## STAFF REPORT

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| **Agenda Item:** | 8 | **Name:** | Leah Krekel-Zoppi |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2021-0130 | **Date:** | March 24, 2021 |

**SUBJECT**

A briefing on a proposed ordinance approving transit service changes for connections to the North Link light rail extension that would go into effect in September 2021.

**SUMMARY**

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0130 would make changes to integrate Metro transit routes in northern King County with three new North Link light rail stations opening in fall 2021. This transit service change, which would take effect in September 2021, is called the North Link Connections Mobility Project.

Today, representatives from Metro and the North Link Connections Mobility Board will provide a briefing on the proposed ordinance, which is expected to be considered by the Mobility and Environment Committee on April 28, 2021.

Metro's stated goals for the project are to: improve mobility for historically unserved and underserved populations; equitably inform, engage, and empower current and potential customers traveling in the project area; and deliver integrated service that responds to Link expansion and meets customer needs.

The primary changes would be to:

* Eliminate Route 41, which is currently the main all-day route connecting Northgate to Downtown Seattle, since it would be replaced by Link light rail;
* Connect transit routes to the three new Link light rail stations in Northgate, Roosevelt, and the University District;
* Truncate some SR 522 corridor and Shoreline service at the Northgate light rail station, and create new routes directly connecting those corridors to First Hill and South Lake Union; and
* Extend east-west routes connecting Magnolia and Queen Anne to University of Washington to connect to Seattle Children's Hospital and create new east-west connections serving the Bryant and View Ridge neighborhoods of northeast Seattle.

The proposed changes would reduce transit service hours in the project area by a net reduction of approximately 147,000 annual transit service hours in the project area, with nearly 150,000 annual transit service hours from revised or deleted routes directly reinvested back into the project area. The reason that the proposed service change includes a large reduction in transit service hours is that 1) Metro is proposing to cut 47,000 annual service hours from the project area, and 2) Seattle is proposing to cut 100,000 of the approximately 125,000 annual transit service hours the city previously invested in the project area due to changes in the Seattle transit funding levy renewal. This net reduction of service hours from the project area means that, while some service would become more frequent and operate over a greater span of the day, other service, particularly in Northeast Seattle, would become less frequent compared to pre-pandemic and current service levels.

Metro conducted community engagement around the proposal beginning in July 2019 and concluding in October 2020 and focused on engaging historically underserved and unserved populations.

Further analysis of the North Link Connection Mobility Project proposed service changes will be presented at the April 28, 2021, Mobility and Environment Committee meeting.

**BACKGROUND**

**Metro Services and Service Changes**

Metro Transit provides a wide range of transportation options for King County. In addition to operating one of the largest bus systems in the United States and providing over 122 million bus rides annually prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro operates vanpools, paratransit services, and other innovative Community Connections services.

Changes to King County Metro’s transit routes are adopted by the King County Council as required by King County Code (K.C.C.) section 28.94.020B, except when an emergency arises or when a service change would affect the service hours for a route by 25 percent or less, or when a change in route location wouldn’t move any route stops by more than a half mile. In such cases, the director of Metro Transit is authorized by K.C.C. 28.94.020 to make the changes administratively.

The policy framework for initiating and designing transit service changes is established by the [Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021](http://metro.kingcounty.gov/planning/strategic-plan/)and the [King County Metro Service Guidelines](https://metro.kingcounty.gov/planning/pdf/2011-21/2015/metro-service-guidelines-042816.pdf)which were adopted by the Regional Transit Committee (RTC) and King County Council in 2011,[[1]](#footnote-2) most recently updated in 2016,[[2]](#footnote-3) and are currently under consideration for being updated later in 2021. Additionally, [Metro Connects](https://metro.kingcounty.gov/planning/long-range-plan/), King County’s long-range plan, adopted by the Regional Transit Committee and King County Council in 2017[[3]](#footnote-4), provides a vision for the future of the transit network, which helps shape transit service change proposals.

**North Link Connections Transit Service Change**

Scheduled to open in fall 2021, Sound Transit's North Link extension will open three new light rail stations in the University District, Roosevelt, and Northgate neighborhoods of Seattle, connecting to the light rail spine serving University of Washington, Capitol Hill, Downtown Seattle, Rainier Valley, Beacon Hill, the Sodo stadium area, Tukwila, and SeaTac. This proposed transit service change focuses on integrating Metro Transit bus service in Bothell, Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, North Seattle, and Shoreline with Sound Transit's North Link light rail extension, by reducing bus service that duplicates the path of light rail and redeploying some of that service to improve connections to the light rail stations.

The routes included in the project were identified because they currently (pre-pandemic) directly serve or operate within a half mile of a new Link light rail station opening in 2021, are currently scheduled in connection with a route serving at least one of the new stations, or have substantial potential ridership overlap with routes that serve the future stations. Metro is calling this service change the North Link Connections Mobility Project.

**ANALYSIS**

**Proposed Route Changes**

The proposed North Eastside Mobility Project would eliminate the major Metro transit route between Northgate and Downtown Seattle, truncate some SR 522 and Shoreline transit service at the Northgate Link light rail station, and revise routes to connect to major destinations like the new Link light rail stations, Seattle Children's Hospital, South Lake Union, and First Hill. According to Metro the proposed changes are intended to integrate Metro’s bus system with Link light rail to improve mobility in the area in an equitable and community-driven way.

Table 1 provides an overview of the proposed changes to routes within the North Link Connection Mobility Project area. Shaded routes are changes that are part of the overall proposed project, but not part of Proposed Ordinance 2021-0130 because the changes would be made administratively by Metro.

**Table 1. Overview of Proposed North Link Connection Mobility Project Changes**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Routes | Description of proposed change |
| New Routes |
| 16X | New route between N 145th Street and Downtown Seattle |
| 20 | New route serving Lake City, Northgate, Green Lake, and University District |
| 79 | New route serving Wedgwood, View Ridge, Bryant, and Ravenna, and connecting to the Roosevelt and University District Link light rail stations |
| 302 | New route serving Richmond Beach, Aurora Village, and First Hill, and connecting to the Northgate Link light rail station |
| 320 | New route serving Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, Lake City, Northgate, South Lake Union, and Denny Triangle |
| 322 | New route serving Kenmore, Lake Forest Park, Lake City, Roosevelt, and First Hill |
| Revised Routes |
| 31 | Revise to connect Magnolia, Interbay, Fremont, and Wallingford to the University District light rail station and Seattle Children's Hospital |
| 32 | Revise to connect Seattle Center, Queen Anne, Interbay, Fremont, and Wallingford to the University District light rail station and Seattle Children's Hospital |
| 43 | Reduce peak frequency from 15-60 minutes to 30-60 minutes |
| 48 | Extend route to serve University Heights |
| 64 | Delete a portion of the route in Lake City and revise the southern terminus to South Lake Union |
| 73 | Revise to connect to the Roosevelt Link light rail station and add peak service |
| 75 | Revise routing to serve Pinehurst |
| 301 | Delete a portion of the route in Shoreline and replace with Route 302; truncate the route at the Northgate Link light rail station and delete the portion of the route between Northgate and Downtown Seattle |
| 303 | Delete a portion of the route serving Shoreline Park and Ride and replace with Route 301 |
| 304 | Delete a portion of the route serving Richmond Beach and replace with Routes 302 and 348; truncate the route at the Northgate Link light rail station and delete the portion of the route between Northgate and Downtown Seattle |
| Deleted Routes |
| 5X | Delete route and replace with new Route 16X |
| 26 | Delete route and replace with Routes 20, 31, 32, 44, and 62 |
| 41 | Delete route and replace Link light rail and Route 75 |
| 63 | Delete route and replace with Routes 67, 64, and 322 |
| 71 | Delete route and replace with Routes 62, 79, and Link light rail |
| 74 | Delete route and replace Route 79 and Link light rail |
| 76 | Delete route and replace with Route 79 and Link |
| 77 | Delete route and replace with Routes 73, 347, 348, and Link light rail |
| 78 | Delete route and replace with Routes 31 and 32 |
| 308 | Delete route and replace with Routes 331, 320, 322, 372, 522, 65, 73, 347, 348, and Link light rail |
| 309 | Delete route and replace with Routes 320 and 322 |
| 312 | Delete route and replace with Routes 320, 322, 522, and Link light rail |
| 316 | Delete route and replace with Routes 345, 346, 26, and Link light rail |
| 355 | Delete route and replace with Route 16X |
| 373 | Delete route and replace with Route 73, 301, 347, and 348 |
| Administrative Changes |
| 40 | Revise to serve the new Northgate Link light rail station |
| 44 | Revise to serve the new U-District Link light rail station |
| 45 | Revise to serve the University of Washington campus via Stevens Way |
| 49 | Revise to serve the new U-District Link light rail station |
| 67 | Revise to serve the new Northgate Link light rail station |
| 70 | Revise to serve the new U-District Link light rail station |
| 331 | Add trips in the peak and on Sundays |
| 345 | Add trips in the peak and on Sundays |
| 346 | Add trips in the peak and on Sundays |
| 347 | Add trips in the peak and on Sundays |
| 348 | Add trips in the peak and on Sundays |
| 372 | Revise to serve the new U-District Link light rail station |

**INVITED**

* Katie Chalmers, Service Planning Supervisor, Metro Transit Department
* DeAnna Martin, Partnerships & Engagement Manager, Metro Transit Department
* Janice Tufte, North Link Connections Mobility Board
* Cheryl Harrison, North Link Connections Mobility Board

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Proposed Ordinance 2019-0139 (and its attachment)
2. Transmittal Letter
3. Fiscal Note
4. Metro’s presentation on the North Link Connections Mobility Project
1. Ordinance 17143 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Ordinance 18301 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Ordinance 18449. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)