



## Legislation Text

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A MOTION relating to public transportation, requesting that the Metro transit department report on unplanned trip cancellations, describe how information about unplanned trip cancellations for fixed-route bus service could more quickly and efficiently be provided to inform transit riders in real time, and describe how metrics about unplanned trip cancellations could be incorporated into the next update of the King County Metro Service Guidelines to inform operational and investment decisions.

WHEREAS, the King County Metro Service Guidelines ("the Service Guidelines"), which were updated in 2021 by Ordinance 19367, guide the development of the transit system through criteria to develop, modify, and evaluate transit service, and

WHEREAS, the Service Guidelines identify performance measures for fixed-route bus service, which the Metro transit department monitors and evaluates to determine if investments or operational changes should be made to meet community needs, and

WHEREAS, schedule reliability is identified in the Service Guidelines as one of the performance measures for fixed-route service, and

WHEREAS, schedule reliability is defined as buses adhering to published schedules within reasonable variance, specifically that a bus route should be no more than five minutes later or one minute earlier than its scheduled arrival time more than twenty percent of the time, or, for routes that provide frequent service, more than three minutes from the scheduled headway more than twenty percent of the time, and

WHEREAS, schedule reliability, which is measured in terms of the number of annual transit service

hours that would be required for routes not operating reliably to meet the reliability standard, is reported for each route each year in the system evaluation report required by Ordinance 19367, and

WHEREAS, in the years following the pandemic, a related issue has emerged, that of unplanned transit trip cancellations, and

WHEREAS, unplanned trip cancellations, which are defined as scheduled trips that do not take place, can happen for many reasons, including when there is either no operator or no vehicle available at the transit base for a specific bus route, meaning that the entire run of that bus route must be canceled, and

WHEREAS, unplanned trip cancellations have a similar impact on transit riders as routes that are unreliable, in that, in both cases, buses do not arrive at their stops at the scheduled time, but have different causes and different solutions, as issues with schedule reliability are typically caused by traffic congestion along a bus route and can be addressed either by investing in capital improvements to enhance transit speed and reliability or by adding transit service hours to adjust the bus schedule, while issues with unplanned trip cancellations can be caused by a shortage of staff or operable fleet meaning that the bus never leaves the transit base and can be addressed by adding staff or fleet, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 19581, which approved the Metro Service Recovery Plan following the pandemic, acknowledged the challenge of unplanned trip cancellations and encouraged the Metro transit department to take all steps necessary to match service plans to achievable operational capacity, including, if needed, by making additional emergency service reductions so that transit riders could depend on the Metro transit department to provide scheduled service on a daily basis without last-minute cancellations, and

WHEREAS, in response to Ordinance 19581, the Metro transit department implemented emergency service reductions in September 2023 to match service levels to operational capacity, and

WHEREAS, in addition, the Metro transit department developed new operational protocols to respond to a nationwide steering column recall that affected a significant portion of the bus fleet and has initiated a service and workforce initiative that has sought to reduce unplanned trip cancellations, recruit more bus

operators, vehicle mechanics, and other operational staff to reduce the level of vacancies, and relieve other operating capacity constraints to better maintain scheduled service levels and provide more reliable service across the system, and

WHEREAS, because of those efforts, the Metro transit department reports improved service dependability reliability in the provision of scheduled trips on average each day;

WHEREAS, the Metro transit department monitors and evaluates unplanned trip cancellations and schedule reliability to inform operational and investment decisions, and

WHEREAS, to maintain rider confidence in the transit system, it is imperative that the Metro transit department quickly and efficiently make information available to inform transit riders of delays or trip cancellations in real time, and

WHEREAS, the Metro transit department maintains an alert system for which riders can register to receive real-time updates on unplanned trip cancellations and other trip disruptions for individual routes and services through text or email, and

WHEREAS, Ordinance 19367 requires the executive to transmit to the council an ordinance to update the Service Guidelines within seven years of transmittal, meaning that updates to the Service Guidelines are expected to be considered no later than 2028, and

WHEREAS, as the Metro transit department develops a proposal for the next update to the Service Guidelines, it is appropriate to include data and information about unplanned trip cancellations and how unplanned trip cancellations will inform operational and investment decisions;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The council requests that the Metro transit department report on unplanned trip cancellations and the impact on transit riders for the period to be covered in the 2025 system evaluation report that is required by Ordinance 19367, with this information to be provided as an appendix to the 2025 system evaluation report, which is due to be transmitted to the council by October 31, 2025.

B. The council requests that the Metro transit department provide updates to the transportation, economy, and environment committee at each of the next two general manager updates during 2025 on how information about unplanned trip cancellations is, or could be, quickly and efficiently provided to inform transit riders in real time of delays or cancellations via communications from the Metro transit department and information provided to third party transit planning applications. The general manager updates should also provide information about how Metro transit department unplanned trip cancellations compares with peer transit agencies.

C. The council requests that the Metro transit department provide a briefing to the regional transit committee and the transportation, economy, and environment committee or its successor no later than February 28, 2026, to describe how metrics about unplanned trip cancellations could be incorporated into the next update of the Service Guidelines to inform operational and investment decisions.