



King County

# Summary of Regional Transit Task Force Charge and Recommendations

October 2010

## Task Force Formation and Process

The King County Council and County Executive formed the Regional Transit Task Force in February 2010 to consider a policy framework for the potential future growth and, if necessary, contraction of King County's transit system. They asked the task force to consider six transit system design factors, to which the task force added a seventh (see box).

### Key Transit System Design Factors

1. Land use
2. Social equity and environmental justice
3. Financial sustainability
4. Geographic equity
5. Economic development
6. Productivity and efficiency
7. Environmental sustainability

The 28 task force members were selected to represent a broad diversity of interests and perspectives. Three *ex officio* members represented King County MetroTransit, Sound Transit, and the Washington State Legislature. An Executive Committee

(County Executive and three County Council members) ensured that the task force carried out its approved work plan. Metro's Manager of Service Development served as the project manager. An Interbranch Working Group supported the Executive Committee and task force's work, and an external facilitator was hired to bring together the task force's recommendations. The task force created two subgroups of task force members to delve into performance measures and cost control/efficiencies.

## Charge

The primary objective of the task force was to recommend to the County Executive and County Council a policy frame-

work that reflects the prioritization of key system design factors and to make recommendations about transit system design and function. These frameworks were to be derived from an exploration of the transit system and its integration with the region's public transportation and overall transportation system. The overall framework should include:

- Concurrence with, or proposed changes to, the vision and mission of King County Metro
- Criteria for systematically growing the transit system to achieve the vision
- State and federal legislative agenda issues to achieve the vision
- Strategies for increasing the efficiency of King County Metro
- Criteria for systematically reducing the transit system should revenues not be available to sustain it.

## Recommendations

The task force learned about transit in King County and about Metro's services. The County's and Metro's actions to reduce expenses, deliver services more efficiently and raise revenues were detailed. And the remaining challenges facing Metro were quantified at more than \$115 million per year.

The task force deliberated on policy approaches to deliver a transit system that meets the needs of King County, with several themes emerging (see box below). As a result, seven recommendations were developed with the unanimous consensus of the task force (see back).

## Themes from Task Force Discussions

### Regional Perspective

Strike a balance among the best interests of the region as a whole, the needs of Metro riders, and the interests and needs of local communities.

### Transparency

Decision-making must be clear, consistent, and based on criteria and objectives that are clear to the public.

### Efficiency

Metro and King County must achieve greater efficiencies in transit operations, plans for new service, and in administration of the system.

### Balanced Approach

To avoid reductions in transit services and to meet future demand will require a combination of expense

reductions, efficiencies and securing new revenues.

### Performance Based

Use tools, decision processes, and reporting that allow all interested parties to evaluate performance.

# Recommendations

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**Recommendation 1:** Metro should create and adopt a new set of performance measures by service type, and report at least annually on the agency's performance on these measures. The performance measures should incorporate reporting on the key system design factors, and should include comparisons with Metro's peer transit agencies.

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**Recommendation 2:** King County and Metro management must control all of the agency's operating expenses to provide a cost structure that is sustainable over time. Cost control strategies should include continued implementation of the 2009 performance audit findings, exploration of alternative service delivery models, and potential reduction of overhead and internal service charges.

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**Recommendation 3:** The policy guidance for making service reduction and service growth decisions should be based on the following priorities:

- 1) Emphasize productivity due to its linkage to economic development, land use, financial sustainability, and environmental sustainability
  - 2) Ensure social equity
  - 3) Provide geographic value throughout the county.
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**Recommendation 4:** Create clear and transparent guidelines to be used for making service allocation decisions, based upon the recommended policy direction.

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**Recommendation 5:** Use the following principles to provide direction for the development of service guidelines:

- Transparency, clarity and measurability
  - Use of the system design factors
  - Flexibility to address dynamic financial conditions
  - Integration with the regional transportation system
  - Development of performance thresholds as the basis for decision-making on network changes.
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**Recommendation 6:** King County, Metro, and a broad coalition of community and business interests should pursue state legislation to create additional revenue sources that would provide a long-term, more sustainable base of revenue support for transit services. To build support for that work, it is essential that King County adopt and implement the task force recommendations, including use of the service guidelines and performance measures, and continued efforts to reduce Metro's operating costs.

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**Recommendation 7:** Metro staff should use the Task Force recommendations and discussions as the framework for revising Metro's current mission statement, and creating a vision statement (as one does not now exist). Both draft statements should be included in the draft Comprehensive and Strategic Plans scheduled to be submitted to the County Council in February 2011.

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