

# transportation today II

## Sound Move, Sound Systems, Sound Transit

In the early 1990s, the Washington State Legislature authorized the creation of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) to plan, build and operate a transit system through King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

A key component is the new light rail system linking downtown Seattle and sports venues to Sea-Tac International Airport. The system will serve approximately 45,000 riders per day. The corridor is "constrained by geography and water," says Sound Transit spokesperson Bruce Gray. As a result, the project requires underground, at-grade, and elevated segments.

RailWorks is installing the signal system and constructing a section of direct fixation track on the new 15.6-mile light rail line. The line will extend through 1.2 miles of existing tunnel and will integrate rubber-tired buses and light rail vehicles on embedded track.

The challenge in retrofitting the tunnel was re-routing the 300 buses that use the tunnel daily. "It was an enormous coordination challenge to make sure service was

maintained and that the downtown roads and businesses were minimally impacted," says Gray.

The project also involves new twin tunnels accessed through Beacon Hill. At its deepest, the borings reach 180 ft below grade. "Getting a clear idea of soil conditions was tough at this depth," Gray says. The first tunnel was completed in May and the second begins in July. The second tunnel is scheduled to be complete by the end of 2007 and the overall project open for

revenue service by July of 2009. "Our good partnership with RailWorks allowed us to get an early start on rail and system testing, which began in January on a different segment of tracks," Gray says.

"Transit is becoming a practical part of a whole economic development cycle," says Jeff Levy, RailWorks president & CEO. "The Sound Transit project is a good example of the new generation of transit. It's been a complex project with tough challenges, but open attitudes and open dialog have made this very rewarding." ■

