SPOKANE BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

STA Proposition 1 — Sources & Methodology

A companion to the Spokane Business Association's STA Proposition 1 powerpoint overview presentation

This document identifies the source for every figure presented in the accompanying slides. Wherever possible, the data come from STA's own records — its audited financial statements filed with the Washington State Auditor and its adopted budgets — supplemented by federal and state public datasets. Each item below is keyed to the slide on which it appears.

Slide 2 — "A $1 billion question"

The $1 billion is the projected cost of the renewed 0.2% ("two-tenths") sales tax over its 20-year ballot life, 2029–2048. It is a forward projection: 2029 collections of roughly $33 million grown at a conservative 4% per year — below Spokane County's ~5.6–5.9% long-run historical sales-tax growth — and summed across the 20 years (≈ $983 million). Base-year collections derive from STA sales-tax revenue reported to the Washington State Auditor.

Slide 3 — Community priorities

Framing only. The $1 billion figure is carried from Slide 2; the public-health and safety data are documented under Slide 4.

Slide 4 — Overdose deaths

Spokane ranks #2 among the 244 U.S. counties with populations over 300,000 for drug-overdose deaths per capita (57.9 per 100,000); only Baltimore is higher. Numerator: CDC National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Rapid Release — provisional county-level drug-overdose deaths (dataset gb4e-yj24), 12-month period ending September 2025 (322 Spokane deaths). Denominator: U.S. Census Bureau population estimates, Vintage 2024 (555,947 residents). "Nearly one per day" = 322 deaths ÷ 365. Comparison cities (Wichita, Boise) are drawn from the same dataset.

Slide 5 — A "No" vote does not cut service

The $274 million reserve figure is from STA's audited financial statements filed with the Washington State Auditor (detailed on Slide 9). The permanent 0.6% sales tax (~$3 billion over 20 years) and the 0.2% (~$1 billion) are projected on the same basis as Slide 2. Fares, investment income, and state and federal grants continue regardless of the vote.

Slides 6–7 — The 2016 ballot and the "temporary" tax

STA's own 2016 Proposition 1 materials describe the package as "more than 25 regional transit projects" — the 2016 public-education mailer ("Proposition 1 would fund more than 25 projects") and ballot resolution RES 742-16. The $169 million in temporary-tax collections (2017–2024) and the $234 million in reserve growth over the same period are from STA's audited financial statements filed with the Washington State Auditor (year-by-year detail on Slides 9–11).

Slides 8–11 — Reserves and tax collections

All figures are from STA's annual audited financial statements filed with the Washington State Auditor ("Spokane Transit"), 2016–2024, including the 2024 Financial Statements and Federal Single Audit Report. Unrestricted reserves grew from $40.3 million (2016) to $274.2 million (2024). 2025 figures are pending the 2025 audit.

Slides 12–13 — Farebox revenue and recovery

Projected fare revenue is from STA's Moving Forward financial plan (2016); actual fare revenue is from STA's audited statements; the cumulative shortfall (~$109 million, 2017–2023) is the difference between the two. The farebox-recovery ratio (20.1% in 2017 to 8.79% in 2024) is computed on STA's pre-2019 unallocated fixed-route method, per STA budgets and audits and the SBA farebox-recovery analysis.

Slides 14–15 — Budget projections vs. actual results

STA's adopted budgets (Adopted 2026 / Amended 2025) compared with actual results reported to the Washington State Auditor, 2017–2025. Cumulative positive variance: $319.6 million.

Slides 16–17 — Staffing and riders per employee

Funded positions (537 in 2016 to 837 in 2026) are from STA's Adopted 2026 Budget (Staffing by Function). Ridership is from STA's annual ridership reporting (National Transit Database and STA performance reports). Riders per funded position are the ratio of those two series.

Slide 18 — Cost per ride

Operating cost per ride is STA's operating expense excluding depreciation, divided by total annual ridership. The 2019 value is $6.71 — ($81,910,902 operating expense − $11,002,893 depreciation) ÷ 10,569,104 rides — and the 2025 value is $12.36, an increase of about 84%. Operating expense is from STA's audited Statement of Revenues, Expenses, and Changes in Net Position; ridership is from STA's annual ridership reporting. The 2025 figure is preliminary, pending the 2025 audit.

Slide 19 — Proposed office lease

Based on STA's proposed lease for the Bank of America building and an internal space analysis (~17,000 square feet for about 60 employees), evaluated against a 175-square-feet-per-employee industry standard. Staffing is from STA's Adopted 2026 Budget.

Slide 20 — Riders per capita

Rides per capita and the +33% population change are built from STA's annual ridership and U.S. Census Bureau population estimates. The inflation-adjusted fare comparison ($1.00 in 2000 ≈ $1.93 today) uses the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index. Free youth rides (about 1.5 million annually) are provided under Washington's state-funded transit program for youth, in effect since October 2022.

Slide 21 — Who rides

Commute share (~2% by transit; 15% work-from-home) and boardings-per-resident figures are from STA's 2024 Fixed-Route Performance Report and U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey commute data.

Slide 22 — Concentration of ridership

The estimate that a small share of residents (~3%) accounts for a large share of trips (~70%) draws on STA ridership data and ridership-distribution research from the Victoria Transport Policy Institute. Presented as an estimate.

Slide 23 — Construction sales tax

Rate and tax-base comparisons between Spokane and Kootenai County are from the Washington Department of Revenue (custom-construction rules), the Idaho State Tax Commission (contractors working in Idaho), published rate tables (Avalara / SalesTaxHandbook), and industry construction-cost guides. Full citations appear in the SBA sales-tax memo.

Primary sources

- **Washington State Auditor —** STA audited annual financial statements and Federal Single Audit Reports (2016–2024).
- **STA budgets and plans —** STA Adopted 2026 Budget (incl. Staffing by Function), Amended 2025 Budget, and the STA Moving Forward financial plan (2016).
- **STA 2016 ballot materials —** Proposition 1 public-education mailer and Resolution RES 742-16.
- **STA ridership reporting —** annual ridership, National Transit Database submissions, and Fixed-Route Performance Reports.
- **CDC —** National Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Rapid Release (provisional county-level drug-overdose deaths).
- **U.S. Census Bureau —** Population Estimates Program (Vintage 2024) and American Community Survey.
- **U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics —** Consumer Price Index (inflation adjustment).
- **Washington Department of Revenue and Idaho State Tax Commission —** construction sales-tax treatment.

A note on 2025 figures: *Where 2025 data appear, they are preliminary and will be finalized when STA's 2025 audit is released.*