



King County

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King County Executive

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March 9, 2021

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, if enacted, would enable King County Metro (Metro) to add six new routes, revise 22 routes, and replace 15 routes beginning on September 18, 2021.

The service changes reflected in the proposed Ordinance will improve mobility, while centering priority populations, and deliver integrated transit service that meets customer needs as well as responding to Sound Transit Link light rail (Link) expansion. Additional administrative changes, including restoration of suspended services, will be implemented in this area and other parts of the Metro system at the same time.

This fall, the next phase of Link expansion will begin operating between Northgate and the University of Washington Station near Husky Stadium, extending the line that currently exists between Angle Lake and Husky Stadium. With the opening of three new light rail stations in North King County, we have the opportunity to take proactive and meaningful steps towards improving mobility in an equitable and community-driven way. The I-5 corridor is a vital mobility pathway for people who live, work, and recreate in King County. New light rail represents a major investment in the area and allows Metro to leverage Sound Transit's infrastructure by investing resources across North King County. The integration of the Metro bus system with Link will advance equitable outcomes by offering Metro customers faster, frequent, and more reliable connections to jobs, education, and other opportunities.

The proposed changes include new routes that create or improve direct connections from Shoreline, Kenmore and Lake Forest Park to First Hill and South Lake Union. New east-west

services will provide all-day connections between Metro and Link, including a new frequent connection between the University District Station and Seattle Children's Hospital via North 45th Street. The proposal reduces duplication between bus routes and light rail while providing frequent connections to light rail stations. Administrative revisions referenced above will complement the changes proposed in this ordinance.

Service levels in the proposal represent what Metro can deliver without investment from the City of Seattle. However, with the recently approved Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD) Proposition 1, Seattle plans to retain some level of service investment in the project area in September 2021, subject to required Seattle City Council budget action. This planned STBD investment would be in addition to service levels described in this proposal and may improve frequency, span of service, and weekend service levels on routes in the project area. If enacted, the proposed new STBD agreement that was transmitted to the King County Council on January 2021 would provide terms for this potential service investment. Metro expects to have a preliminary list of proposed STBD-funded service investments in the project area available for review later this month.

In some cases under the emergency authority provided in King County code section 28.94.020.B.2, Metro may also continue some temporary service suspensions within the project area upon implementation, consistent with the system-wide COVID-19 recovery approach and with intent to reach full planned service levels, as described in the service change materials, in 2022. Metro will provide information on any temporary suspensions when it is available and as part of presentations to the King County Council regarding this ordinance.

In addition to the proposed service revisions, Metro, in partnership with Sound Transit and the City of Seattle, is investing in several capital improvements to support bus operations and improve the customer experience. The planned improvements include several bus stops and passenger amenities aimed at ensuring that transferring between buses and light rail is safe, easy, and convenient.

The proposed service revisions are the result of a collaborative process that centered equity, public input, and service design best practices in decision making. To develop the proposed service revisions, Metro focused on building relationships with historically underrepresented groups, which includes people affected by racism, bias, poverty, linguistic diversity, disability, or immigration status. Metro is committed to conducting grassroots, inclusive, and accessible public engagement processes while navigating the limitations of the current reality of social distancing and public health guidance. A summary of these activities is provided in the enclosed public engagement report.

Informed by King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan and Metro's Mobility Framework, the North Link Connections Mobility Project prioritizes outreach and engagement with those whose voices have traditionally not been included or considered in the decisions that end up affecting them disproportionately. By engaging and collaborating

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with those with the greatest needs to develop this proposed transit network, Metro will be able to provide greater freedom of mobility to those who need it most, even as we maintain and grow our current customer base.

The proposed changes are consistent with the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 and King County Metro Service Guidelines. The project's emphasis on equitable community engagement, equity analysis, and prioritizing investment for people of greater need also aligns with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan and the Metro Mobility Framework Report and its specific recommendations on investments and engagement. These improvements will also further the goals of the Strategic Climate Action Plan by improving transit connections to new Link stations, providing frequent bus service to all stations, creating new east-west connections, improving the span of service, and providing more alternatives to private or for-hire automobile travel to customers.

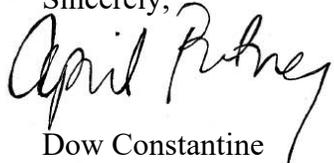
The proposed changes further the King County Strategic Plan goal of delivering a safe, reliable, and seamless network of transportation options to get people and goods where they need to go, when they need to get there.

The project's equity analysis ensures consistency with King County's equity and social justice goals. Identifying the relative impacts of proposed changes on priority populations is an important step in applying the fair and just principle stated in the King County Strategic Plan. This project process and outcomes are also consistent with King County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan, 2016-2022; the equity rationale for the proposal is documented in the Equity Impact Review. In accordance with U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Title VI regulations (49 CFR Part 21) and King County Code and policy, Metro prepared the "September 2021 North Link Connections Mobility Project Title VI Service Equity Analysis," which is enclosed with this transmittal.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposed Ordinance to approve public transportation service changes for September 2021. Due to the time-sensitivity of implementing a service-change, I am requesting that the Council act on this proposed Ordinance by the first week of May 2021.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Bill Bryant, Managing Director, Service Development, Metro Transit Department, at 206-477-6456.

Sincerely,



for

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosures

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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

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

Terry White, General Manager, Metro Transit Department (MTD)

Christina O'Claire, Director, Mobility Division, MTD