

RapidRide I Line Locally Preferred Alternative Equity Impact Review

A supplemental document to the
RapidRide I Line Locally Preferred
Alternative Report

King County Metro Transit

March 2020

Contents

Introduction	3
LPA Equity Impact Review.....	3
Phase 1: Scope. Identify who will be affected.....	4
Identify how the decision will affect priority populations.....	4
Identify stakeholders	4
Phase 2: Assess equity and community context.....	9
Identify community priorities	9
Determinants of equity	12
Potential to improve known disparities	13
Potential unintended equity-related outcomes	13
Phase 3: Analysis and decision process.	14
How the decision affects community priorities	14
Potential community burdens or benefits from the decision	14
Previous decisions influence.....	15
Decisions made for equitable outcomes	16
Phase 4: Implement. Staying connected to the community	16
How the decision is communicated and engagement with affected communities.....	16
Advancing pro-equity opportunities.....	17
Evaluation of intended outcomes	17
Phase 5: Ongoing Learning. Listen and co-learn with communities	18
Did the decision reflect community priorities?.....	18
How project elements can change as community priorities shift & communicating progress to stakeholders	18
Conclusion.....	18

Introduction

The RapidRide I Line Project will provide a high-quality bus rapid transit service connecting Renton, Kent, and Auburn, Washington. It will increase transit speed, reliability, and passenger carrying capacity, connect to other high-capacity transit services, and accommodate future population and employment growth.

The RapidRide I Line will be a 17-mile north-south BRT service that travels between the Renton Transit Center and the Auburn Transit Center via the Kent Transit Center, connecting three of the largest suburban cities in South King County: Renton, Kent, and Auburn. All three communities include regionally designated Growth Centers, and include the locally identified centers of East Hill, Panther Lake, and Benson. The corridor includes multiple areas of high concentrations of population and employment. Connections to other regional high-capacity transit such as RapidRide F Line, Sounder Commuter Rail, and future Metro and Sound Transit BRT will provide greater access to regional destinations.

This RapidRide I Line Locally Preferred Alternative Equity Impact Review supplements the RapidRide I Line Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) Report. The LPA Report details the process used to establish the LPA including technical analysis, community engagement, and guiding policy. The LPA Report is a key milestone set forth in the Federal Transit Administration's Capital Investment Grant Small Starts funding program. The project is seeking a federal grant through this program for elements of the RapidRide I Line. The LPA Report establishes the alignment and station locations and provides project goals related to branding, passenger amenities, speed & reliability improvements, and operational characteristics.

This document expands upon the LPA Report specifically to detail how the policies and goals laid out in the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan were applied in the LPA decision making process.

LPA Equity Impact Review

The Metro project team established the RapidRide I Line LPA with equity at the forefront of the decision making process. Starting from the vision documented in METRO CONNECTS, we have applied the principals of the Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan throughout the planning and design phases to date and will continue to apply these principals moving from the LPA into further design, implementation and operational phases. This document details the decision process to establish the LPA. The alignment and vision for the corridor set in the King County Council adopted METRO CONNECTS serves as the baseline for our decision making process.

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Phase 1: Scope. Identify who will be affected.

Identify how the decision will affect priority populations

The decisions we make regarding the alignment and station locations impacts who within the community has the greatest benefit from the increase in fast, frequent, reliable transit options. Improved transit service to existing and future employment areas will enhance the ability of transit-dependent residents to access jobs and services along the corridor. An important determinant of the need for the RapidRide I Line is the existing and expected future demographics of the communities it serves.

South King County communities have some of the highest proportions of low-income and people of color populations in King County. Metro's analysis of Routes 169 and 180 shows that these routes serve higher proportions of low-income and people of color areas than the Metro system as a whole. Route 180 has the highest proportion of ORCA LIFT riders within the system (ORCA LIFT is Metro's reduced-fare program for low income households).

As the region continues to grow, high housing prices in Seattle are pushing low-income populations to more affordable South King County.

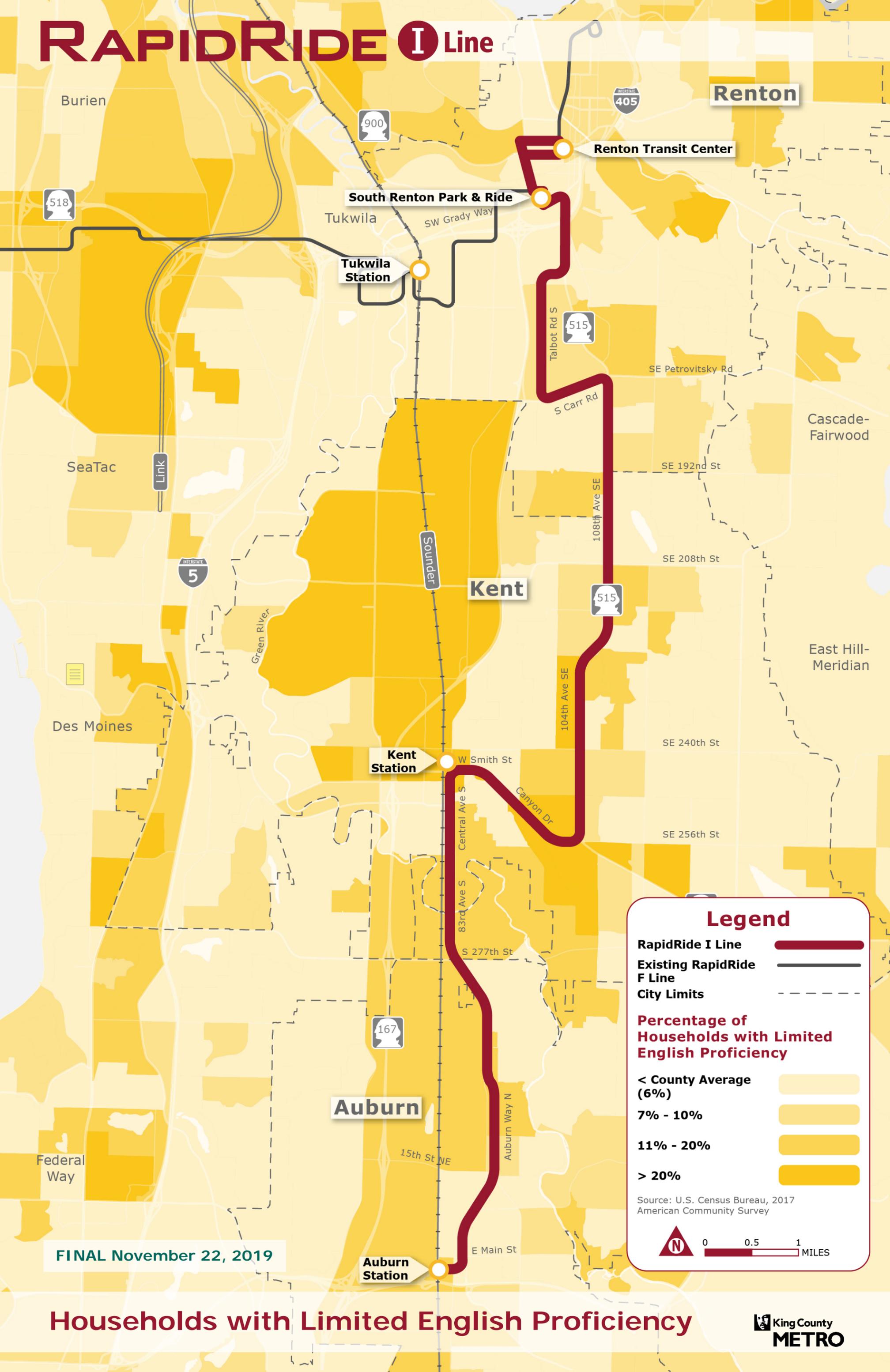
As previously stated, the corridor includes multiple areas of high population and job density; the communities surrounding this corridor are some of the most racially, culturally, linguistically and economically diverse in the region. Core to King County's equity work and as explained in King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, Metro/we understand the we must focus on addressing the systemic inequities faced by these communities, particularly as a result of past and current government decisionmaking.

This project will increase mobility with the potential for long term benefits as reliable transit options widen the choices for community members traveling throughout the project area.

Identify stakeholders

The help identify stakeholders, project team used the technical analysis of project area demographics, identified community assets, and had discussions with community based organizations and local jurisdictions We prioritized the populations identified in King County's Equity & Social Justice Strategic Plan: people of color, low-income people, and people with limited English proficiency. The corridor serves areas with higher proportions of these population groups than King County as a whole. The community engagement summary that accompanies this document details the approach and outcomes of our community engagement efforts. We focused engagement to prioritize understanding the needs of these historically underserved populations to influence the decision making process.

RAPIDRIDE I Line



Legend

- RapidRide I Line** (Dark red line)
- Existing RapidRide F Line** (Black line)
- City Limits** (Dashed line)

Percentage of Households with Limited English Proficiency

- < County Average (6%) (Light yellow)
- 7% - 10% (Light orange)
- 11% - 20% (Medium orange)
- > 20% (Dark orange)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

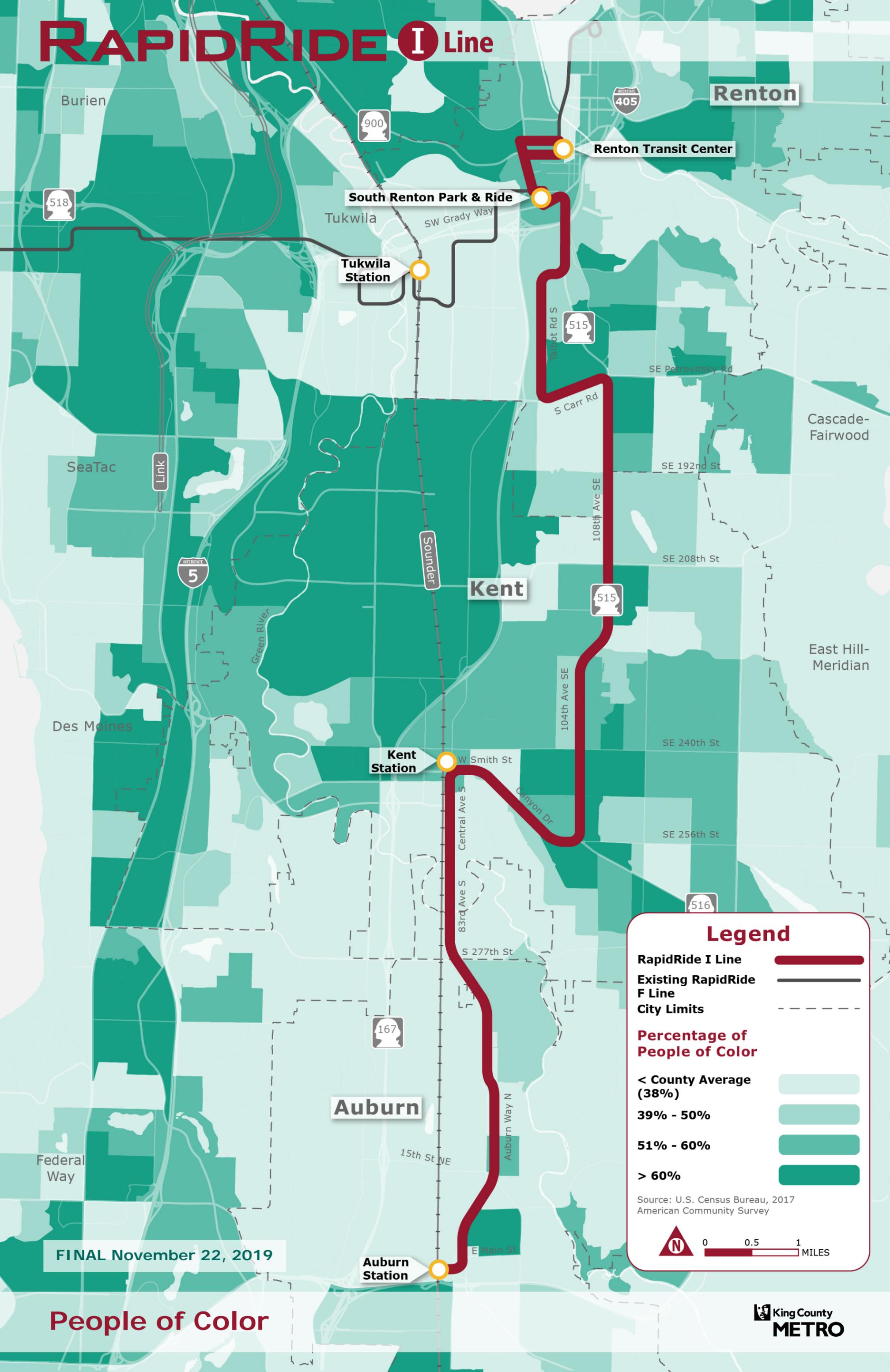
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FINAL November 22, 2019

Households with Limited English Proficiency



RAPIDRIDE I Line



Legend

- RapidRide I Line**
- Existing RapidRide F Line**
- City Limits**

Percentage of People of Color

- < County Average (38%)
- 39% - 50%
- 51% - 60%
- > 60%

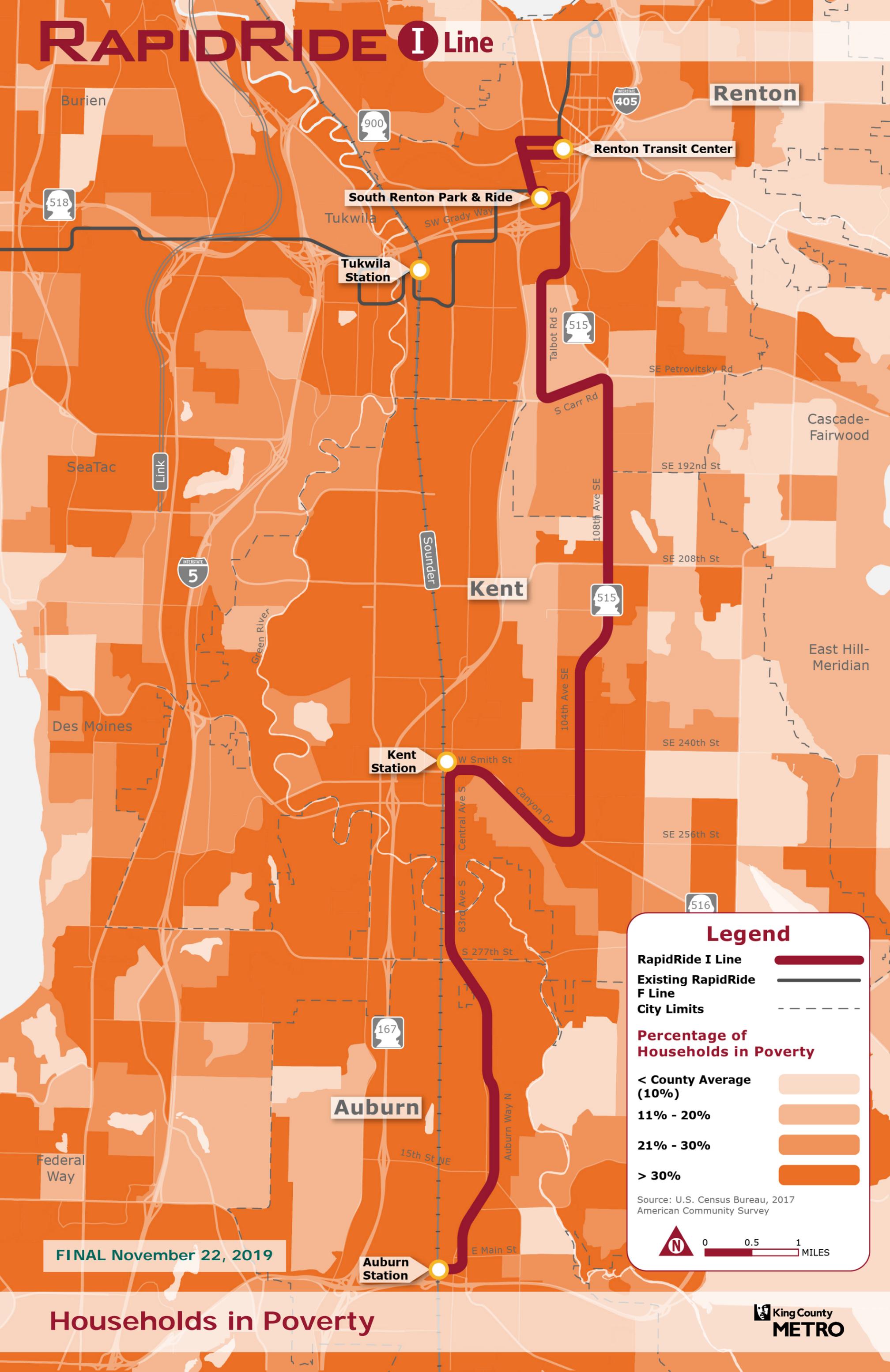
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

0 0.5 1 MILES

FINAL November 22, 2019

People of Color

RAPIDRIDE I Line



FINAL November 22, 2019

Legend

- RapidRide I Line
- Existing RapidRide F Line
- City Limits

Percentage of Households in Poverty

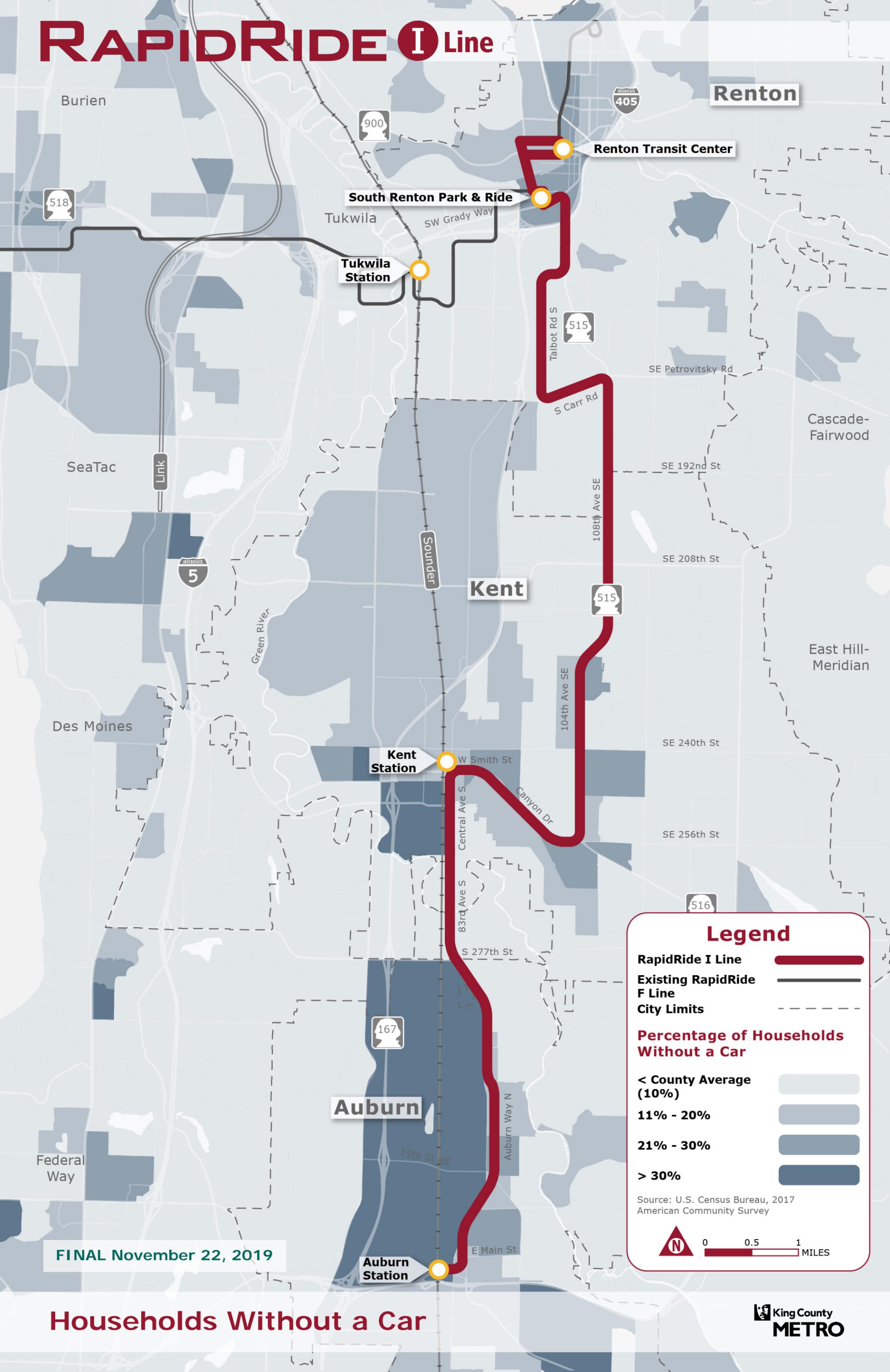
- < County Average (10%)
- 11% - 20%
- 21% - 30%
- > 30%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

0 0.5 1 MILES

Households in Poverty

RAPIDRIDE I Line



Legend

- RapidRide I Line** (Dark red line)
- Existing RapidRide F Line** (Black line)
- City Limits** (Dashed line)

Percentage of Households Without a Car

- < County Average (10%) (Lightest blue)
- 11% - 20% (Light blue)
- 21% - 30% (Medium blue)
- > 30% (Darkest blue)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 American Community Survey

0 0.5 1 MILES

FINAL November 22, 2019

Households Without a Car

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Phase 2: Assess equity and community context.

Identify community priorities

Understanding the community's priorities was a key goal of the extensive community engagement work as documented in the attached Community Engagement Summary report. During the first phase of community engagement we focused on introducing the project to community members and gathering feedback on needs and priorities for transit service.

In order to meet the needs of and hear from priority populations, Metro designed an inclusive engagement process that favored in-person and in-language engagement such as the Mobility Board, tabling, one-on-one interactions, and briefings.

Community members and stakeholders who participated in the first phase of engagement overwhelmingly support RapidRide expansion. A few key themes emerged from the survey, stakeholder interviews, and Mobility Board meetings.

- Support for faster, more reliable, more frequent bus service
- Interest in more bus service throughout the day, into the evening, and on weekends
- Desire for a range of transit options including RapidRide service and more flexible options that meet the needs of the communities served
- Service to community amenities and services such as shopping centers, transit centers, medical centers, schools, and residential areas
- A need to continue leading with equity and prioritize communities who have been historically underserved.

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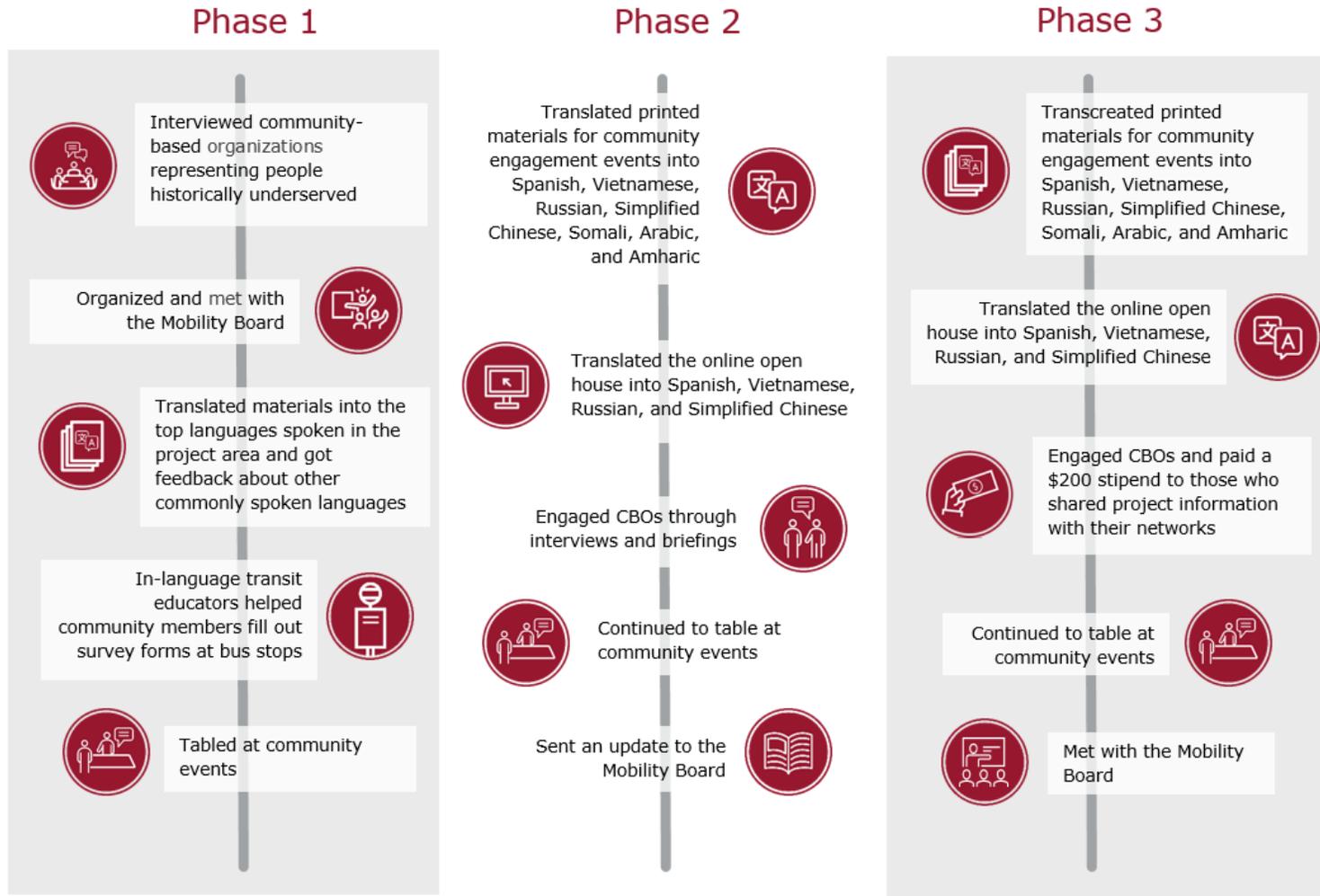


Figure 1: Inclusive Engagement Process

Mobility Board

The project team designed the first set of Mobility Board workshops to introduce members to the project, provide an overview of service planning, and tradeoffs, share feedback from stakeholder interviews and the survey, and encourage members to provide input on needs and potential solutions. Mobility Board members participated in two exercises to first, identify needs and priorities, and then help identify potential solutions while discussing tradeoffs. Overall, Mobility Board members support Metro’s efforts to enhance transit service in the area.

The following key themes emerged from their feedback:

- Provide a range of transit options to meet the diverse needs of these communities
- Offer more frequent service operating later, earlier, and on weekends
- Serve areas that are currently hard to access, including providing more east-west connections
- Move station locations closer to destinations
- Consider shorter, more frequent routes
- Prioritize serving schools, community and senior centers, childcare, residential areas—especially low-income housing, and shopping centers. Participants asked Metro to think about providing late night service to places with shift workers, including the Muckleshoot Casino and manufacturing business in the Renton Industrial Valley
- Prioritize equity focus areas.

The diverse group of 27 Mobility Board members represent a range of mobility needs, rider types, and familiarity with the project area.

- Members include native English, Somali, and Spanish speakers, and bilingual speakers who speak Somali, French, Spanish, Arabic, or Farsi.
- They represent many rider types, including seniors, students, and people with disabilities.
- Board members live and/or work in Renton, Kent, or Auburn. Some are affiliated with surrounding areas such as Covington, Burien, Tukwila, Seattle, and SeaTac.

Stakeholder interviews

Interviewees shared a variety of feedback about how people in their communities use transit, barriers to using transit, opportunities to encourage people to ride the bus, and strategies to better engage people in transit planning. Several key themes emerged.

- Interviewees agreed on the importance of listening to people. Several people said their community members are concerned public outreach efforts “check a box” and do not actively engage the community in decision making. This model of public involvement dissuades them from engaging.
- Most interviewees agreed that meeting people where they already are is more effective than asking them to attend a special meeting.

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- Many interviewees had heard of RapidRide, but several interviewees said that many community members that they serve are unfamiliar with RapidRide.
- Transit transfers are confusing to navigate, especially for people who don't speak English as a first language or have visual challenges.
- People lack information about how to use transit.
- Transit takes too much time.
- Service schedules need to consider shift worker needs.

The project team interviewed 18 stakeholders from community-based organizations representing various historically underrepresented communities.



Determinants of equity

The RapidRide I Line can influence many of the determinants of equity identified by King County. The key determinant of equity influenced by alignment setting and station locations for the RapidRide I Line impact community access to the transportation network. Proximity to fast, frequent, reliable transit service can increase mobility, providing a higher level of transit access in the area relative to today's conditions. Secondly, the project can influence many other determinants as an increased in transportation mobility can provide better access to jobs, healthcare, food, childcare, education, parks, and other community assets as well as foster community development through an increase in neighborhood safety and social cohesion,

Potential to improve known disparities

The METRO CONNECTS identified alignment for the RapidRide I Line is currently served by Metro routes 180 and 169, which have lower levels of service, passenger amenities, and transit preferential treatments than the RapidRide I Line would include. Fast, frequent, and reliable transit service in this corridor would provide an increase in mobility for priority populations in the study area. Placing RapidRide stations near community assets such as employment, transportation, and healthcare hubs increases access.

Potential unintended equity-related outcomes

Setting the alignment and station locations must balance the needs along differing pathways and associated key destinations. As we determine these project elements, access to some destinations for certain equity populations may be reduced. This would be due to further walk distances or poor pedestrian infrastructure between the determined alignment and station locations with the desired destination. There are areas within the project area that have incomplete pedestrian facilities; the decision to site a station may have an impact to pedestrian access or comfort for populations as a result of the decision. The project may spur additional changes to the built environment such as new development or zoning changes to promote transit oriented development. We will continue to assess these potential changes, with a goal to promote access and benefits to existing communities to reduce risk of displacement.

Phase 3: Analysis and decision process.

The LPA included two key analysis and decision processes: identifying the alignment and station locations. The alignment decision process assessed the METRO CONNECTS alignment for the RapidRide corridor relative to existing transit routing in the area as well as other adjacent pathways. The analysis included community priorities and needs as well as technical information such as existing ridership, transit travel times, and proximity to community assets and priority populations. The station placement decision process included technical considerations such as existing ridership, transit connection points, proximity to community assets, the built environment, as well as project goals of increased speed and reliability from serving fewer stops than traditional transit service.

How the decision affects community priorities

Routing alternatives and station locations will impact access for priority populations as well as access to community assets. Access for priority populations and transit access to community assets were key priorities identified through the engagement process. Additionally, the community prioritized station placement that would increase the speed and reliability of transit service along the corridor. The community engagement effort included discussions with community based organizations and the formation of a mobility board representing diverse views and populations throughout the area to guide the decision process. This process is documented in the community engagement summary.

Potential community burdens or benefits from the decision

ALIGNMENT DECISION PROCESS

As detailed in the LPA Report, the major routing change to the alignment away from the METRO CONNECTS vision was the pathway between Kent Transit Center and the Kent East Hill neighborhood. The two pathways serve differing populations and community assets, with technical differences such as total running time and potential ridership.

In deciding the RapidRide I Line alignment, prioritization of access for priority populations and to community assets was favored over shorter travel times between Kent Transit Center and Renton. The pathway chosen, using Canyon Drive, serves a higher proportion of existing riders from areas with higher proportions of priority populations as well as serving more identified community assets.

This decision will benefit riders throughout the project area in accessing community assets in this area and priority populations that live along the chosen alignment. Priority populations residing

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outside the area but traveling through or to (such as traveling from Renton to Auburn) will have a burden of longer travel times due to this decision. The benefits to priority populations in the area of the routing alternatives and the additional access to community assets is expected to increase total ridership and mobility benefits for equity populations in the project area.

STATION LOCATION DECISION PROCESS

Station placement was developed through an iterative process that included an initial screening based on daily ridership at each station, consideration of community assets and equity focus areas, and connections to existing transit. Existing zones with higher ridership levels, proximity to community assets and equity population focus areas, and transit connections became the baseline stations for determining the remaining network. At each stage, the RapidRide I Line stations were evaluated for station spacing, travel time, community priorities, jurisdictional priorities, and walking conditions.

Efforts to ensure inclusion of the entire community, including those who have historically been underrepresented, were incorporated throughout this process. Station placement consideration focuses on ensuring that overall trip length is not disproportionately extended for priority communities. In addition, we consider the equity impacts of right-of-way acquisition, the proximity of car-free households, and proximity of community assets to stations along the corridor.

The project team incorporated equity considerations through a multi-stage process. First, in developing zone placement to desired spacing standards, no zone was removed from an area serving community assets identified through engagement efforts as a priority for equity populations or an area which received substantial interest during community engagement. Engagement results were reviewed throughout the process to ensure station placement could best meet the needs of the community.

RapidRide stations are typically placed with more distance between stations relative to regular Metro bus service, and some riders may experience longer distances to access stations relative to existing local service. The process to identify station locations may burden riders who, as a result of station location, would have greater walk distances over the course of a trip, even as overall travel times for the same riders might improve due to faster bus speeds and greater service frequency. We engaged with priority populations throughout the decision making process that may be burdened by longer walk times in making decisions of where stations should be located.

Previous decisions influence

The King County Council-Adopted METRO CONNECTS document identifies the RapidRide I Line corridor as part of the future network of high capacity transit lines throughout King County. The decisions of this LPA are predicated on the decisions included in that document. In developing its

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2019-20 CIP proposal, which recommended an initial order of implementation for new RapidRide lines, King County Metro implemented the equity guidance in the County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan. The I Line was recommended for early implementation because the project area has a higher proportion of priority populations than the King County average, as well as the potential for relatively high ridership, speed and reliability improvement, and connections to the regional high capacity transit network.

Decisions made for equitable outcomes

The decisions to serve equity priority populations through the alignment setting and station locating process aligns with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan. This does not overburden the anticipated capital or operating costs for the project and provides greater opportunities for equity priority populations, today and into the future.

Phase 4: Implement. Staying connected to the community

How the decision is communicated and engagement with affected communities

During the third phase of community engagement in fall 2019, Metro focused on presenting the preferred RapidRide concept developed using community input, including I Line route and station locations. We also shared information and asked for input on roadway and intersection improvements to help buses move faster and stay on-schedule and ways to make it easier to get to the bus. We continued building relationships with community based organizations (CBOs) representing people who are historically underserved. We worked closely with Metro's Renton-Kent-Auburn Area Mobility Plan team to share proposed service changes and explain how they relate to upcoming I Line service. Community engagement consisted of:

CBO conversations: We reached out to CBOs that engaged in previous phases to continue building relationships and encouraged their involvement in sharing and engaging in upcoming activities.

In-person engagement: Metro hosted informational events and presented to community partners and groups to share project information, including the preferred I Line concept.

Outreach on bus routes 169 and 180: Project team members conducted on-board bus outreach on routes 169 and 180 to inform community members about the project and encourage online open house participation.

City council presentations: Metro met with city councils, jurisdictions, and other groups to provide project updates and share community feedback.

Online open house: Metro created an online open house in multiple languages to share information and gather input on the preferred concept.

Area Mobility Plan (AMP) Mobility Board meeting: The Area Mobility Board was made up of community members who live, work and travel within Renton, Kent, and Auburn. The Area Mobility Board advised Metro on I Line’s potential alignment and service changes and at the final AMP meeting in November gave their unanimous support to the preferred concept. A full summary of the AMP’s Mobility Board is included with materials for that project.

Advancing pro-equity opportunities

For existing contracting for the project, and in the next phases of the project (final design and construction) we anchor to existing King County pro-equity policy.

Contracting with Small Business Enterprise - SBE Certified Business – King County has established a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) program in accordance with regulations of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT). The program purpose is to ensure that DBEs have an equal opportunity to participate in USDOT assisted contracts.

DBEs are small businesses owned by socially and economically disadvantaged individuals. King County encourages its contractors to maximize the amount of work opportunities available to DBE firms. The County establishes a triennial (three-year) goal for DBE participation levels on its federally funded contracts, and monitors the performance of contractors across all eligible construction, design, and service contracts.

Community Workforce Agreement (CWA) - In addition to the SBE goal the project contracting will work to include CWA, a comprehensive pre-hire collective bargaining agreement between King County and labor unions that sets the basic terms and conditions of employment for public works construction projects. This process identifies construction projects that can include priority hire requirements to prioritize workers within priority communities and includes workforce reporting requirements.

Evaluation of intended outcomes

The RapidRide program monitors community priorities and system performance through regular customer satisfaction surveys once a Line is open. These surveys help us understand ongoing needs for the existing RapidRide network. The RapidRide I Line, upon completion of the capital elements and opening of service, will be evaluated in this ongoing process. This body of work evaluates shifting priorities and needs over many years and can identify potential improvements within the network. In addition, King County Metro’s System Evaluation Report and Service

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Guidelines provide a regular assessment of the performance of system elements like the I Line, and guidance on how to adjust when performance isn't meeting our standards.

Phase 5: Ongoing Learning. Listen and co-learn with communities

Did the decision reflect community priorities?

Metro led an extensive community engagement effort to understand the needs and priorities of the community. This included utilizing the Renton-Kent-Auburn Area Mobility Board to guide the decision making for the alignment. This level of engagement was crucial due to the level of built capital investment in the area and the financial and schedule impacts if these elements were to be changed.

How project elements can change as community priorities shift & communicating progress to stakeholders

Metro conducts regular engagement throughout communities that will be served by the RapidRide I Line such as the Rider/Non Rider Survey. In addition to community engagement, information from local jurisdictional partners and other partner agencies will continue to shape service and investment needs for the RapidRide I Line. The RapidRide program takes these shifting needs into account in managing existing lines. Changes to the existing RapidRide network can respond to these needs, and would include a robust engagement process to undertake changes to the existing service.

The robust capital investment to establish the RapidRide I Line will include substantial, lasting changes to the built environment. These investments are expected to establish a high level of performance with the large capital investment, and as a result substantial changes to the capital element investments will be less nimble than service adjustments. As a result, the decisions on alignment and station locations included the robust engagement and analysis process are documented here to ensure these lasting investments match community, technical, and equity priorities.

Conclusion

The RapidRide I Line planning and design process has been led with equity. The decisions on alignment as well as station locations to define the LPA are consistent with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan where priority population needs and priorities were solicited and influenced the decision making process. The engagement approach included a focus on

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community based organizations and together with the Renton-Kent-Auburn Area Mobility Plan team, developed a new way to engage with the community through the project mobility board. This created new ways to learn priorities, vet ideas, and garner valuable feedback from community members that have been historically underrepresented in the decision making process.