



# 2022 Action Plan

Approved November 28, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

The 2022 Action Plan outlines key activities in what will be the sixth year of delivering the commitments in the *STA Moving Forward* plan and voter approval of its funding. It will also mark the centennial anniversary of a voter-approved unified transit system that became Spokane United Railways, a predecessor to Spokane Transit. The name “Spokane United Railways” was more than symbolic gesture; it was the melding of disparate operations, fare policies and route schedules to achieve a coherent, more functional and convenient system for tens of thousands of daily commuters. Arguably it also impressed in the collective mind of the community the essential nature of transit in the healthy function of a city.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 global pandemic in March 2020, the essential nature of transit service has once again been emphasized. Similarly, the historic unification of transit came during a time of much disruption to the transit industry, including inflation and increased car ownership, not unlike the present day.

Our hope is that 2022 will be a year of recovery from the pandemic and its impacts on public health, the economy, employment and transit ridership. We will track external indicators and emphasize to riders and the community that transit is still a safe way to travel. In spite of the uncertainty created by COVID-19, we will strive to exemplify resiliency and excellence. Our focus will continue to be on making transit an even easier, more convenient option for travelers, which will support economic growth and address the associated traffic challenges of a strong region.

The COVID-19 Global Pandemic has resulted in supply-chain disruptions that have severely impacted project delivery, particularly for the City Line, which now will go into service in July 2023. Despite this setback, 2022 will be an important year for key improvements and important planning activities, both for the delivery of projects in the *STA Moving Forward* plan and also opportunities beyond that plan.

## VISION

Spokane Transit aspires to be a source of pride for the region.

## MISSION

We are dedicated to providing safe, accessible, convenient, and efficient public transportation services to the Spokane region’s neighborhoods, business and activity centers.

We are leaders in transportation and a valued partner in the community’s social fabric, economic infrastructure and quality of life.



As described later in this plan, there are four core actions STA will pursue in 2022 to support ridership recovery and plan implementation:

1. Design and deliver core infrastructure
2. Advance and implement High Performance Transit (HPT)
3. Improve the customer experience
4. Look to the future.

### PLAN BASIS

The 2022 Action Plan provides a focused view of the specific activities Spokane Transit will take in the coming year to further and deliver on its strategy. The strategy elements represent the agency’s highest priorities, and are guided by its vision and mission statements, as well as publicly vetted and Board-approved plans including STA’s comprehensive plan, *Connect Spokane*, the six-year *Transit Development Plan* (TDP), and the 10-year plan, *STA Moving Forward*.

### PLAN CONTEXT

STA provides the region with a high level of service relative to the region’s population and density, undergirding everything we do. With the COVID-19 global pandemic in its second year, we have learned to be more agile and flexible. It is in this context we outline actions and deliverables for the coming year to address regional transportation needs and growth and provide quality service that can be a source of pride for the region.

Ridership projections for 2022 are necessary for budgeting purposes notwithstanding the uncertainty surrounding such figures.

1. **Fixed-Route Bus** – STA’s goal is to begin to recover fixed-route bus ridership. The budget assumes 6.3 million rides. It appears likely that ridership recovery will be prolonged.
2. **Paratransit** – STA projects 277,000 passengers on the service, a decline from pre-pandemic levels.
3. **Vanpool** – STA’s goal is to stabilize Vanpool ridership at 136,000 rides in 2022. Vanpool ridership is expected to continue to be sensitive to shifts in telecommute policies.

### PLAN FUNDING

Operating and capital funding for new investments, as well as maintaining the already robust regional system, is provided by three major sources: fares paid by passengers, federal and state grants, including continued use of recovery and rescue plan funds, and local, voter-approved sales tax.

## PRIORITIES

Ensure Safety

Earn and Retain  
the Community’s Trust

Provide Outstanding  
Customer Service

Enable  
Organizational Success

Exemplify  
Financial Stewardship



## NATIONAL & REGIONAL CHALLENGES

The actions in the 2022 plan originate from a variety of documents approved by STA's Board of Directors, composed of elected officials appointed by their jurisdictions in the Public Transportation Benefit Area and a non-voting representative of labor. Those plans provide conceptual and specific solutions that aim to address the following challenges at the local and national levels:

- ☞ Uncertain economic outcomes arising from the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic, related to labor availability and supply chain constraints impacting timing and cost of goods.
- ☞ Major shifts in travel patterns intertwined with temporary changes will result in an uncertain picture of the future transportation system.
- ☞ Significant regional growth in Spokane County will continue to strain the region's transportation infrastructure.

## GOAL & STRATEGIES

**It is Spokane Transit's goal in 2022 to further the implementation *STA Moving Forward* and exemplify resiliency and excellence.** In addition to its ongoing operations performance measures, STA will track outcomes against the following four strategies and associated objectives.

### Action 1: Deliver Core Infrastructure & Services

STA will continue to design and deliver infrastructure that ensures a state of good repair and improve public transportation service for the community as set forth in the agency's transit development plan and the approved operating and capital budgets. In 2022 STA will make progress on three major initiatives that, in each case, have a significant influence on the quality and demand for public transportation in the future and align with the agency's mission, vision and priorities.

- ☞ **Fare Collection System** Spokane Transit will implement a modernized fare collection system that empowers riders to manage their fares online and to use contactless fare payment tools like mobile devices or STA's new smartcard. This important technology improvement stems from customer feedback to make the fare payment process easier, more convenient and more accessible and has the benefit of faster boarding times as more customers can by-pass the farebox. Revisions to STA's fare policy is expected to be finalized in early 2022 to support the rollout of new smart cards and payment options. All major hardware and software features will be in place and functional by late 2022. STA will evaluate the scope and timing of other capabilities, such as all-door boarding.
- ☞ **Battery Electric Technology** – STA's battery electric bus (BEB) fleet is now comprised of 14 coaches, including 10 City Line vehicles, with an additional 16 currently fully funded in the Capital Improvement Program. Ten of these additional coaches are funded through a Low or No Emissions Vehicle ("Low-No") Grant submitted in partnership with Proterra, a US BEB manufacturer. Beginning with their initial placement in revenue service in late 2021, STA will evaluate the

performance of the first four BEBs, two each from two different manufacturers, to determine the preference for future orders, especially six more buses that will enable the Route 4 Monroe-Regal to operate 100% electrically. STA will also begin work on additional charging infrastructure to support overnight charge of the additional buses awarded in the Low-No grant with funding support from the region's Electrification of the Transportation System (ETS) grant, awarded in late 2020. The STA Board of Directors may fund up to ten more BEBs that can be accommodated in the Boone Northwest Garage and placed into revenue service by 2024. STA expects to reassess the state of technology as early as 2023 to determine if there are expanded opportunities for funding to increase the adoption of zero emission vehicles.

- ☞ **May 2022 Fixed Route Service Revisions** – A key deliverable of the *STA Moving Forward* plan in 2022 is improved service to northeast Spokane. Through extensive public input, STA developed a service plan for these improvements, originally envisioned to be in place at the time of the City Line launch. With the City Line launch date extended to July 2023, STA has identified a path to deploy most of these improvements in May 2022. New and revised services to launch in 2022 will improve access to high schools and middle schools in north Spokane and Spokane Valley. These include a new east-west route in north Spokane, extending of service northward in the area of Francis Avenue and Crestline Street, and revising service in Liberty Lake to serve the new Ridgeline High School.
- ☞ **Near Term Investment Opportunities** – STA's financial position, borne from careful management, regional economic growth and federal support, has introduced an opportunity to consider additional investments in service, capital improvements and other investments that support longer term strategies. This may include opportunities to add targeted improvements to improve job access and equitable access to the fixed route network. These near-term investments will be evaluated and selected by the STA Board of Directors in late 2021 and could be deployed during 2022.

## Action 2: Advance and Implement High Performance Transit (HPT)

Since 2010, STA's central vision for its fixed route network has included a series of connected corridors with frequent, easy to use service with enhanced amenities. Six corridors in that network are included in the *STA Moving Forward* plan with varying levels of improvements planned. The following summary outlines the current status and planned actions on these lines during 2022.

- ☞ **City Line** – The planned 5.8-mile corridor-based Bus Rapid Transit route from Browne's Addition to Spokane Community College by way of downtown and the University District, including Gonzaga University, is in construction, with the installation of station amenities slated through much of 2022. In response to supply chain and other impacts, many of which are associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic, a new launch date of July 2023 is now expected for the project.
- ☞ **Cheney Line** – The Cheney Line will extend across a regional corridor to connect Cheney and the West Plains to Spokane. The service architecture was instituted in September 2021 and the

construction of Four Lakes and Eagle stations are projected to be complete by end of 2021. Other improvements in the corridor will be in design and move toward construction in the second half of 2022. Capital investments on the Cheney Line will conclude in 2023 with additional station and stop improvements and the deployment of double-decker buses

- ☞ **Monroe-Regal Line** – Route 4 launched in September 2019 and has become STA’s busiest bus route. Additional elements are planned for 2022, including station and access improvements at South Hill Park and Ride, wayfinding markers and real time signs at stations in the corridor.
- ☞ **Sprague Line** – In 2021, STA successfully received a state regional mobility grant to advance the Sprague Line. During 2022, STA expects to complete design of the Sprague Line improvements in preparation for construction in 2023 and 2024. This work is predicated on past improvements made in partnership with the City of Spokane and the Sprague Line corridor development plan that is expected to be completed in late 2021. As much as possible, STA will continue to partner with the cities of Spokane and Spokane Valley on locations that can be integrated into other road improvements.
- ☞ **I-90/Valley Corridor** – Interstate 90 represents a major east-west axis for regional trip-making. In 2021, STA was a state regional mobility grant recipient to aid in the implementation of this corridor. STA will be completing the corridor plan for the I-90/Valley corridor in 2022 that will establish the location and scale of transit improvements to improve capacity, accessibility and service quality in this corridor. .
- ☞ **Division BRT** – Division Bus Rapid Transit has transitioned from a long-term planning concept to an active project in 2021 with the adoption of a locally preferred alternative (LPA) identifying battery electric buses operating primarily in business access and transit (BAT) lanes from downtown Spokane to the Mead area and along Division Street and Newport Highway. During 2022 we expect to advance preliminary engineering and establish the window of time in 2023 in which we will formally submit the project to the FTA Small Starts program for entry into Project Development.

### Action 3: Improve the Customer Experience

- ☞ **Focus Communication Efforts** – STA will focus its efforts on assuring riders and the community that it is safe to ride transit. Emphasizing vehicle and facility cleaning, air circulation and filtering, and compliance with state and federal health requirements should communicate confidence in STA’s diligence to keeping a healthy environment for employees and customers.
- ☞ **Deliver New Customer Information Systems** – In addition to the Fare Collection project that will enable customers to manage their fares online, STA will coordinate the introduction of other digital communication functions to provide customers with important information where it is most convenient for them – on their mobile or desktop devices. A redeveloped website, designed for transit customers’ convenience, will launch in 2021. It will provide easy access to trip planning, real-time information, improved schedules and detour notifications, as well as fare management and mobile ticketing.
- ☞ **Implement New Digital Signage** – STA began to transition away from displaying important customer information at high ridership locations on printed temporary signage in 2021. In 2022

digital signs will be installed at more locations to display more timely and relevant information for customers. Real-time schedule information, system alerts, emergency notifications, rider tips and other helpful messages will be delivered to digital screens throughout the transit network via a newly acquired content management software service. This system will lay the foundation for on-board digital signage on City Line buses when that service begins in 2023.

#### Action 4: Look to the Future

- ☞ **Complete a major update to *Connect Spokane*** – STA’s comprehensive plan, *Connect Spokane*, has been instrumental in a visionary, policy-grounded framework for planning decisions. A major update is underway and will improve plan usability, refine policy outcomes and provide a framework for preparing a new (roadmap??) as we anticipate the completion of *STA Moving Forward* investments in 2025 and continued regional growth and change.
- ☞ **Embark on strategic planning journey** – The STA Board of Directors has charted a course to refresh its vision for the future, extending the horizon for strategic investments and actions through 2035. The first phase of this planning effort will set the direction of the agency. It is expected to be completed in the second half of 2022 and transition to a second phase in which investment opportunities are defined and selected. Key areas to explore in the planning process include the course toward a zero-emission fleet, understand ridership dynamics of the future, expand STA’s efforts in diversity, equity and inclusion, assess required facilities to address planned and projected service growth, new service and growth opportunities and other means to improve the role STA plays and the value STA provides to the region.
- ☞ **Recruit talent** – STA continues to operate in a growth phase to fully deliver *STA Moving Forward*. Continue to pursue excellence in recruiting and retaining new talent to fill a variety of roles.

## CONCLUSION

On May 2, 1922, voters in the City of Spokane overwhelmingly endorsed the future of transit despite the challenges. Similar to a hundred years ago, we look forward to the future, united in our commitment to serve the region now and in the future. We remain dedicated to strong collaborative partnerships with the cities and Spokane County, whose residents we are privileged to serve. The strategies outlined in this document reflect our ongoing commitment to bringing the *STA Moving Forward* vision to life.