



King County

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King County Executive

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February 28, 2023

The Honorable Dave Upthegrove
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Upthegrove:

This letter transmits the Transit Riders Now report for the Fall 2023 service change, as required by Ordinance 19546, Section 114, Proviso P5. This is the first of four Transit Riders Now reports required by Ordinance 19546.

The report includes an analysis of ridership patterns, ridership levels and route productivity; a description of changes by agency partners that could affect transit service provided by Metro; and an analysis of any constraints that limit additions to transit service. No recommended service changes are presented or evaluated in this report, as Metro has indicated it will not be preparing a proposed fall 2023 service change Ordinance. The potential changes that Metro is currently considering fall under the thresholds identified under King County Code 28.94.020. Should additional changes be identified that require the Council's approval, a proposed Ordinance would be transmitted to the King County Council for consideration.

Data shows that ridership continues to recover and grow steadily, remaining at about 52 percent of 2019 levels. Throughout the pandemic, people relied on Metro services to get them to work and meet their daily needs. Looking at the number of rides per hour (productivity) shows a stronger recovery than total ridership because Metro was operating less service in Fall 2022 compared to 2019. Many of the same routes that had high productivity before the pandemic continue to be the top performers.

Metro continues to coordinate and plan with key partners. Metro is engaging with the City of Seattle to explore service additions to be funded by the Seattle Transit Measure. Metro is coordinating with Sound Transit around changes to Metro-operated Sound Transit Express bus service, Link light rail expansions and Stride Bus Rapid Transit service. Finally, Metro will continue to coordinate with Hopelink and consider restoration of DART service operated by Hopelink when staffing allows.

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Metro is closely monitoring metrics related to service recovery, including changes in staffing and overtime in front-line roles, fleet availability, and trip delivery. As operational capacity grows and trip delivery improves, Metro is prepared to grow service and will include any associated recommendations in subsequent Transit Riders Now reports and accompanying service change ordinances.

As outlined in Metro's proposed Service Recovery Plan, service restructure projects will be the primary means for reshaping service and reinvesting suspended hours back into the system in the next several years. These projects will be informed by newly adopted policies, community and interested party engagement, and emerging ridership needs. This approach is consistent with the expectations expressed in Transit Proviso P5, as follows:

It is imperative that [transit service added in 2023-2025] reflect the needs of current transit riders, by responding to changing ridership patterns, Metro transit department staffing levels, available funding, changes made by the City of Seattle, Sound Transit or other agency partners and the King County Metro Service Guidelines and Metro Connects long-range plan adopted by Ordinance 19367.

Thank you for your consideration of this first Transit Riders Now report. We welcome your feedback on this first report and look forward to continued engagement with the Council to help shape a strong, equitable, and sustainable future for the transit system.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Christina O'Claire, Mobility Division Director, Metro Transit Department, at 206-477-5801.

Sincerely,

 for

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers
 ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff
 Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council
 Shannon Braddock, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive
 Karan Gill, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive
 Mina Hashemi, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive
 Michelle Allison, General Manager, Metro Transit Department (MTD)
 Christina O'Claire, Director, Mobility Division, MTD