Transit \(BRT\)](#) project is estimated to launch with the completion of the North Spokane Corridor in 2030. **The new BRT line will run for ten miles from downtown Spokane north to Mead.**

In 2019, the STA and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC), in collaboration

with the City of Spokane, Spokane County, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), conducted the DivisionConnects study to explore potential enhancements and improvements to the Division Street corridor.

STA is in the process of securing federal funding to deliver the project and has secured a commitment of \$50 million from the state through the [Move Ahead Washington](#) transportation package.

50,000 vehicles use Division Street daily, and Route 25 is used by nearly one million people each year



Core Investments: Clean Energy Campus & Zero Emission Buses

We are continuing our work to create a healthier region and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by purchasing [zero emission vehicles](#) and building a [new clean energy campus for STA](#) to store and charge these vehicles.

Clean Energy Campus

STA is committed to reducing the carbon impact of our campus through new and energy-efficient facilities. The new campus will contribute to our operational efficiency that have lower maintenance costs. The future campus showcases our commitment to sustainability and positions STA as a leader in environmental responsibility, inspiring broader adoption of similar practices.

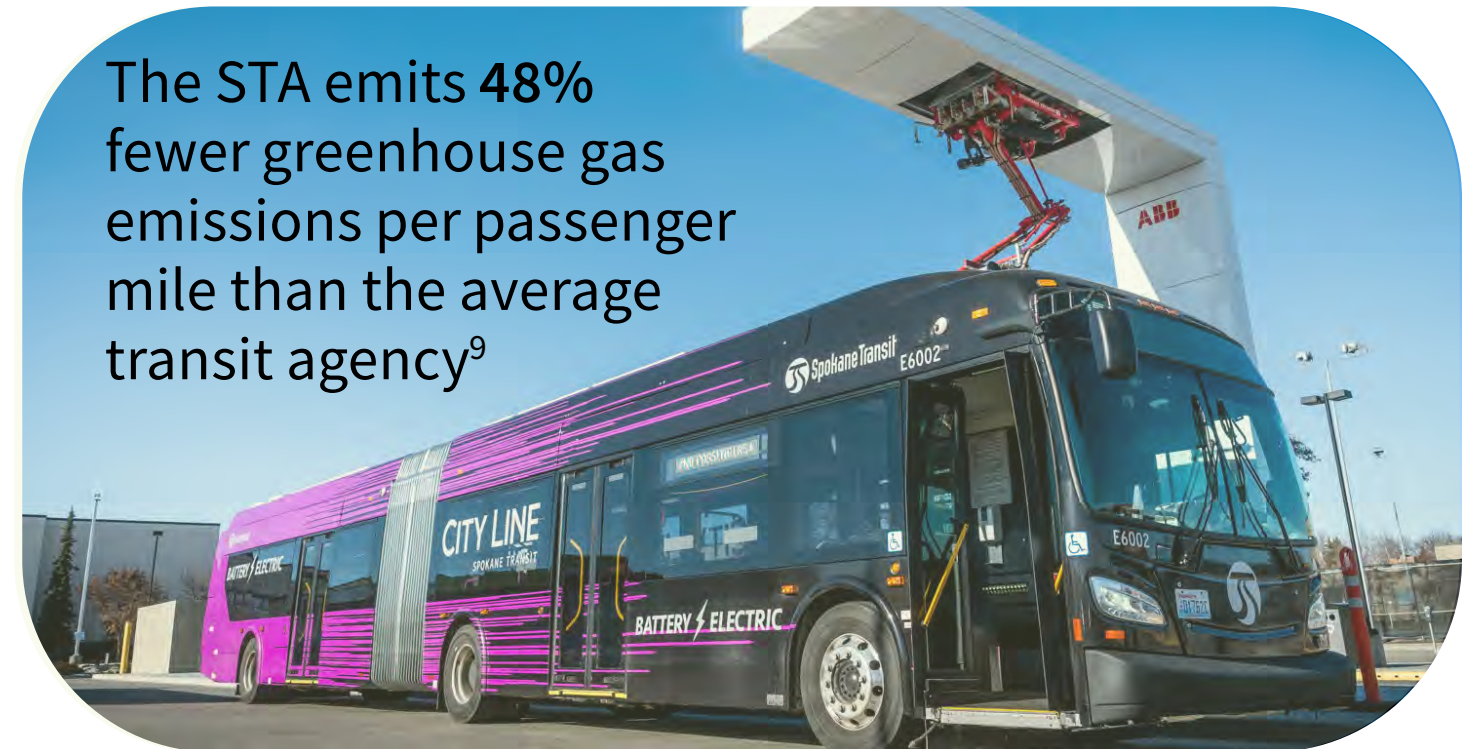
Zero Emission Vehicles

STA currently has 36 battery electric buses and aims to achieve a **100% zero-emission bus fleet by 2045** to meet state requirements.

To date STA has primarily funded the transition to zero-emission technologies through available grant funding and will continue to identify, pursue, and leverage these opportunities to reduce the burden on Spokane taxpayers.

In addition to environmental benefits, zero emission buses offer lower operating and maintenance costs, helping to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of our transit system.

The STA emits 48% fewer greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile than the average transit agency⁹



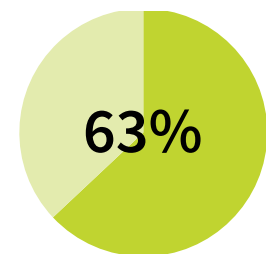
Goal 1: Elevate the Customer Experience

Throughout the *Connect 2035* planning process, we have heard many ideas from riders and community members about how we can continue to update our services, roll out new features, and provide more amenities that will elevate the customer experience. With our existing resources, STA will pursue the following improvements.

Updating Bus Routes

Where, when, and how people are traveling around our region has changed over the last several years as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. We closely monitor these trends, regularly engage with our riders, and listen to rider requests to identify ways to improve our bus routes and service. In the coming years we will be adding more night and weekend service on key routes with high ridership and that serve important job centers, updating service in Spokane Valley to respond to growth and increasing demand, and adjusting routes to better connect to new and emerging employment centers.

Updating Bus Routes was the most highly rated investment to improve customer experience based on community feedback (selected by 63% of more than 500 survey respondents).



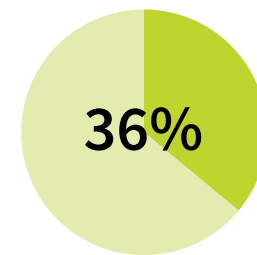
Improving Bus Stops

Our riders deserve a safe place to wait for the bus that is protected from the elements. We will invest in improving safety and comfort for riders by adding 100 new shelters across the system—increasing the number of shelters by 50%— and installing lighting at every bus stop with a shelter.

In a survey of more than 1,000 bus riders and community members, adding shelters and lighting were the top two investments respondents felt would improve the experience of waiting at the bus stop the most.



STA's five current High Performance Transit lines account for more than a third (36%) of our ridership on a typical weekday. Over the next 10 years, we will be making major investments to bring the benefits of High Performance Transit to more communities and better connect people across the region.



Share of all STA rides on a typical weekday on existing High Performance Transit lines.

Upgrade Route 33 Wellesley to a High-Performance Transit Line

Route 33 – Wellesley is an important cross-town route traveling from Spokane Falls Community College to Spokane Community College and passing through a number of diverse neighborhoods. Route 33 – Wellesley already has frequent service with buses coming every 15 minutes for most of the day, and this project would invest in enhanced stations and amenities to increase safety, comfort, and the overall experience for riders.

Planning and Designing the Next Round of High Performance Transit Lines

Across the many surveys, listening sessions, community events, and open houses we have conducted to hear from community members, our riders have consistently said that increasing

frequency and creating more High Performance Transit lines are the most meaningful ways STA can improve their experience and make the system more convenient and useful. Based on rider feedback, ridership data, and analysis of regional travel patterns and growth, we have identified three high-priority future HPT lines. We will also continue to evaluate opportunities for future high-capacity transit corridors.

- Route 61 – Highway 2/Fairchild
- Extending Route 9 – Sprague to Liberty Lake
- Extending Division Street BRT from its current planned end point at the Hastings Park and Ride east into Mead



Goal 1: Elevate the Customer Experience

Safety Ambassadors

Of STA riders, 70% report feeling safe while riding the bus compared to a national average of 42% of transit users. Throughout this planning process, though, we've also heard significant input around the need to improve the sense of safety and security throughout our system.

Aside from the bus being on time, feeling safe on the bus is our riders' highest priority. To help address these issues, STA will pilot a new safety ambassador program to help foster a safe, welcoming environment for all our customers.

Streamlining Paratransit Booking

STA provides more than 1,000 Paratransit trips a day, connecting people with disabilities to destinations across the region. In order to make it easier and more convenient for paratransit users to book their rides, we are creating a new platform for Paratransit users to schedule their trips online versus having to call in to book trips.

Improve Real-Time Information

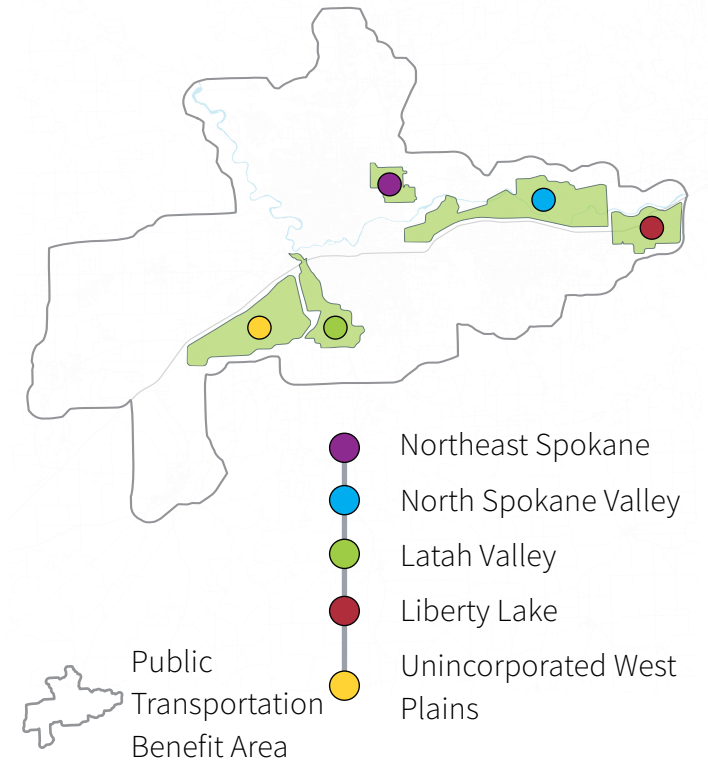
We know that riders value access to real-time information about when the next bus is arriving and count on that information to be accurate. In order to continually improve the reliability of real-time information, we will upgrade our backend technology systems to enable better, more accurate information for our riders.

New Mobility-On-Demand Services

STA will pilot new Mobility-on-Demand services (technology-enabled services like Uber or Lyft but with multi-passenger vehicles) in four locations across the region to expand transit coverage and better connect workers to jobs: North Spokane Valley, Latah Valley, Liberty Lake, unincorporated portions of the West Plains, and Northeast Spokane.

Input from community members highlighted these areas as fast-growing locations that would benefit from transit service, and piloting Mobility-on-Demand will provide STA with information on the cost effectiveness and customer response to this new type of service. We will also develop a Mobility-on-Demand program to serve targeted geographic locations and trip types that are not well-served by the fixed-route bus network.

Planned Mobility-on-Demand Service Areas



Case Study: TriMet Ambassador Program¹⁰

The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District's (TriMet) ambassador program is designed to serve riders and encourage safe transportation use. TriMet Ambassadors are contracted to help people learn about the transit system, safety, and trip planning throughout the Portland area. Ambassadors have mental health training, carry water, dry socks, and other supplies, answer questions, and help handle situations that would otherwise result in calls to security or the police.

The TriMet ambassador program is a product of a Transit Public Safety Advisory Committee comprised of regional thought leaders, community representatives and national transit experts. The committee used feedback gathered through surveys and listening sessions to develop targeted safety improvements.

Case Study: King County Metro Flex¹¹

King County Metro's Metro Flex service is designed to help residents access public transportation by providing on-demand rides to and from transit hubs. These rides are typically shared with other passengers and transport people from their homes, work, or nearby locations to major transit stations in the Seattle area.

Initially launched as a pilot program, Metro Flex now operates in five specific areas of King

County. Fares are priced similarly to regular buses, and payment is integrated with ORCA cards, which are used for fare payment on public transit across the Puget Sound region.



Goal 2: Lead and Collaborate with Community Partners

We operate in our region’s ecosystem, delivering transportation options for community members. Creating strong partnerships will ensure that we make informed choices, through collaboration, that benefit everyone and contribute to the vibrancy and sustainability of this region now and in the future. Leveraging our existing resources, STA will pursue the following improvements.

Pilot a Reduced Fare Program for Riders Experiencing Low Incomes

Even as the price of most goods and services has increased in recent years, STA has maintained our regular fare of \$2 for bus and Paratransit rides. We have also introduced new programs, like free rides for youth 18 and under, and innovations such as fare capping. Fare capping limits the total amount a rider pays over a certain period of time, such as a day, week, or month. At STA, fares are capped at \$4 a day or \$60 monthly.

To further our vision of Connecting Everyone to Opportunity, we will pilot a reduced fare program for riders experiencing low incomes. Defining the parameters of the pilot program, such as the discount and eligibility requirements, will involve significant engagement with the public and stakeholders.

Case Study: ORCA Lift¹²

King County Metro’s ORCA Lift Program is a reduced-fare transit initiative in the Seattle area aimed at providing affordable public transportation for low-income individuals. Administered by various transit agencies in the Puget Sound region, the program offers a significant discount on fares, often 50% lower than regular adult fares, across multiple modes of public transportation, including buses, light rail, streetcars, ferries, and trains. The program is designed for residents whose income is at or below 200% of the federal poverty level. The program is a vital resource for ensuring that public transportation remains accessible for those facing economic hardships.

Empower New Riders to Use the Bus

Special Mobility Services, a partner of STA, offers a robust travel training program that provides one-on-one assistance to help people learn how to use the bus system to travel independently. More than three out of four STA riders report feeling confident navigating the system and say it is easy to find information on services, routes, and schedules. Partnering with CBOs, we will work to increase programs teaching new riders to use the bus, with a specific focus on reaching disadvantaged communities.

Encourage More Housing and Employment Near STA’s Transit Services

As a growing region, working to encourage more housing and employment to locate near transit benefits everyone—lowering costs for families, increasing transit ridership, reducing congestion, and improving air quality. We will work with our municipal partners across the region to fund planning efforts for transit-oriented development (TOD), laying the groundwork for future mixed-use development and growth along key transit corridors.

Electric Vehicle Charging

As more households across the region purchase electric vehicles, STA will work to expand access to convenient, public electric vehicle charging at

our park-and-rides and other facilities. We will work with our partners at Avista and the Spokane Regional Transportation Council to tap into state and federal programs to support this work.

Enhance Transit Information Accessibility

More than 7% of households in Spokane County speak a language other than English at home. STA will work with community partners to raise awareness of existing information on our services in languages other than English and identify the need for additional rider resources and signage in other languages.

“Our community’s demographics are changing, and we need to provide services in the languages our community speaks.”
– Community Survey respondent

Case Study: Division Street TOD Pilot

The Division Street TOD Pilot is a community-based plan to produce a corridor-wide vision for transit-oriented development (TOD) along the Division Street corridor. The project was established in 2022 as a collaboration between the City of Spokane, Spokane County, and the STA, and funded by the Federal Transit Administration’s Pilot Program for TOD Planning. The plan is currently in its concept development phase and is set to propose a community-based vision recommending plans and policies that guide land use and maximize the high-frequency transit along Division Street.

The TOD plan also builds on the assessment of a locally preferred alternative for BRT on Division Street. Consequently, the regional effort on Division Street will guide future investments that support historically marginalized communities since it runs through seven high risk neighborhoods.

Goal 2: Lead and Collaborate with Community Partners

Expand Partnerships with Employers

Of STA riders, 12% get their bus pass through their employer and [STA's Employer Sponsored Bus Pass Program](#), which allows employers to purchase discounted Connect fares and passes. As the number of jobs in our region continues to grow, we will work to expand and deepen these partnerships, working with Commute Smart Northwest to invest in additional outreach and education efforts.

Attract More Visitors to Use the Bus

In 2023, 9.8 million visitors came to Spokane County,¹⁴ which represents a major opportunity for STA to attract more riders and support the regional economy. Partnering with Visit Spokane, hotels, and event organizers, we will improve and increase the sharing of information on how to use the bus geared towards tourists and visitors, along with programs to incentivize ridership. For example, we will work with event organizers and venues to integrate transit fare into event tickets, a successful practice used in other cities.

Increase Engagement with Underrepresented Communities

Through the *Connect 2035* process we have built and deepened relationships with many CBOs and the perspectives we have heard through these partnerships has been invaluable to the process. Going forward, we will formalize these partnerships and practices by establishing a CBO Network to support and strengthen our engagement efforts with underrepresented communities.

Throughout the Connect 2035 planning process, STA conducted 20 meetings, interviews, and listening sessions with CBOs to gather input and ideas from communities that have been historically underrepresented, including African American residents, Spanish speakers, new arrivals to the Spokane region, the Asian American and Pacific Islander community, youth, people with disabilities, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Case Study: Climate Pledge Arena, Seattle, Washington¹³

The transit partnership associated with Seattle's Climate Pledge Arena is part of a broader effort to promote sustainable transportation and reduce the environmental impact of events at the venue. Climate Pledge Arena, which opened in 2021 and is home to the NHL's Seattle Kraken, the WNBA's Seattle Storm, and various concerts and events, aims to be the world's first carbon-zero arena.

*One of the core features of the partnership is that **all event tickets for Climate Pledge Arena include free public transit**. This initiative is part of a collaboration between the arena, the Seattle Kraken, and Sound Transit (the regional light rail and bus service provider), as well as King County Metro, which operates buses in the area. This offer applies to both bus and light rail services on event days, encouraging attendees to use public transit instead of driving.*

Case Study: LA Metro CBO Network¹⁵

To meet the goals of the Vision 2028 Strategic Plan, LA Metro intends to further collaborations with CBOs and equitably meet community needs. In 2021, TransitCenter and the Center for Neighborhood Technology helped develop a database connecting CBOs and LA Metro staff to each other in order to facilitate potential partnership opportunities.

Now, the LA Metro CBO Network serves as a centralized database for Metro departments to identify local organizations for project collaborations. The site provides users with profile information on organizations and partnership opportunities with Metro. Overall, The LA Metro CBO Network is designed to ensure that the CBOs Metro engages with will more accurately reflect the County's diverse communities and promote equitable strategies by strengthening partnerships with CBOs where Metro operates.

Goal 3: Strengthen Our Capacity

As an organization, STA must grow and adapt to ever changing conditions and respond to the demands of the region. Having a team who is well equipped and focused on our mission, along with strong supporting infrastructure, will provide the foundation required to deliver on the goals of this plan, balanced with providing reliable daily service. Using our existing resources, STA will pursue the following projects and investments.

Improve Real-Time Information

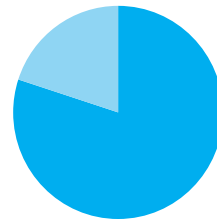
We know that riders value access to real-time information about when the next bus is arriving and count on that information to be accurate. In order to continually improve the reliability of real-time information, we will upgrade our backend technology systems to enable better, more accurate information for our riders.

Invest in Our Operators

STA has made significant investments over the last several years to hire and retain more bus operators. Looking forward, we are committed to investing in our operators and improve their day-to-day experience by upgrading break rooms and amenities, delivering more high-quality restrooms along routes, and developing new operator support systems.

80%

of STA riders say that bus operators are knowledgeable, courteous, and helpful—significantly higher than the national average.¹⁶



Streamline Customer Interactions and Service Delivery

At STA, we pride ourselves on our customer service and continually work to make it easier for riders to get the information they need quickly and easily. Investing in new technology solutions will enable our customer service teams to better track, respond to, and resolve customer inquiries and improve collaboration for teams across STA. The results for our customers: smoother, faster resolution for inquiries and issues.

Safer Vehicles

STA has begun gathering more information from vehicles on driver behavior and vehicle condition to improve safety, inform preventative maintenance, and create new opportunities for operator training. In the coming years, we will continue these investments to cover our entire fleet of vehicles.

Increase Transparency and Access to Data

We know that reporting on our performance and making data publicly available are critical to building trust with our communities. As part of *Connect 2035*, we will develop user-friendly public dashboards for key performance indicators and make it easier to access and use transit data.

Build Our Team

At STA, we invest in our people and work to build a diverse, inclusive, and empowered workforce that takes pride in serving our region. To support this work, we will establish an organizational development program to formalize training, leadership development, and enhance employee engagement and internal communications across the organization.



Future Service Improvements

Throughout the *Connect 2035* planning process, we heard many ideas for future projects and investments. Many of these ideas are tied to increasing transit service—either running buses later or more often on existing routes, or creating new routes to serve growing parts of the region.

Delivering these future improvements will require additional, ongoing funding sources, so that STA can sustainably grow service without compromising any of the investments of the past decade. Extending our current levels of sales tax funding, which requires voter approval before 2028, will enable STA to maintain past investments and deliver the package of projects and investments highlighted in the preceding pages; however, it would not provide additional funding needed to continue expanding the system. A new funding source, such as increasing the transit sales tax rate to 0.9% (or an additional 0.1%), is necessary to enable continued growth of the system and major service increases.

These potential future investments are organized around two key themes:

Service Frequency and Extensions

Increase weekend service frequency on additional high-performing routes.

Extend bus service to 12:30 a.m. Monday to Saturday.

Increase service frequency in the West Plains.

Make Mobility-on-Demand pilots permanent to provide transit service to growing areas.

High Performance Transit

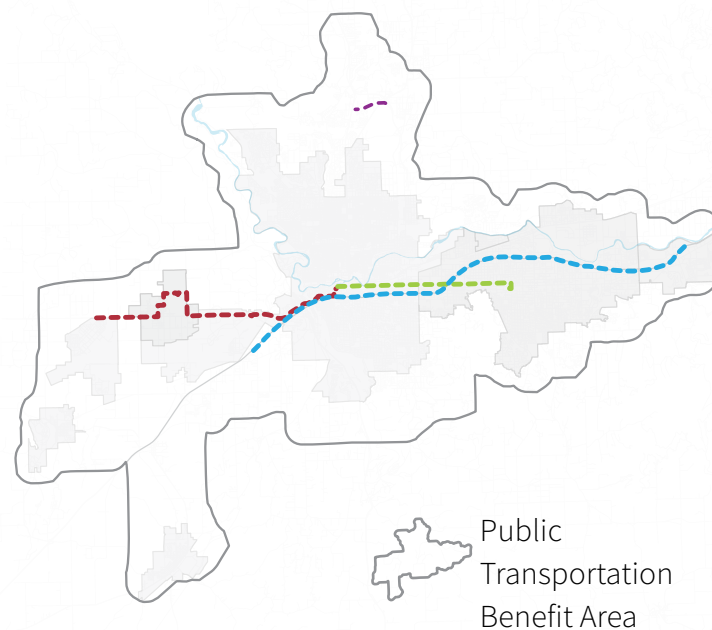
Upgrade Route 61 - Highway 2/Fairchild to HPT (upgraded stations and amenities and increased frequency).

Extend Route 9 - Sprague to Liberty Lake (upgraded stations and amenities and increased frequency).

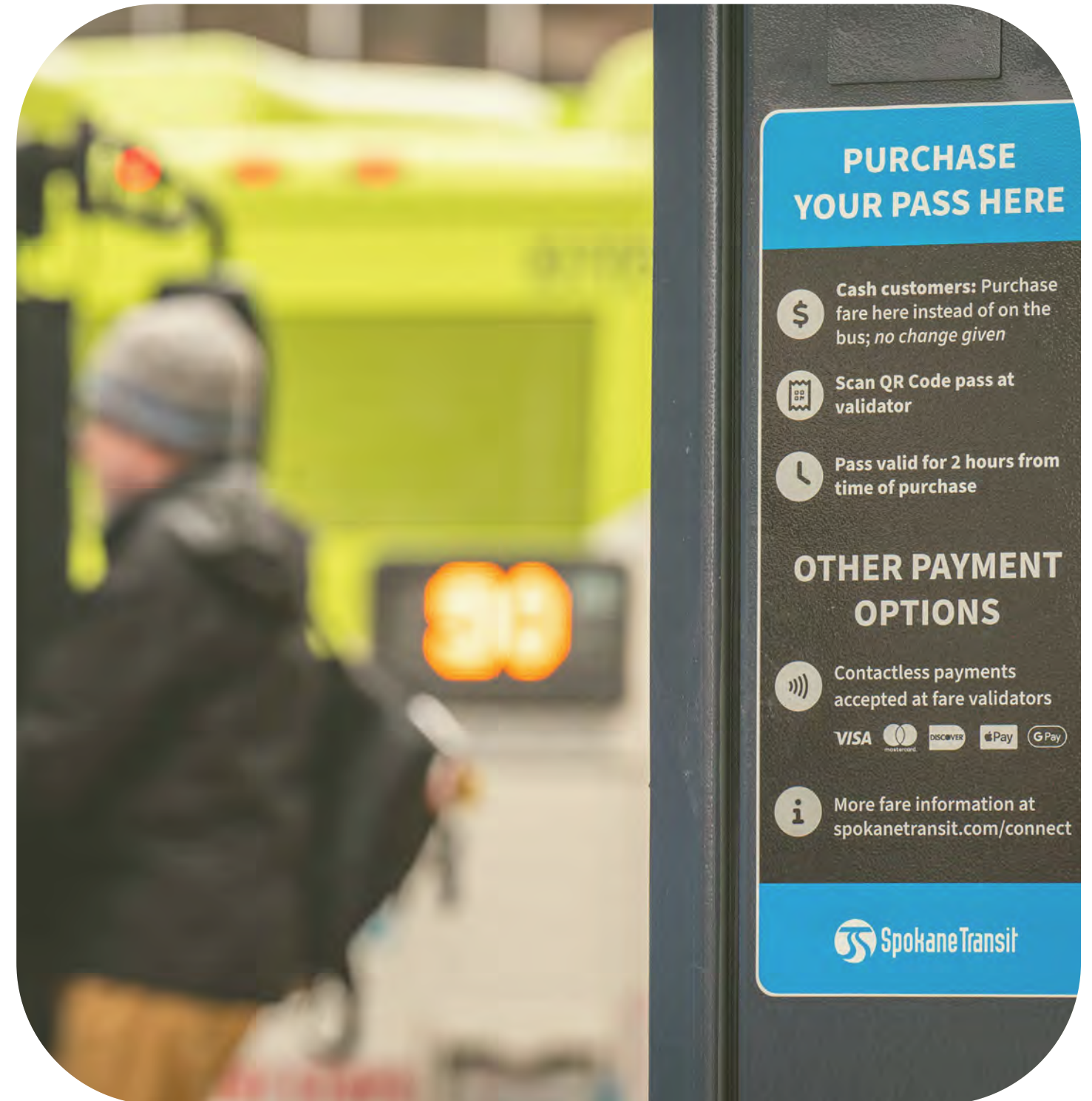
Expand High Performance Transit investments in the I-90 corridor between Liberty Lake and the Airport to include more frequency and additional connections.

Upgrade the planned Division Street Bus Rapid Transit line to 10-minute service and extend the line to Mead from Hastings Park and Ride.

Future High Performance Transit Lines



Public Transportation Benefit Area



Putting the Plan Into Action

Putting *Connect 2035* into action is crucial because it ensures that we can effectively meet the evolving transportation needs of our region. This plan provides a clear roadmap for addressing key challenges such as growing demand, funding limitations, and the need for modernized infrastructure. By implementing *Connect 2035*, we can improve service reliability, expand sustainable initiatives, and enhance overall accessibility, leading to better transit experiences for everyone.

Implementing *Connect 2035*

Connect 2035 presents STA's portfolio of projects, programs, initiatives, and investments we aim to improve and implement. This slate of investments will be put into action through our annual budget and Capital Improvement Plan processes, and our Transit Development Plan, which details near- and medium-term service improvements.

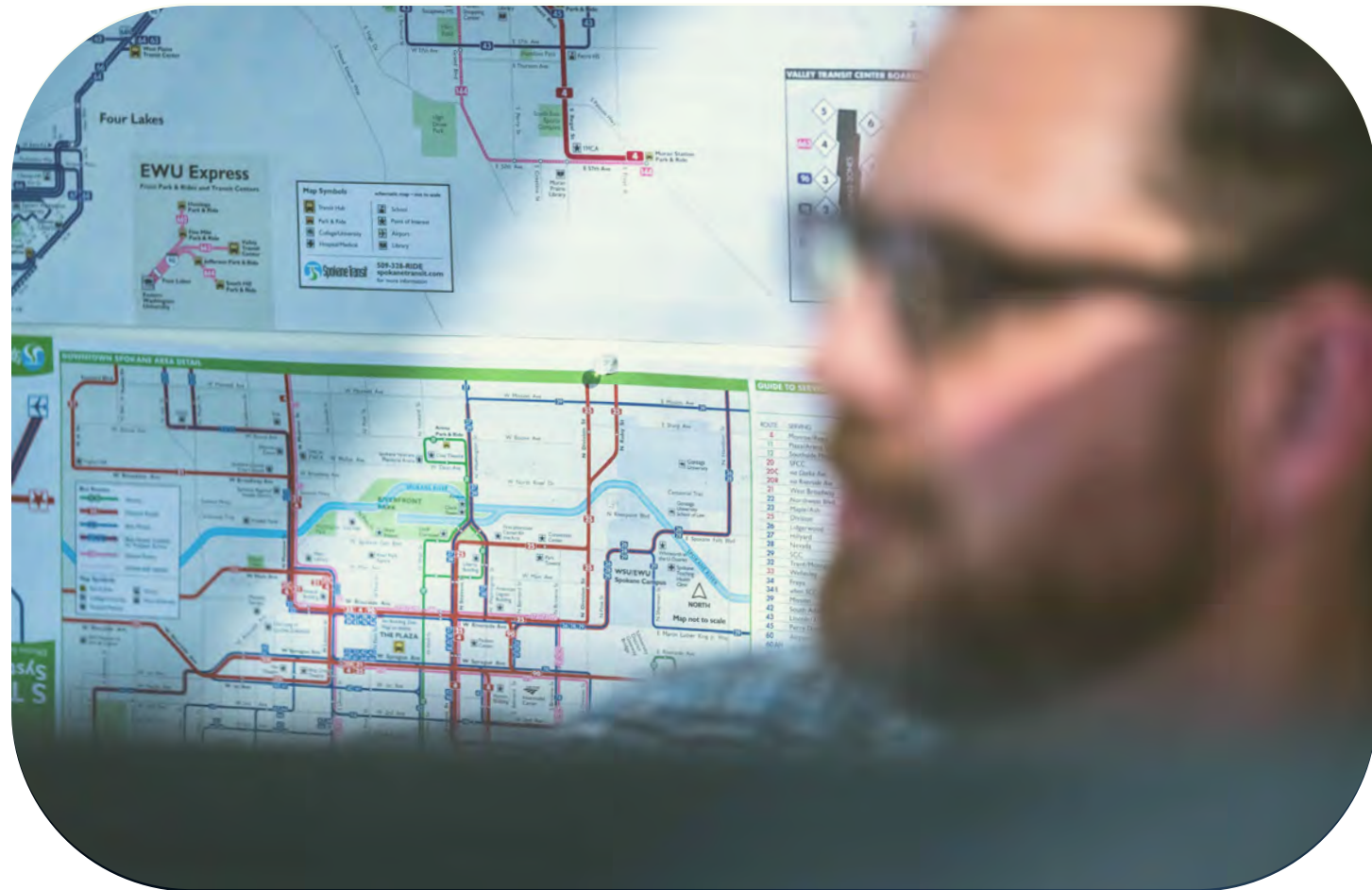
As we implement the plan in the coming years, we will remain committed to listening to our riders and engaging with our partners to inform the development, design, and rollout of individual initiatives.



Tracking Our Progress

The performance measures included in *Connect 2035* will play a critical role in communicating STA's progress and building accountability and transparency with the public, elected officials, and funding bodies. The performance measures below will be primarily external-facing—acting as STA's report card on *Connect 2035* to be shared with the public. They will also play an important role in our internal decisions, helping us determine whether the actions we are taking and investments we are making are leading to the outcomes we care about—or whether we need to adjust course, reallocate resources, or adapt in other ways.

The STA already provides quarterly reports on performance to the Board of Directors as well as updates on the implementation of *STA Moving Forward*. To avoid duplication with these existing reports, *Connect 2035*'s performance measures will be reported on a trimester schedule. Each trimester report will include updates on all headline performance measures and status updates on *Connect 2035* initiatives. Additionally, each report will focus on all performance measures under one of the three strategic goals, providing a more in-depth look at STA performance and accomplishments around that goal.



Goal 1

Elevate the Customer Experience

- **Overall system ridership**
- **Percent of residents and jobs within a 10-minute walk of all-weekday frequent transit**
- **Favorable customer experience score**
- On-time performance
- Unlinked trips per capita
- Percent of residents within 10-minute walk of any STA service
- Customer safety score
- Percent of population that has ridden STA in the last 30 days
- Customer satisfaction with passenger information

Goal 2

Lead and Collaborate with Community Partners

- **Number of new housing units by frequent transit**
- **Number of rides facilitated through partnerships** (UTAP, CAP, Youth Ride Free, low-income fare, event integration)
- Rating on “STA is essential to the livability in the region” on community surveys
- Number of engagement events and online interactions
- Percent of regional employers offering transit benefits
- Participation on local organization boards and in events/activities

Goal 3

Strengthen our Organizational Capacity

- **Fully funded annual budget and six-year capital plan**
- **Consistent rating as one of the best places to work in our region**
- **Annual employee retention rate**
- Percent of employees receiving annual training
- Pounds of greenhouse gas emissions per passenger mile traveled
- Percent of revenue miles by zero-emission vehicles
- Rating on “provides taxpayers good value for the money” in community survey
- Employment engagement index
- Succession plans defined across the organization

* **Headline Performance Measure**

Appendix



Goal: Deliver the Core Investments

Initial Planning-Level Cost	
\$	< \$200,000
\$\$	\$200,000 - \$1,000,000
\$\$\$	\$1,000,000 - \$7,000,000
\$\$\$\$	> \$7,000,000

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Implement the Division Street Bus Rapid Transit project	WSDOT, City of Spokane, SRTC	\$\$\$\$	5+ Years	
Implement the Zero-Emission Vehicle Transition Plan	Avista, New Flyer, Proterra, Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency	\$\$\$\$	5+ Years	
Implement the Facilities Master Plan to create a Clean Energy Campus	Avista, Other utility providers, Spokane Regional Clean Air Agency	\$\$\$\$	5+ Years	

Goal 1: Elevate the Customer Experience

Initial Planning-Level Cost
\$ < \$200,000
\$\$ \$200,000 - \$1,000,000
\$\$\$ \$1,000,000 - \$7,000,000
\$\$\$\$ > \$7,000,000

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Implement online scheduling for paratransit trips		\$	Up to 2 Years	
Implement a Mobility-on-Demand pilot in North Spokane Valley	City of Spokane Valley	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Implement a Mobility-on-Demand pilot in Latah Valley	City of Spokane	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Implement a Mobility-on-Demand pilot in Liberty Lake	City of Liberty Lake	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Implement a Mobility-on-Demand pilot in unincorporated portions of the West Plains	Spokane County	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Implement a Mobility-on-Demand pilot in Northeast Spokane		\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Evaluate opportunities for high-capacity transit, appropriate service modes, and the greatest corridors of opportunity		\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Pilot a safety ambassador program with trained personnel on buses and at facilities	Downtown Spokane Partnership	\$\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Develop a mobility on demand program for targeted geographic locations and trip types not well-served by the fixed-route network	Human Service Providers, Community Based Organizations	\$\$\$	Up to 2 Years	

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Implement the fixed route network optimization (additional night/weekend service on high-performing routes, updating service in Spokane Valley, reaching new job centers)	City of Spokane Valley, Major regional employers	\$	2-3 Years	
Install lighting at all sheltered stops		\$\$	2-3 Years	
Install shelters at all stops with more than 25 daily boardings		\$\$\$\$	2-3 Years	
Conduct planning and design for future HPT corridors: Route 61 - Highway 2/Fairchild	Fairchild Airforce Base, City of Airway Heights, Spokane Airport	\$\$	3-5 Years	
Conduct planning and design for future HPT corridors: extend Division St. BRT to a potential new transit center in Mead	Spokane County	\$\$	3-5 Years	
Conduct planning and design for future HPT corridors: extend Route 90 - Sprague to the Appleway Park-n-Ride	City of Liberty Lake, City of Spokane Valley	\$\$	3-5 Years	
Upgrade Route 33 - Wellesley to High Performance Transit (infrastructure)	City of Spokane	\$\$\$\$	3-5 Years	

Goal 2: Lead and Collaborate with Community Partners

Initial Planning-Level Cost
\$ < \$200,000
\$\$ \$200,000 - \$1,000,000
\$\$\$ \$1,000,000 - \$7,000,000
\$\$\$\$ > \$7,000,000

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Increase educational efforts to raise awareness of service information in languages other than English and ability to request translations	Community Based Organizations	\$	Up to 2 Years	
Expand outreach to employers to educate about the benefit of transit and STA's service options	Major regional employers, Commute Smart Northwest	\$	Up to 2 Years	
Work with event organizers to integrate transit fare into event tickets	Public Facilities District Event Venues	\$	Up to 2 Years	
Work with Visit Spokane, hotels, and event organizers to develop partnerships and enhance information for visitors	Visit Spokane, Downtown Spokane Partnership	\$	Up to 2 Years	
Fund station area TOD planning efforts in partnership with municipalities	Municipal partners	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Pilot an eligibility-based reduced fare program for riders experiencing low incomes	Community Based Organizations, Human Service Providers, Social Service Agencies	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Increase programs teaching new riders to use the bus, including partnerships with CBOs	Community Based Organizations	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Establish a CBO network to support and strengthen STA's community engagement efforts focused on underrepresented communities	Community Based Organizations	\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Identify locations for installation of signage (and other rider resources) in languages other than English	Community Based Organizations	\$	2-3 Years	
Work with partners to expand access to public electric vehicle charging at STA facilities	SRTC, Avista	\$\$\$	2-3 Years	

Goal 3: Strengthen Our Capacity

Initial Planning-Level Cost
\$ < \$200,000
\$\$ \$200,000 - \$1,000,000
\$\$\$ \$1,000,000 - \$7,000,000
\$\$\$\$ > \$7,000,000

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Enhance internal employee engagement and communications efforts to retain STA talent		\$	Up to 2 Years	
Increase transparency by developing user-friendly, public-facing dashboards for key performance indicators and making it easier to access and use publicly available data		\$	Up to 2 Years	
Establish an organizational development program		\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Purchase a customer relationship management system to streamline customer interactions and improve service delivery		\$\$	Up to 2 Years	
Invest in our operators by upgrading break rooms and amenities, expanding access to high-quality restrooms along routes, and developing new operator support systems		\$\$	2-3 Years	
Upgrade our Computer-Aided Dispatch / Automatic Vehicle Location systems to enable more accurate real-time information		\$\$	2-3 Years	

Initiative	Partner Agencies	Cost Category	Project Delivery Timeframe	Implementation Year
Make targeted investments in staffing to expand competencies in support of strategic internal and external initiatives		\$\$\$	2-3 Years	
Implement telematics in all STA fleet vehicles to increase safety, efficiency, and opportunities for expanded operator training		\$\$\$	3-5 Years	

References

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- 8 Transportation Cooperative Research Program. ["An Update on Public Transportation's Impacts on Greenhouse Gas Emissions"](#).
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon. [Reimagining Public Safety & Security on Transit](#).
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