



King County

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February 4, 2025

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Zahilay:

This letter transmits a proposed Ordinance that recommends service changes to the King County Metro (Metro) bus system in east King County. If adopted, the proposed Ordinance would add eight new routes, revise 16 routes, and remove 20 routes to align the bus service with the eight existing and four future 2 Line stations. The full 2 Line Link light rail will operate service between Chinatown-International District Station and Downtown Redmond Station.

This proposal is centered on expanding service, adding approximately 160,000 annual service hours to the transit system, improving connections to 12 new Link stations, and improving mobility for priority populations, as defined by Metro's Mobility Framework, including Black, Indigenous and other people of color, people with low- or no-income, people with disabilities, refugees and immigrants, and diverse language speakers. The proposed network was developed with extensive community engagement and includes the following benefits:

- Increased service in east King County
 - More frequent service on eight routes
 - More than 2,700 weekday added trips
 - More than 550 weekend added trips
 - Later night service on four routes
 - New weekend service on five routes
- Improved access to frequent transit for approximately 24,000 people residing in Equity Priority Areas and more than 30,000 people total
- Improved connections to local and regional destinations
 - 23 of 24 project area routes connect to at least one light rail station
 - Four routes that create new connections between cities or to Link light rail

- Faster regional connections for Bellevue, Redmond, Issaquah, Renton, and other cities
- Greater overall transit system reliability with shorter and streamlined routes, and connections to reliable Link service

The added service hours in this project reflect the full restoration of all service hours suspended from 2020 to 2023 on project area routes and an additional investment to reinstate hours reduced during the pandemic to address congestion levels. This is consistent with Metro's Service Recovery Plan adopted by Council in 2023, which stated that "Metro will work with community and use policies to bring back hours in ways that meet emerging ridership needs and build towards the Metro Connects vision." Metro is making minor administrative changes consistent with this proposed Ordinance in spring 2025 to serve two new Link light rail stations as they open. Larger-scale changes and service growth is planned to begin in fall 2025. The balance of remaining changes and restorations would take place at subsequent service changes after the opening of the full Link light rail 2 Line and as Metro's workforce allows.

Informed by King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan and Metro's Mobility Framework, the East Link Connections Mobility Project proposed service changes within pandemic public health constraints using a collaborative process centered on equity, public input, and service design best practices. Outreach and engagement prioritized historically excluded voices in transit decisions. Engagement included two distinct time periods, Phases 1-3 in 2021-2022 and Phase 4 in 2024, but are presented together in one Public Engagement Report.

The proposed changes are consistent with Metro's Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2021-2031, and Metro Service Guidelines, as they support:

- investing upstream where needs are greatest.
- reducing the demand for single-occupant and high emissions transportation modes.
- improving mobility for historically disadvantaged populations.
- delivering integrated service that responds to changes in community needs and the transit network, such as connections to high-capacity transit services.
- creating convenient opportunities for customers to transfer between services.

Thank you for your consideration. If approved, this proposed Ordinance would improve mobility and transportation choices for King County residents with the opening of Sound Transit's 2 Line Link light rail expansion.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Katie Chalmers, Managing Director, Service Development, Metro Transit Department, at 206-477-5869.

The Honorable Girmay Zahilay

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Badda". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, circular flourish at the end.

for

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff, King County Council

Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Penny Lipsou, Council Relations Director, Office of the Executive

Michelle Allison, General Manager, Metro Transit Department

Christina O'Claire, Director, Mobility Division, Metro Transit Department