



October 2024

Public Hearing for *Connect 2035* Draft Plan



STA is preparing to release the public draft of its next 10-year strategic plan, *Connect 2035*, on Wednesday, November 6. The strategic plan outlines initiatives, capital projects, routes, and programs that will improve and expand transit service to the region over the next 10 years. STA is encouraging the public to review the draft and submit **feedback**.

A public hearing on the draft plan will take place during the November Board meeting on November 21 at 1:30 pm. The hearing will provide residents another opportunity to share their opinions, whether they support the plan in general or have specific projects they are excited about.

“We’ve received a lot of robust feedback throughout this process, and it’s clear that the community is engaged and invested in the future of transit. We’re excited to take the next steps forward,” said Karl Otterstrom, STA’s Chief Planning & Development Officer.

Following the public hearing, STA’s Planning & Development committee will review the feedback in early December before finalizing the plan. The committee will then recommend the plan to the Board for adoption during their December 19 meeting.

To stay up to date on the latest developments for *Connect 2035*, sign up for emails

at spokanetransit.com/connect2035. Any questions, suggestions, or feedback to share about *Connect 2035* may also be directed to connect2035@spokanetransit.com.

Public Hearing for Draft 2025 Budget



Above: The cover page of the STA Draft 2025 Budget

A public hearing will be held for STA's draft operating and capital budget for 2025, scheduled to take place during the STA Board of Directors meeting on Thursday, November 21 at 1:30 pm. The hearing will allow members of the public to provide input before the budget is finalized.

The draft budget includes operating and capital expenditures for the coming year, reflecting proposals submitted by various STA departments. This annual process ensures that STA's spending aligns with both operational needs and long-term capital projects, as well as input from the community and stakeholders.

The draft budget was presented to the Planning & Development Committee on October 2 before also being presented to the Citizens Advisory Committee the following week. Then the STA Board reviewed the draft budget at its October meeting. Following these reviews, a proposed version will be available in November

with final adoption by the Board expected in December.

To view the draft 2025 budget, please visit spokanetransit.com/financial-information.



Transit-Oriented Development Project Kickoff for Division



Above: An aerial photo of Division Street

In partnership with STA and Spokane County, the City of Spokane has launched the Division Street Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) project, an initiative aimed at transforming the Division Street corridor in alignment with future transit improvements. Funded by a grant from the Federal Transit Administration managed by STA, the project focuses on leveraging the upcoming Division Street Bus Rapid Transit route to encourage development that enhances public transportation and creates more pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented neighborhoods.

“This is a great opportunity to explore different development opportunities along the corridor that might not have been as suitable without the investment in transit and other mobility options,” said Brian Jennings, STA Deputy Director for Community Development.

The TOD project will focus on five to six key sub-areas along Division Street, where the introduction of BRT could stimulate new growth. The project is timely as the region prepares for the opening of the North Spokane Corridor. Jennings emphasized that the expected change of through traffic from Division to the newly completed freeway, which could occur by 2030, opens the door to transforming Division Street into a more accessible and vibrant corridor.

“As traffic shifts, we expect Division to change dramatically, and this project will help us plan for that future,” Jennings said.

Public engagement is a key component of the project with the planning team already conducting initial outreach.

“This month, consultants conducting the planning study were here to kick off the project, including a tour of the corridor and a public meeting at Natural Grocers, where residents could ask questions and learn more about the objectives and timeline,” said Jennings.

The consultants also met with local developers and brokers to gather early input on issues and opportunities.

Looking ahead, Jennings confirmed that more public engagement activities will begin in early 2025.

“The project team, led by the City, is planning additional engagement opportunities and meetings with businesses and property owners in the first quarter of 2025,” Jennings noted.

These efforts will be supported by the establishment of advisory committees to ensure community input is central to the planning process.

The Division Street TOD project is expected to continue through 2025 with final plans anticipated by early 2026.

“This is an exciting time for residents of Spokane and Spokane County, and we’re eager to see how this project will shape the future of Division Street,” Jennings said.

To learn more about the project, visit my.spokanecity.org/projects/division-street-transit-oriented-development-pilot.



Rideshare Gets a New Look



Above: EWU employee Scott Larson standing in front of a newly wrapped STA Rideshare vehicle

STA's Rideshare program, formerly known as Vanpool, offers commuters a cost-effective way to get to work, and now its vehicles are hitting the road with a fresh, new look. The recent addition of vibrant vehicle wraps to STA's Rideshare fleet marks the latest step in the program's rebranding effort.

Rideshare allows groups of people who live or work near each other to share a commute in an STA-provided vehicle. Participants pay a fee based on their starting and ending locations, while STA handles maintenance, gas, insurance, and other expenses. A minimum of three riders is required to form a Rideshare group.

With the introduction of 37 newly procured Chevy Traverses that will feature the new blue and green-wave wraps, STA aims to enhance the visibility of this eco-friendly program and attract more participants.

"The program has undergone a lot of change in the last year," said Janet Stowe, Senior Paratransit & Rideshare Transportation Manager at STA. "We rebranded from Vanpool to Rideshare, retired some of the older vans, and brought in a new fleet of Chevy Traverses. The new wraps make the rebrand feel complete."

Scott Larson, a staff member at Eastern Washington University, has been a strong advocate for the Rideshare program. Larson, who serves as the main driver for his group and has a 64-mile round-trip commute, first joined Rideshare to save money on vehicle wear and tear, a significant concern for him as an automotive mechanic.

"I save a huge amount of money each year by using Rideshare," Larson said. "It's like giving myself a raise."

Beyond financial savings, Larson has found personal benefits as well. "I've met new people at Eastern that I wouldn't have met otherwise. It's a great way to build

community,” he said.

Larson also encourages others to try the program, noting that any initial concerns about independence or group dynamics quickly fade.

“The savings are immediate, and it’s a smooth process,” Larson said.

With 97 vehicles in the fleet and 86 Rideshare groups on the road, STA’s Rideshare program is steadily growing. The introduction of the new Chevy Traverses and their eye-catching wraps has only added to the momentum, with 16 of the 37 Traverses already sporting the new design.

“We’re excited for this next step,” Stowe said. “The new design is getting attention, and we hope it encourages more people to join.”

For more information on Rideshare, visit spokanetransit.com/rideshare.



Timepoints & Bus Stops



Above: A Route 6 bus in Four Lakes

Bus riders often wonder why their bus sometimes waits for a few minutes at a bus stop or passes one without stopping if no riders are waiting there. The answer lies in understanding two types of bus stops: timepoints and regular bus stops.

Timepoints are designated bus stops along a route that have scheduled departure times, as listed in STA’s paper schedules. These stops are often located at notable

locations, transfer hubs, or other well-used stops. Buses may arrive early at a timepoint but should not leave before the scheduled time. This ensures that passengers arriving on time will not miss their bus, which is why buses sometimes wait at these stops in order to stay on schedule, pacing their travel along a route.

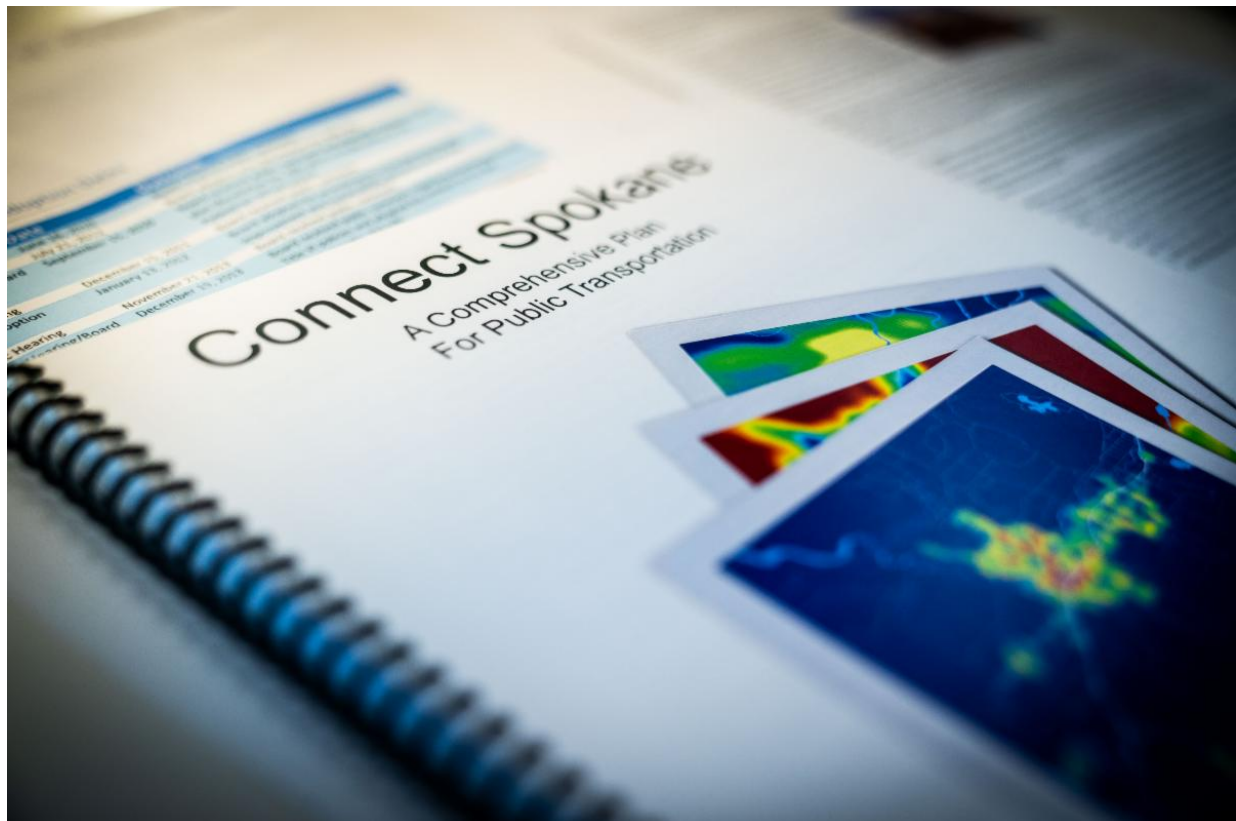
On the other hand, regular bus stops do not have a set departure time. That is, departure times shown on trip planning tools, like Google Maps or online schedules, are estimates. By not assigning a scheduled time, the driver has the flexibility and discretion to stay on track and adjust as needed, given the variety of operating conditions throughout the day and year, such as increased traffic congestion, construction, or an unusually larger number of passengers boarding and alighting the bus.

Since regular stops do not have a fixed time, STA recommends riders arrive at their bus stop at least five minutes earlier than an anticipated departure time, especially if it is not a timepoint. Updates to STA's website are coming in November that will show designated timepoints versus regular stops to assist with trip planning.

By knowing when and where buses are required to stop, riders can navigate the system with more confidence and avoid unnecessary waits or missing the bus.



Updates to Comprehensive Plan Adopted by Board



Above: The cover page to STA's comprehensive plan, Connect Spokane

Updated elements to STA's comprehensive plan, *Connect Spokane*, were adopted by the STA Board of Directors at their October meeting. The revisions reflect STA's ongoing commitment to improving transit equity, transparency, and accessibility throughout the region.

One of the key changes includes updates to STA's revenue and fare policy, with an emphasis on expanding eligibility-based fare programs.

"STA is considering the possibility of piloting a three-year low-income fare program," said Karl Otterstrom, STA's Chief Planning & Development Officer. "The policy adjustment helps align with STA's broader goal to ensure equitable access to public transportation, especially among those who need it most."

In addition to updating the fare policy, STA is also introducing a new transit equity and inclusion element into the body of the document. This section had previously been included only in an appendix.

"By formally integrating STA's Title VI policies into the comprehensive plan, we're making a stronger statement about our commitment to access, mobility, and equitable decision-making," Otterstrom explained.

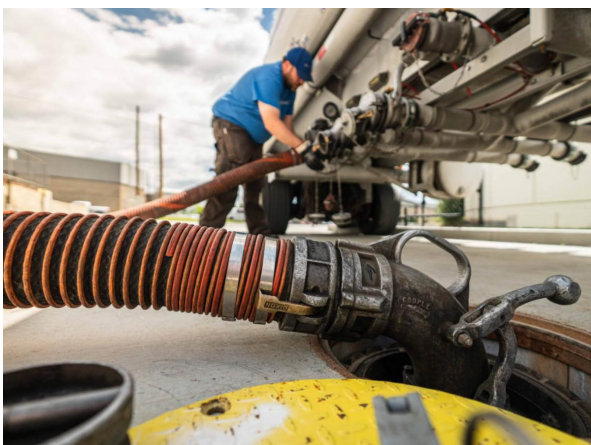
The new equity section highlights policies focused on ensuring that all communities, particularly underserved populations, have fair and transparent access to transit services.

"This update will help ensure that Spokane's transportation infrastructure meets the needs of our growing and diverse population," Otterstrom said.

To learn more about the comprehensive plan, visit spokanetransit.com/projects/comprehensive-plan.



STA Fully Transitions to Renewable Diesel



Left / Above: Renewable diesel being delivered to STA's Boone fuel facility

Right / Below: A comparison between renewable diesel on the left and traditional fossil diesel on the right of pollutants released when burning

STA has transitioned its entire diesel fleet to renewable diesel (R99), marking a notable step towards sustainability within the agency’s overarching plan to transition to a fully zero-emission fleet by 2045. Currently, STA operates 40 battery-electric buses, which make up 25% of the overall fleet. The agency plans to increase this number upon the development of a proposed Clean Energy Campus that will provide space for additional vehicle storage, zero-emission propulsion infrastructure, and maintenance space expansion.

Diesel buses now run on R99, a highly refined fuel that serves as a direct replacement for conventional diesel. The switch to renewable diesel is not limited to buses but also to the rest of STA’s diesel-powered equipment, from tow trucks to maintenance vehicles and backup generators.

As part of the transition to zero emissions, the switch to R99 offers several benefits over traditional diesel. Renewable diesel is made from renewable, non-petroleum sources, such as natural fats and vegetable oils, and is processed to be chemically identical to petroleum diesel. Because it is chemically identical to standard diesel, R99 serves as a drop-in replacement that can even be mixed with traditional diesel without issues.

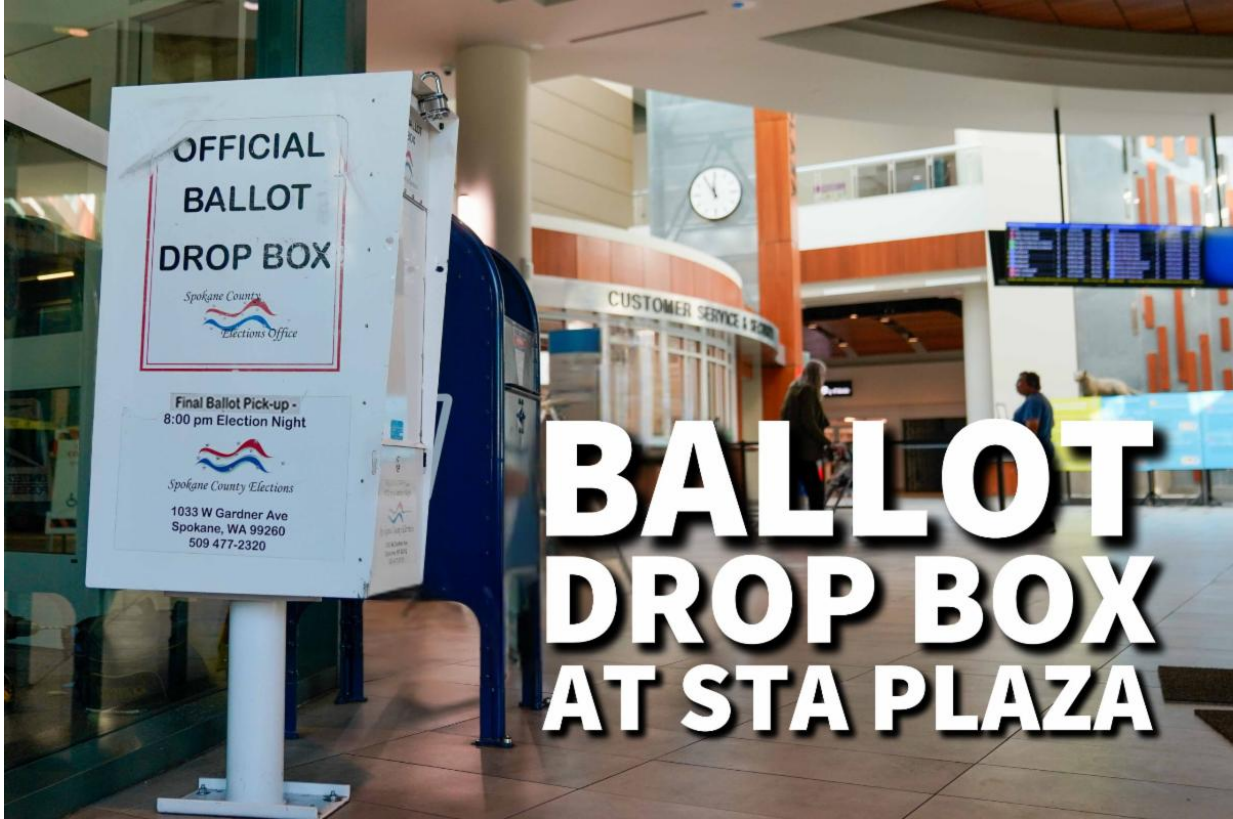
According to the [US Department of Energy](#), R99 reduces carbon intensity by 65% on average compared with petroleum diesel. Its higher cetane rating compared to traditional diesel allows for a more complete burn, resulting in more efficient fuel use. Additionally, R99 burns at a lower temperature which reduces strain on engine components. This benefit is expected to result in fewer mechanical issues, a reduction in maintenance costs, and an overall improvement for service delivery.

“Switching over to renewable diesel makes sense at the present time due to its benefits over traditional fossil diesel and because of the current limitations on zero-emission bus storage space and associated charging infrastructure,” commented STA Chief Operations Officer, Brandon Rapez-Betty. “We recognize R99 remains a high carbon-intensity fuel, so we’re considering it a positive, but temporary, solution while the agency works towards implementing a new Clean Energy Campus to enable further zero-emission vehicle expansion.”

To learn more about STA’s Zero-Emission Transition Plan, visit spokanetransit.com/projects/zero-emission-transition-plan.



Election Ballot Drop-Off at STA Plaza



BALLOT DROP BOX AT STA PLAZA

Above: The ballot drop box in STA Plaza

Spokane Transit Plaza is proud to be an official Ballot drop box location for the upcoming election. Starting October 16, you can drop off your completed ballot at STA Plaza or any of the other drop boxes throughout Spokane County.

Ballot drop boxes will close promptly at 8:00 pm on Election Day, November 5. No postage is needed when using any official Ballot drop box, and ballots are collected regularly to ensure they are safely received.

If you can't make it to STA Plaza, you may find other nearby drop box locations at [Spokane County Ballot Drop Box Locations](#).

For help planning your trip, visit STA's trip planner at spokanetransit.com/trip.



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