

ATTACHMENT 1

June 1, 2016

King County Metro Transit
c/o Victor Obeso
500 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA, 98104

Dear Mr. Obeso,

We commend King County Metro Transit for developing a long range plan to guide how the agency will plan and deliver bus service and related capital investments through 2040. We want to thank you and Stephen Hunt for providing an overview of the Metro Connects plan at our April 25 Council meeting, and appreciate the opportunity to provide comments.

As indicated during our discussion on April 25, meeting the transit needs of Bellevue, the Eastside and the broader region is a top priority for Council. We share many of the same transit goals with our fellow Eastside Cities, as expressed in the Eastside Transportation Partnership Metro Connects comment letter (Attachment 1).

The Eastside is a growing regional economic engine, comprised of diverse and thriving communities. By 2040, our cities will include 700,000 residents and 500,000 jobs. This area spans a diverse mix of growing urban centers, small and medium size cities and rural areas—and requires more than traditional urban-suburban fixed route service to efficiently meet our travel demands.

The Bellevue Transit Master Plan (TMP), which was completed in 2014, lays out a vision for transit service and capital investments in our City. In Metro Connects, you acknowledge the critical importance of working with local jurisdictions to understand transit needs and land use plans in order to deliver the optimal transit system for our growing region. We are pleased to see many of the key elements from the TMP reflected in Metro Connects, and we thank you for engaging with Bellevue and other cities early in your planning process to reflect local plans.

The following comments address specific policy areas of keen interest to Council. In addition to this letter, Bellevue transportation staff will submit a more technical comment letter.

Increase Transit Service Hours and Connections among Eastside Cities.

The greatest need for improved transit service lies in connections between the Eastside's activity centers and higher education institutions. As envisioned in the Bellevue TMP, it is imperative that the Eastside be served by fast and reliable all-day transit service that connects the Eastside with the Eastside, as well as to the rest of the region. The shift from a Seattle-focused system to a multi-centered system of service that takes into account the expected growth on the Eastside, as

described in Metro Connects, reflects this need and we thank you for moving Metro services towards this operational model. We look forward to seeing this concept as part of the final plan.

Improve System Access and Integrate Transit Services.

For transit service to work, riders must be able to seamlessly access it from a variety of modes. We appreciate Metro's work to increase non-motorized system access, as well as the agency's stated priorities to incorporate local jurisdiction land use plans into service planning to create Transit Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities.

We are pleased to see the importance of transit integration as an additional piece of the system access plan. Continued improvement of the integration of transit service among the various transit agencies is a must. Commuters and taxpayers are not concerned with which transit agency is operating the system – instead, they are interested in cost-effective, reliable transit service on routes that serve the places Eastside residents want to go. We encourage Metro to work closely with Sound Transit to provide a robust bus network that feeds Sound Transit light rail and bus rapid transit investments.

Although these steps are critical to enhancing transit access in urban areas, it is still important to provide access to King County residents who live in the outlying areas of the County. In order for residents in lower density areas of the Eastside to access the transit system we must have conveniently located parking garages, sized and well managed to provide reliable parking for transit system users.

We encourage Metro to work with its fellow parking providers, Sound Transit and WSDOT, to develop a comprehensive parking strategy to better manage the parking infrastructure currently available, invest in lease-lots now to ease commuter parking constraints in high demand areas, and plan for additional park & ride investments on the Eastside—particularly in the I-90 and I-405 corridors. Bellevue's TMP provides an analysis that identifies the needs of commuter parking through 2030—this level of detail is essential for adequate planning in each major service corridor. The joint parking program should follow a similar model for estimating the future parking demands of the region.

Invest in Alternative Services and Plan for New Technologies.

We are encouraged by Metro's plans to explore enhancements to its alternative services program. Providing alternative service modes, such as vanpools, ride share and shuttle services, to areas not served by frequent bus routes allows service to be maintained in less dense areas while maximizing transit routes in the areas with the highest ridership.

In addition, King County Metro should continue to evaluate emerging technology improvements and implement appropriate solutions to enable commuters to have better transportation choices and improved mobility.

Although we understand that Metro Connects is a long-range vision, and not a financial plan, we are concerned that the plan does not take a tiered approach depending on funding availability. For example, in the TMP, Bellevue assessed service and capital priorities based on three funding scenarios. Without this prioritization, we are concerned that many of the good intentions of

Metro Connects will be lost if funds do not become available. Along these lines, without a clear understanding of the funding requirements to implement the plan, it is difficult to understand the implications to the tax payers. We request that Metro provide a thorough financial plan that equitably allocates Metro service and capital investments throughout King County, as part of the final Metro Connects document.

Thank you again for engaging with Bellevue on this important planning process. We will stay closely involved as Metro updates the plan every six years, and through any short-term planning endeavors undertaken to achieve the near-term needs identified in the annual Service Guidelines analysis.

We look forward to working with Metro to ensure the needs of the Bellevue and the greater Eastside are effectively addressed throughout the implementation of Metro Connects.

Sincerely,

John Stokes, Mayor of Bellevue

Cc: Bellevue City Council
Brad Miyake, City Manager
Dave Berg, Transportation Department Director

Attachments:

- Eastside Transportation Partnership Metro Connects Comment Letter