



King County

Metropolitan King County Council Transportation, Economy and Environment Committee

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Item:	14	Name:	Paul Carlson
Proposed No.:	2016-0093	Date:	February 2, 2016

SUBJECT

A motion approving a work plan for assessing ridership impacts and customer response to the University Link bus integration.

SUMMARY

Proposed Motion 2016-0093 is one of three motions submitted by the Executive in response to requirements of Ordinance 18133, approving the restructure of Metro bus routes designed to integrate the bus routes with the University Link Light Rail extension to Capitol Hill and University of Washington Link Stations, effective March 26, 2016.

Since the University Link bus restructure will result in a significant shift of trip patterns for many riders, Ordinance 18133 requires a motion approving a work plan to assess ridership and customer satisfaction with existing services and subsequently the new bus and light rail network.

BACKGROUND

University Link Restructure

In September-October 2015, the County Council reviewed the King County Metro proposal to restructure approximately 30 bus routes in conjunction with the opening of University Link, the extension of Sound Transit's Central Link Light Rail line to Capitol Hill Station and University of Washington Station adjacent to Husky Stadium. On October 19, 2015, the Council passed Ordinance 18133, approving the proposed restructure with some route modifications.

The Council evaluation of this major restructure identified several specific issues associated with the proposed restructure. Ordinance 18133 includes provisions addressing four of these issues:

- **Transfer environment.** The amenities at bus stops where the number of transfers is projected to increase, and requiring a motion approving a work plan for implementing planned improvements (Section 2 of Ordinance 18133);

- **Public outreach.** A joint public engagement campaign leading up to the March 26, 2016 effective date, carried out in collaboration with Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, and the University of Washington (Section 3 of Ordinance 18133);
- **Performance measures.** Evaluation of ridership impacts and customer response to the restructure, and requiring a motion approving a work plan for customized performance measures (Section 4 of Ordinance 18133); and
- **Montlake traffic study.** A study of the traffic impacts of installing a bus stop on northbound Montlake Boulevard NE, and requiring a motion approving a report on the traffic impacts study (Section 5 of Ordinance 18133).

The proposed motions required by Sections 2, 4, and 5 have been transmitted for Council review. The oral reports required by Section 3 were presented in committee in December and January.

Ridership Impacts and Customer Response

Section 4 of Ordinance 18133 addresses the means by which the County will assess the impacts on riders of the University Link bus route restructure:

SECTION 4. A. To ensure a full understanding of the ridership impacts and customer response to the University Link bus integration service change, by January 29, 2016, the executive shall transmit a work plan, and a motion for the approval of the work plan, identifying customized performance measures for the routes and corridors affected by the restructure. The work plan shall:

1. Identify performance measures to assess ridership and customer satisfaction with the existing Metro bus network and the new network integrated with the Central Link light rail;
2. Include plans through which the division shall conduct a customer and resident service assessment survey to be conducted by March 2017 to measure customer and resident satisfaction before and following the service change;
3. Be coordinated with Sound Transit performance assessments to avoid duplication of effort; and
4. Be modeled on past performance reports such as the C and D Line assessment.

B. The council is interested in near-term assessments of the service change impacts but recognizes that a thorough evaluation must take place over an extended time period.

C. The executive shall transmit the report in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the policy staff director and the lead staff for the transportation, economy and environment committee, or its successor.

Work Plan Overview

Attachment A to Proposed Motion 2016-0093 is the King County Metro Transit Work Plan for Assessing Ridership Impacts and Customer Response to the University Link

Bus Integration. It describes plans to conduct ridership assessment, customer analysis, and resident service assessment pertaining to the March 2016 service change. Here is an overview of the Work Plan's Scope of Work and Tasks.

Ridership Assessment (pages 2-3)

This section of the Work Plan identifies King County Metro Service Guidelines goals for bus service restructures and the Federal Transit Administration requirement for Title VI review of disparate impact on minority populations and disproportionate burden on low-income populations.

With these goals in mind, the Work Plan calls for analyzing overall ridership in the restructure area, and at the route level, route segment level, and stop level. Using Automatic Vehicle Locator (AVL), Automatic Passenger Counter (APC), and ORCA databases, the report will address ridership; on-time performance; "ons and offs" by bus trip and for weekday timetable trips, each bus stop; and transfers using ORCA. It should be noted that origin and destination data is not available from these databases.

The Work Plan states that this "report will be very similar to the August 2013 report, RapidRide C & D Line Implementation and Restructures, Ridership Assessment and Guidelines Analysis":

<http://metro.kingcounty.gov/am/reports/2013/rapidride-c-and-d-line-restructures-assessment-august2013.pdf>

The C and D Line Report includes some 70 pages of data and graphic displays. Note that the Fall 2012 service change with the C and D Lines took place during an upgrade of the automatic passenger counters, which complicated the before and after analyses. King County Metro staff states that this is not an issue now because the 30 percent of buses equipped with APCs all have the same equipment.

Customer Analysis (pages 3-4)

The Work Plan includes "before" and "after" on-board surveys to assess customer satisfaction with the existing and future Metro bus networks.

Prior to service change, in February and March, on-board surveys using self-administered questionnaires will be conducted on Routes 8, 16, 25, 26, 28, 30, 43, 48, 49, 64-68, 71-76, 242, 316, 372, and 373. A total of 50 bus trips will be selected to conduct the surveys; an estimated 1,300 surveys are expected to be completed. Relevant data from a 2015 Sound Transit survey will also be included in the analysis.

The questionnaire will be similar to the C & D Line questionnaire reprinted on pages 7-8 of the Work Plan. Questions address riders' travel behavior; fare payment; and satisfaction with trip time, frequency, reliability, personal safety, condition of the bus, bus stops, and transferring. Riders will be invited to provide contact information if they want to participate in a follow-up survey at the end of 2016.

Note that the survey questions must be finalized on February 5.

After the service change, in late 2016, self-administered questionnaires will be distributed on Routes 8, 38, 43, 45, 48, 49, 62-65, 67, 71, 73-76, 78, 316, 372, and 373, as well as to passengers boarding or alighting Link Light Rail at Capitol Hill and University of Washington Stations. A total of 50 bus trips will be selected to conduct the surveys; an estimated 1,300 surveys are expected to be completed.

Questions will be similar to those on the February-March questionnaire, with additional questions about the impacts of the March 2016 service change including new transfer patterns.

There will also be a survey of about 400 respondents who provided contact information in the February-March survey; for any respondents who stopped riding Metro, questions will ask the reasons for the change.

Resident Service Assessment (pages 4-6)

The Work Plan addresses the requirement for a survey of people who do not ride transit.

Prior to service change, for the survey of restructure area residents who do not ride transit, the Work Plan will extrapolate data from the Fall 2013 and Fall 2015 rider/non-rider survey with the expectation that about 250 non-riders in the affected zip codes will be included in the surveys. The analysis will focus on non-rider responses to questions about barriers to riding Metro, the appeal of using Metro, various attributes and benefits of Metro, commuting needs, and demographics. Other County information (such as survey results from the U-Link outreach surveys) and 2012 Sound Transit survey information will be analyzed for the report.

Post-service change, because the next non-rider survey is in Fall 2017, too late for this purpose, a survey of about 250 randomly-selected non-riders will be conducted in November-December 2016. The same non-rider survey questions will be asked, plus additional questions relating to awareness of transit and impacts of the March 2016 changes.

Schedule and Budget (page 6)

Here is the schedule provided in the Work Plan:

- **January 2016** – Notice to proceed with consultant to perform the on-board surveys
- **January 2016** – Submit work plan to the King County Council
- **February-March 2016** – Conduct on-board surveys prior to the service changes
- **October-November 2016** – Formal analysis of ridership from the March-September service period and ridership from before the service changes
- **November-December 2016** – Conduct on-board surveys after the service changes
- **November-December 2016** – Conduct residential assessment
- **January-March 2017** – Prepare and analyze report

- **March 2017** – Deliver report to the King County Council

The budget is estimated at \$117,000 for consultant work, primarily covered in the 2015-2016 transit operating budget for customer research but possibly including a 2017-2018 budget request.

ANALYSIS

Adoption of Proposed Motion 2016-0093 will approve the work plan for assessing ridership impacts and customer response to the University Link bus integration. The Work Plan identifies pre-University Link and post-implementation actions to assess ridership using data from the AVL, APC, and ORCA systems, to conduct on-board surveys of customers, and to survey non-rider residents of the service change area.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Proposed Motion 2016-0093 (and its attachments)
2. Transmittal Letter

INVITED

- Victor Obeso, Deputy General Manager Planning and Customer Service, King County Transit Division
- Marty Minkoff, Acting Manager Service Development, King County Transit Division
- Rob Coughlin, Project/Program Manager, King County Transit Division