

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Briefing on Draft King County Metro Long Range Plan.

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POLICY ISSUES

Council has identified transit solutions as an important element of the transportation system supporting land use goals and level-of-service standards as set forth in the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. The Metro Long Range Plan (LRP) will be the basis for King County Metro's growth in the future, including recommendations for additional transit service and capital investments to/from Bellevue's major activity centers where transit demand is high and expected to increase in the future. The LRP provides the umbrella for planning all Metro service in the long-term, and will be informed by the King County Metro Service Guidelines Report, which guides how Metro allocates service in the near-term. The Service Guidelines are in the final stages of refinement following an extensive review by the Service Guidelines Task Force, on which Deputy Mayor Chelminiak served.

Bellevue Transit Master Plan

The Bellevue *Transit Master Plan* identifies transit service and capital investments needed to serve Bellevue and connect to other parts of the region. The *Transit Master Plan* serves as an important reference document for collaboration with transit service providers and partner jurisdictions.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

☐ Action
☒ Discussion
☒ Information

- Tonight's briefing is an opportunity for Council to learn about the Draft Metro Long Range Plan, known as "Metro Connects," and how this effort will impact future transit service on the Eastside. Council may direct staff to compile a Bellevue comment letter, as part of the draft plan public comment period, for Council consideration.
- No action is being sought from Council at this time.
- Victor Obeso, Deputy General Manager, Planning & Customer Services at King County Metro will provide an update on Metro Connects, which was released to the public April 18.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

In January 2015, the King County Council initiated the Metro Transit Long Range Plan – a comprehensive look ahead at the system that will be required to meet King County's transit needs

through 2040. The Plan considers current transit operations and performance, the priorities expressed by the public about the network, and projected growth in population and employment. Council was last briefed on the long range planning work at its September 28, 2015 Study Session. The agenda memo from this briefing is included as Attachment 1. Since that time, Metro has been working with a citizen advisory committee, technical advisory committee (TAC) and regional transit operators to complete the draft plan. Bellevue Transportation staff served on the TAC, and following Council direction, used the Bellevue Transit Master Plan as the blueprint for advocating for future Eastside Metro services.

Using the input from these groups as a guide, Metro developed a draft Long Range Plan—known as Metro Connects. Metro Connects is a vision to meet future transit needs in King County by building an integrated, frequent, all-day transit system, and is intended to chart a course for both service and capital investments. The plan proposes a 70% increase in service hours, a total of six million service annual hours, which would result in an estimated doubling of ridership.

Highlights of the plan include:

- 20 new RapidRide lines around the county that would arrive every 5-to-15 minutes or better all day—a total of 26 lines.
- New express service that would arrive every 15-to-30 minutes or better all day, connecting centers where many people live and work.
- Local services tailored to community needs.
- Improved Metro connections to light rail stations.
- Expanded travel options such as community shuttles, “right-now” ride-sharing applications, partnerships with companies like Lyft, Uber and Microtransit, and more innovations as new technologies and services emerge.
- 600 miles of service with improvements to keep buses moving swiftly, such as bus lanes and transit signal priority; 300 of these miles would be for the proposed RapidRide expansion.
- One easy-to-use system that offers:
 - More real-time customer information, such as how many seats are available on the next bus.
 - New and improved paths, sidewalks and wayfinding signs to transit stops.
 - Improved bus stops, shelters, and transit centers.
 - Managed park-and-rides to maximize ridership.
 - Buses and stops designed to make boarding and riding easy for everyone—including riders with wheelchairs, luggage, or strollers.
 - Fast, easy fare payment.

Metro Connects plan will be updated every six years. Between updates, Metro will develop short-term plans to achieve the near-term needs identified in its annual Service Guidelines analysis, and provide greater clarity about when to make changes. Factors that may influence service changes include the type and location of new population and job growth as well as the presence of transit supportive infrastructure.

The plan does not include funding for implementation. Metro plans to pursue grants and form partnerships with cities, businesses, and partner agencies to fund projects that help buses travel faster and more reliably, free up parking spaces, and make it easier to bike and walk to transit stops. Opportunities for transit-oriented development would also be explored.

At its April 25 briefing, Metro will share information with Council, including the following:

- How the proposed Metro Connects network affects different parts of the county generally, and Bellevue specifically;
- The impact of anticipated changes resulting from improved system integration with Sound Transit's investments;
- How the draft plan responds to City input and how it supports the service and capital visions outlined in Bellevue's Transit Master Plan; and,
- How it will be implemented, i.e., near-term action plans and what additional funding Metro estimates it needs to fulfill the plan over time.

King County Metro is taking public comments on the Metro Connects through May 20, and will hold an open house for the plan at Bellevue City Hall on May 11 from 5:30-7:00 pm.

ATTACHMENTS

- 1) Bellevue City Council Metro Long Range Plan Study Session Item, September 28, 2015