

Metro Service Guidelines Task Force

Meeting Summary

March 4, 2015, 4:00 – 7:00 PM

King Street Center, 201 S. Jackson St., Seattle

Task Force members present: Paul Bachtel, Nancy Backus, Amy Biggs, Vic Bishop, Josh Brown, Tim Burgess, Fred Butler, John Chelminiak, Suzette Cooke, Lauren Craig, Chris Eggen, Mahnaz Eshetu, Jim Ferrell, Hilary Franz, George Frasier, David Freiboth, Josh Kavanagh, Matt Koltnow, Scott Kubly, Matt Larson, John Marchione, Gordon McHenry, Lynn Moody, Shefali Ranganathan, Tom Rasmussen, Carla Saulter, Jon Scholes, Edna Shim, Jim Stanton; *Ex-Officio members:* Kevin Desmond, Mike Harbour; *Facilitator:* John Howell (Cedar River Group)

Members not present: Patrick Green, Jonathan Porter

Guests: Councilmember Jane Hague, Councilmember Larry Phillips

Presenters: Victor Obeso (Deputy General Manager, Planning and Customer Services, King County Metro); Chris O’Claire (Supervisor, Strategic Planning and Analysis, King County Metro)

Welcome

Councilmember Larry Phillips welcomed members of the task force and thanked them for their willingness to participate. He noted that the County Executive was not able to attend this meeting but is fully supportive of the effort. He reviewed the events leading to the County Council’s creation of the Service Guidelines Task Force: the recommendations of the 2010 Regional Transit Task Force (RTTF), the Council’s adoption of their recommended policy principles of productivity, social equity and geographic value, and Metro’s use of the principles. Despite a struggling economy, Metro has been able to implement six Rapid Ride routes and fund an alternative services program for areas of the county where traditional bus service is not needed. Sales tax revenue has increased since 2010, but demand for Metro service has also increased every year. The Service Guidelines Task Force is being asked to build upon the policy framework created by the RTTF and adopted by the Council. The Task Force has an important role to play in reviewing and advising on the guidelines Metro follows to plan service.

Metro’s General Manager, Kevin Desmond, welcomed task force members to King Street Center, Metro’s headquarters. He noted that it was intentional that the Service Guidelines Task Force include members of the original RTTF along with other community leaders and elected officials. The goal is to ensure that Metro’s service guidelines are transparent, objective and based on the policy foundation set by the RTTF. Since the RTTF, Metro has adopted service guidelines, adjusted service 10 times, improved the productivity of the system, and issued annual guidelines reports. A recent successful Seattle ballot measure will increase service in that city over the next six years. That action and the service cuts Metro made last September have opened new dialogue about service and long-term solutions for a regional system. Metro has also just started a long-range planning process.

Task Force Facilitator John Howell asked the members to introduce themselves and say what brings them to the table. Task force members offered the following interests and hopes for the task force:

- Social equity for all residents, including non-commuters, low-income communities, students, seniors, rural residents and others who rely on transit
- What geographic value means, how it works
- Ways to improve Metro service for each city or region of the county
- How to allocate service to balance between commuters' needs and the needs of those who rely on transit for everyday needs, e.g. doctor's appointments, shopping, etc.
- How to identify the *destinations* of riders as part of service planning
- Transit as a key to healthy, livable communities and the region's economic vitality
- Building a regional and integrated system that serves transportation needs and frees up road space for freight
- How employers can help improve transportation for their employees and reduce single-occupancy trips
- Public-private partnerships
- How to measure success and maximize the resources that we have

Councilmember Jane Hague thanked task force members for their willingness to devote time to reviewing the service guidelines. She noted that members' introductions show they bring rich perspectives and passion to this work, and looks forward to receiving their guidance.

Task Force Charge and Ground Rules

Charge and scope. Mr. Howell reviewed the County Council's charge to the task force (see Resource Notebook, General Information tab, p. 1.9) and the Scope of Work (pp. 1.10 – 1.14). The core of the charge is that the task force is to review and make recommendations regarding:

1. The transit performance measures Metro is using across different types of service
2. Metro's implementation of the policy goals of geographic value and social equity, and how to better reflect those values
3. The policies that enable cities to purchase services
4. The use of alternative services and how to improve implementation.

Mr. Howell noted that the Scope of Work includes topics the task force might discuss in each of these areas. In response to a question about why the charge does not include reviewing Metro's work to increase productivity, Victor Obeso said that social equity and geographic value are the policy areas in which the most questions have been raised. Mr. Howell noted that the Scope of Work asks the task force to discuss the tensions between productivity, social equity and geographic value.

Schedule. Two documents in the notebook relate to the task force's schedule. These documents can be found under the heading "Meeting Agendas and Handouts." One ("Service Guidelines Task Force Meeting Schedule") lists the meeting dates and locations. The second ("Service Guidelines Task Force Charter") includes a timeline of the task force's work and subsequent guidelines update in relation to the timeline of Metro's Long-Range Public Transportation Plan. There may be a need to add one or two

more task force meetings in June-July, but the task force's work will not go through the summer. The staff will use the task force's recommendations to revise the service guidelines over the summer. Then the task force will reconvene for one meeting in October to review Metro's work on any revisions to the guidelines before recommendations go to Council.

Relation to Long-Range Plan. Mr. Obeso explained the differences between the Service Guidelines Task Force's charge and Metro's Long-Range Planning process. (See meeting handout, "Service Guidelines Task Force and Long-Range Plan Differences.") The long-range planning process, which is underway, focuses on how Metro plans to grow, the policies to guide growth, and the capital and infrastructure needed to deliver the growth. Some topics the task force raises might be more appropriate for discussion in the long-range plan, such as the level and type of alternative services used in the system. When these issues arise, staff will add them to a list of topics for the long-range planning work on the Long Range Planning parking lot board.

Ground rules. Mr. Howell reviewed a draft set of ground rules for how the task force will operate (in the resource notebook Meeting Agenda and Handouts tab). He drew attention to the following proposed ground rules: #3: respect for others' perspectives and interests, and civility in discussions; #4 the importance of being open minded and trying to understand the interests behind a position that a task force member might take; #5 that decisions will be made by consensus, defined as "support or can live with" a proposed decision; #7 time will be allocated for public comment at the meetings, though there will not be formal testimony taken; #8 members are encouraged to attend all meetings but may send a non-voting alternate if they cannot attend a meeting; #12 while task force members may speak to the media or other groups, they are requested to refer media questions about the progress of the Task Force to Mr. Howell or Jana Demas at Metro; and #15 Metro will attempt to respond to task force members' requests for information.

In response to a question about having a phone-in option for the task force meetings, Mr. Howell said that he hopes this option will be available, but it will depend on the facilities available at Bellevue City Hall where most of the meetings will take place.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Decision: Task Force members approved the draft Ground Rules for Metro Service Guidelines Task Force.
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Request. A task force member asked for a list of the task force members with their contact information so that they could easily contact each other. Mr. Howell asked task force members to let him or Ms. Demas know if they had concerns about including their telephone number in a roster for members' use.

Metro Overview

Mr. Obeso provided an overview of Metro' products and services, and of the RTTF recommendations (see meeting presentation "Metro Overview" in the "Meeting Agendas and Handouts" section of the notebook or online at www.kingcounty.gov/sgtaskforce), including methods Metro has been using to measure productivity, and to incorporate social equity and geographic value into the service guidelines.

He also reviewed the reports Metro is using to increase transparency (found in Metro's online Accountability Center), and the methods for cost control.

In response to task force members' questions, Mr. Obeso offered the following clarifications and additional information:

- *Fare increases:* Between 2008 and 2011, Metro increased fares four times. As of March 1, 2015, Metro has increased fares a fifth time.
- *Difference among Access, DART and Hyde Shuttle:* Access is a paratransit service for people with disabilities who are unable to use regular transit service. Dial-a-Ride Transit (DART) is transit service (using a smaller vehicle) on the outer edges of the county where there is less ridership. A DART trip reservation has to be made at least two hours before the desired pick up time, and reservations can be made for 30 days at a time, up to 30 days in advance. The Hyde Shuttle is a contracted service to Senior Services, not a regular route. Metro provides a bus to be operated by volunteer drivers. It does not require preregistration.
- *Cap on partnership agreements:* Transit Now set a limit on the funds Metro could invest in partnership agreements. The contracts are on a five-year basis and are renewable.
- *Cuts and service model:* A committee member asked if Metro's recent cuts of some routes into downtown Seattle from other cities, such as the bus from the south end of Mercer Island, reflect a change away from emphasizing direct commuter routes. Mr. Obeso said that 30 to 35 percent of riders make a transfer to reach their daily destination. Metro is looking at alternatives to help fill the gap for Mercer Island riders.

Introduction to Service Guidelines

Chris O'Claire explained the service guidelines and how they currently work (see meeting presentation "Service Guidelines Overview" in the "Meeting Agendas and Handouts" section of the notebook or online at www.kingcounty.gov/sgtaskforce). She provided an overview of Metro's planning process, explained in more detail the guidelines analysis section of this process, including priorities for investments and reductions as well as target corridor service levels.

In response to task force members' questions, Ms. O'Claire provided the following clarifications and additional information:

- *Policy review:* The Regional Transit Committee sets policy for the service guidelines but does not review and approve the service guidelines reports.
- *Process for new routes and changes when there is new service:* As Metro sees a market growing and changing, the agency looks at ways to restructure service, including considering routes with increased demand and those that are underperforming. They continuously reassess demand and performance. When University Link begins operation and goes to Northgate, there will be an opportunity to redeploy hours and make the regional system more productive. For example, when Central Link light rail opened, Metro eliminated the Route 42, which duplicated the Link light rail line, and redeployed hours to connect more people to the Link service.
- *Performance measures:* The two performance measures Metro uses are standards in the transit industry and reflect the tension in balancing goals. The Rides per Platform Hour measure

emphasizes dense urban service and the number of people served. The Passenger Miles per Platform Mile measure emphasizes commuter service with riders traveling longer distances, and serves to get more cars off the road.

- *Overlap with other transit systems:* Ten Metro corridors overlap with Sound Transit. Most Community Transit (Snohomish County) and Pierce Transit routes with stops in King County mainly serve commuters into downtown Seattle.

Request. A task force member requested future discussion on redeployment of hours related to new light rail operations.

Questions and Information Requests

Mr. Howell asked task force members if there was information they would like to have that they did not see in their notebooks. Task force members made the following requests:

- Data sets Metro has to help identify the *destinations* of low-income riders' trips.
- Information on why revenue hours are not used as a measurement.
- Examples of at least two routes that were increased and at least two that were decreased.
- List of transit facility improvements that have been made in recent years.
- Where there has been community push-back about a service change, such as on Mercer Island, have measurably longer commute times resulted? What has happened to ridership?
- How does Metro's performance on the two measures (rides per platform hour and passenger miles per platform hour) compare to that of other comparably sized U.S. transit agencies?
- List of co-funding agreements or community service partnerships and how Metro factors these into evaluation of service.
- Comparison of how much transit service is provided for social equity low-income riders and how much for commuters.

[Note: A complete list of follow up items from this meeting, as well as additional requests received after the meeting is attached to these meeting notes.]

Next Steps

Mr. Howell noted that today's presentations were detailed to show how Metro is making decisions about service. The next meeting will explore how implementing the service guidelines has affected service.

The next task force meeting will be on Wednesday, April 1, 4:00 PM, at Bellevue City Hall. **[Note: The April 1 meeting was later rescheduled to begin at 3:00 PM to avoid conflicting with another event.]**

Public Comment

There were no members of the public present who wanted to provide comment.

Follow up items
Expand roster to include email and phone numbers.
Explain how Metro has redeployed hours when new light rail operations come online.
Provide the data sets Metro has to help identify the destinations of low-income riders (as opposed to the origin of their trip).
Provide information on why revenue hours are not used in performance measurement.
Give examples of at least two routes that were increased and at least two that were decreased using service guidelines methodology.
Provide a list of transit facility improvements that have been made in recent years.
Describe a change to service where there has been community push-back. Have these changes resulted in measurably longer commute times? What has happened to ridership?
Provide information on how Metro's performance on the two measures (rides per platform hour and passenger miles per platform hour) compares to that of other comparably sized transit agencies.
Provide a list of co-funding agreements or community service partnerships and how you factor these into the evaluation of service.
Compare transit service provided for low income riders and peak period riders.
Provide more information on DART – where services are located, how DART works, and difference from the Hyde shuttle.
Provide basic timeline/frequency of service changes per year.
Describe how new corridors/routes are added in service guidelines.
Describe how the lists in the service guidelines turn into service changes.
Explain if the bottom 25% of Seattle core is mainly commuter service from the suburbs.
Provide more information about peak service and how it is incorporated in the service guidelines.
Review the Seattle Core and Non-Seattle Core distinction and how we redeploy hours.
Review Seattle Prop 1 Investments related to service guidelines investment needs.
Rationale behind the 50/25/25 balance between productivity, social equity and geographic value.
Evaluate if every city in King County has at least one activity or regional growth center.
Explain if there is a minimum level of service identified for cities.
Describe how park-and-rides are factored into the service metrics.