



February 5, 2021

Terry White, General Manager
King County Metro Transit
201 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: SDOT Support for proposed North Link Connections Mobility Project

Dear Mr. White,

This letter is to express support from the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) for the proposed North Link Connections Mobility Project service changes (“North Link”) in King County. SDOT participated in the project Partner Review Board, King County Metro’s service planning process and outreach to the community. We are proud to support Metro’s efforts in this new proposed service network.

New Service Network – SDOT is excited to see the hard work that King County Metro put into revising and reimagining the bus network given the addition of the fast travel times, capacity, and reliability brought by the Northgate Link Extension. This was a regional effort that included SDOT, Community Transit, and Sound Transit Link and bus service to create a holistic network that improves travel for not only Seattle residents but riders throughout King County and the region.

The proposed network provides better connections to the new Link Stations, including enhanced east-west connections requested by the public, while reducing bus volumes across the Interstate-5 Ship Canal Bridge and into Downtown Seattle. These actions also help to reduce vehicles and congestion on some of the city’s busiest corridors. The new network also improves connections to other major employment centers within Seattle, such as the U District/University of Washington, South Lake Union, First Hill, and Seattle Children’s Hospital, creating better connections for many of the essential workers who continue to commute throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic.

With the recent voter approval of the Seattle Transportation Benefit District, SDOT will continue to be a partner in providing resources to support increased frequency on Metro’s revised bus network.

Equity and Inclusive Outreach – SDOT is encouraged to see King County Metro align with the goals set out in the County’s recently approved Mobility Framework. The Metro team thoughtfully and intentionally built this network with the needs of underserved communities in mind. The North Link Mobility Board was also well-structured to seek authentic engagement from actual riders in the community, and this partnership helped equitably co-create a bus network that improves travel for all passengers with the expansion of light rail service to Northgate. As the COVID-19 Pandemic created many changes to our travel patterns, work styles, and communication methods, Metro Community Relations staff deftly pivoted to a new world of wholly online engagement, and created new standards for live, multi-lingual, and interactive outreach. Further, their survey methods directly sought to lift the voices of priority communities, and to make sure that the proposed North Link service network furthers the travel needs of these populations.

Capital Delivery to Support Transit Operations - As asset owner and operator of the roadways within the City of Seattle, SDOT recognizes that the success of a new transit network hinges on ensuring bus service is safe and reliable for riders. SDOT is working closely with Metro, as well as with partners Sound Transit and Community Transit, to design and deliver capital improvements to support the successful start of a revised bus network this Fall.

These improvements include signal upgrades, changes to roadway channelization, sidewalk and bus stop enhancements, pavement improvements where buses operate, establishment and maintenance of layover zones, and better bicycle facilities at new Link stations and existing bus stops. This work is visible in the North Link project area, including improvements on NE 43rd St and 12th Ave NE near the U District Station, where new sidewalk, bicycle, transit layover, and paving improvements funded by SDOT will improve connections to this new station. Another partner project with Metro and Sound Transit will create new transit zones connecting bus riders to Link at Roosevelt Station, while improving pedestrian safety and bicycle connections.

Ongoing Partnership – Our partnership with Metro is an opportunity to further SDOT’s mission to enhance climate friendly and equitable transportation options for the traveling public. As light rail expands, providing a new service for residents in East King County and Snohomish County, SDOT hopes to continue to build on our relationship to support a robust regional transit system that serves the many residents that live, work, and visit the Puget Sound region.

We encourage the King County Council to adopt the proposed North Link Connections Mobility Project service changes with implementation in September 2021, as it represents progress towards delivering frequent, reliable service, and all-day transit options for residents of the region. We look forward to continuing the work with King County Metro as the project moves forward to implementation.

If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Respectfully,


Sam Zimbabwe (Feb 5, 2021 13:13 PST)

Sam Zimbabwe
Director, Seattle Department of Transportation

CC: Dow Constantine, King County Executive
Council Chair Claudia Balducci
Candida Lorenzana, Seattle Department of Transportation