

METROPOLITAN KING COUNTY COUNCIL

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE

**STAFF REPORT
(Revised)**

AGENDA ITEM: _____

DATE: July 22, 2002

PROPOSED NO. 2002-0074

PREPARED BY: Arthur Thornbury

SUBJECT: Proposed 2002-2007 Six-Year Transit Development Plan

SUMMARY: The Regional Transit Committee forwarded its recommended 2002-2007 Six-Year Transit Development Plan to the council on July 17, 2002. The committee recommends a number of changes to the executive-proposed plan which was transmitted in February of this year. The major plan elements and RTC recommendations are summarized below, following a discussion of the council's review process for regional committee recommendations.

Regional Committee Recommendations to the Council Section 270.3 of the King County Charter describes the process for council review of recommendations from regional committees:

- a committee-recommended plan can be adopted with seven affirmative votes;
- a vote to amend a committee recommendation triggers a re-referral to the committee
- upon re-referral the committee may vote to accept or reject the council amendments or recommend additional amendments
- once the committee has reviewed the council amendments, the council may adopt a plan different than the committee recommendation with eight affirmative votes

The Council Rules (K.C.C. 1.24.065) establish timelines for these deliberations:

- the council has 90 days to act upon a regional committee recommendation (in this case, the 90 days expires on October 15, 2002)
- the committee has 60 days to consider a re-referral from the council
- the council has 60 days to act following receipt of legislation previously re-referred to committee

Transit Financial Policies The Transit Financial Policies, updated periodically by the council, are intended to guide development of the Transit Division's annual budget and CIP proposals. The proposed Six-Year Plan would incorporate several elements of the financial policies --- subarea allocation of new service investments and service cuts, and the set-aside of schedule maintenance hours --- while removing them from the financial policies.

Transit Long-Range Plan Also known as the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation, this is the overarching transit policy document first adopted by the Metro Council and later amended with the adoption of the 1996-2001 Six-Year Transit Development Plan. It would again be amended by Proposed Ordinance 2002-0074 to make it consistent the subarea service allocation strategy of the new Six-Year Plan.

Schedule Maintenance Hours Currently, schedule maintenance hours are invested administratively by the Transit Division to maintain the quality of existing routes, to avoid having schedules slip as buses are slowed by traffic congestion for example. This investment is set aside at the rate of approximately 16,000 hours (one-half of one percent of total transit hours) annually. The RTC-recommended plan would change this by dividing the allocation of new resources --- one-third to schedule maintenance, two-thirds to new service --- until the schedule maintenance cap (one-half of one percent of total transit hours) is reached, after which all additional resources would go to new service.

This change was made to address the low-revenue scenario upon which the current Transit Financial Plan is based. Under current projections for the next six years, new revenues will support only 165,000 hours of service, of which schedule maintenance's share would be 55,000 hours. This compares to approximately 100,000 hours that would be set aside for schedule maintenance under current policy. However, if revenues exceed projections and are sufficient to support 300,000 hours of service, the schedule maintenance share from the RTC-recommended formula would reach the same level, 100,000 hours, that it would reach under current policy.

If the low-revenue scenario persists and schedule maintenance resources fall below what is needed, the RTC-recommended policy would empower the Transit Division to shift resources from existing service to cover schedule maintenance needs.

Subarea Service Allocation Currently, new service is distributed among the subareas in proportion to their populations as follows: South 36%, East 28% and West 36%. The investment in each subarea is measured in terms of subsidy, which is the difference between the cost of operating a route and fares collected on that route. Since operating costs and farebox collections vary between subareas, one dollar of subsidy will buy more hours of service in one subarea than in another.

The RTC-recommendation would invest new service resources over the life of the plan in the following proportions: South 40%, East 40% and West 20% and would measure them in terms of annual service hours rather than subsidy amounts. The executive-proposed plan would have applied the 40/40/20 distribution to the first 400,000 hours only.

Cross-Subarea Routes Currently, most routes serving more than one subarea are assigned entirely to one subarea on the basis of where the majority of a.m. boardings occur. The RTC-recommended plan would split the hours of such all-day, two-way routes 50/50 between the two subareas.

Service Cuts Current policy calls for any systemwide service reductions to be distributed among the subareas in proportion to their populations: South 36%, East 28% and West 36%. The RTC-recommended plan would cut service in proportion to each subarea's share of the total of systemwide service hours.

Service Priorities Responding to increased uncertainty surrounding Transit revenues, the executive-proposed plan identified higher priority service investments to receive the first 65,000 hours of new service as well as hours resulting from consolidation or reduction of unproductive current service. The executive-proposed priorities were:

1. service to expanded park-and-ride lots,
2. routes with overcrowding or high-ridership potential and,
3. intergration with Sound Transit.

The RTC-recommended plan adds a fourth category of high-priority service:

4. bus rapid transit where identified as a subarea priority.

Lower priority for new investments are:

- Peak-period service;
- Core service (all-day, seven-day routes), and
- Service identified through a subarea-priority process.

Bus Rapid Transit BRT is a relatively new concept that was not addressed by the prior Six-Year Plan. It involves very frequent service in corridors where capital investments have been made to increase speed, reliability and rider comfort. The executive-proposed plan identified one corridor in each subarea to receive further consideration by King County and the affected cities. The RTC-recommended plan calls for Metro to "move toward full implementation of BRT service in the Aurora North corridor" utilizing West Subarea resources. As noted above, the RTC also added BRT to the plan's list of "higher priority investments."

Public Involvement in Service Design Implementation of the prior Six-Year Plan included extensive community outreach and work with local stakeholder sounding boards. This activity is expected to continue, but at a lower level due to the more directive nature of the proposed 2002-2007 plan which leaves less service planning to take place during plan implementation. In addition to the general prioritization discussed above, the proposed plan earmarks up to one-half of new investments to specific core service corridors where the prior plan identified all core service needs and left prioritization to the process that culminated in council adoption of service change packages several times each year.

Resources for Additional Service The RTC-recommended plan includes a new strategy focused upon identifying additional operating resources in the Transit Financial Plan. Designed to guide the council's annual Transit Budget and CIP review, the strategy calls for: reduced levels of underexpenditure in the capital and operating sub-funds, refined lifespan assumptions for the transit fleet and replenishment of the Fare Stabilization and Operating Enhancement Reserve drawn down in the aftermath of Initiative 695.

Growth Management Linkage The Service Chapter of the proposed plan includes strategies to focus new investments on:

- designated Urban and Manufacturing Centers and other urban concentrations with high ridership potential, and
- cities that meet housing and population targets, or take other transit-supportive actions to promote density and pedestrian activity.

Service Evaluation Route performance is currently evaluated annually on the basis of rides-per-revenue-hour and farebox return. The RTC-recommended plan calls for the use of additional performance indicators to reflect the benefit of longer routes with high capacity utilization but fewer boardings/alightings than service in high-density urban areas.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Letter from Councilmember Jane Hague, dated July 15, 2002
2. Letter from Steve Burkett, Shoreline City Manager, dated July 17, 2002
3. Letter from Jason Kelly, Chair, Transit Advisory Committee, dated July 17, 2002



Metropolitan King County Council
Jane Hague, *Councilmember District 11*

King County Courthouse

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July 15, 2002

Dear Fellow Members of the Metropolitan King County Council:

Eastside cities have been working hard to improve transit by making it more attractive. The Executive's draft plan proposes a 40/40/20 allocation of new transit hours, an investment that is critical to the future viability of transit in East King County.

For years the Eastside has been investing capital resources into transit facilities, yet service improvements are grossly inadequate. Some great examples of Eastside investments are the Access Downtown project, the Eastgate Direct Access and Park and Ride Lot expansion, the Bellevue Transit Center, and the Overlake Transit Center. The Access Downtown and Eastgate projects provide direct HOV access ramps into downtown Bellevue and the Bellevue Community College areas. The Bellevue Transit Center and Overlake Transit Center are innovative multi-purpose facilities that will serve as the focal points of these vibrant commercial and residential centers for years to come. These projects are just a few of many that illustrate the investments being made throughout the Eastside to improve the viability of transit.

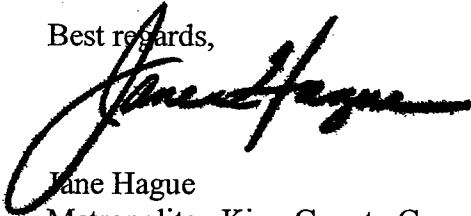
Service improvements are desperately needed to balance the transit equation. Despite substantial capital investments, transit service is poor throughout much of the Eastside. Buses serve many transit-friendly neighborhoods as infrequently as only once every hour and a half during peak commute times (its even worse for the rest of the day) and long transfers make transit less attractive. The Executive's proposed 40-40-20 allocation is a rational compromise that will help to make transit a true mobility option for Eastside residents and employees – it is also true to our GMA plans and policies – while also improving service Countywide.

This is smart growth. This is government being proactive instead of reactive. This is honoring the investments made by eastside cities. This is helping people get to work faster and more efficiently, while taking more cars off the road.

I would like to urge members of the Metropolitan King County Council to support the Executive's service allocation policies as outlined in the draft Six-Year Transit Development Plan for 2002 - 2007.

Population growth will continue in the coming years, especially on the eastside. We must help our urban centers prepare for this growth, and new service hour allocation is one excellent way of demonstrating this support.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane Hague". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "H".

Jane Hague
Metropolitan King County Councilmember

cc: Regional Transit Committee



SHORELINE
CITY COUNCIL

Scott Jepsen
Mayor

Kevin Grossman
Deputy Mayor

John Chang

Rich Gustafson

Ron Hansen

Linda Montgomery

Robert Ransom

July 17, 2002

Hon. Rob McKenna, Chair, and Regional Transit Committee Members
King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104-3272

Dear Chair McKenna and Committee Members:

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the Regional Transit Committee for the long hours and hard work that has been dedicated to the proposed "Six-Year Transit Development Plan for 2002 to 2007.

The City of Shoreline has had the opportunity to review the draft Plan, as well as the amendments discussed at the July 7 Regional Transit Committee Special Meeting. The following comments are conveyed on behalf of the Shoreline City Council:

- ◆ We support the amendments sponsored by the City of Seattle identifying the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit on Aurora Avenue N as a "highest priority" investment item in the plan.
- ◆ We also support the amendment requiring future voter-approved transit revenues to be allocated according to subarea population – approximately 36% West Subarea, 36% South, 28% East, rather than a new proposed allocation reducing the West Subarea's share from 36% to 20% of new service, and would support maintaining the population-based allocation formula for all new service.
- ◆ We do not support the amendment sponsored by Don Gerund enacting a debit-credit system for new route subarea assignments. This amendment would prevent new service investments in the West Subarea, which includes the cities of Shoreline, Lake Forest Park, and a portion of Kenmore, for a very long time.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this very important planning document.

Sincerely,

Steven C. Burkett
Shoreline City Manager



King County

Department of Transportation

Community Relations

KSC-TR-0824

201 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104-3865

July 17, 2002

The Honorable Rob McKenna, Chair
Regional Transit Committee
Metropolitan King County Council
King County Courthouse
Mailstop KCC-CC-1200

Dear Councilmember McKenna:

On July 9, 2002 Bill Bryant, Transit Planner, Metro Transit Division, briefed the Transit Advisory Committee on the Regional Transit Committee's proposed amendments to the Six-Year Transit Development Plan. While there are several issues we may yet weigh in on, the proposed amendment to Strategy C-5, Transit Fleet, in particular compelled us to respond immediately.

The Transit Advisory Committee is keenly interested in replacing the articulated trolley fleet with low floor articulated electric coaches if economically feasible. Clean and quiet, the electric trolley is well suited to frequent stops and hilly terrain. Low floor articulated electric coaches on routes 7, 9, 43, and 44 will accommodate the high passenger volumes while improving speed and reliability in the downtown core and denser neighborhoods.

Our interest stems from concern for the existing investment in trolley infrastructure. The acquisition of low floor articulated coaches would demonstrate continued commitment to energy efficient and environmentally friendly trolley transit in a way that refurbished Bredas cannot.

Regional Transit Committee
July 19, 2002
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We thank you for the opportunity to comment throughout this process and welcome a continued dialogue.

Sincerely,



Jason Kelly, Chair
Transit Advisory Committee

cc: The Honorable Ron Sims, King County Executive
The Honorable Dow Constantine, King Council Council
The Honorable Carolyn Edmonds, King Council Council
The Honorable Larry Gossett, King Council Council
The Honorable Jane Hague, King Council Council
The Honorable Larry Phillips, King Council Council
The Honorable Kent Pullen, King Council Council
The Honorable Peter von Reichbauer, King Council Council
Arthur Thornbury, Legislative Analyst, Committee Staff, King County Council
Harold Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Mary Peterson, Deputy Director, DOT
Rick Walsh, General Manager, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Eric Gleason, Manager, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Victor Obeso, Senior Transit Planner, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Bill Bryant, Transit Planner, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Transit Advisory Committee
Barb deMichele, Community Relations Planner, DOT