



King County

Metropolitan King County Council Transportation, Economy and Environment Committee

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item:	11	Name:	Paul Carlson
Proposed No.:	2016-B0048	Date:	March 1, 2016

SUBJECT

Status report on:

1. Regional Transit Committee (RTC) consideration of Proposed Ordinance 2016-0005, approving updates to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 (Transit Strategic Plan) and King County Metro Service Guidelines (Service Guidelines), and
2. Development of the Metro Transit Long Range Plan (LRP) by King County Metro in collaboration with cities and Sound Transit.

SUMMARY

Update to Transit Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines

Proposed Ordinance 2016-0005, a mandatory referral to the RTC, approves updates to the Transit Strategic Plan and King County Metro Service Guidelines, most of which reflect recommendations from the Service Guidelines Task Force and the Access to Transit Study. The RTC reviewed this proposal at its regular January 20 meeting, a special February 3 workshop meeting, and its February 17 meeting. The RTC is expected to approve Proposed Ordinance 2016-0005 by the end of April, after which it will be referred to the Transportation, Economy and Environment (TrEE) Committee.

Long Range Plan

King County Metro staff have been working with cities, Sound Transit, and other stakeholders on the Metro Transit Long Range Plan since early 2015. The LRP will reflect a large expansion of Metro bus service, integrated with expanded Sound Transit high capacity services, so King County can accommodate significantly more residents and jobs by 2040 as projected by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). A draft LRP is expected to be released in the Spring. Later in the year, a final proposed LRP will be transmitted for consideration by the RTC and then the TrEE Committee.

Resources

Attachment 1 to the staff report identifies links to resources for the Update, the Service Guidelines Task Force, the Access to Transit Study, and the Long Range Plan.

BACKGROUND

The Transit Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines were approved in 2011, reflecting the recommendations of the Regional Transit Task Force (RTTF). The RTTF recommended transparent, performance-based guidelines emphasizing productivity, social equity, and geographic value.

The Transit Strategic Plan:

- Defines King County Metro's vision,
- Provides background information on Metro Transit's function and challenges,
- Establishes eight broad Goals each of which is associated with one or more Objectives that describe what Metro must do to achieve its Goals,
- For each Objective, defines Strategies for achieving the Objectives, and
- Lists performance measures that are used to assess progress in accomplishing the strategies.

The Service Guidelines – the King County Metro Service Guidelines contain the guidelines called for by the RTTF. These Guidelines:

- Define the all-day and peak network of Metro Transit corridors connecting Regional Growth Centers and Metro-designated Transit Activity Centers. Target service levels on these transit corridors are identified through a scoring process that awards points for productivity, social equity, and geographic value.
- Establish measures of route productivity, passenger loads, and schedule reliability to assess Metro system performance.
- Set service design criteria for individual bus routes and the overall bus network.
- Outline performance measures and design factors used to manage the system.

Starting in 2012, the Service Guidelines informed restructures of bus service in response to new RapidRide bus lines and Link Light Rail extensions. As part of the 2015-2016 biennium budget, the Service Guidelines Task Force was convened to assess the Service Guidelines' impacts. In October 2015, the Task Force issued its consensus Principles, Recommendations, and a Report, which the King County Metro staff used to develop the Transit Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines update.

Access to Transit Study

The Access to Transit Study concerns the means by which riders reach their bus stops. The two-phase Access to Transit Study is a requirement of Ordinance 17641, approving the 2013 update of the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021. The final,

Phase 2 Report has been transmitted to the County Council, along with Proposed Motion 2016-0018 accepting the Report. This item is pending in the RTC.

Addressing input about park-and-ride facilities, biking and walking infrastructure, transit-to-transit and other last-mile connections, interjurisdictional collaboration, and Metro performance measures, the Report identifies findings relating to these issues as well as Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and security. The Access to Transit Study is reflected in several recommended changes to the Transit Strategic Plan.

Proposed Changes

Here is an overview of the proposed changes to the Transit Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines (there are also technical edits and updates to ensure that recent events and current data are reflected):

Transit Strategic Plan

Service Guidelines Task Force recommendations

1. Revise strategies 2.1.1 and 2.1.4 to support the expansion of Metro's alternative services by developing an extensive range of such services, serving new markets, and developing partnerships.
2. Revise strategies 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 to support improved mobility through the expansion of public-private partnerships, partnerships with private transportation operators, and partnerships that encourage transit options for low-income workers.
3. Revise strategy 6.1.1 to be consistent with proposed revisions to the Service Guidelines that clarify the purposes for which the guidelines are used.

Access to Transit Study

4. Modify strategies 3.2.2, 3.2.3, 3.3.1, and 3.3.2 to better characterize how Metro will value park-and-rides and all types of access to transit.
5. Modify objective 3.2 and strategies 3.2.2 and 3.2.3, and add strategy 3.2.4, to address how Metro will facilitate convenient and safe access to transit by all modes.
6. Change performance measures to better assess how well people can access the transit system.

Clarifying policy intent

7. Update objectives 4.1 and 4.2 to reflect the greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets in the County's Strategic Climate Action Plan.
8. Update out-of-date information in Strategy 6.2.1.
9. Update strategy 6.3.1 to more clearly describe what Metro does when revenue-backed service expires.

Service Guidelines

Service Guidelines Task Force recommendations

1. Modify the way Metro evaluates corridors to better reflect productivity, social equity and geographic value. This proposed change would have the effect of increasing target service levels and the measured overall need for transit services.
2. Change the definition of “low income” used in setting target service levels from 100% of the federal poverty level to 200% of the federal poverty level, in line with the ORCA LIFT program and many other human service programs.
3. Establish a minimum service level of every 60 minutes for corridors and routes.
4. Provide greater protection for peak-only services in the event of major service reductions.
5. Modify Metro’s service types so that comparable services are measured against one another.
6. Expand the description of Metro’s planning and public outreach process and how the agency engages and works with the community.
7. Expand the description of the Alternative Services Program as a way to meet diverse needs.
8. Expand the descriptions of how Metro will partner with communities and with private partners to build the best transit network possible.
9. Expand the description of the different factors Metro considers when making investments.
10. Give more consideration to the relative impacts to all parts of the county when making service reductions.

Clarifying policy intent

11. Remove cost/farebox recovery from the service levels analysis because it does not reflect actual farebox recovery and is a redundant measure.
12. Modify the way Metro measures passenger crowding from a measure based on seats to one based on square footage in buses.
13. Modify the corridor list to match up the current list with the service Metro provides. Corridors have changed due to system changes (restructures, adding, deleting service) over the past four years.

Long Range Plan

On November 17, 2015, the Committee heard a status report on the Metro Transit Long Range Plan. In the intervening months, King County Metro staff has continued to work with staff from the cities and other transit agencies throughout 2015, in preparation for the release of a Draft LRP in the Spring.

As noted in November 2015, the 2013 update to the Transit Strategic Plan added new Strategy 6.1.2 calling for development of a Transit Long Range Plan in collaboration with other jurisdictions. The genesis of the Long Range Plan was city interest in

ensuring that their comprehensive planning efforts would be coordinated more effectively with King County Metro plans to ensure more effective coordination and implementation of the PSRC's ambitious transit expansion goals.

The Long Range Plan will describe Metro's role through 2040 in providing mobility in King County and meeting the regional transportation goals in the PSRC's Transportation 2040 and Vision 2040 plans, and reflecting the values of local communities. Even with Link Light Rail expanding to the north and east, the PSRC's regional vision relies on expanded Metro bus service hours and increased bus trips. The regional transportation plan projects more than 700,000 daily weekday boardings on Metro services by 2040, up from the current 400,000. Metro bus service hours, currently in the 3.5 million hour per year range, would increase to 5.8 million hours per year.

The PSRC is projecting sizable growth in the region's population and jobs. King County is home to nearly 42 percent of the jobs in Washington, and is expected to see a major increase of jobs and population over the next 25 years — 560,000 new jobs and 360,000 new residents. Greater job and residential density in the growth centers is a cornerstone of regional efforts to preserve natural resources, limit adverse environmental effects of sprawl, and allow more travel needs to be met with trips that include pedestrian, bicycle, and transit segments. If achieved, this kind of regional growth pattern would contribute to improved health outcomes, reduced greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, energy conservation, and achievement of equity/social justice goals.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Resources: Links to Background Material

INVITED

1. Christina O'Claire, Manager Strategy and Performance, King County Transit Division