



Spokane Transit Authority  
**Phase 1 Strategic  
Foundation**



Approved by the STA Board of Directors in  
Resolution 803-22 on December 15, 2022



# What is *Connect 2035*?

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

This summary report contains the following sections:

- Purpose and Context
- Community Engagement
- Vision and Mission
- Goals Summary
- 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
- Next Steps

## Key Context and Policy Trends

As we embarked on this strategic journey, we considered several trends which have been taking place in the region over the past several years, including recent pandemic-specific trends.

- Population and jobs have been increasing, and housing is much more expensive. At the same time, poverty and homelessness became top community concerns by 2019.<sup>1</sup>
- The region is becoming more diverse (11% non-white population in 2010, versus 18% in 2020) and incomes are rising (27% increase in median income, 2010–2020, outpacing 19% inflation over the same period). However, housing costs have risen at a faster pace (88% increase in median sale prices and 28% increase in rent in Spokane County between 2016 and 2021).<sup>2</sup>
- Since the pandemic, travel patterns have shifted: less travel during rush hour, more remote work, and more intercounty work travel. Nonetheless, long-term effects are uncertain.<sup>3</sup>
- From a transit perspective: frequent service and reliability remain core functionality; certain demand-based services have seen varying degrees of success in communities across the country; and hiring and retaining staff is a key challenge for transit agencies nationwide.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> US Census (2010, 2020); Bureau of Labor Statistics (2009–2021); STA Community Perception Survey (2013, 2016, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Sources: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2010, 2020); Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010, 2020); Spokane-Kootenai Real Estate Research Committee (2021); The Housing Availability and Affordability Study for Kootenai County (December 2021).

<sup>3</sup> US Census Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (2009, 2019).

<sup>4</sup> Transit Center (2019); American Public Transit Association (2022).



# How did we get input from stakeholders and community members?



## Board

Interviews with STA Board members



## 27

Community leaders and stakeholders interviewed



## Employees

Discussed STA's future direction with STA employees



## 849

Responses to a community survey for this Strategic Plan



## 3

Drop-in events held in the community



## 72

People attended six rider-focused listening sessions—three of which were held in partnership with Spokane community-based organizations that serve historically underrepresented groups



## What did we hear about STA?



The community considers STA essential



Riders consider STA affordable, though many riders desire lower fares



People see STA as a convenient travel mode that reduces stress



Riders and the community highlighted safety as a priority

## What did we hear about the future?



Buses that come often is the #1 priority for the future of transit



Service to more places is the #2 priority for the future of transit



People want STA to prioritize expanded hours all week



People see the opportunity for STA to be a leader in sustainability and climate change

Listening session at Martin Luther King Jr. Community Center (8/24/2022)



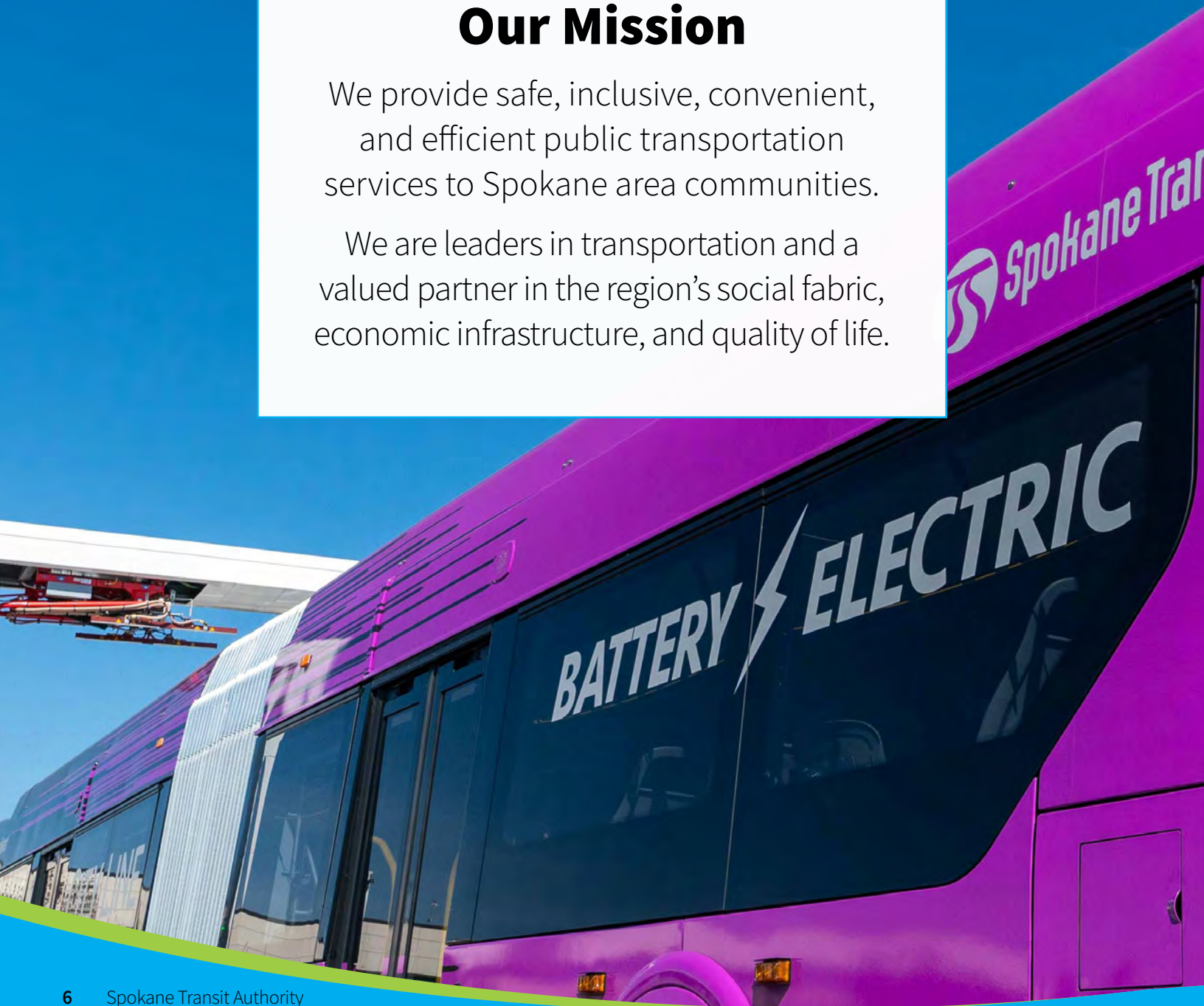
## **Our Vision**

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.



**GOALS SUMMARY**

# Goals, Performance Measures, and Strategies

Goals	<b>GOAL 1</b> <b>ELEVATE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>GOAL 2</b> <b>LEAD AND COLLABORATE WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR REGION</b>	<b>GOAL 3</b> <b>STRENGTHEN OUR CAPACITY TO ANTICIPATE AND RESPOND TO THE DEMANDS OF THE REGION</b>
Headline Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Percent of residents with 15-minute or better all-weekday transit frequency</li> <li>▪ Favorable Customer Experience Index</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Number of new housing units by frequent transit</li> <li>▪ Number of rides facilitated through partnerships (UTAP, Employer Sponsored, and Community Access Pass)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consistently be rated as one of the best places to work in our region</li> <li>▪ Fully funded annual budget and six-year capital improvement plan</li> </ul>
Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1.1</b> Expand and adapt mobility options to attract and serve more people</li> <li><b>1.2</b> Advance frequent, easy-to-use, fast, and reliable service</li> <li><b>1.3</b> Deliver an outstanding door-to-door experience</li> <li><b>1.4</b> Create a welcoming, comfortable, and secure environment for all customers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>2.1</b> Collaborate to enhance access to transit</li> <li><b>2.2</b> Support community partners to amplify community benefits</li> <li><b>2.3</b> Proactively initiate partnerships to promote and help employers, service providers, and residential development to locate near high-frequency transit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>3.1</b> Develop, prepare, and empower our team members</li> <li><b>3.2</b> Engage in proactive assessment and planning, and deliver strategic long-term investments most beneficial to our communities</li> <li><b>3.3</b> Exemplify financial stewardship to maintain public trust and organizational sustainability</li> </ul>

# GOAL 1 Elevate the customer experience

## WHY IT'S IMPORTANT

We exist to connect our customers to opportunity. Fostering an easy-to-use, safe, and inviting experience promotes us as a compelling transportation choice across our region.

## HEADLINE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

### 1. Percent of residents with 15-minute or better all-weekday transit frequency

This measure will inform community access and future development of our service. The measure will capture residents who have access within a 10-minute walk to service, which offers 15-minute or better weekday frequency.

### 2. Favorable Customer Experience Index

This index will track the level of satisfaction customers have with STA's services as captured by the Net Promoter Score™ based on not less than biennial community surveys.

#### STRATEGY 1.1

##### Expand and adapt mobility options to attract and serve more people

Travel behaviors are constantly evolving. The pandemic accelerated some of these behavioral shifts. We will continually adapt and improve our bus, paratransit, and vanpool service to keep up with changing needs.

##### Possible actions to achieve this:

- Further expand bus and paratransit hours of service
- Introduce service in new areas of ridership demand
- Provide more frequent service across more bus routes
- Develop on-demand service for areas and times of day not well served by bus service
- Explore creating a rider loyalty rewards program

#### STRATEGY 1.2

##### Advance frequent, easy-to-use, fast, and reliable service

*STA Moving Forward*, the previous Strategic Plan, includes the improvement of signature high-frequency corridors. These corridors have been developed along the Monroe-Regal Line, Cheney Line, and the City Line and are being implemented for the Sprague Line, Division Line, and along the I-90/Valley area. Continued investment in this high-quality service will enhance the mobility of our current and future customers across the region.

##### Possible actions to achieve this:

- Expand High Performance Transit network
- Increase service frequency on existing corridors, particularly evenings and weekends
- Identify and address bottlenecks that slow service or cause unreliable travel times
- Collaborate with local and state governments to implement solutions like transit lanes and transit signal priority
- Promote high-frequency service through education, wayfinding, amenities, and vehicles





### **STRATEGY 1.3**

#### **Deliver an outstanding door-to-door experience**

Our customers' experience, from door-to-door, must exceed their expectations. We are working to make every stage of the journey simple, intuitive, and accessible for everyone from planning a trip and accessing a pickup location, to boarding, paying a fare, making a transfer, and arriving at a destination.

#### **Possible actions to achieve this:**

- Provide a seamless trip-planning, payment, and wayfinding experience designed for customers' ease of use
- Improve first/last mile connections
- Enhance boarding locations with customer amenities such as shelters, real-time signage, and lighting
- Communicate in real time
- Embrace the use of technology to enhance the rider experience

### **STRATEGY 1.4**

#### **Create a welcoming, comfortable, and secure environment for all customers**

We work to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent people from realizing the benefits of transit service.

#### **Possible actions to achieve this:**

- Develop and maintain relationships with diverse community groups to help identify and address unique needs
- Ensure fares are affordable
- Create proactive marketing tools for safe and comfortable use of transit through ongoing community engagement
- Promote ridership through education and outstanding service
- Invest in amenities which promote comfort and safety throughout our vehicles and facilities, including the Plaza

### **ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL METRICS TO TRACK PROGRESS:**

- Unlinked annual trips per capita
- Percent of area population that has ridden STA in the last 30 days
- Percent of residents within a 10-minute walk of any STA service
- Percent of jobs with 15-minute or better all-weekday frequency
- Percent of boardings at sheltered stops

# **GOAL 2** **Lead and collaborate with community partners to enhance the quality of life in our region**

## **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT**

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.

## **HEADLINE PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

### **1. Number of new housing units by frequent transit**

This will allow us to track the success of our partnerships with local jurisdictions, developers, employers, and community partners directed at enhancing quality of life for residents of our area through access and mobility. We will capture new residential units within easy access of transit service with 15-minute frequency or better.

### **2. Number of rides facilitated through partnerships (UTAP, Employer Sponsored, and Community Access Pass)**

This will help us understand how partnerships positively impact ridership and overall regional access.

## **STRATEGY 2.1**

### **Collaborate to enhance access to transit**

Our ability to deliver on our mission depends on successful collaboration with others. Our service relies on the use of public rights-of-way while our customers travel to bus stops via pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure provided by private and public developers. Other entities help spread the word about available services to potential riders. And crucially, the land use and development that surrounds transit routes directly influence transit ridership. We are also called to be a helpful partner in advancing the mission of other entities serving our community.

#### **Possible actions to achieve this:**

- Plan and advocate with partners for coordinated land use and transportation
- Leverage our real estate assets to create opportunities for mixed use development
- Invest in coordinated projects that promote advancement of transit use
- Coordinate with rural, tribal, and neighboring transportation providers to extend transit's regional reach
- Leverage partner relationships, including with large employers and employment sites, to promote ridership and provide access to more people
- Collaboratively preserve long-term options for rail



### **STRATEGY 2.2**

#### **Support community partners to amplify community benefits**

During outreach for this plan, stakeholders shared that they believe we are uniquely positioned to take a leadership role in helping the community tackle some of the greatest challenges of our times. Leadership includes listening to, engaging with, facilitating for, and following our community partners.

#### **Possible actions to achieve this:**

- Improve the visibility of transit as a potential solution to community challenges
- Participate in community planning initiatives
- Regularly communicate and collaborate with stakeholders
- Actively support community activities

### **STRATEGY 2.3**

#### **Proactively initiate partnerships to promote and help employers, service providers, and residential development to locate near high-frequency transit**

We will make clear why transit is important—and what transit-oriented development means—to developers, employers, jurisdictions, and service providers, during the planning stages of projects.

#### **Possible actions to achieve this:**

- Partner on Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) projects
- Support and advocate for transit-oriented infrastructure development
- Encourage jurisdictional incentives for TOD
- Share best practices for TOD

### **ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL METRICS TO TRACK PROGRESS:**

- Percent of residents with 15-minute or better all-day transit frequency (aligned with Goal 1)
- Participation on local organization boards and in events/activities
- Rating on “STA is essential to the livability in the region” and on “STA will play an important role in meeting the region’s future” in community perception surveys
- Degree to which community members and neighborhoods feel their mobility needs are being acknowledged and considered by STA based on community perception surveys

# **GOAL 3** **Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of the region**

## **WHY IT'S IMPORTANT**

We need to grow and adapt to ever changing conditions, as recent experience continues to teach us. 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.

## **HEADLINE PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

### **1. Consistently be rated as one of the best places to work in our region**

We will participate in an independent employer survey measuring our status as a Best Place to Work. This will allow us to understand our success as an organization working with our team members to deliver on our strategic goals.

### **2. Fully funded annual budget and six-year capital improvement plan**

We will ensure that our financial resources exceed our financial obligations on an annual basis so we can remain debt free. We will also look to the future as we plan long-range strategic projects to ensure they are adequately supported financially.

## **STRATEGY 3.1**

### **Develop, prepare, and empower our team members**

Our team members are the most essential component to deliver our strategic plan goals. Their success means our success. We must ensure they understand our goals and strategies and we must, in turn, support them with the tools they need to thrive in their roles today and into the future.

#### **Possible actions to achieve this:**

- Foster an inclusive and diverse culture where all employees feel welcome, appreciated, safe, and comfortable
- Prioritize learning and development
- Adapt practices and policies to stay competitive in the evolving employment market
- Develop a succession planning program for team members to grow and progress
- Build a mindset of continuous improvement and accountability throughout our organization



### STRATEGY 3.2

#### Engage in proactive assessment and planning, and deliver strategic long-term investments most beneficial to our communities

Continuous evaluation of today's demands combined with keeping an eye towards the future will best position us to understand changing needs and dynamics across the region which we will be ready to meet.

#### Possible actions to achieve this:

- Leverage analytics to make informed choices
- Develop robust facilities master planning
- Evaluate network architecture in relation to the Plaza to accommodate system growth into the future
- Acquire and expand passenger facility properties
- Continue transition to zero-emission vehicles
- Integrate cutting-edge utilities and telecommunications into facility design and retrofits

### STRATEGY 3.3

#### Exemplify financial stewardship to maintain public trust and organizational sustainability

Our stewardship of taxpayer, customer fare, and federal and state dollars directly impacts our ability to deliver benefits to the public. We must remain vigilant to balance our investments with our sources of funding to be a resilient organization while creating lasting value for our customers and partners across our region.

#### Possible actions to achieve this:

- Maintain “no debt” financial position
- Excel at project management to deliver capital investments on time and on budget
- Emphasize transparency and accountability via consistent and robust reporting practices
- Continue strong public outreach across our various endeavors

### ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL METRICS TO TRACK PROGRESS:

- Percent of employees receiving annual training
- Percent annual turnover rate
- Succession plans defined across the organization
- Percent of fleet miles driven by zero-emission vehicles
- Rating on “provides taxpayers a good value for the money” in community perception survey

## NEXT STEPS

# Key Projects and Performance Measures

This Phase 1 Strategic Plan Executive Summary is only the beginning of our *Connect 2035* planning journey. In 2023, we will begin Phase 2:

**Community engagement** will be a key part of Phase 2



**Identify key projects** that align with *Connect 2035* goals, strategies, and actions, as well as their estimated funding requirements



**Prioritize projects** based on community input, estimated funding requirements, and other evaluation criteria



**Develop performance measures** that are meaningful, accurate, and cost effective to collect—to assess the impacts of projects on our region

Some examples of performance measures are available under **ADDITIONAL POTENTIAL METRICS TO TRACK PROGRESS** in each goal section of this document.

We expect to have our action plan, with key projects and associated performance measures, available in 2024.

**Learn more and join the conversation at:**

[spokanetransit.com/connect-2035](https://spokanetransit.com/connect-2035)



