

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**King County Metro RapidRide K Line Overview and Guiding Principles**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**DIRECTION**

King County Metro's (Metro) RapidRide K Line will connect Bellevue and Kirkland with fast, reliable and frequent transit service. Metro staff will attend and provide an overview of the K Line project, which is currently in the planning phase. In June, Metro will begin Phase 2 of community engagement. Bellevue staff is seeking Council's concurrence with the attached draft Bellevue RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles, to inform Bellevue's participation in K Line planning.

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to use Bellevue RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles to represent local needs and ensure that the city's transit interests are effectively represented in K Line planning.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

RapidRide is Metro's bus rapid transit service, providing connections between regional centers. RapidRide lines are intended to make transit a convenient and attractive alternative to driving alone. Compared to the standard bus routes they replace, RapidRide lines are up to 20 percent faster and carry up to 70 percent more passengers. To make RapidRide service fast and reliable, Metro works with local jurisdictions to implement capital improvements such as arterial high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes, business access and transit (BAT) lanes, new turn lanes, or traffic signals that prioritize buses. RapidRide lines have amenities such as off-board fare payment, all-door boarding, real-time bus arrival signs, on-board Wi-Fi, and high-quality stations. RapidRide buses arrive every five to 15 minutes from early morning until late evening seven days a week.

RapidRide K Line

Metro is in the planning phase for the RapidRide K Line, which will connect Eastgate Park and Ride, the Bellevue Transit Center, and the Totem Lake Transit Center in Kirkland. Planned for service as soon as 2030, the K Line is intended to operate on arterial roads within the two cities. The K Line will serve a variety of major employers in the medical, technology, and aerospace industries, as well as several higher education institutions and other regional destinations. The K Line's route and stop locations are under development as Metro gathers public input and investigates potential roadway improvements.

Metro's K Line budget is \$120 million, and Metro assumes 50 percent will be funded with Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant funding.

The K Line is an outcome of the Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan*, which was adopted by City Council in 2014. The *Transit Master Plan* identified the need for enhanced connectivity between Totem Lake, Downtown Bellevue, Bellevue College, and the Eastgate Park and Ride. *Metro Connects*, King County's long-range transit vision adopted in 2021, included this corridor as a future RapidRide line. The K Line will connect riders to other major transit routes in the area, including Sound Transit's Link light rail 2 Line, I-405 Stride bus rapid transit, and the existing RapidRide B Line in Bellevue. By providing a network of frequent transit connections, passengers will be able to reach more locations in less time.

In addition to making roadway improvements, the K Line project will make it safer for people of all abilities to access stations. While the K Line will connect to the existing Eastgate Park and Ride, no additional parking will be constructed as part of the K Line project. Therefore, most passengers will walk, roll, or take transit to access the K Line. Metro is investigating potential improvements to sidewalks and bike lanes in Bellevue and Kirkland.

Community Engagement Phase 1 – Fall 2019

Metro conducted an initial phase of community engagement in 2019 to identify needs and priorities for RapidRide service between Kirkland and Bellevue. Community-based organizations (CBOs), businesses, and community members were asked about their transit use, how and where they need to travel, and proposed routing through Kirkland and Bellevue. To hear from communities historically underrepresented in transit planning, Metro led an inclusive engagement campaign. Metro held in-person engagement events, such as briefings, tabling, and transit center and onboard bus outreach and conducted an online survey with more than 1,100 respondents. Key themes heard during this phase of engagement included:

- Community members want transit that will get them to important destinations within the community.
- Speed of travel is important to community members.
- Community members want to be certain the bus will be there when they need it.
- Some people said Metro needs to better serve people with mobility, vision, hearing, or other impairments.
- Community members stressed the importance of safety at stations, including lighting and crosswalks, as well as sidewalks leading to stations.
- Difficulty getting to and from the bus stop can make it hard for people to use transit.

- Bus transit takes significantly longer than other transportation methods and is a barrier to getting to places on time.

On October 28, 2019, King County Metro staff briefed Bellevue City Council on RapidRide K Line progress to date, including the draft route and the decision process. Bellevue City Council comments were supportive of the RapidRide K Line project. Councilmembers thanked Metro staff for working collaboratively with the cities and for aligning the project with Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan*.

Route Identified and Project Paused - 2020

In 2020, Metro identified the RapidRide K Line route as connecting Eastgate Park and Ride, the Bellevue Transit Center, and the Totem Lake Transit Center in Kirkland. This decision was made based on input from the cities, including Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan* as well as input received during Community Engagement Phase 1. A map of the planned route is included as Attachment A.

Metro paused work on the K Line at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic due to funding shortfalls.

In 2022, Bellevue and Kirkland advocated to the King County Council for RapidRide K Line funding to be included in the County's 2023-2024 budget and 10-Year Capital Improvement Program. Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson signed a letter of support for the project; the letter is included as Attachment B.

Community Engagement Phase 2 – Spring 2024

A second phase of community engagement will begin in June and last approximately four weeks. Using the feedback received in 2019, Metro is intentionally seeking to hear from people and groups who have been historically underrepresented or overlooked in transportation planning. Metro will continue to focus engagement efforts on meeting people where they are, hosting events in the community, partnering with CBOs, attending regularly scheduled meetings, and engaging people in the languages they prefer to use. Metro has developed materials in eight languages.

Metro plans to re-introduce the project to the community and gather feedback on community priorities and conceptual design plans for RapidRide K Line, which Metro developed in partnership with local agencies. Specific areas for conversation include:

- proposed RapidRide K Line station locations;
- priorities and barriers to accessing transit to inform projects making it easier for people who walk, roll, and bike to get to the station;
- priorities for people who travel in the area; these priorities will inform roadway improvements that make the bus faster and more reliable; and,
- additional ways to share information and gather input from Eastside communities.

Community Engagement Phase 3 – Fall 2024

A third and final phase of community engagement is planned for this fall where a complete vision of the proposed project will be presented. Metro's goal is to get detailed feedback that the project team will use to refine the project vision, confirm community priorities and complete the project's planning stage.

Locally Preferred Alternative – Fall 2024

A key decision point for the K Line is adoption of the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). "LPA" is a

term used by the FTA and refers to an alternative evaluated through the local planning process, adopted as the desired alternative by the appropriate agency and identified as the preferred alternative in the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) review process. The LPA defines the core components of the project, including the mode, alignment, roadway and transit capital improvements, and operating characteristics. As a part of identifying roadway and transit capital improvements, it lists generalized speed and reliability treatments the project will consider and highlights areas along the corridor where the project will focus applying transit priority treatments.

The Bellevue and Kirkland City Councils will be asked to provide letters in support of the LPA in the fall of 2024. Bellevue staff will return to Council requesting direction to prepare the letter. Metro must have the cities' letters to be able to apply for FTA funding for the K Line. Submitting a letter of support for the K Line LPA acknowledges that the City of Bellevue supports the core components of the project as stated in the LPA and believes implementation is reasonable pending further design refinement and collaboration. Providing a letter of support infers that the City of Bellevue will remain committed as a good faith partner to the future refinement and ultimate delivery of the project. After receiving the letters, the County Executive will transmit the LPA to the King County Council for adoption. Metro must begin preparing an application for federal funding in the spring of 2025 in order to meet the 2030 target to begin K Line service.

Draft Bellevue RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles

Bellevue staff is seeking Council direction to use the draft Bellevue RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles (Attachment C) to provide feedback to Metro during the planning process. The Draft Guiding Principles are based on policy adopted by Bellevue City Council in the *Transit Master Plan*, *Comprehensive Plan*, *Mobility Implementation Plan*, and other policy documents. The Draft Guiding Principles will enable staff to better represent local needs and ensure that the city's transit interests are effectively represented in K Line planning.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The RapidRide K Line is a key part of the frequent transit network envisioned in Bellevue's *Transit Master Plan*, which was adopted by City Council in 2014. The *Transit Master Plan* identified potential transit way improvements, including HOV lanes and BAT lanes. Bellevue's partners on the *Transit Master Plan* included King County Metro, Sound Transit, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Bellevue Downtown Association, Bellevue College, major employers, CBOs, and neighboring cities.

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan, updated in 2022, includes the following policies:

- TR-24. Incorporate transit/high-occupancy vehicle facility improvements in accordance with the Transit Master Plan and corridor studies.
- TR-63. Allow for repurposing of travel lanes for other uses such as parking, transit or pedestrian and bicycle facilities where excess vehicular capacity exists and/or to optimize person throughput along a corridor.

- TR-68. Support planned growth and development with a bold transit vision that provides efficient, useful, attractive service for most people, to most destinations, most of the time, serving maximum ridership.
- TR-71. Work with transit providers to create, maintain, and enhance a system of transit-supportive facilities and amenities.

Since 2009, Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan has also included the following policy, "Ensure that high capacity transit adds new travel capacity within its own right-of-way, rather than replacing existing travel lane capacity, in order to maximize speed and reliability for high capacity transit while minimizing impacts to other modes." This policy originated in Bellevue's 2008 Light Rail Best Practices Report. The RapidRide K Line may be considered high capacity transit as described in the Comprehensive Plan. However, TR-93 conflicts with the other policies listed above and therefore is not incorporated into the Draft RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles (Attachment C).

Fiscal Impact

Bellevue is contributing staff time to the project during the planning phase. The city may consider contributing right of way or other contributions to the project.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to use Bellevue RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles to represent local needs and ensure that the city's transit interests are effectively represented in K Line planning.
2. Provide alternate direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Planned RapidRide K Line Route
- B. Bellevue RapidRide K Line Support Letter
- C. Draft Bellevue RapidRide K Line Guiding Principles

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A