



King County

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

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June 26, 2020

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

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits a proposed ordinance that would, if enacted, approve a transit funding agreement between King County Metro, Pierce Transit, and the City of Auburn. Approval of this proposed legislation allows for the continued operation of the Route 497 between the Lakeland Hills neighborhood of Auburn and the Auburn Sounder Station.

In November 2008, King County, Pierce Transit, and the City of Auburn signed a Transit Service Financial Agreement to provide commute alternatives to Pierce County residents who work in King County. As a result of this agreement, Pierce Transit began service of Route 497, which provides a connection between the Lakeland Hills neighborhood of Auburn and Auburn Station during peak periods. Route 497 is the only existing transit service in the Lakeland Hills neighborhood of Auburn. Costs for the service are currently divided equally between the City of Auburn, Pierce Transit, and King County Metro.

Since 2008, Metro, Pierce Transit, and the City of Auburn have signed five amendments to the Transit Service Financial Agreement to maintain Route 497, and to extend the terms of the agreement to September of 2020. Per the agreement, the term of the existing agreement cannot be extended any further. This proposed ordinance approves a new transit funding agreement to enable the continuation of service beyond September 2020.

The proposed ordinance extends service beyond September 2020 and is based on consistent ridership growth and a strong three-way partnership. Ridership has grown 16 percent per year since initial implementation, and the route attracts more rides per platform hour than many other Metro peak-only routes outside downtown Seattle. This route is operated by Pierce Transit and its performance is consistent with service which would not be targeted for reductions per the King County Metro Service Guidelines. Metro uses the Service Guidelines, adopted by the King County Council in 2011 and updated in 2015, to evaluate, design and modify transit service.

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The proposed Transit Funding Agreement maintains equal cost sharing between King County, Pierce Transit and the City of Auburn. The cost to Metro in 2021-22 would be approximately \$178,000 per year, or \$360,000 for the biennium. Strong ridership, together with the leveraged partner investment, ensures high cost effectiveness of Metro's contribution.

Route 497 was temporarily discontinued from April 6th to May 26th of this year in response to COVID-19. Route 497 will operate at a reduced service level matching Sounder service from May 26th until Sound Transit fully restores Sounder service.

Continuation of Route 497 aligns with the King County Strategic Plan mobility goal and its objective of delivering a safe, reliable and seamless network of transportation options to get people and goods where they need to go, when they need to get there. Additionally, implementing the agreement supports King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan, as maintaining transit service access for King County residents and employees decreases the need for single-occupant vehicle travel, resulting in the reduction of countywide greenhouse gas emissions.

The agreement supports the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan's Pro-Equity Agenda by expanding access to transportation and affordable housing that connects people to job centers and employment opportunities as well as providing more frequent service that connects disadvantaged communities to major transit hubs by partnering with transportation agencies to integrate service.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed ordinance. If your staff have any questions, please contact Bill Bryant, Managing Director of Service Development, Mobility Division, King County Metro Transit Department, at 206-477-6456 or bill.bryant@kingcounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers
ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff
Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council
Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive
Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive
Rob Gannon, General Manager, Metro Transit Department
Chris O'Claire, Director, Mobility Division, Metro Transit Department
Bill Bryant, Managing Director, Service Development, Metro Transit Department