

South Link Connections Mobility Project

Transportation, Economy, and Environment
Committee

February 17, 2026



Agenda

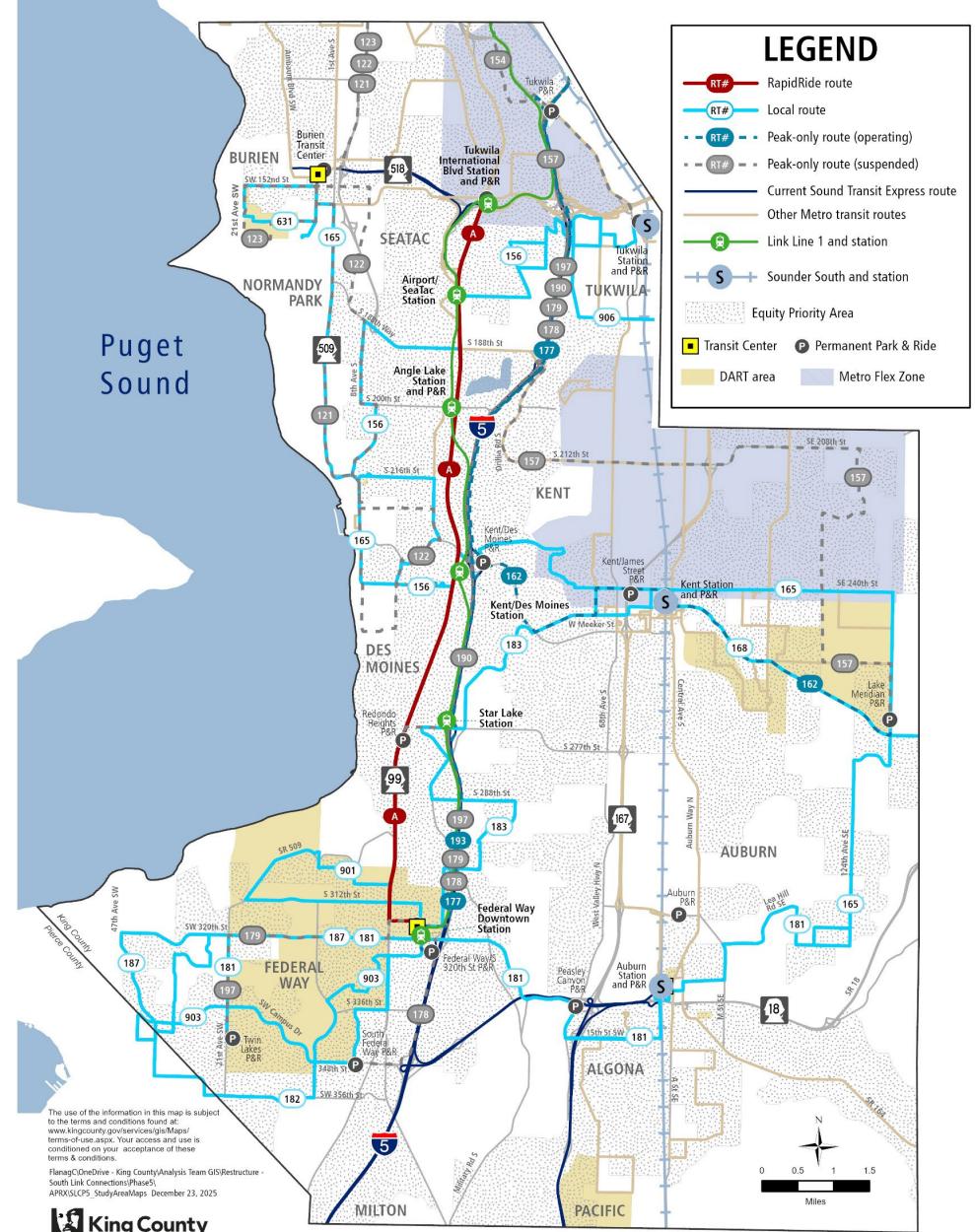
1. Project background
2. Recap of engagement
3. Final network proposal highlights
4. Implementation timeline

Project Background and Scope

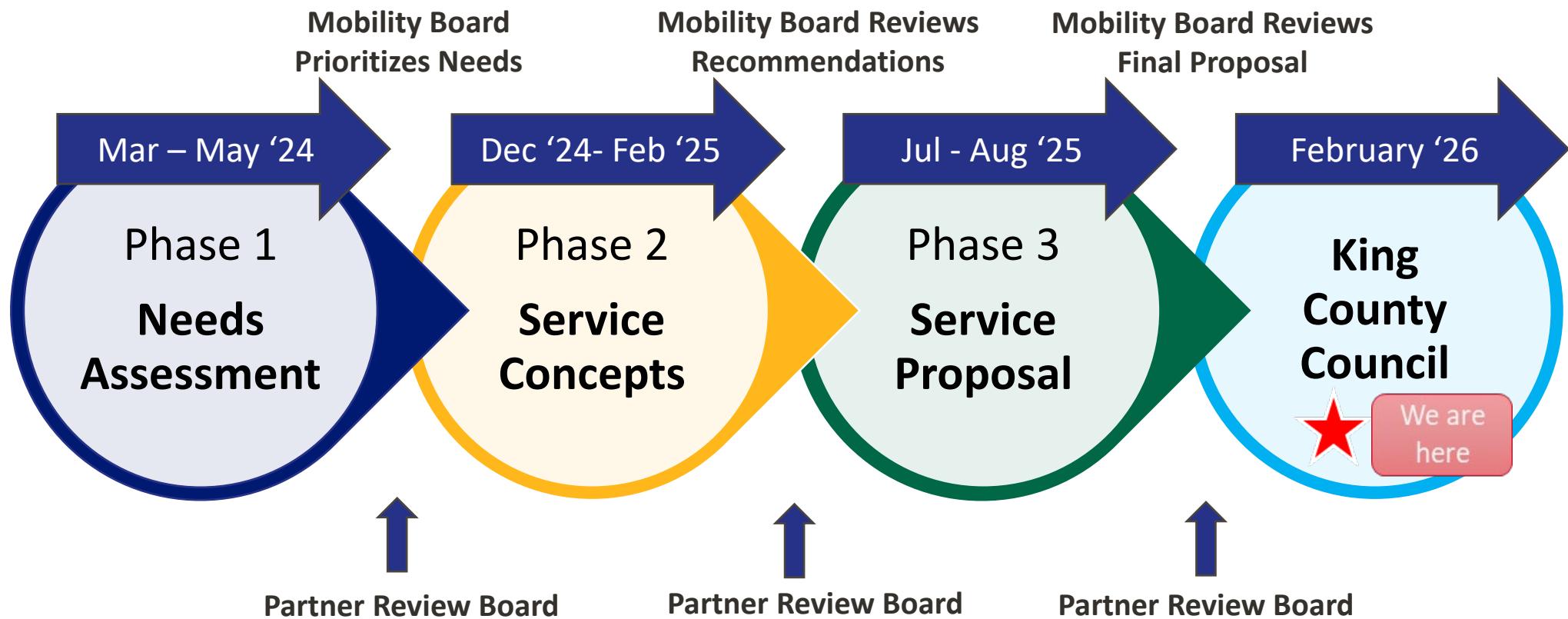
The South Link Connections project proposes updates to Metro's network in alignment with Sound Transit's Federal Way Link Extension.

- Project area covers 10 jurisdictions and portions of unincorporated King County.
- Project scope: 23 routes, including 9 suspended peak-only routes.
 - This project aligns with Metro's Service Recovery Plan and restores suspended service hours (80k).
 - The final network proposal is consistent with Metro's 2026-2027 biennial budget.
 - Approximately 28% increase in service hours compared to existing.

South Link Connections: Baseline Transit Network



Engagement Timeline – Fall 2026 Implementation



Engagement Efforts Spring 2024- Summer 2025

3-phase engagement process

- Engagement materials in **14 languages**
- **15** Community Mobility Board members
- **91 institutions, partner agencies, jurisdictions, CBOs and employers** invited to Partner Review Board
- **4 surveys** conducted virtually and in-person (6,700+ responses)
- **7** multi-lingual virtual public meetings
- **250+** organizations outreach list
- **Multilingual media tool kit**
- **Multi-lingual social media campaigns**
- **12** ethnic media publications
- **4** multilingual community liaisons
- Signs at **over 100 bus stops**
- **100+ hours of in-person outreach** at high-ridership bus stops
- **42** Community & Government presentations
- **51,000+** transit E-Alerts

8 Formal CBO Partnerships



- 50+ partner led in person & virtual community events
- 5,000+ people engaged

Engagement focused on:

- Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC)
- Recently arrived immigrants and refugees
- Low-income communities
- People experiencing housing instability
- Queer and Trans Pacific Islanders
- Youth and teens
- Individuals who primarily speak Arabic, Amharic, Burmese, Dari, French, Kurdish, Lingala, Oromo, Pashto, Portuguese, Punjabi, Rohingya, Russian, Samoan, Somali, Spanish, Swahili, Tigrinya, Ukrainian, Vietnamese

South Link Connections Mobility Priorities



Greater transit coverage



Improved early morning and nighttime service



Faster travel times within and beyond the project area



Improved east-west transit connections



Increased weekend service, especially on Saturdays

Final Network Highlights

The proposed network enhances all-day, all-week travel with:

- Trips running earlier and/or later and more often on all local and frequent routes.
- New frequent service on two important east-west connections.
- New weekend service where there currently is no service.
- Easier-to-understand service, including:
 - Providing more direct, two-way service to improve travel times.
 - Providing consistent schedules on Saturdays and Sundays for all routes.

Hours from discontinued peak routes are reinvested to meet mobility priorities in the project area.

- 8 suspended peak-only routes, 2 in-service peak-only routes.

Grant funding supports pilot Metro Flex zones in Auburn and Federal Way.

Final Network Highlights



Maintains all existing transit access.

Approximately 22,600 people gain access to transit (**7% increase**).

Approximately 44,600 people gain access to frequent transit (**70% increase**).



Earlier and/or later trips on **8 routes**.



Eleven of fourteen project routes connect to a Link station.

Improved connections to the **current and future RapidRide system**.

Added **51% more trips on weekdays** and **72% more trips on weekends**.



New frequent service **every 15 minutes** on two important **east-west corridors**.



New days of weekend service.

Routes operate the same schedule on Saturday and Sunday.

Service Improvements

Improvements include:

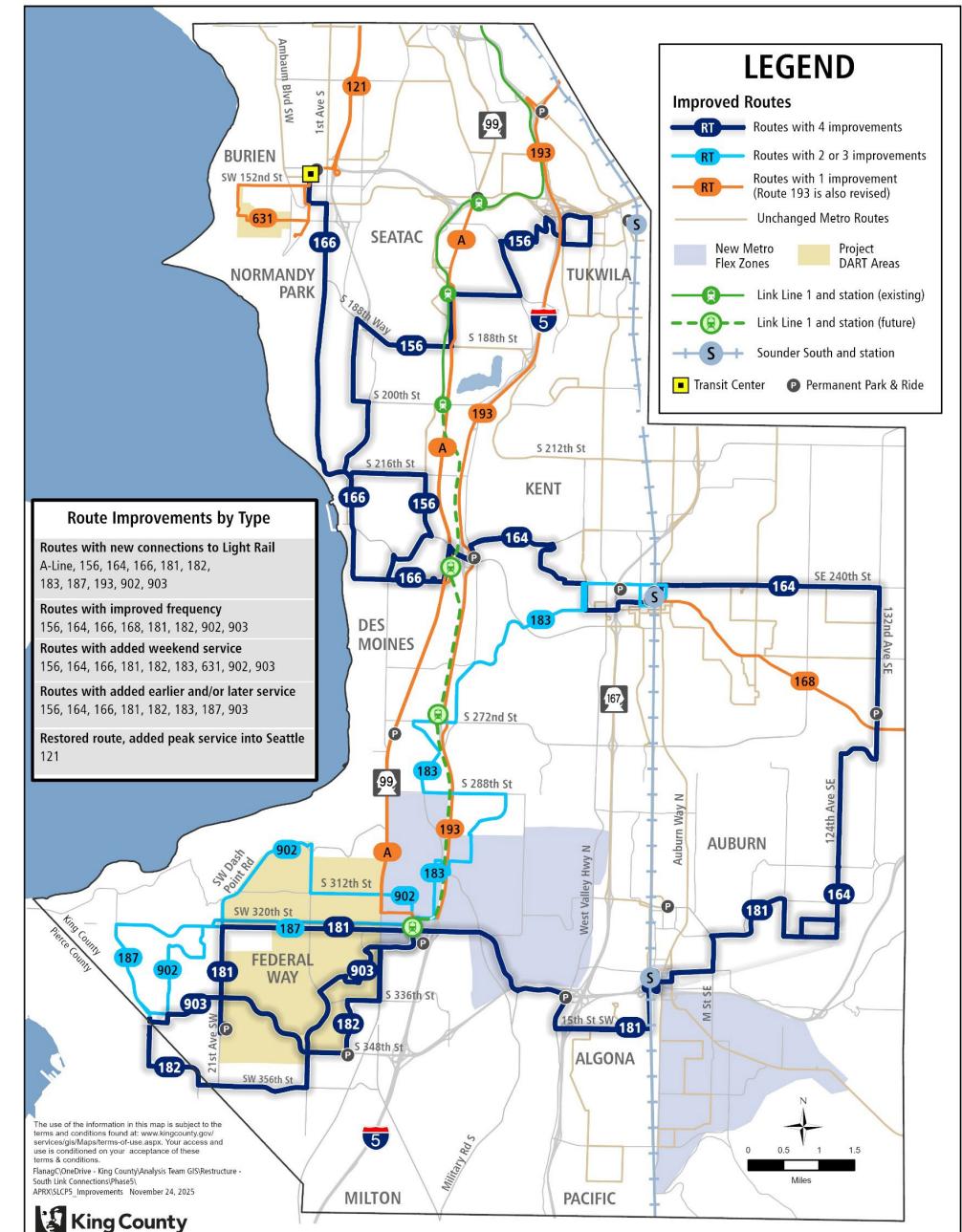
- Connections to light rail
- Improved frequency
- Added weekend service
- Earlier and/or later service
- Restored route

Dark Blue: 4+ improvements

Light Blue: 2-3 improvements

Orange: 1 improvement

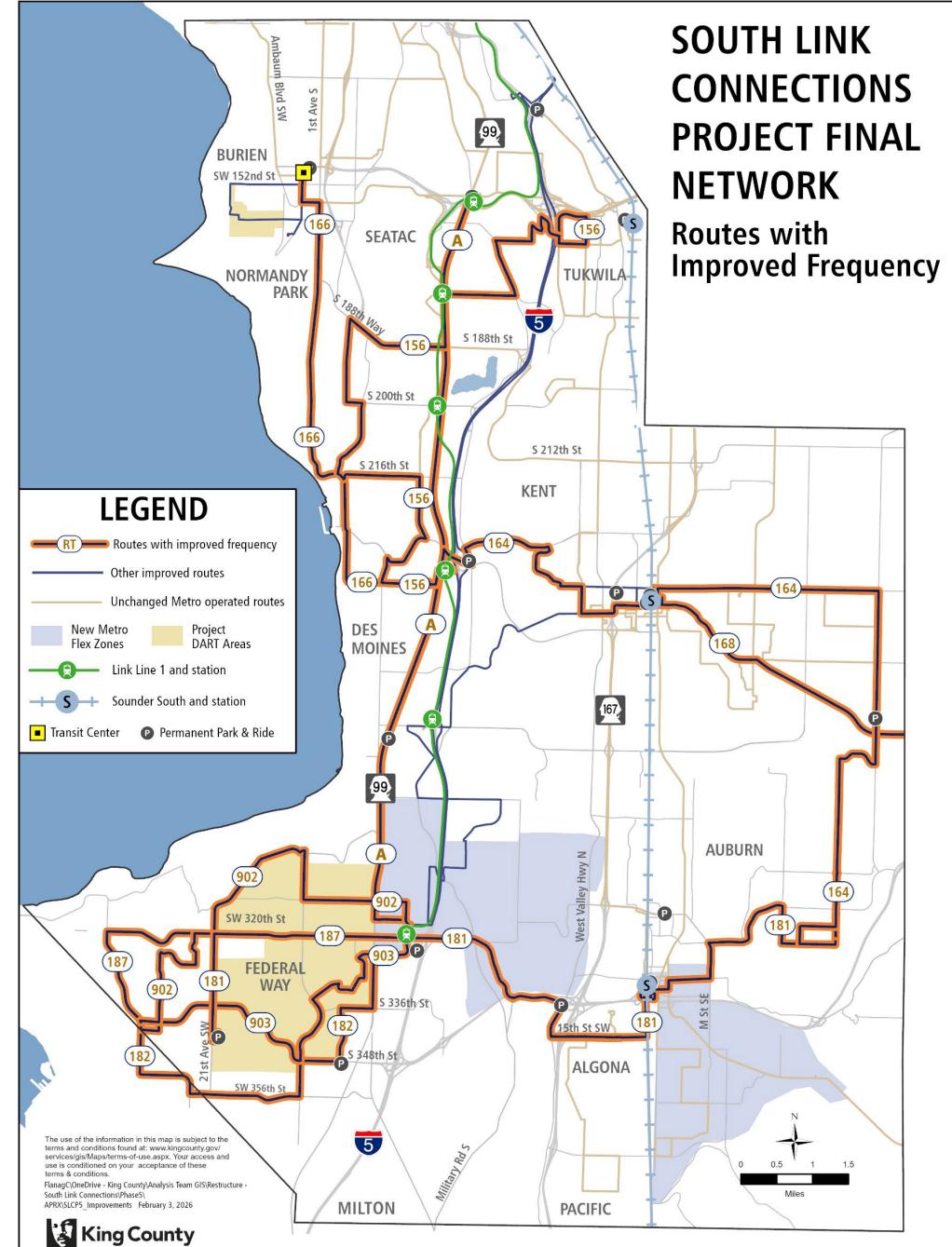
South Link Connections Final Network: Transit Improvements



Routes with Improved Frequency

Routes proposed to have trips come more often:

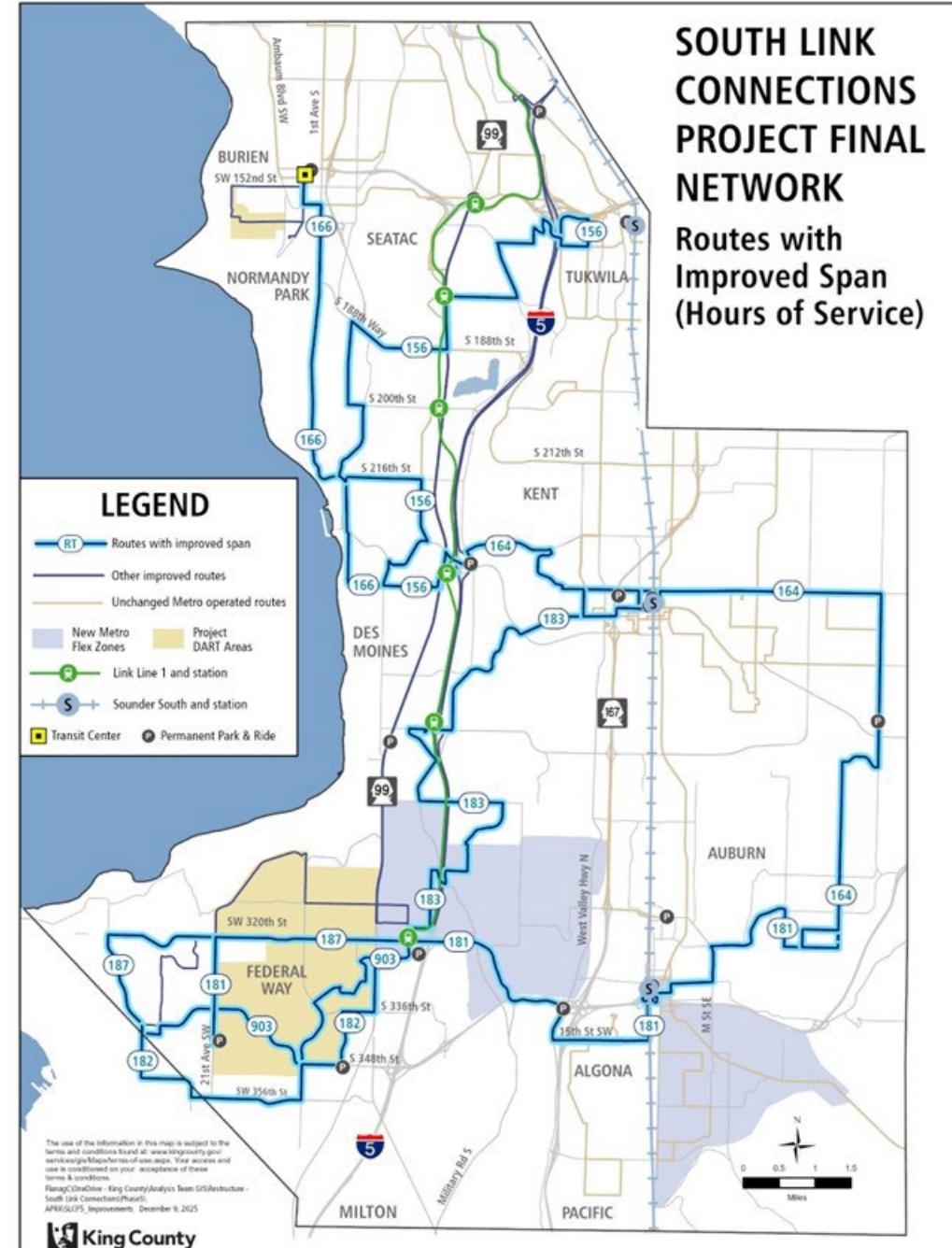
- 156
- 164, 166 (compared to replaced service)
- 168
- 181
- 182
- 187
- 902 (compared to replaced service)
- 903
- A Line



Routes with Earlier and Later Trips

Routes proposed to have trips start earlier and end later:

- 156
- 164, 166 (compared to replaced service)
- 181
- 182
- 183
- 187
- 903
- A Line



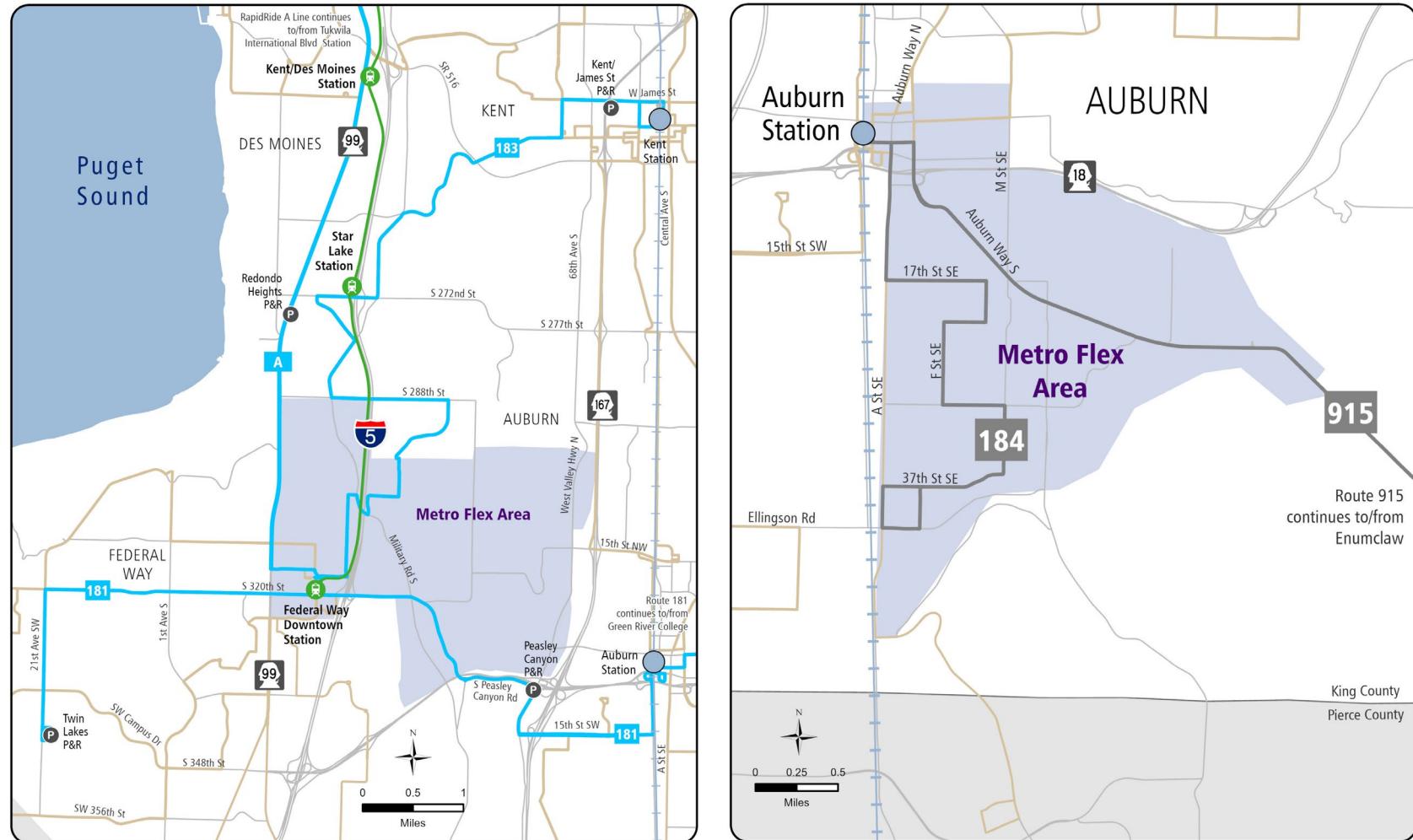
Routes with Earlier and Later Trips



Metro Flex Pilot Zones

The final network proposal includes two Metro Flex pilot zones that are grant-funded for two years.

Provides new transit service coverage and connections to Federal Way Downtown Station and Auburn Station.

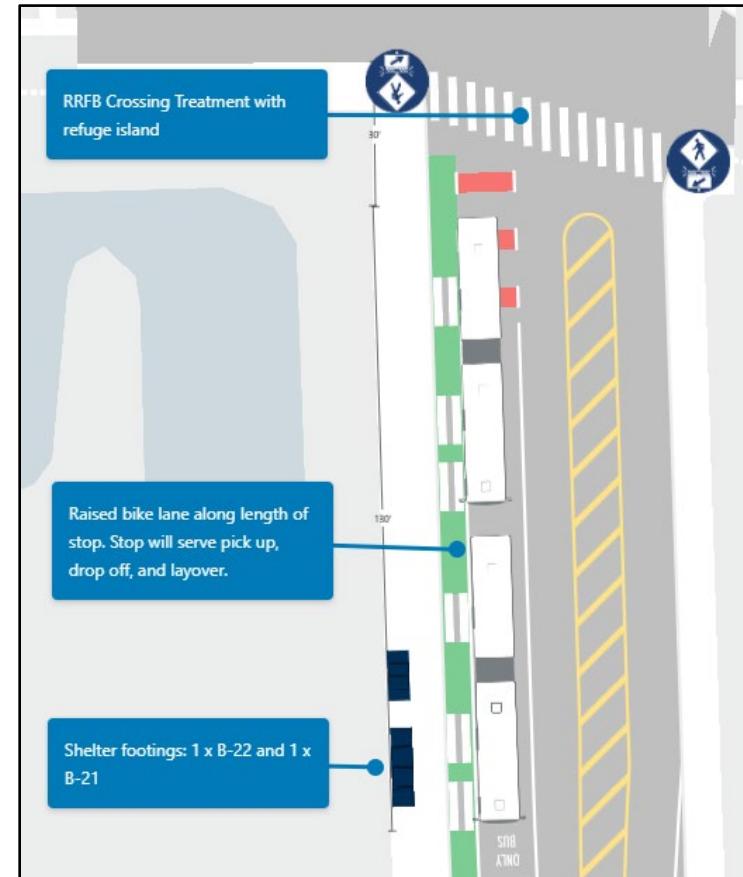


Network Tradeoffs

- Removal of peak-only services to reinvest resources into the all-day, all-week network in alignment with prioritized mobility needs
 - Suspended routes: 122, 123, 154, 157, 178, 179, 190, 197
 - Currently operating routes: 162, 177
 - Route 162: Mitigation provided by added trips on Route 168
 - Route 177: Mitigation provided by proposed retention of ST Express routes 577, 578
 - Peak-only routes that remain provide competitive travel times or a unique connection
- Requests that were unable to be addressed with this project:
 - Additional transit coverage in southern Des Moines and northern Kent
 - Continued investment in south King County transit

City Partnerships to Deliver Capital Improvements

- Two new layover bays, 16 new landing pads, and 62 new stops are planned to support the proposed SLC network.
- Successful partnerships with cities of Auburn and Federal Way to deliver improvements.



Pictured: Planned layover improvements at Green River College (left), landing pads planned at stops in West Federal Way (upper right), bus stop and shelter planned in Des Moines (lower right).

What We Heard

- **73% satisfaction for the network in Phase 3 engagement**
(rose 24% percent from the Phase 2 network)
- People **continue to support the investments in more all-day service** (more trips, service that starts earlier and ends later, more weekend service, east-west service on major corridors, etc.)
- **Unanimous approval** from Community Mobility Board
- **14 letters of support** from jurisdictions, community-based organizations and partner agencies

What We Heard

“Just want to add that I am really grateful to see frequent local east-west buses that will connect to the new Link stations... The additional hours of service on evenings and weekends will allow more ways to use transit outside of commute trips.”

“I really appreciate the effort to add more trips overall, especially on weekends. And making the 187 go in both directions for the entire route would be a complete lifesaver when it comes to getting around efficiently, as it's the main route to and from my neighborhood.”

“I live on Military and often have to walk down to the A Line on Sundays when trying to get around, the expansion to [Route 183] Sunday service is something I have wanted for a long time now and I appreciate that my area isn't being forgotten with the expansion to the network.”

What We Heard

Feedback from International Rescue Committee engagement:

"An Afghan immigrant who lives in Federal Way, commutes daily to his job at SeaTac Airport. He welcomed the proposed changes, particularly the new and more frequent east-west connections and the expanded services linking Federal Way Downtown Station to Link light rail and nearby neighborhoods. The increased frequency on Route 182 will make it easier for him and other airport workers to reach the light rail during early mornings and late evenings."

What We Heard

Feedback from Iraqi Community Center of Washington engagement:

"As a Muslim youth rider, I appreciate that the updated bus and train routes create stronger connections between communities like Tukwila, SeaTac, Des Moines, Kent, and Federal Way. These are the neighborhoods where many of us live, study, and attend community programs. The fact that the future Kent/Des Moines station is right next to Highline College is especially valuable for students, and the connections through Kent and Auburn stations make it easier to reach Green River College. Routes like the 164 to Kent East Hill, the 156 and 166 through Tukwila and SeaTac, and the 181/183/187/903 through Federal Way all make a real difference in helping youth access schools, jobs, and daily activities."

Next Steps

- **February 23:** Transmittal of ordinance package
- **March 17:** TrEE discussion and possible action
- **March 24:** Council discussion and possible action (if expedited)
- **March 2026 service change:** Minor administrative changes to serve new 1 Line stations and expand hours of service on six routes
- **April:** August service change preparation begins
- **August 2026 service change:** Pending ordinance adoption, larger-scale changes, restoration, and service growth would be implemented

Sound Transit is also planning changes to ST Express buses within the project area. Those changes are subject to Sound Transit Board approval.

Thank you! Questions?