

Responses to Questions from RTC-ME Joint Meeting of September 15, 2021

Updated September 22, 2021

The Regional Transit Committee (RTC) and Mobility and Environment Committee (ME) held a joint meeting on September 15, 2021, to begin deliberations on the proposed updates to Metro Transit's adopted transit policies ([Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286](#)). At that meeting, committee members posed a number of questions about the transmitted proposals for the transit policies. This document provides answers to those questions. Please contact the RTC committee staff, [Mary Bourguignon](#), for more information.

STRATEGIC PLAN

How will Metro provide consistent data on how the transit system will serve King County?

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286 would require Metro staff to appear before the RTC or ME "on request" to report on the implementation of the policy documents and the performance of transit services (lines 89-92).

In addition, the ordinance would require Metro to develop two types of performance reports (lines 94-113):

- A. An annual System Evaluation report, to be transmitted each year by October 31 for acceptance by motion, which must include:
 1. Target service levels for routes based on the Service Guidelines;
 2. The estimated number of services hours needed to meet each route's needs;
 3. The performance of each route; and
 4. A list of transit service changes since the last report.

- B. A performance measurement dashboard available on the Internet and with an oral report made to the Council at least once a year, which must include:
 1. Data and a description of each performance measure in the Strategic Plan;
 2. A peer agency summary comparing Metro with 29 peer agencies using data from the National Transit Database; and
 3. A summary of progress towards key performance measures associated with Metro Connects

The performance measures to be tracked are identified in the proposed Strategic Plan (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A). They include metrics for each of the 10 goals proposed for the Strategic Plan, as well as metrics to measure progress toward the implementation of Metro Connects, such as ridership, transfers, customer satisfaction, proximity to transit, and the funding gap. (pp. 79-84 of the proposed Strategic Plan, please see also Table 2 on page 23 in the [Council staff report](#) for the September 15 RTC-ME meeting, which compares adopted to proposed performance measures)

How is Metro planning to support the County's rapid growth?

The proposed Strategic Plan notes that it "responds to significant regional changes, including more population growth" and states that "Metro plays an important role in the growth strategy. It offers travel options that connect people to areas of concentrated activity and encourages jurisdictions to take transit-supportive actions like increased zoning capacity." It also states that "the 2021 Metro Connects update includes a revised service network that aligns with VISION 2050 projections. Metro will strive to achieve VISION 2050 by delivering on its equitable transit-oriented communities' policy, and by connecting people to job centers and other opportunities across the county through the Metro Connects network. Metro will also follow King County's Countywide Planning Policies." (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, pp. 25, 53)

The proposed Strategic Plan includes a section on population and job growth anticipated in King County, stating that, "As a result, demand for a well-integrated network of mobility services will continually increase" (p. 26)

The proposed Strategic Plan states that it is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies and the King County Comprehensive Plan (p. 19) and that “Metro contributes to King County’s compliance with the GMA by focusing public transportation services in urban growth areas” (p. 20).

The proposed Strategic Plan also includes goals and performance measures related to meeting the needs of regional growth, which include:

- The **Transit Oriented Communities** goal area includes a strategy to “Support jurisdictions and planning organizations in implementing the regional growth strategy that envisions an integrated transportation system linking cities and centers.” (p. 53)
- The **Service Quality** goal area states that “Expansion of Metro’s services and innovation in how customers access and use services will help accommodate the region’s population and job growth and serve new transit markets” (p. 59)
- The **Stewardship** goal identifies the need for stable funding sources “that enable system growth and keep pace with regional growth and employment”

The proposed Metro connects states that it responds to the needs of a “growing, diversifying population” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, p. 2) and identifies as a goal to “connect a growing population to fast, high-capacity transit services,” (p. 8) planning to increase the service network to 7.25 annual service hours by 2050 in response.

Attachment QA1 to this question-and-answer document provides a detailed response from Metro staff on how the transmitted policies are intended to help Metro work with jurisdictions to respond to growth.

Does Metro plan to show how it is meeting the regional growth strategy?

The proposed Strategic Plan includes a number of performance measures that could track how Metro is expanding the transit system and providing transit services that are accessible to a growing population. These include:

- The **Investments** goal area includes an “Accessibility” performance measure, which is described as “a measure of travel times using transit to connect to jobs, opportunities, and physical community assets (schools, grocery stores, medical facilities, places of worship, food banks, etc.)” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, p. 79)
- The **Access** goal area includes a “Proximity to Transit” measure for accessibility to frequent and infrequent transit service (p. 80).

The proposed Strategic Plan also includes a set of measures to track progress toward implementing Metro Connects that include measures on ridership, ORCA transfers, pilot program ridership, customer communication satisfaction, proximity to transit, transportation emissions, vehicle miles traveled, customer safety satisfaction, assaults, and the funding gap (p. 82)

Attachment QA1 to this question-and-answer document provides a detailed response from Metro staff on how the transmitted policies are intended to help Metro work with jurisdictions to respond to growth.

How do we ensure that the Strategic Plan still emphasizes discretionary, commuter trips and supports job centers?

The proposed Strategic Plan notes that King County expects more than 680,000 new jobs by 2050 and states that “demand for a well-integrated network of mobility services will continually increase.” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, p. 26)

The proposed Strategic Plan includes goals and performance measures related to economic development and access to jobs. These include:

- The **Investments** goal area includes a strategy to “Prioritize service in geographic areas that have highly dense, transit-supportive development; a high proportion of priority populations; and limited midday and evening service,” which states the intent of “prioritizing access to jobs, housing, and schools.” (p. 40)
- The **Investments** goal area includes an “Accessibility” performance measure, which is described as “a measure of travel times using transit to connect to jobs, opportunities, and physical community assets (schools, grocery stores, medical facilities, places of worship, food banks, etc.)” (p. 79)
- The **Innovation** goal area includes an “Accessibility and Sustainability Analysis” performance measure. The proposed Strategic Plan states that this measure is in development but would “include how innovations improve access to jobs, opportunities, and physical community assets (e.g., grocery stores) and reduce emissions.” (p. 79)
- The **Transit-Oriented Communities** goal area includes an objective to “Support healthy communities, a thriving economy, and a sustainable environment,” which states that “Metro will work with partners to provide a mobility system that advances equity, addresses the climate crisis, and supports economic vitality and the region’s vision and strategy for growth.” (p. 52) This goal area also includes a strategy to “Support equitable economic development and improved regional mobility through Metro’s mobility services, use of transportation infrastructure, and partnerships,” which states that “Metro will continue supporting equitable economic development by serving centers and other areas of concentrated activity and by focusing on strategies to connect people – especially priority populations – to jobs.” (p. 54)
- The **Service Quality** goal area includes a strategy to “Invest in flexible services that address community-identified needs and connect people to high-capacity transit,” which states the intent that flexible services would “increase access to jobs and physical community assets.” (p. 61) This goal area also includes a strategy to “Deliver mobility services that connect people to jobs and job centers, opportunities, and activities of daily living. Improve service during non-peak periods,” which states that Metro will “connect people to opportunities by moving workers to and from job centers and by providing access to destinations that are essential to countywide economic prosperity.” (p. 61)

Pre-COVID, which percent of trips were people going to or coming from work?

According to respondents of Metro’s Rider/Non-Rider survey, 53.7% of 2018 Metro trips and 52% of 2019 Metro trips were used primarily to travel to and from work.

Are there any areas of the county that do not have weekend transit service?

According to Metro’s records, prior to the pandemic, there were several routes that did not provide weekend service: Routes 78, 119, 153, 200, 224, 246, 330, 629 (operated by Snoqualmie Valley Transit), 631, 773, 775, and 907. For a pre-pandemic map showing these routes, please see **Attachment QA2**, which is attached to this question-and-answer document.

In terms of the current status of these routes, the 78 is currently suspended and will be terminated this fall as part of the North Link Connections Mobility Project (Ordinance 19280); the 200 is currently suspended and is anticipated to remain suspended until 2022; and the 246 is suspended but will be restored this fall.

Are there any routes with headways of 90 minutes or longer?

According to Metro's records, prior to the pandemic, there were several routes with headways of 90 minutes or longer during some parts of the week: Routes 118 (midday weekdays, Saturday & Sunday), 119 (weekdays), 208 (weekdays, Saturday), 224 (weekdays), and 915 (Saturday). For a pre-pandemic map showing these routes, please see **Attachment QA2**, which is attached to this question-and-answer document. All of these routes have continued to operate during the pandemic.

How will movement around East King County (focus on rural areas) be facilitated?

The proposed Metro Connects proposes a network of transit service around the county through two future transit networks: Interim Network (approximately the mid 2030s) and 2050 Network. These future networks are illustrated through maps in the proposed Metro Connects. (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, pp. 18, 19)

The proposed Metro Connects also includes a "heat map" showing how long it would take people to travel to destinations around the Overlake Transit Center in East King County (extending farther east into the county) in 2050 compared with 2019. (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, p. 10)

Will public and stakeholder feedback be used in tandem with the performance measures, and how will we know that is happening?

In terms of measuring public and stakeholder feedback, the proposed performance measures in the transmitted Strategic Plan include several measures that would gauge satisfaction with Metro's performance, including proposed measures on:

- Customer satisfaction with safety,
- Customer satisfaction with emergency preparedness,
- Customer satisfaction on access to transit,
- Customer satisfaction with Metro service levels and performance,
- A quality-of-service index that would include information on on-time performance, pass-ups, and missed trips,
- Job satisfaction for Metro employees, and
- Metrics on Metro's co-creation engagement, equitable contracting, and engagement satisfaction (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, pp.79-82).

In terms of engaging with community members, jurisdictions, and stakeholders, several of the strategies proposed to achieve the identified goals in the proposed Strategic Plan would include community and stakeholder engagement. These include:

- Engage with communities to understand barriers to transit ridership, a strategy under the **Investments** goal area. (p. 41).
- Engage in a regional conversation to evaluate and implement equitable options for vehicle usage pricing and management, part of a strategy under the **Sustainability** goal area (p. 42).
- Engage with community stakeholders early in the development of pilots for flexible services, and work with jurisdictions to develop a framework for engaging with innovative mobility services, part of strategies under the **Innovation** goal area (p. 47).
- Engage communities, especially priority populations, to understand their needs when developing safety features, part of a strategy under the **Safety** goal area (p. 50).
- Engage directly affected communities in the planning processes for transit-oriented development projects, and advocate for and support jurisdictions in adopting policies and land uses to minimize displacement near transit, parts of strategies under the **Transit-Oriented Communities** goal area (pp. 53, 55).

- Partner with local jurisdictions and engage communities to develop plans for transit corridors that provide safe opportunities to walk, roll, or bike safely to transit connections, part of a strategy under the **Access** goal area (p. 57).
- Engage with communities and partners in developing the Metro business plan and engage with stakeholders to drive the design and delivery of services, projects, and programs, part of strategies under the **Stewardship** goal area (p. 70).
- The objectives and strategies under the **Engagement** goal area focus on “meaningful, inclusive, and community-driven approaches to develop, provide, and evaluate mobility choices and supporting infrastructure that serve priority populations” (pp. 72-76).

In terms of direct engagement with elected officials, Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286 would require Metro staff to appear before the RTC or ME “on request” to report on the implementation of the policy documents and the performance of transit services (lines 89-92). Metro would also be required to provide an oral report to the Council at least once a year on the performance measurement dashboard and to provide the annual System Evaluation report for acceptance by the RTC and Council by motion (lines 94-113).

How often does Metro intend to evaluate progress on the Interim Network?

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286 requires that the annual System Evaluation report include a summary of target service levels and the “number of service hours necessary to meet each route’s needs” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, lines 94-99). Because target service levels set by the proposed Service Guidelines would be aligned with the Metro Connects Interim Network (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 10), this would provide an annual evaluation of progress toward achieving the Interim Network.

The proposed Strategic Plan includes a set of performance measures to evaluate progress toward achieving Metro Connects. These measures would be included in the proposed performance measurement dashboard, meaning that information would be available online and that Metro would be required to provide an oral report annually and to make additional reports “on request” to the RTC and Council. (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, p. 82 & Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, lines 89-92)

The “Progress toward Metro Connects” measures are proposed to include:

- Ridership
- ORCA transfers
- Pilot program ridership
- Customer communication satisfaction
- Proximity to transit
- Transportation emissions
- Vehicle miles traveled
- Customer safety satisfaction
- Assaults and disturbances
- Metro Connects funding gap (Strategic Plan, p. 82)

In terms of updating the Interim Network itself, Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286 requires Metro to transmit updated policy documents (including Metro Connects) within seven years from the transmittal of this year’s proposed updates (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, lines 114-116). The Interim Network would be updated, and presumably extended forward in time, at the time of that update.

SERVICE GUIDELINES

Priority populations may move between Census tracts for many reasons, including displacement. How will Metro’s calculations take that into account?

The proposed equity metrics that would be used in the Service Guidelines are based on the locations where priority populations live. (Priority populations are defined as communities of color, low- or no-income population, disabled population, foreign born population, and population with limited English proficiency,

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 12.) These metrics would be calculated using a weighted method based on the population data provided for US Census Block Groups.

The US Census Bureau provides updated [American Community Survey](#) data every [year](#), with updates made at the Census Block Group level every [five years](#).

The proposed Service Guidelines notes that “Metro projects future service needs and sets target service levels in the annual System Evaluation report” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 10). Metro staff have indicated that, as part of preparing the System Evaluation report each year, they would update the equity metrics based on the most up-to-date American Community Survey data from the Census. These annual updates would reflect changing demographics to the extent that information is reflected in American Community Survey data from the Census.

There is concern that, in the past, Metro has shortened a route, then cancelled it when the shorter route no longer meets productivity metrics. How can this be avoided in the future, both for productivity and equity metrics?

The proposed Service Guidelines identify 11 guidelines to be used when Metro develops transit routes and services (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 22-25). These are:

1. **Network Connections:** design service in the context of the entire transit system, make transfers easy, and reduce wait times.
2. **Multiple Purposes and Destinations:** design routes to serve multiple purposes and destinations rather than specialized travel demands.
3. **Easy to Understand:** design routes with predictable and direct routings that provide frequency and span appropriate to the market served and serve connections points where riders can connect with frequent services.
4. **Route Spacing and Duplication:** Routes should be designed to avoid competing for the same riders (no closer than ½ mile) except where necessary due to geography or where routes converge to serve regional growth centers.
5. **Route Directness:** Routes should operate directly between locations, with deviations to serve a specific destination only when the delay is less than 10 passenger minutes per person boarding or exiting the bus along the deviation.
6. **Bus Stop Spacing:** Stops should be spaced between 1/3 to 1 mile apart for RapidRide, and 1/4 mile apart for all other services to facilitate transit access and enable fast and reliable service.
7. **Route Length and Neighborhood Route Segments:** A bus route should be long enough to provide useful connections for riders and to be more attractive than other travel modes, but when routes extend beyond centers to serve less dense residential neighborhoods, ridership should be weighed against the time spent serving neighborhood segments to ensure the service level is appropriate to the level of demand.
8. **Operating Path and Appropriate Vehicle:** Buses should be routed primarily on arterial streets and freeways, except where routing on local or collector streets is necessary to reach layover areas or turn buses around, and services should use vehicles that are an appropriate size to operate safely and accommodate demand.
9. **Route Terminals:** Route terminals should be placed where parked buses have the least impact on adjoining properties, if possible, and where restroom facilities are available for operators (and charging infrastructure available as needed for routes served by battery electric buses).
10. **Fixed and Variable Routing:** In low-density areas where demand is widely dispersed, demand-responsive service may provide more effective service than a fixed route.
11. **Bus Stop Amenities and Bus Shelters:** Weekday boardings are used to set criteria for the type of bus stop and level of amenities to be provided, with the minimum ridership threshold for providing a standard shelter and bench at all stops set at 25 average daily boardings.

In terms of how elected officials can determine if these service design guidelines are incorporated appropriately into proposed service changes, the King County Code requires approval by the Council for all proposed service changes, except for emergency changes and small changes that Metro is authorized

to make administratively that include changes that (a) affect the established weekly service hours for a route by 25% or less; (b) change the location of any route stop by less than ½ mile; or (c) change route numbers (KCC 28.94.020.B). During the review process for a proposed service change, the Council could withhold support from a proposed change to a route that would be inconsistent with the adopted Service Guidelines service design standards.

For Priority 3 (Service Growth) service additions, please provide more information on how the prioritization and the weighting of the three factors will determine which routes are prioritized for service additions.

The proposed Service Guidelines would use three priorities to add transit service:

- **Priority 1: Reduce Crowding** by adding service to overcrowded routes;
- **Priority 2: Improve Reliability** by adding service to routes that run late; and
- **Priority 3: Grow Service** by filling the gap between existing service and the target service levels.

For Priority 3 (Service Growth), the Service Guidelines would provide two types of guidance:

- First, determining **WHAT** the target service level should be for each route; and
- Second, setting priorities for **HOW** service investments for individual routes should occur over time to move from the existing service level to the target service level, given that available resources are always less than the need for more service.

The proposed Service Guidelines would use three factors to address these two issues: equity, land use, and geographic value. These three factors would be scored, based on metrics calculated for each route. The scores would then be prioritized and weighted, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Proposed Priority 3 (Service Growth) Factors

Factor	Prioritization	Weight
Equity Would use one of the proposed new equity metrics, the Equity Prioritization Score (EPS) ¹	1 <i>(formerly #3)</i>	25% <i>(10 points)</i>
Land Use Land use density would be scored based on the number of households, park-&-ride stalls, jobs, low-income jobs, and students within ¼ mile	2 <i>(formerly #2)</i>	50% <i>(20 points)</i>
Geographic Value The connections between regional growth centers, activity centers, or manufacturing/industrial centers would be scored	3 <i>(formerly #1)</i>	25% <i>(10 points)</i>

In terms of **WHAT** the target service level should be for each route, the proposed Service Guidelines would align to the proposed Metro Connect Interim Network. The proposed Service Guidelines note that they “identify candidate routes for investment in the Interim Network as well as the existing transit network.” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 10) This means that in areas where transit service does not exist today, but Metro Connects envisions transit service in the future, “the routes from Metro Connects will be evaluated as a service growth need.” That is also the case for routes that currently have peak-only service but for which Metro Connects envisions all-day service. (p. 10)

To set these target service levels for each route, the Service Guidelines go on to state that the target service levels are “the highest levels suggested by either 1) the Service Guidelines growth methodology, which

¹ More information about the proposed new equity metrics can be found in Attachment 5 (page 89) in the September 15, 2021 [committee packet](#) from the joint RTC-ME meeting.

uses the factors of land use, equity and geographic value as described below or 2) the service levels envisioned in the Metro Connects Interim Network.” (p. 10)

To set the target service levels, the Service Guidelines would use the weighted point totals for the three factors of land use (20 points total), equity (10 points total), and geographic value (10 points total). So, in the case of **WHAT** the target service level for a route should be, the proposed Service Guidelines would use the weighting of the scores, which would weight land use highest (at 50% of the total possible score) thereby providing more weight to routes (or future routes) in areas with the greatest density. (This weighting is described in more detail on p. 11 of the proposed Service Guidelines.)

In terms of **HOW** routes would be prioritized for investments to move from their current service level to their target service level, which would happen gradually over time, the Service Guidelines would use the prioritization of the three factors to prioritize routes based on their scores for equity first, land use second, and geographic value third.

In terms of this annual prioritization for service growth investments, the Service Guidelines state that: “Each route’s score for the three factors is used to set the priority order for future investments. The scores for routes will be updated each year to reflect changes in demographics, land use, and connections. Metro may not fully invest in a route before moving on to the next prioritized route, but will plan to invest in the future a resources become available in each biennium. Metro developed this prioritization as the best way to advance its values of advancing equity and addressing climate change.” (p. 16)

SUMMARY: For Priority 3 (Service Growth) additions, the Service Guidelines provide two types of guidance:

- First, to determine **WHAT** the target service level should be for each route, the Service Guidelines would use either the service level envisioned for the Metro Connects Interim Network or the scores for the factors of land use, equity, and geographic value, weighted as land use (50%), equity (25%), and geographic value (25%). The highest resulting service level is used as the target service level.
- Second, to prioritize **HOW** service investments for individual routes should occur over time to move from the existing service level to the target service level, the Service Guidelines would rank routes by prioritizing the three factors by equity first, land use second, and geographic value third.

How can we show how future service will serve the entire county and, in particular, how it will coordinate with ST service? (Used example of travel heat maps being very helpful)

The proposed Metro Connects proposes a network of transit service around the county through two future transit networks: Interim Network (approximately the mid 2030s) and 2050 Network. These future networks are illustrated through maps in the proposed Metro Connects. These maps show connections between Metro services to Sound Transit Link, Sounder, ST Express, and Stride services. (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, pp. 18, 19)

Like the adopted Metro Connects, the proposed Metro Connects includes “heat maps” showing how long it would take people to travel to destinations around several centers in King County (Downtown Ballard, Highline College, Overlake Transit Center, and Skyway) in 2050 compared with 2019. (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, pp. 9-10)

The performance metrics in the proposed Strategic Plan would include measures of proximity to transit (both to frequent and infrequent service) for priority populations and other populations. (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, p. 82)

Concerned that the state Growth Management Act does not use an equity lens and therefore the need for transit to serve proposed growth may not be aligned with the equity focus proposed for the Service Guidelines. How are these aligned, and how will growth needs in King County be met?

In terms of meeting regional growth needs, the proposed Strategic Plan states that Metro service and the proposed policy documents are compliant with the Growth Management Act “by focusing public transportation services in urban growth areas” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, p. 20). The proposed Metro Connects states that Metro will use its role as “convener, advocate and as part of King County government to advance VISION 2050 goals, including via the King County Countywide Planning Policies and Centers Framework,” for increased land use density and affordable housing near transit (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, p. 69).

In terms of the balancing transit service between growth needs and equity needs, the proposed Strategic Plan states that Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that Metro “provide public transportation in a manner that does not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, disability, or age” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment A, p. 22)

As answered in more detail above (in the response to the question about Priority 3 (Service Growth)), the Service Guidelines propose to set what the target service level should be for each route by using either the service level envisioned for the Metro Connects Interim Network or the scores for the factors of land use, equity, and geographic value, weighted as land use (50%), equity (25%), and geographic value (25%). The highest resulting service level is used as the target service level. This means that, in setting the target service level, the proposed Service Guidelines would provide more weight to routes (or future routes) in areas with the greatest density. (This weighting is described in more detail on p. 11 of the proposed Service Guidelines.) Annual service investments to take routes from their existing service levels toward the target service levels would be made by prioritizing the three factors as equity first, land use second, and geographic value third.

Attachment QA1 to this question-and-answer document provides a detailed response from Metro staff on how the transmitted policies are intended to help Metro work with jurisdictions to respond to growth.

What are the reasons for transit service reductions?

The proposed Services Guidelines provide priorities and criteria for Metro to use when proposing reductions to transit service (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 16), but do not state why transit service might be proposed for reduction.

In terms of past practice, service reductions have typically been proposed due to a lack of resources, though low-productivity routes have also been proposed for reduction in the past as part of a service change or service restructure to free up resources to direct to the Service Guidelines’ service addition priorities (Priority #1 reduce crowding, Priority #2 improve reliability, Priority #3 system growth).

In terms of service reductions necessitated by a lack of resources, as part of the biennial budget the Executive proposes the number of annual service hours that can be funded with the proposed budget. The Council must approve the budget (and any adjustments) by ordinance. The adopted budget sets the service hours capacity for Metro in terms of proposing service changes, including any potential reductions, over the course of that biennium.

In terms of the financial circumstances that could trigger reductions, declining revenues (from fares, sales taxes, or other revenue sources) and/or increasing costs (due to increasing fuel or labor costs, etc.) would be the most likely reasons to propose a reduction in service.

For the 2021-2022 budget, Metro proposed using fund balance to avoid making permanent service cuts during the 2021-2022 biennium but forecasted a need for significant service reductions by 2025 if revenues and ridership did not recover. Since that time, the General Manager has reported that federal relief funding

as well as the uptick in sales tax revenues may delay or minimize that need for future cuts. Council staff anticipate additional information on these estimates in the mid-biennial supplemental ordinance, which is expected this fall.

Concerned that rural routes could be identified as low productivity and therefore prioritized for reductions because they don't serve as many people as urban routes.

To address differences in expected ridership between different parts of the county, the proposed Service Guidelines would set three different "classes" of service that would have different thresholds used to measure productivity (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 6). These three classes are:

- **Urban** routes serve the regionally designated Regional Growth Centers of Seattle Downtown, First Hill/Capitol Hill, South Lake Union, the University District, and Uptown. These areas have the highest densities in the county, the highest historical transit use, and the highest market potential for transit.
- **Suburban** routes serve cities throughout King County or serve Seattle but do not connect to the centers listed above.
- **Rural and DART** routes serve lower-density areas. Rural routes serve as connectors between rural communities and between rural communities and larger cities. They are defined as having at least 35 percent of their route outside the urban growth boundary. DART routes provide fixed-route service and have the ability to deviate from their fixed routing in lower-density areas.

Urban routes must meet the highest productivity threshold, with Suburban and Rural/DART routes having lower thresholds. The actual route productivity thresholds for each of these classes of service as defined in the 2020 System Evaluation (Motion 15802) can be found as **Attachment QA3** to this question-and-answer document.

Concerned about the apparent contradiction in the King County Code language around service changes, which allows the Metro General Manager (GM) to notify Council in writing about permanent changes following an emergency, but also sets standards for which types of service changes require Council approval by ordinance and which can be made administratively.

Metro's ability to implement service changes (both planned and emergency) is regulated by the King County Code (KCC 28.94.020.B).

- KCC 28.94.020.B.1 states that any changes to transit service require approval by the Council except for changes that Metro is authorized to make administratively: (a) changes to a route's weekly service hours by 25% or less; (b) changes to a route location that do not move the location of any bus stop by more than ½ mile; or (c) changes to route numbers.
- KCC 28.94.020.B.2 authorizes the Metro GM to implement service changes during an emergency. That section states that "Such changes that the director intends to be permanent shall be reported in writing to the chair of the council."

In terms of the language in the two different sections of Code, Metro's ability to make emergency service changes is limited to an emergency situation. Metro's ability to make emergency service changes permanent without Council approval is limited to those changes that the Code authorizes to be made administratively.

In terms of the COVID-19 pandemic emergency, specifically, although the Code does grant the Metro GM broad authority to determine what constitutes an emergency requiring transit service changes, the King County Executive issued a proclamation of emergency on March 1, 2020, in response to the onset of the pandemic, which the Council affirmed through Motion 15610. This emergency proclamation remains in effect. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Metro has implemented emergency, long-term suspensions to about 15% of its system with full suspensions of 51 routes touching 377 census tracts with more than 2.1 million people. In briefings to the RTC and Council, Metro has stated its intention of restoring about half the

suspended service during the Fall 2021 service change and restoring the remainder of suspended service in 2022.

Would like information on the data Metro will be using on restructuring, with a focus on making sure people can get to light rail.

The proposed Service Guidelines list the reasons for and data to be considered when proposing a service restructure (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, pp. 17-19). Reasons to restructure service include:

- Major transportation network changes, including extension or enhancement of light rail services;
- Mismatch between service and ridership; and
- Major development or land use changes.

The data to be considered when proposing a restructure include:

- Current and expected future travel patterns
- Service in equity priority areas, compared to the rest of the restructure area
- Existing housing, jobs, and other generators of ridership and the location and density of permitted future development
- Passenger capacity of routes relative to projected ridership
- The cost of added service to meet projected ridership demand relative to cost savings from reductions of other services.

METRO CONNECTS

How will Metro prioritize future RapidRide lines?

The adopted Metro Connects identifies specific future RapidRide lines in the maps adopted for the 2025 and 2040 Networks.

The proposed Metro Connects would instead identify a list of routes as “candidates” to potentially become RapidRide lines in the future, with the goal of developing a total of 19-23 RapidRide lines by 2050. The prioritization process for RapidRide lines (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment C, pp. 23-27) would be based on the current six lines (A-F) and the additional four lines that are currently funded and in the process of being planned or developed (G-J). For future lines beyond those 10, the proposed Metro Connects states that Metro would complete at least:

- Three new RapidRide lines as part of the Interim Network, and
- Nine new RapidRide lines as part of the 2050 Network.

The details for the prioritization process to identify future RapidRide lines are described in Technical Report C: RapidRide Expansion, which was transmitted for context but not for adoption. (The Technical Report can be downloaded from the [Council's legislative records site](#); it is summarized in Attachment 3 to the [Council staff report](#) for the September 15 RTC-ME meeting, beginning on page 53.)

The technical report describes the evaluation process Metro conducted on 57 corridors during the update of Metro Connects for consideration as RapidRide lines. The corridors that were evaluated included all corridors identified for RapidRide in the existing adopted Metro Connects, all frequent service routes identified in the adopted 2025 Network, and 11 additional corridors with high ridership and key regional connections (Technical Report C, p. C-1). These corridors were evaluated using a two-step process that included:

- **Step 1 Evaluation** focused on service demand and connectivity value (p. C-2).
- **Step 2 Evaluation** focused on equity, environmental impacts, capital needs, service demand, and implementation issues (p. C-2).

The report notes that during the Step 1 evaluation, 22 of the 57 corridors (including four corridors that had been planned for RapidRide service in the existing adopted Metro Connects) did not meet the criteria and were determined not to be appropriate for RapidRide service. The remaining 33 corridors were included in the Step 2 evaluation and grouped into a scale of low, medium, or high for each factor (p. C-4).

The technical report then describes the programmatic approach Metro proposes to use to identify candidate corridors for RapidRide as part of the proposed Metro Connects. This programmatic approach identifies a larger pool of candidate corridors for each future network than can actually be implemented, with the selection of specific lines to be determined in the future (p. C-4).

The technical report concludes with lists of the current and planned RapidRide lines (p. C-5), the Interim Network RapidRide candidates (p. C-6), and the 2050 Network RapidRide candidates (p. C-6). *(Please see Attachment 4 to the [Council staff report](#) from the September 15 RTC-ME meeting for a comparison of the route lists between the 2025 Network and Interim Network; and between the 2040 Network and the 2050 Network. Routes or corridors that would change from being identified as a future RapidRide line to being identified as a "RapidRide candidate" are also listed in the body of the staff report. Please note that these route lists are provided for context only. Metro Connects would be adopted at a conceptual, map level. Individual route lists were not adopted as part of the original Metro Connects and are not proposed to be adopted in the 2021 transmittal.)*

To deliver the Metro Connects network over time, will Metro use flexible services if there is not enough funding for fixed route service?

The proposed Service Guidelines state that Metro would consider flexible services to "provide mobility from and within communities that have low-to-moderate density including rural communities, seed emerging markets, and provide time-of-day service or geographic coverage where there are gaps in the fixed-route system" (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, pp. 25-28).

The Service Guidelines also note that flexible services could be used to "enhance mobility options for residents while optimizing finite transit resources" (p. 26), while stating that the priorities of flexible services would be "to connect residents to high-capacity, fixed-route transit and to increase access to jobs and community assets" (p. 26).

The proposed Service Guidelines also provide guidelines to add and evaluate flexible services, and to transition pilot services to permanent.

What will be the process to update Metro Connects? Want to make sure the document remains up to date as the population changes.

Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286 requires Metro to transmit updated policy documents (including Metro Connects) within seven years from the transmittal of this year's proposed updates (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, lines 114-116). The Interim and 2050 Networks would be updated, and presumably extended forward in time, at the time of that update.

In terms of keeping information up to date as the population changes, the proposed equity metrics that would be used in the Service Guidelines are based on the locations where priority populations live. (Priority populations are defined as communities of color, low- or no-income population, disabled population, foreign born population, and population with limited English proficiency, Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 12.) These metrics would be calculated using a weighted method based on the population data provided for US Census Block Groups.

The US Census Bureau provides updated [American Community Survey](#) data every [year](#), with updates made at the Census Block Group level every [five years](#).

The proposed Service Guidelines notes that “Metro projects future service needs and sets target service levels in the annual System Evaluation report” (Proposed Ordinance 2021-0286, Attachment B, p. 10). Metro staff have indicated that, as part of preparing the System Evaluation report each year, they would update the equity metrics based on the most up-to-date American Community Survey data from the Census. These annual updates would reflect changing demographics to the extent that information is reflected in American Community Survey data from the Census.

Metro staff note that, “Metro will update the Strategic Plan, Metro Connects, and Service Guidelines within seven years. If necessary, the King County Executive may direct Metro to make minor changes to the information in the documents, as long as it does not impact the substance of the policies. Metro will monitor progress towards these policies and of the system itself more regularly. Metro will continue using an annual System Evaluation report to determine service needs system wide. Metro will also monitor progress towards its Strategic Plan goals and Metro Connects through the Strategic Plan public-facing dashboard.”

How is King County going to propose funding for Metro Connects?

The King County Council or the King County Transportation District (which is comprised of the members of the King County Council) could propose a funding measure to implement Metro Connects.

In early 2020, the King County Transportation District began deliberations on a [potential regional funding measure](#) to implement Metro Connects. That effort was suspended due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. That potential funding measure was developed based in part on a report on the implementation of Metro Connects prepared by the Executive in 2019 in response to Motion 15252 ([2019-RPT0075](#)).

Regional Transit Committee Follow-Up: September 2021

How the proposed policies address growth, densification, and demographic changes

My community is growing, diversifying, and densifying to prepare for transit expansion and align with regional growth targets. How do the new proposed policies address the need to provide transit that supports growth?

Metro's proposed policy updates are rooted in the concepts included Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) VISION 2050. They aim to support the region in achieving that vision by including tools to help cities plan and allow Metro to manage growth and adjust service to best meet needs as resources allow.

Strategic Plan:

- The Strategic Plan directs Metro to support jurisdictions in planning and implementing the regional growth strategy in VISION 2050.
- It also directs Metro to connect people to job centers, advocate for transit-supportive land use, and implement and evaluate service based on Service Guidelines methodology, including evaluating connections to growth centers, and through an annual System Evaluation report.

Metro Connects:

- The draft Metro Connects interim and 2050 service networks were updated using the most recent PSRC growth projections. The vision for 70 percent more service by 2050 will help meet those projections.
 - Today, the Metro and Sound Transit networks align to serve growth centers. Most existing regional centers in King County are served by frequent transit, and most centers have frequent service and/or multiple transit routes. Most existing routes can support additional travel to, from and within many urban centers and job centers. Many centers are also served by local Metro service, regional Sound Transit services, and other transit providers. (e.g. Washington State Ferries, Pierce Transit, Community Transit).
 - Metro Connects supports job and population growth by planning for more frequent service, additional RapidRide lines, and new local routes. Community engagement would drive specific service changes.
- Metro Connects includes updated cost estimates, illustrating that additional funding is needed to implement it in support of growth projections.

Service Guidelines:

- Metro will produce an annual System Evaluation report based on the Service Guidelines, which will guide future service investment proposals. Staff will create this report using the most recent data available, which will capture increases in housing, employment, and community demographics.
- Ultimately, the King County Council determines service investments and changes through the biennial budget process. During the biennium, any changes above the 25 percent or ¼ mile thresholds to service must be guided by a community engagement process and approved by the King County Council.
- The Service Guidelines will continue to align future service investments with regional growth.

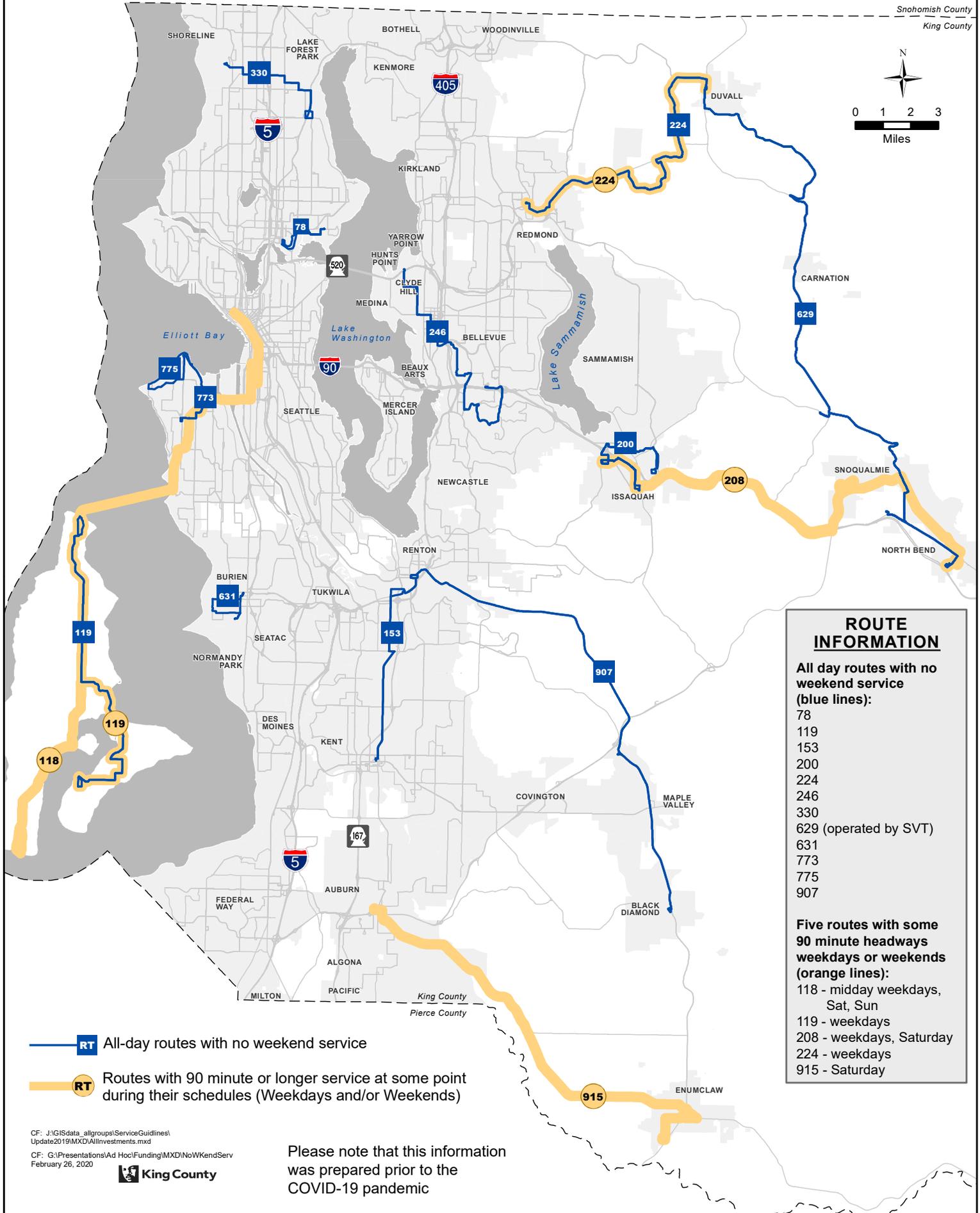
- Crowding remains the first priority for investment, meaning routes that become crowded due to population growth would be candidates for more service.
- The updated Service Guidelines also outline the types of transit supportive land uses that support different kinds of service, intended to help interested cities plan for development.
- The updated Service Guidelines direct Metro to grow towards Metro Connects by setting target service levels according to the proposed interim network.
- The proposed priority order for the factors that influence growth recommendations – equity, then land use, then geographic value – will support cities that are densifying. Dense areas with more people who identify as priority populations would be top priority for investment in a resource-constrained scenario.

In conclusion, these three policies allow cities and Metro to work together to plan for growth and changing demographics in several ways:

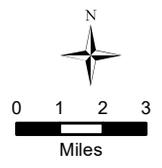
- **They provide information for cities to consider as they grow.**
 - Metro does not control land use. However, having productive, well-used transit service is the best way to keep and grow service as we build towards Metro Connects. That is why Metro encourages cities to implement transit-supportive land uses.
 - As communities grow, they could choose to locate development along existing transit routes, especially frequent service routes and planned RapidRide lines. Many routes have ample capacity to take on new riders in the near-term.
 - Communities who would like to factor projected transit service into plans for future development can do so by looking at Metro Connects to see the type of service (ie, RapidRide, frequent, or local service) envisioned for their communities. They can then look at the new section in the proposed Service Guidelines to understand the land uses that support different types of transit.
- **They identify the need for sustainable new funding, while allowing Metro to support growth without new resources.**
 - Metro and partners can work together to secure new funding to implement Metro Connects and ensure investment in more routes throughout King County.
 - Though new funding will be essential, the proposed policies will help accommodate growth and density without it. As mentioned previously, routes that become crowded due to growth and increased density could still see investments.
 - As Metro and Sound Transit expand service and increase frequencies, more locations can support additional growth.
- **They describe how Metro will account for growth, densification, and changing demographics.**

The System Evaluation report will capture the impact of these factors in Metro's service investment priorities, even though Metro's policies will not be updated annually.

All Day Routes with No Weekend Service and Five Routes with some periods of 90-Minute Headways



Snohomish County
King County



ROUTE INFORMATION

All day routes with no weekend service (blue lines):

- 78
- 119
- 153
- 200
- 224
- 246
- 330
- 629 (operated by SVT)
- 631
- 773
- 775
- 907

Five routes with some 90 minute headways weekdays or weekends (orange lines):

- 118 - midday weekdays, Sat, Sun
- 119 - weekdays
- 208 - weekdays, Saturday
- 224 - weekdays
- 915 - Saturday

- All-day routes with no weekend service
- Routes with 90 minute or longer service at some point during their schedules (Weekdays and/or Weekends)

CF: J:\GIS\data_allgroups\ServiceGuidelines\Update2019\MXD\AllInvestments.mxd
CF: G:\Presentations\Ad Hoc\Funding\MXD\NoWKendServ February 26, 2020



Please note that this information was prepared prior to the COVID-19 pandemic

Excerpted from 2020 System Evaluation Report (Motion 15802)
 Appendix D: Changes to Route Productivity Thresholds

Top 25%

Service Type	Year	Peak		Off Peak		Night	
		Rides/ Platform Hour	Passenger Miles/ Platform Mile	Rides/ Platform Hour	Passenger Miles/ Platform Mile	Rides/ Platform Hour	Passenger Miles/ Platform Mile
Suburban	2020	21.6	7.3	25.2	8.6	15.2	4.8
	2019	24.1	7.8	25.3	8.5	15.8	5.4
	Change	-2.5	-0.5	-0.1	0.1	-0.6	-0.6
Urban	2020	37.8	15.0	37.9	11.7	25.7	7.8
	2019	40.3	16.4	36.4	11.9	24.7	7.7
	Change	-2.5	-1.4	1.5	-0.2	1.0	0.1
DART/Shuttle	2020	15.1	3.6	16.0	4.0	9.4	2.8
	2019	13.8	4.5	14.8	4.5	12.7	4.7
	Change	1.3	-0.9	1.2	-0.5	-3.3	-1.9

Bottom 25%

Service Type	Year	Peak		Off Peak		Night	
		Rides/ Platform Hour	Passenger Miles/ Platform Mile	Rides/ Platform Hour	Passenger Miles/ Platform Mile	Rides/ Platform Hour	Passenger Miles/ Platform Mile
Suburban	2020	13.1	4.9	13.6	5.4	9.4	3.0
	2019	13.7	5.3	11.9	4.9	8.4	2.8
	Change	-0.6	-0.4	1.7	0.5	1.0	0.2
Urban	2020	24.3	10.1	21.2	7.4	16.6	4.3
	2019	24.7	9.8	22.4	7.5	15.7	4.4
	Change	-0.4	0.3	-1.2	-0.1	0.9	-0.1
DART/Shuttle	2020	8.9	2.5	8.1	2.4	12.7	4.7
	2019	8.1	2.1	7.4	2.3	13.0	4.7
	Change	0.8	0.4	0.7	0.1	-0.3	0.0