



Seattle Streetcar Program Overview

Transit Advisory Board
December 17, 2025

Presentation Outline

- Seattle Streetcar System Overview
- Seattle Streetcar and the Seattle Transit Measure
- Seattle Streetcar: Looking Forward





Seattle Streetcar: System Overview

Seattle Streetcar Network

- Modern streetcar system consisting of two lines —South Lake Union and First Hill Streetcar
- Provides high-quality, attractive, easy-to-use service:
 - 12-15-minute headways on each line
- Fully electric, zero emissions system that advances City of Seattle mobility, livability, equity, safety and climate goals
- Only SDOT-controlled transit service
 - Direct ability to invest service for events and in response to emerging needs
 - Role in regional transit policy making



First Hill Streetcar Overview



- First Hill Streetcar (FHS) opened 2016:
 - Funded by Sound Transit in lieu of First Hill Link Station
- 2.5 Mile Alignment, 10 Stops, 6 vehicles
- Partnerships - Seattle University sponsorship, CID train wrap and station art
- Ridership:
 - Currently at ~4,000 daily weekday riders
 - Major Employer Riders: UW, Swedish, Amazon, Seattle U, and Microsoft make up 25% of ORCA boardings

South Lake Union Streetcar Overview



- South Lake Union (SLU) Streetcar opened in 2007:
 - Funded through Local Improvement District, federal grants, and local funds
- Partnerships - funding and promotions
 - Amazon, SLU Chamber
- 1.3 Mile Alignment, seven stops, four vehicles
- Ridership:
 - Currently at almost 900 daily weekday riders (double 2024 ridership).
 - Major Employer Riders: Amazon, Fred Hutch, UW, Google, and Allen Institute make up ~37% of ORCA boardings



King County Metro Partnership

- Like Sound Transit's Link, Metro operates and maintains the Seattle Streetcar
 - Leverages the expertise and resources of a large transit agency to deliver service
- King County Metro Streetcar section includes ~62 employees (70% at First Hill)
 - Shared roles across both lines (Section Managers, Superintendents, Finance, Admin, etc.)
- Interlocal agreement defines roles and responsibilities
 - Metro: Operations, maintenance, communications and customer service
 - SDOT: Policy, strategy, financial management and grant administration, reporting, and federal safety compliance

The Seattle Streetcar role in the transit network

- Successful neighborhood-level transit routes that support economic development
 - Neighborhood transit routes connect local destinations
 - Leverage the value of the regional network with unique connections to Link, Monorail
 - Support a growing city by enable low- and no-car households
- Aligns with long-term system trends
 - Transit travel trends shifting toward all-day ridership - both lines serve a range of all-day and evening destinations
 - Provide resiliency for system as Link expands



Comparable Routes to Streetcar

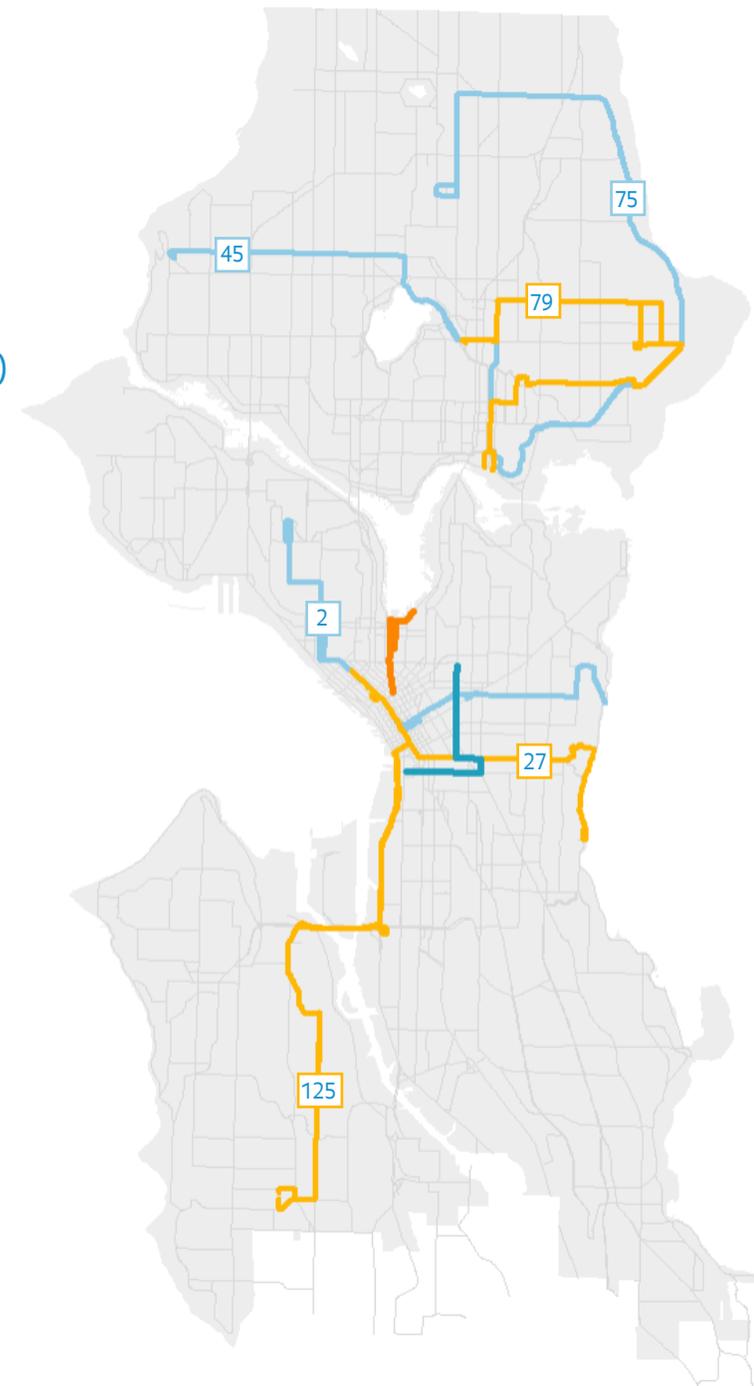
- Both FHS and SLU are comparable to several Metro routes that provide neighborhood transit functionality and regional connections
- 41% of Metro transit routes have lower ridership than the SLU line

Streetcar

- First Hill (FH)
- South Lake Union (SLU)

Comparable Bus Routes

- Routes similar to FH
- Routes similar to SLU



Metric	SLU	125
Average Daily Boardings	900	800
Cost Per Rider	\$ 21.07	\$ 22.76
Average Fare per Rider	\$ 1.35	\$ 0.50
Productivity (Riders per hour)	18	10

How Seattle Streetcar Compares to Other Streetcar Systems

- Lower than average operating costs

		Operating Expenses		
		Per Revenue Hour	Per Passenger Miles	Per Rider
Average		\$ 421.03	\$ 14.34	\$ 21.05
Seattle Streetcar		\$ 377.60	\$ 8.97	\$ 9.89

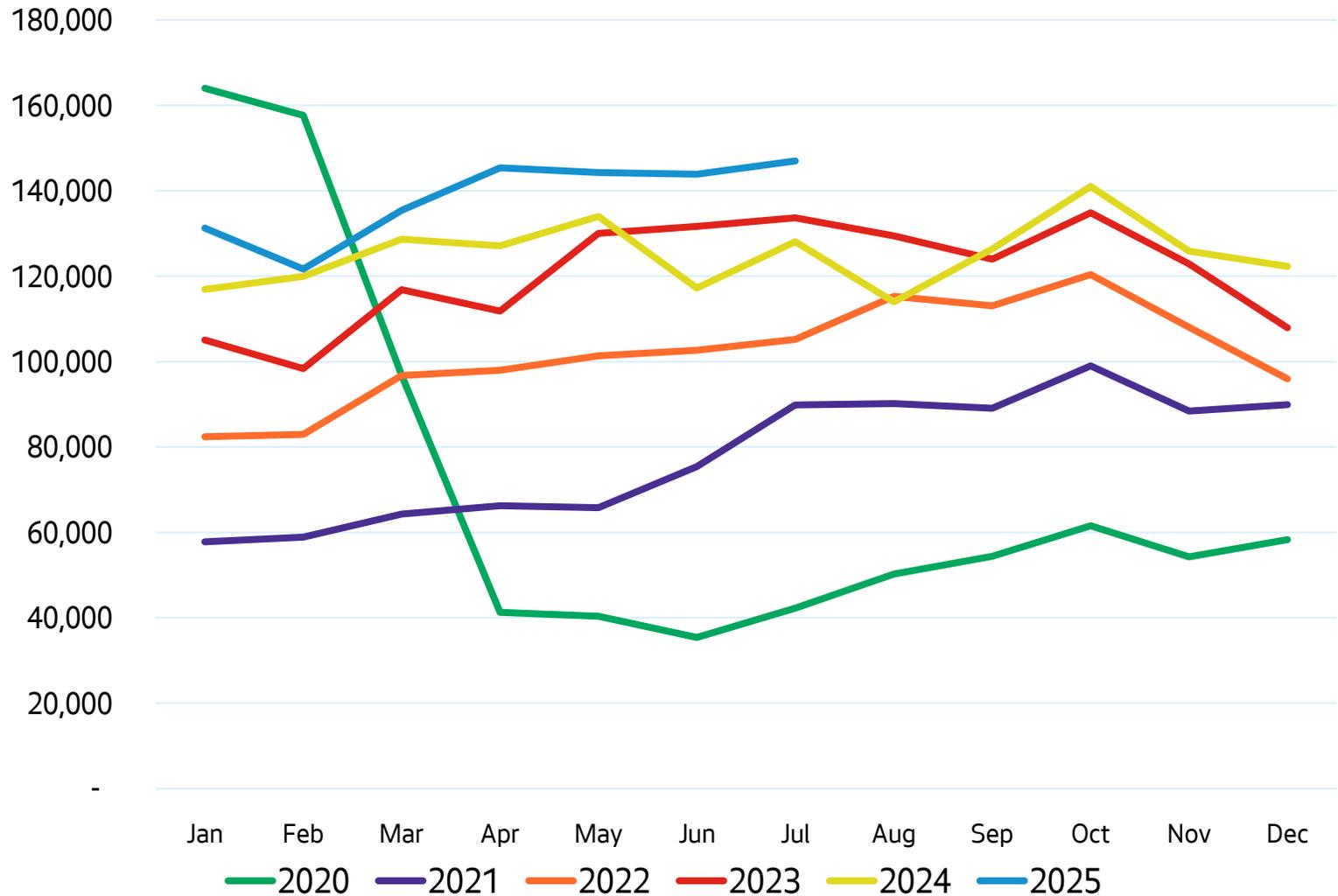
- Higher than average ridership

		Ridership	
		Per Revenue Mile	Per Revenue Hour
Average		5.55	32.92
Seattle Streetcar		7.90	38.20

*From 2023 NTD Data

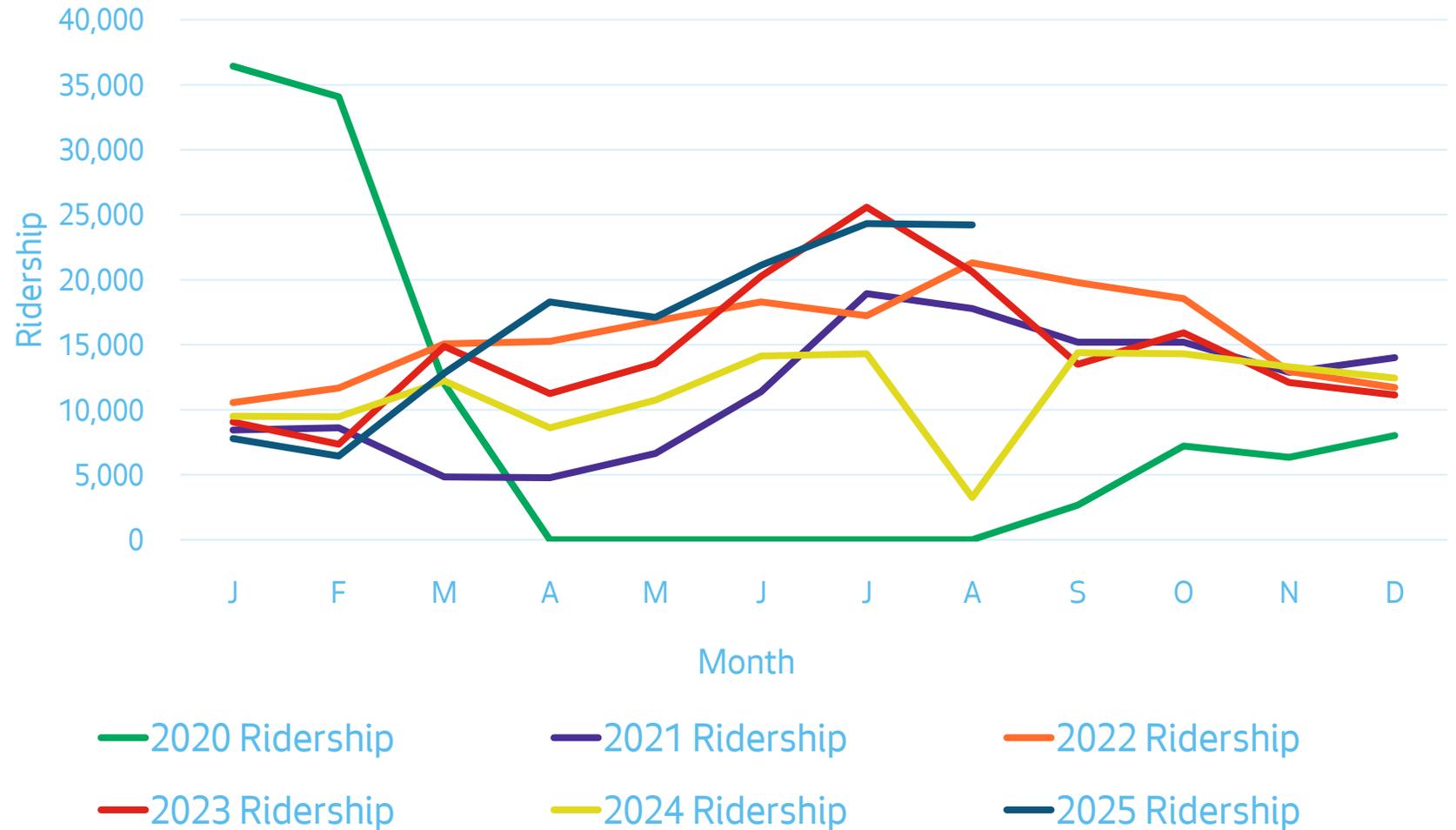
Streetcar System Ridership is Growing

- 1.5 Million Riders in 2024
- At 74% of pre-pandemic ridership in 2024
 - Higher than Metro Bus recovery (64%) in 2024
 - Puget Sound agencies are seeing plateau of all systems at 77% of 2019 ridership
- Averaging about *4,400 daily weekday rides system-wide



South Lake Union Ridership is Growing

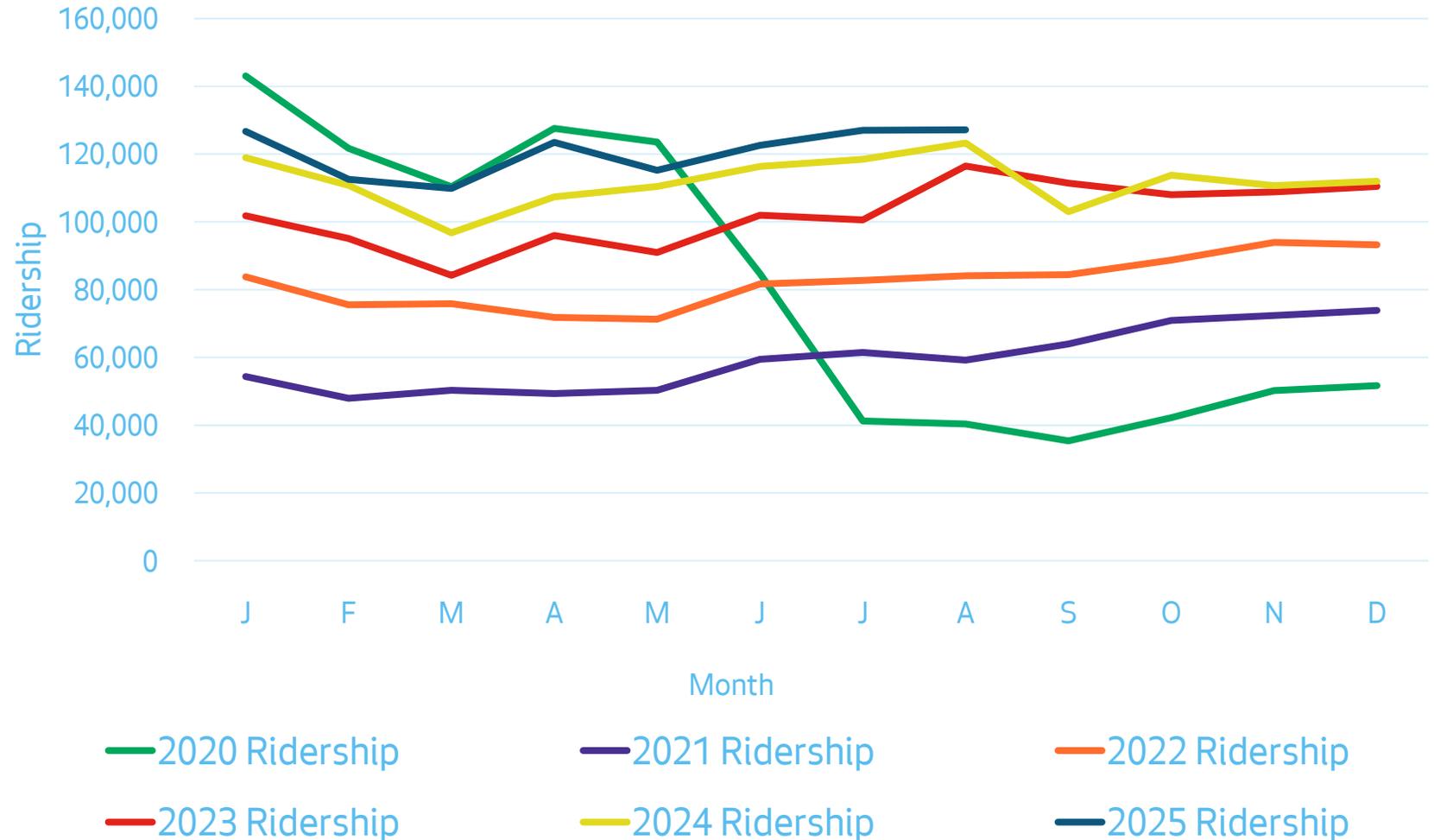
- 900 Average Daily Weekday Riders (42nd Percentile)
 - Almost double 2024 Average Weekday Riders at ~467
- Higher summer ridership, while Metro ridership drops
- 81% of ORCA riders use ORCA Passport
- 12% buy tickets (e.g. visitors)



*August 2025 Ridership Data

First Hill Ridership is Growing

- 4,000 Average Daily Weekday Riders in 2025 (82nd Percentile)
 - Compared to 3,700 Average Weekday Riders in 2024
- 97% of 2019 ridership



*August 2025 Ridership Data

Continuous improvement

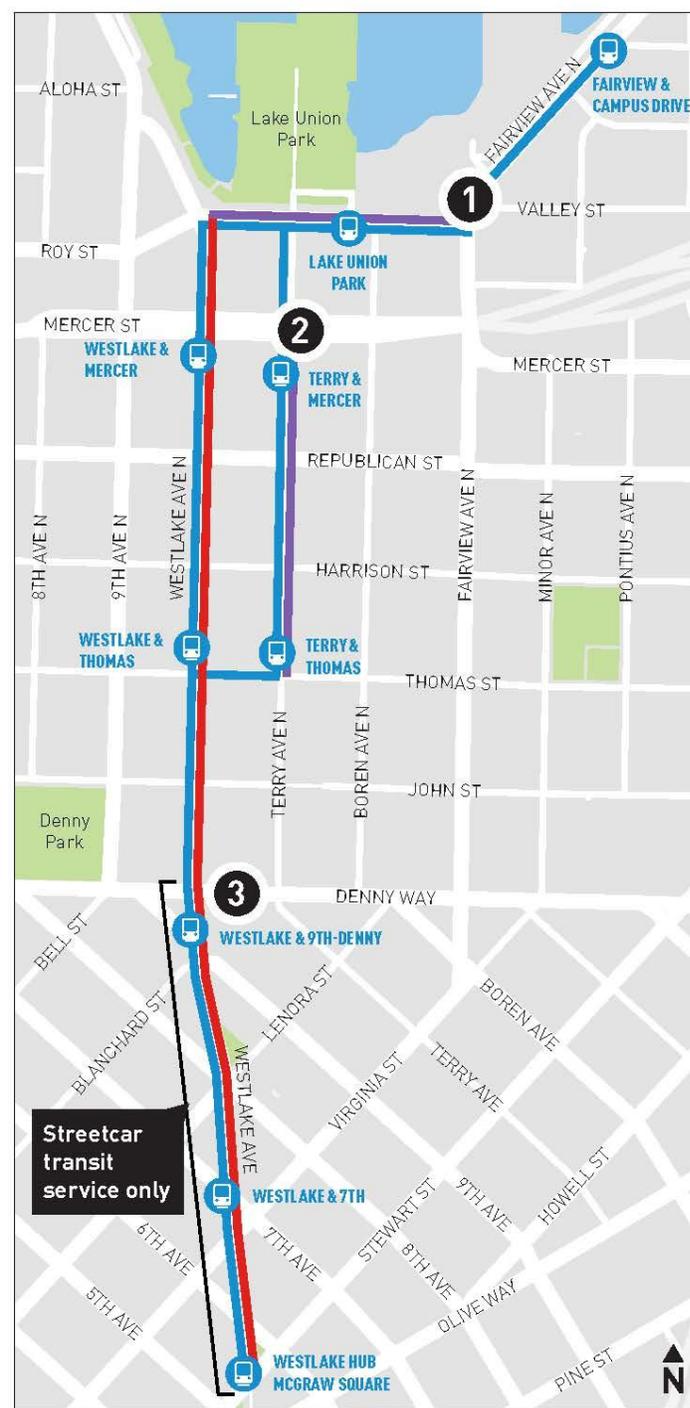
- **South Lake Union Reliability Investments:**
 - Right turn restriction on Denny
 - Terry and Mercer signal upgrades
 - Rapid Ride J - Transit Only Lanes (bringing line to ~95% transit only lanes)
- **Service Investments:**
 - Additional service during DSTT Closures, FIFA Club Cup, and Seafair events
- **Network integration to improve experience:**
 - Metro Transit Police providing services to Seattle Streetcar
 - Fare Enforcement: Fare evasion rates decreasing
 - Fare Change to \$3: Align with other transit services to ease transfers

Streetcar Alignment and Transit Lanes

- South Lake Union Streetcar
- BAT (business and transit access)/transit lanes
- Streetcar-only lanes

Future Streetcar Performance Improvements

- 1 Rapid Ride J will make all of Fairview streetcar alignment - transit only
- 2 Signal improvement for reliability
- 3 Right turn restriction on Denny



Streetcar System Serves Diverse Populations

Average Percentages of Equity Priority Area Populations for Seattle Streetcar

High Zero Vehicle Households, People of Color, and Limited English Proficiency on Both Lines

	SLU	FHS	Seattle
65 & Over	7%	13%	13%
Zero Vehicle Households	42%	48%	19%
Commuting by Transit	16%	32%	21%
People of Color	52%	52%	39%
Below 200% Poverty	13%	33%	18%
Limited English Proficiency	8%	11%	7%
People with a Disability	9%	15%	10%

*ACS 5 Year 2022 Census tract data via OPCD

Community Partnerships

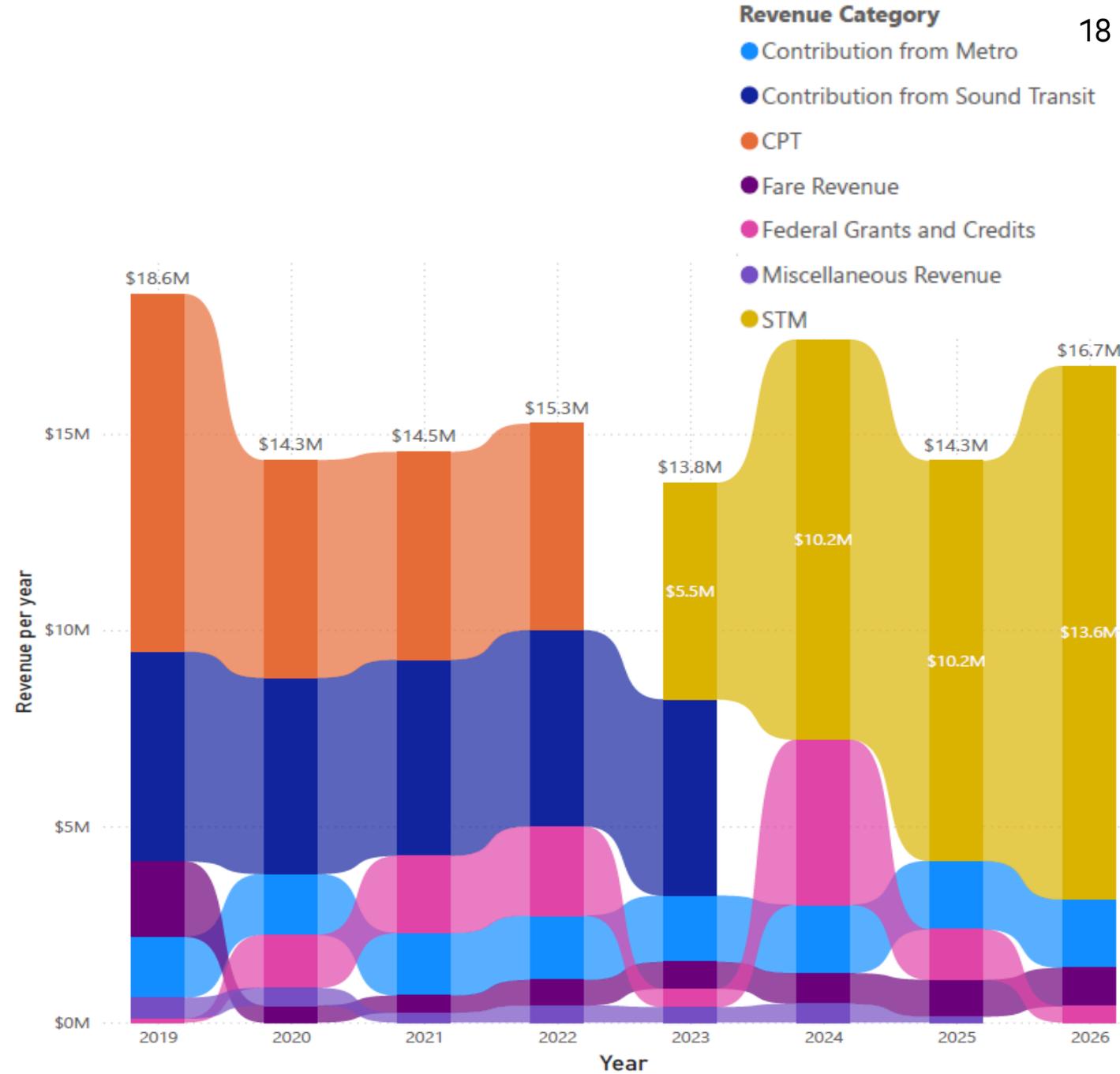




Seattle Streetcar & STM

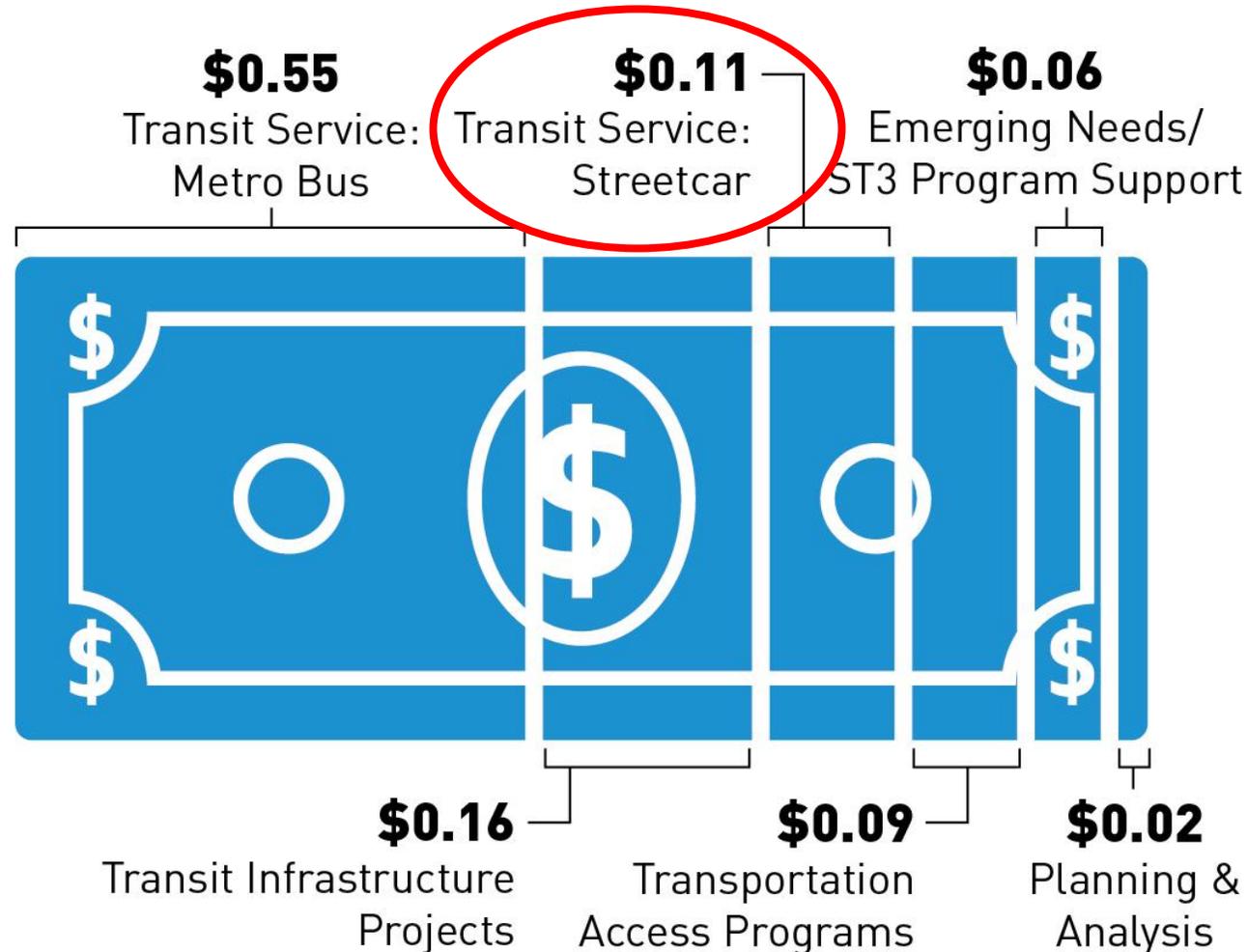
Streetcar Funding

- Streetcar funding has evolved
- Lasting impacts of COVID reduced ability to fund with previous sources such as Commercial Parking Tax
- Annual Sound Transit contribution of \$5M sunset in 2023
- In 2023, STM began funding operations and maintenance (O&M)
- Aligns with purpose of expanding access to transit



STM Streetcar Funding

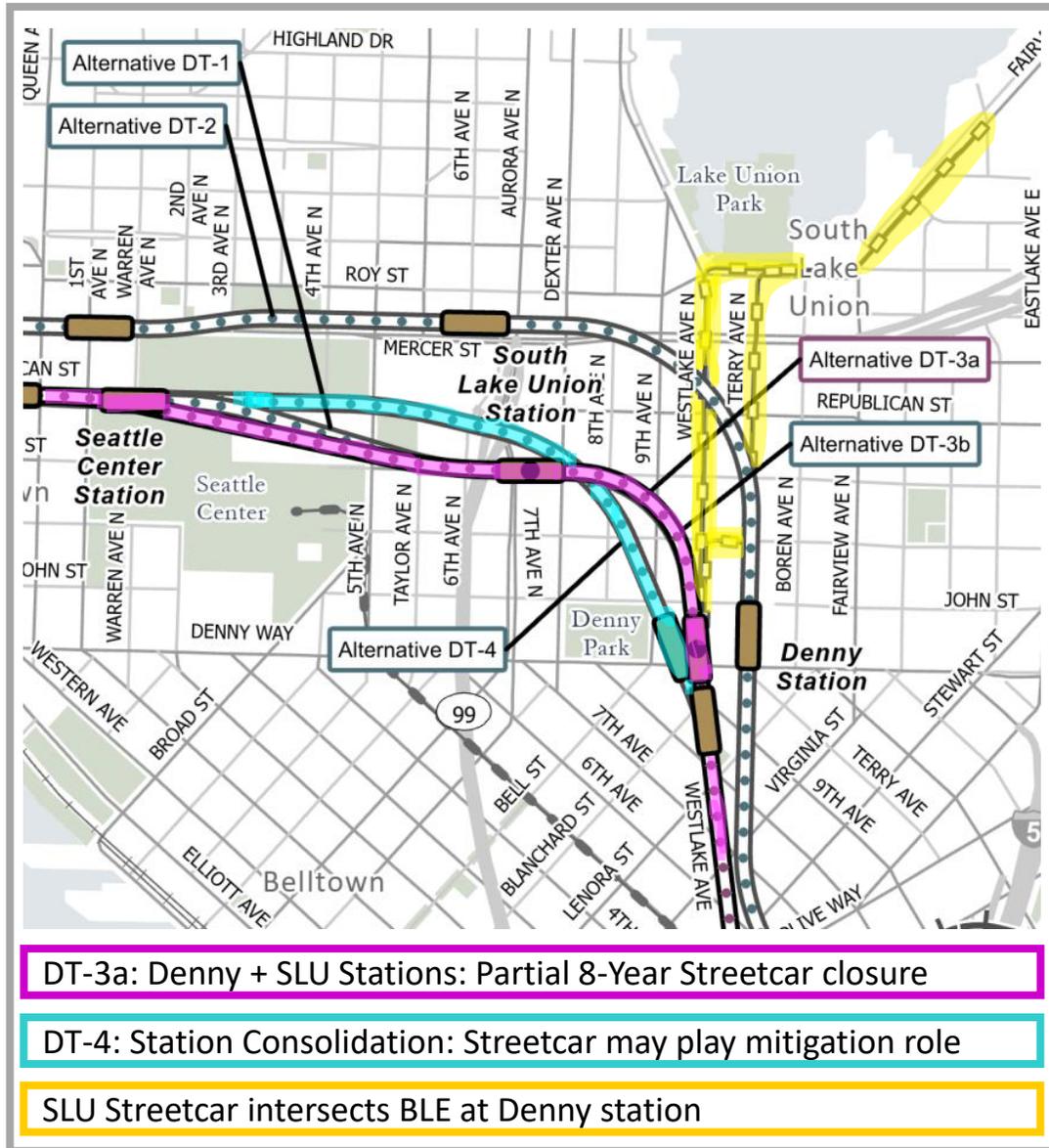
STM Spending Breakdown in a Typical Year per Dollar, 2021-2026





Seattle Streetcar: Looking Forward

Relationship to ST3: *Ballard Draft EIS*



Uncertainty of impacts to SLU Line:

- Sound Transit considering cost saving options that could alter impacts to SLU Streetcar

BLE Schedule:

- 2026: DEIS, FEIS, Record of Decision
- 2028-2039: Permitting + construction
- 2039: Service delivery

Seattle Streetcar: Looking Forward

- Future ridership growth:
 - Addressing reliability at pinch points to reduce travel time across both alignments
 - Current ridership trending up on both lines
 - 2025 SLU daily ridership is nearly double 2024
 - Strong ridership during special events
 - South Lake Union:
 - Up 23% during Seafair (1,100 Daily Riders)
 - Up 62% on 4th of July (1,500 daily riders)
 - Adding service for FIFA World Cup on both lines
- Transit integration:
 - During WSLE and BLE construction, both lines will support a transit-first mobility strategy
 - Long-term, SLU will directly serve future Denny Station and Harrison Transit Corridor, and FHS will provide connectivity to CID



Questions?

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www.seattle.gov/streetcar



From the entire SDOT Team:
Thank you!

