

The North Eastside Mobility Sounding Board's Recommendation

March 12, 2019

INTRODUCTION

The North Eastside Mobility Sounding Board was a group of seventeen citizen-volunteers, many of whom had served on the preceding Link Connections SR-520 Sounding Board (April – December 2017), selected by King County Metro staff to represent the communities affected by proposed bus service changes. Prospects for the board were recruited and selected to become members based upon the following criteria:

- Current or prospective bus riders
- Reflect the diversity of the communities in which Metro is considering service changes
- Express an interest in public transportation
- Commit to attending and participating in meetings
- Represent geographic, racial, age, income, language, professional, and ability diversity

The board met six times at Kirkland City Hall, from June 2018 through February 2019. Each two-hour session included a well-organized agenda and discussions facilitated by King County Metro Staff. Board members reviewed materials provided by King County Metro and Sound Transit staff. Board members posed challenging questions, discussed ideas, and provided observations with the goal of producing the best mobility solutions for both current and prospective customers traveling to and from the North Eastside region.

At the end of the eight month process the mobility board enthusiastically supports the proposed North Eastside Mobility Project plan and recommends the King County Council moves to approve the plan without delay.

OUR JOURNEY

Inaugural meeting, June 14, 2018: We introduced ourselves to one another, learned about the project, and reviewed both the agenda and the sounding board's goals, during the first half of the meeting. During the second half of the meeting, members formed small groups where we discussed the current state of transit, determined how it is/is not meeting the needs of North Eastside region customers and identified opportunities to improve transit in the future. Report outs summarized each group's discussion.

Meeting #2, July 19, 2018: The first hour was spent reviewing Phase I Outreach, conducted in June and July 2018. Input was gathered from the public through focus groups, online surveys, farmers markets, and community group meetings. Various methods were used to engage the community including street teams, signs at bus stops, social media, employer emails, and through conducting open houses in community centers and through presentations to community organizations. Potential benefits, as well as drawbacks and challenges, were identified regarding the transfer of Route 255 riders to Link light rail service at the UW Transit Station. Comments concerning improvements and reinvestments were included in feedback from the public. Online survey questions were displayed in easy-to-understand metrics summarizing the responses. We spent the last hour participating in a 'Needs Assessment'

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exercise. The exercise allowed the board to digest the results of the report, draw conclusions from what was shared and add our individual observations.

Meeting #3, August 16, 2018: Board members were presented with two restructuring scenarios, based on input from the Phase I Outreach, as well as the board's input from the last meeting in July. The goal was to evaluate how well the needs and priorities of communities matched service guidelines to enable a comparison of the current service in each region (i.e. across SR-520, Kenmore/Finn Hill, Bothell/Juanita, Woodinville/Brickyard, Kingsgate, North Rose Hill, and Redmond/Kirkland) to these two scenarios. Our input would be used to lay the groundwork for the final phase of outreach in September.

Meeting #4, October 4, 2018 This meeting followed the Phase II Public Outreach in September. The first hour was spent reviewing what was learned from the outreach. What Community members want mobility services that are...

- Reliable and dependable
- Improvements to local access for residences, workplaces, schools, and destinations
- Available more frequently, into the evenings, every day of the week
- Convenient for riders of different ages and abilities
- Integrated to comprise a network of services (i.e. Link light rail, rapid transit, ridesharing options)

The board responded by proposing solutions to improve transportation options that . . .

- Streamline and improve routes
 - Total trip time equal or less than what is currently experienced
 - Improved transfer environment at UW Link light rail station (Montlake Triangle Project)
 - Address concerns from the 2017 Link Connections SR-520 Sounding Board
- Improves reliability and transfer conditions
- Reduces wait times
- Provides longer hours of service
- Creates new, flexible transit options across the North Eastside region

Last scheduled meeting, December 6, 2018: Board members reviewed findings from Phase III outreach, conducted in November, and reviewed the impact of the two options: Take no action or support the proposal for change. We were pleased to learn that the community strongly favored the recommended changes, and that the concerns raised (listed above) had been addressed. The remainder of the meeting was spent learning about Montlake Triangle project improvements, the status of the Montlake freeway station platforms, and final adjustments made to the proposal.

Supplemental meeting, February 7, 2019: This meeting was called to enable staff to thank sounding board members for their service, review the next steps regarding the implementation

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schedule, and featured an informal talk and Q&A by Metro Transit District General Manager Rob Gannon. Board members learned about Sound Transit's Link 2020, the construction for

which will push the implementation date of the North Eastside Mobility Project plan six months beyond the original September 2019 start.

While the news was disappointing, the board felt that it was in the best interest of riders and the public to delay the implementation until after the Chinatown/ID tunnel station improvements are completed.

Eleven of the 17 board members participated in a formal evaluation. Board members could recommend taking no action or implementation of the proposed North Eastside Mobility Project plan. See Appendix A for results

Board members expressed the following concerns in response to the survey questions:

- The route 255 truncation at the UW Link station may be viewed negatively by many Eastside riders and could pose a potential public relations problem. Opportunities to mitigate include
 - Strategic messaging that targets all customer demographics (limited English proficiency, low-income, youth, seniors, commuters and public-at-large),
 - Providing onsite assistance that supports riders during the transfer transition (bus/Link at the UW light rail station)
 - Prepare for customer safety and efficiency making connections between the two modes. This would include making access to ORCA cards easier and offering education and assistance with obtaining/using pre-loaded cards for boarding different modes. Many riders have never transferred from bus to light rail making advance education on how to transfer a key component of implementation.
 - The sooner King County Council approves the North Eastside Mobility Project, the sooner Metro can design a thoughtful and robust community outreach and education campaign to assist customers in adapting to the changes.
- The increasing congestion on Central Way/NE 85th Street/Redmond Way corridor, due to retail and residential development in Kirkland, Redmond, and Woodinville, is especially disquieting to Kirkland board members. The cities of Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville, and transit officials must work together to reduce the level of interference that other vehicles pose to bus routes and the potential for schedule unreliability on new route 250. Currently connectivity between Redmond and Kirkland is not sufficient for the volume of travel demand between these major urban destinations with significant employment centers. The 250 provides a welcome transit choice to commuters in both communities.

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- A bus or HOV lane should be maintained on the off-ramp for vehicles to transition from SR 520 to the Montlake Triangle to achieve on-time service during high-volume commuting periods.
- Route 225 should be revised to stop at Bastyr College.

CONCLUSION

It is the consensus of the North Eastside Mobility Sounding Board that the King County Council should approve the proposed North Eastside Mobility Project, so that the county can move forward in addressing the explosive growth and dynamic conditions within the North Eastside region. Please consider that...

- This proposed solution will be an integral part of future transit investments that connect people, cities, and businesses.
- The status quo is untenable. The visionary changes recommended by North Eastside Mobility Sounding Board will make the public's ability to move throughout the area and region work better as an integrated whole.
- Delayed implementation should not delay the approval process or implementation planning. By expeditiously authorizing the proposed restructuring, Metro staff can spend the time to develop a comprehensive plan for communicating the many changes and their benefits, so that people are informed and ready when the project is implemented in 2020.

The North Eastside Mobility Sounding Board urges the King County Council to adopt the full proposal, resisting the few individuals voicing dissent because of personal interests, and recognizing that considerable amounts of time and talent were invested in the deliberative process that is foundational to the board's recommendation to implement the proposed North Eastside Mobility Project plan.

Thank you for your service to King County and for considering our recommendation.

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North Eastside Mobility Board Letter of Recommendation

Appendix A

Route	Status	Support (%)	Support/Modify (%)	Unable to decide (%)
225	New	81.8%	18.2	0
230	New	100	0	0
231	New	100	0	0
234	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
235	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
236	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
238	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
239	New	81.8%	18.2	0
243	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
244	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
248	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
250	New	90.9	9.1	0
255	Modify	90.9	9.1	0
277	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
540	Delete & Replace	100	0	0
541	Delete & Replace	90.9	9.1	0
544	New	100	0	0
545	Revised	100	0	0
930	Added Service	100	0	0
Community Connections: Additional S. Kirkland Community Van		90.9	0	9.1
Community Connections: Bothell – Woodinville Community Ride		90.9	0	9.1
Community Connections: Kirkland –Kenmore Community Ride		81.8	0	18.2