August 25, 2015

The Honorable Larry Phillips

Chair, King County Council

Room 1200

C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Phillips:

This letter transmits an ordinance that would implement a number of service improvements to the Metro Transit System, including:

* Extension of the RapidRide C and D Lines
* Modifications to Route 200 to improve productivity and be responsive to community concerns
* Implementation of the first phase of the Southeast King County Alternative Services project
* Addition of peak service in the Interstate 5 South corridor to implement a Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Mobility Grant

All of these changes would improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the transit system and demonstrate an ability to work with regional partners to enhance Metro’s transit network. More background about the planning and public outreach for each of these changes is included in the enclosed attachments to this letter.

The extensions of RapidRide C and D Lines would be part of Metro’s recently adopted Transit Service Funding Agreement with the City of Seattle that has already implemented service enhancements on nearly 60 routes that serve Seattle residents, employers, and visitors. Extending the RapidRide C Line to South Lake Union would connect a rapidly growing employment area and one of Seattle’s oldest and most established neighborhoods. Extending the RapidRide D Line to Pioneer Square would re-establish an all-day connection between Ballard and Uptown with the southern part of downtown Seattle that was compromised when the RapidRide C and D Lines were initially implemented.

Metro is also proposing several route changes that are the result of jurisdiction and community collaboration. Over the past few months, Metro has worked extensively with the City of Issaquah to identify minor modifications to Route 200, which provides service between Issaquah Highlands, Issaquah Transit Center, Issaquah Community Center, and Issaquah High School. Route 200 has experienced poor performance over the past several years, and these changes are intended to improve performance and better meet rider demand in this area. The City of Issaquah is highly supportive of these proposed changes.

Metro has also been engaged with the communities in Southeast King County as a part of an alternative services project. Through a collaborative process of working with area jurisdictions and community stakeholders, Metro identified opportunities where community travel needs could be better met with a combination of alternative services and a modified fixed-route transit network. This ordinance package contains frequency improvements for DART Route 915, the first phase of implementation for this project. The second phase will include proposed revisions to Route 907, set to take place in September 2016.

Lastly, Metro is proposing service additions to peak period service on two routes in the I-5 South Corridor: routes 179 and 190. Metro was awarded State Regional Mobility Grant funding for these routes to relieve congestion on Interstate 5 between Federal Way and downtown Seattle, which accommodates over 150,000 vehicles every day, with very high volumes during peak periods. During peak periods, it can take commuters more than an hour to drive the 22 miles between these places due to congestion. Adding two AM and two PM peak trips to both routes 179 and 190 will enable Metro to serve more riders during these periods, relieve crowding on existing service, and reduce single occupancy vehicle traffic. Both Metro and Sound Transit partnered together in pursuing this grant funding. The Regional Mobility Grant will also fund additional service for Sound Transit Route 577.

These service investments will have a positive impact on Metro’s countywide transit system as well as help support the efforts of the Strategic Climate Action Plan. A more robust transit system will encourage new and existing riders to reduce emissions by making it possible for residents to choose transit more often.

Also in accordance with U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Title VI regulations (49 CFR Part 21) and King County Code and policy, Metro prepared the “March 2016 Service Change Title VI Service Equity Analysis,” which is enclosed with this transmittal. In addition to ensuring compliance with USDOT Title VI regulations, the service equity analysis helps to ensure consistency with King County’s goals related to equity and social justice. Identifying the relative impacts of proposed changes to low-income and minority communities is an important step in applying the “fair and just” principle as stated in the King County Strategic Plan 2010-2014.

Given the needs for transit service throughout King County, the funding from the City of Seattle’s Proposition 1 and grants should not be seen as permanent solutions to meet the region’s transportation needs. Metro’s 2014 Service Guidelines Report identified over 550,000 hours of transit need throughout the system. I remain committed to working with the Council and other local jurisdictions to secure an acceptable and sustainable regional solution to public transportation funding. King County’s prosperity depends on preserving and growing the transit system throughout the region to reduce crowding on buses, keep service reliable, and meet current and future rider demand.

Thank you for your consideration of this ordinance to approve the public transportation service changes for March 2016. If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Desmond, General Manager, King County Metro Transit Division, at 206-477-5910.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

 ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

 Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

 Carrie S. Cihak, Chief of Policy Development, King County Executive Office

 Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

 Harold S. Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)

 Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Metro Transit Division, DOT

 Victor Obeso, Deputy General Manager, Planning and Customer Services, Metro Transit Division, DOT

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