

## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 2020-0198, **Version:** 1

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Clerk 05/29/2020

A MOTION relating to public transportation, commending the Metro transit department and its employees for providing essential transportation services during the COVID-19 pandemic, requesting that the Metro transit department provide cloth or disposable masks or other facial coverings for passengers who do not have them and asking the Metro transit department to report on these efforts to the King County council and other partners and stakeholders.

WHEREAS, the Metro transit department ("Metro") is the largest public transportation agency in the Puget Sound region, in 2019 providing nearly five hundred thousand rides each day throughout King County through a combination of fixed-route, contracted, shared and flexible mobility services, and

WHEREAS, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro's services are vital to essential workers, including health care workers and first responders, traveling to their workplaces, as well as to people who rely on public transit to shop for groceries, medications and other essential needs, and

WHEREAS, in response to declining ridership during the pandemic and to ensure safe operating conditions for its employees, Metro has implemented several rounds of temporary service reductions, which have resulted in service cuts of up to seventy percent, and

WHEREAS, Metro has been following guidance from local, state and national public health agencies regarding employee and passenger safety, including the local health officer face covering directive that took effect on May 18, 2020, and that requires that all individuals must wear face coverings over their noses and mouths when they are in indoor public settings or in outdoor public locations at which they cannot maintain

distancing of approximately six feet from others, and

WHEREAS, Metro has implemented a number of operational changes to provide greater safety for its employees and passengers, including but not limited to undertaking enhanced daily cleaning of bus coaches, eliminating fare collection and restricting boarding to rear doors only, except for passengers needing assistance in boarding, to provide separation between operators and passengers, cordoning off seats and limiting the number of passengers on coaches to provide social distancing among passengers, redeploying security personnel for safety and social distancing support, offering paratransit services to new customers with disabilities, providing face masks and hand sanitizer to operators and encouraging passengers to travel for essential travel only, to avoid travel if ill and to follow the local health officer face covering directive by wearing masks or other facial coverings while taking transit, and

WHEREAS, Metro continues to collaborate with its employees to identify operational and service changes that could enhance employee and passenger safety, and

WHEREAS, Metro has engaged in outreach and communications efforts to engage with and inform community members and partner jurisdictions about operational and service changes, safety measures Metro has implemented and the requirement to use a mask or facial covering when riding public transit, including distributing seventy-five thousand masks to community organizations to be used by people with low or no incomes who rely on transit, and

WHEREAS, it is critical that public transportation services be provided in a manner that meets essential travel needs and that provides a safe environment for employees and passengers;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The council commends the Metro transit department ("Metro") and its employees for providing essential public transportation services during a global pandemic.

B. The council requests that Metro continue to enhance the safety of employees and passengers by providing cloth or disposable masks or other facial coverings for passengers who are unable to comply with the

requirement to use a mask or facial covering when using public transit because they do not have masks or facial coverings of their own, with a particular focus on passengers with disabilities who interact with bus operators in a situation in which social distancing is not possible, and by using audio announcements to remind passengers to use masks or facial coverings. To the extent possible, Metro should develop mechanisms, potentially with the aid of employees, to distribute masks or facial coverings to riders who board public transit without a mask or facial covering.

C. The council requests that, for the duration of the pandemic emergency and as Metro begins planning to resume services in consultation with elected leaders and public health experts, Metro should communicate regularly with passengers, employees, community members, partner jurisdictions, the regional transit committee and the council through regular meetings and communications channels, as well as through specially convened forums, such as video meetings. The council expects that a written report be made available to the councilmembers and the public on Metro's efforts to provide masks or other facial coverings for passengers no later than twenty-eight calendar days after the passage of this motion. Metro should file the special study report in the form of an electronic document with the clerk of the council, who shall provide an electronic copy to the chief of staff and all councilmembers.