October 31, 2019

The Honorable Rod Dembowski

Chair, King County Council

Room 1200

C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Dembowski:

As required by Ordinance 17143, I am transmitting to the King County Council the *King County Metro Transit 2019 System Evaluation*. Metro’s ridership continues to grow, and this report identifies a need for the transit system to grow by 11 percent in order to reduce crowding, improve reliability, and meet target service levels on corridors throughout King County.

Metro has invested approximately 120,000 annual service hours this year. About 25,000 of these hours went directly to reduce crowding, improve reliability, and grow service, in line with Metro’s approved budget. The remaining hours included substantial investment associated with the end of joint operations in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel and the permanent closure of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and meeting other obligations, including funding service consistent with Metro’s Community Mobility Contract with the City of Seattle. Metro’s investments this first year of the 2019-2020 biennium bring total investments over the biennium to more than 300,000 hours, not including hours invested by partners.

This year’s system evaluation report identifies a system-wide need for 455,150 more annual service hours—equivalent to 11 percent of Metro’s current system size of 4.1 million annual service hours. As Metro expands their scope of operations and becomes a mobility agency, additional service hours and other innovative initiatives will help the organization meet the growing and changing transportation needs of the county. Of the needs identified in the report, 35,050 hours are needed to relieve crowding and improve reliability, and 420,100 are needed for service growth on major transit corridors. The report is based on the Service Guidelines, which help Metro plan and manage the transit system and allow the public to see the basis of proposals to expand, reduce, or revise service. The 2019 report includes analysis of Metro’s system from Fall 2018 through Spring 2019.

Ordinance 17597, which amended Ordinance 17143 that adopted Metro’s *Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021,* requires that this report be transmitted by October 31 of each year to the Regional Transit Committee for consideration. It reads in part:

*“SECTION 1. Ordinance 17143, Section 5 is hereby amended to read as follows:*

*Beginning with a baseline report for 2012 and then annually thereafter through the duration of the plan, the executive is directed to transmit to the council, for acceptance by motion, an annual service guidelines report of Metro’s transit system…”*

*“A. For the period of the report, the service guidelines report shall include:*

*1. The corridor analysis to determine the Metro All-Day and Peak Network with a summary of resulting scores and assigned service levels as determined by the King County Metro Service Guidelines (Service Guidelines);*

*2. The results of the analysis including a list of corridors above and below their target service levels and the estimated number of service hours necessary to meet the needs of corridors under their target service level;*

*3. The performance of transit services by route and any changes in the Service Guidelines thresholds since the previous reporting period, using the performance measures identified in Chapter III of the Strategic Plan and in the Service Guidelines;*

*4. A list of transit service changes made to routes and corridors of the network since the last reporting period;*

*5. The network and rider connectivity associated with transit services delivered by other providers; and*

*6. A list of potential changes, if any, to the Strategic Plan and Service Guidelines to better meet their policy intent.”*

In addition to fixed-route service, this report includes other modes of transportation. Looking to the future, Metro is also beginning to examine how best to measure new, innovative mobility solutions. These efforts will help determine which products provide the best and most efficient service where it is needed and for those who need it. This report responds to the requirement in Motion 13736 for Metro to provide an annual progress report on the King County Metro Transit Five-Year Implementation Plan for Alternatives to Traditional Transit Service Delivery. It includes performance data for those pilot services deployed by Metro’s Alternative Services programs that were in the evaluation stage during the September 2018 to March 2019 service period. The Community Connection and Alternative Services programs work with local governments and community partners to develop innovative and cost-efficient transportation solutions in areas of King County that do not have the infrastructure, density, or land use to support regular, fixed-route bus service.

METRO CONNECTS, Metro’s long-range plan, took a bold step in defining the region’s future public transit needs and charting a path to achieve this monumental growth. Metro will need approximately two million additional service hours to achieve the METRO CONNECTS vision, which is aligned with the region’s *Transportation 2040* plan and integrated with Sound Transit’s expansion plans. This system evaluation contains the second progress report and includes Metro’s first evaluation of performance metrics associated with METRO CONNECTS.

Metro included King County Water Taxi services in the System Evaluation to comply with Ordinance 18413. Metro evaluated Water Taxi services against the criteria set in the Service Guidelines, including measures of crowding, reliability, productivity, and the peak-only route analysis. Metro also included select service statistics.

The *King County Metro Transit 2018 System Evaluation* shows progress toward the goals laid out in Metro’s Strategic Plan. These eight goals concern safety, health and human potential, economic growth, environmental sustainability, service excellence, financial stewardship, public engagement and transparency, and quality workforce. By identifying the resources needed to meet target service levels in all transit corridors, this report helps illustrate how Metro delivers efficient, effective, and equitable services that enable King County residents to access opportunities and help them achieve their full potential.

The report also shows how the Metro system supports goals expressed in the King County Strategic Plan concerning mobility, safety and justice, health and human services, economic vitality, accessible and affordable housing, healthy environment, and efficient and accountable government. The assignment of service levels based on low-income and minority demographics and ridership demonstrates a higher commitment to those corridors where more people depend on public transportation. This effort is aligned with the fair and just principle of the King County Strategic Plan and the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan.

This report supports the objectives and strategies of the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan, particularly those related to the Transportation and Land Use goal. The report illustrates how Metro is encouraging transit use and reducing the need for driving by investing resources where the need is greatest and improving the reliability and efficiency of service.

This evaluation supports the 2016-2022 Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan by increasing Metro’s capacity to provide systemic and equitable services by delivering more transit service options to more places in King County.  This evaluation is also important in achieving the goals of the King County Strategic Climate Action Plan by operating services to reduce transportation emissions, increase reliability and efficiency of transit options and expand the use of transit in general.

It is estimated that this report required 350 staff hours to produce, costing approximately $20,300. The estimated printing cost for this report is $500.

Thank you for your consideration of this motion. This report will help King County residents see how Metro is making the best use of the County’s transit resources to deliver high-quality services that get people where they want to go—and what more Metro must do to meet current and future public transportation needs.

If you have any questions, please contact Christina O’Claire, Mobility Division Director for King County Metro Transit, at 206-477-5801 or christina.oclaire@kingcounty.gov.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

Enclosures

cc:

King County Councilmembers

                                ATTN:    Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

                Rob Gannon, General Manager, Metro Transit Department (MTD)

                Christina O’Claire, Director, Mobility Division, MTD

                Bill Bryant, Managing Director, Service Development, MTD

                Katie Chalmers, Supervisor, Service Planning, MTD