



Legislation Text

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AN ORDINANCE adopting public transportation service changes for February 2015.

STATEMENT OF FACTS:

1. The Metro transit system is funded mainly by sales tax, and due to the inherently unstable and variable nature of that funding source, the amount of operating funds available from that source varies with the health of the economy. The devastating economic downturn that started in 2008 and the resulting drastic decline in sales tax revenues caused a projected shortfall in the transit division's operating funds of approximately \$1.2 billion for the years 2009 through 2015 compared to long-range expected revenues in the financial plan.
2. Following recommendations from the King County auditor and commencing in 2009, the transit division has undertaken a series of significant actions to address the revenue shortfall, including increasing system-wide operating efficiencies, using one-time reserve funds, eliminating staff positions, reducing capital programs, raising fares, negotiating labor savings with employees, eliminating many lower-performing bus routes and reinvesting service hours in higher-performing routes and generating new revenue, resulting in \$798 million in combined cost savings and revenue enhancements, with a net annual, ongoing positive impact to the division's budget of approximately \$148 million. Although the worst of the Great Recession has passed and sales tax revenue is currently increasing, being \$31 million above projections for 2014 and \$31 million above projections in 2015, the economy has not recovered enough to generate the sustained sales tax revenues needed to operate the system as it is currently sized and

structured.

3. In 2010, the regional transit task force unanimously recommended a comprehensive policy framework for an efficient and effective transit system, balancing productivity with geographic and social equity, resulting in the adoption of the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 and the King County Metro Service Guidelines. The guidelines were updated in 2013.

4. In 2011, a temporary funding source, the congestion reduction charge, was authorized by the state Legislature and approved by the council in Ordinance 17169. The intent of the congestion reduction charge was to help address transit revenue shortfalls during the severe economic downturn and allow the Metro transit system to continue reducing congestion on some of the state's most crowded highways. The county implemented the congestion reduction charge with the expectation that the state would adopt a comprehensive, long-term package that would address Metro transit shortfalls and other regional and statewide transportation needs. No statewide package was adopted.

5. With the expiration of the congestion reduction charge in June 2014 and the prior drawdown of certain of its reserve funds, the transit division continues to face significant budget challenges.

6. In July, 2014, with the enactment of Ordinance 17848, public transportation service changes for September 2014 were set, which eliminated 151,000 annual transit service hours from the Metro transit system. Ordinance 17848 also directed that an additional 188,000 annual transit service hours be eliminated in February 2015. Ordinance 17848 also created an ad hoc committee on transit reductions to make recommendations to the executive and the council regarding transit service hour reductions for February 2015 after considering revenue forecast information and considering current transit division finances.

7. The ad hoc committee has met and has recommended that February public transportation service changes be considered as stand-alone decisions and not dependent on future service

changes to achieve productivity, social equity or geographic value policy goals. Further, the committee recommended that the February proposal take into consideration the results of additional community workshops and engagement conducted by the transit division in July and August 2014. The committee also recommended a February 2015 transit service reduction level of 169,000 annual service hours, with 11,000 hours reserved for critical reinvestment to address unforeseen challenges or to support potential partnership reinvestments.

8. The proposed public transportation service changes implemented by this ordinance will result in a reduction of approximately 169,000 service hours from the Metro transit system, but with 11,000 transit service hours reserved to to address unforeseen challenges.

9. The proposed public transportation service changes are consistent with the policy direction and priorities adopted on August 30, 2013, in the Updates to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 and associated King County Metro Service Guidelines under Ordinance 17641.

10. In accordance with applicable federal regulations and King County code and policy, the transit division conducted required public outreach and Title VI service equity analysis related to the proposed public transportation service changes.

11. Strategies 3.1.1 and 6.3.1 of the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 identify partnerships with local jurisdictions and businesses as a potential source of the revenue necessary to provide transit service in support of a strong, sustainable economy.

12. On July 17, 2014, the Seattle Transportation Benefit District adopted Resolution 12 placing a measure on the November 4, 2014, general election ballot that would raise revenue to preserve designated King County Metro Transit service related to the city of Seattle.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. The February 2015 public transportation service changes for King County, substantially

as described in Attachment A to this ordinance, are hereby approved and, except as provided in sections 2, 3 and 4 of this ordinance, shall be implemented beginning February 14, 2015.

SECTION 2. In accordance with Strategies 3.1.1 and 6.3.1 of the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021, should any public or private entities desire to contract with King County to pay for the cost of transit service on routes to be revised or eliminated as part of the public transportation service changes to take effect on February 14, 2015, the executive shall transmit to the council by December 1, 2014 either a letter of intent to contract or a proposed ordinance authorizing an interlocal agreement or a contract, as applicable, for each such public or private entity and attaching the respective interlocal agreement or contract, as applicable. Each letter of intent or proposed ordinance shall identify what, if any, service modifications to the Metro transit system will be necessary to effectuate the terms of its accompanying interlocal agreement or contract. The implementation of the February 14, 2015 service changes identified in each letter of intent or contract for service transmitted per this section shall be deferred until June 6, 2015. The executive may establish early dates for notification of intent and development of service contract details.

SECTION 3. Should the Seattle Transportation Benefit District Proposition No. 1 be approved by voters on November 4, 2014, the February 2015 public transportation service changes for King County, substantially as described in Attachment A to this ordinance, shall be effective and implemented beginning June 6, 2015.

SECTION 4. For any interlocal agreement or contract authorized by the council by March 2, 2015, the transit service to be funded pursuant to the terms of the particular interlocal agreement or contract will not be revised or eliminated as part of the June 6, 2015, public transportation service change.