

Ideas Emerging from June 3rd Discussion Regarding Alternative Services

- **Increase the funding support for alternative services where fixed route is not cost effective.** In the 2015/16 county budget \$12 million was allocated to alternative services for the next two years. That is a good start in enhancing these services. However, in order to provide greater geographic value for rural and suburban communities, additional resources should be provided for alternative services.
- **Alternative services may be used to address several system needs not being met by current transit services:**
 - **Replace poorly performing, fixed-route services under certain circumstances.** Metro should consider ways to mitigate service reductions; one way may be through the implementation of alternative services in places where fixed-route are poorly performing, when alternative services are more cost-effective.
 - **Provide better connections between centers.** Metro should be working to increase mobility options between suburban centers at all hours, including off-peak when shift workers may need transportation options. Alternative services could be used to better connect suburban centers.
 - **In rural communities.** Many rural residents have limited public or private transportation options. Alternative services can be used to provide an option for those who may need to be connected to transit centers.
 - **In emerging markets to “seed” potential new routes.** Alternative services should be used to provide initial service in a corridor that may not yet warrant fixed route service. Based on land use patterns, growth projections, investment in transit-friendly infrastructure, alternative service could be provided in a corridor where ridership it is expected to grow.
- **Enhance the planning for alternative services.** Metro should play a role as convener to facilitate discussions between municipalities, employers, and residents to identify unmet needs and opportunities for alternative services and partnerships. As an example, there is a need for discussions about the transportation needs of workers who work off-peak hours. In addition, when planning in a sub-region (e.g. SE King County) it would be helpful to identify key destinations in other sub-regions and include stakeholders from those regions in the planning.
- **Create a new metric for measuring performance of alternative services.** The metric of cost per rider is not a good indicator of the value of alternative services.

Since overall costs to operate an alternative service are lower than for a fixed route, it may be more appropriate to evaluate the cost per route.

- ***Differentiate the types of alternative service in evaluating their performance.*** The DART and Shuttle transit services operate very differently than the other forms of alternative service (van pool, van share, rideshare, etc.). In measuring the performance of alternative services, differentiate between DART and Shuttle services, and other forms of alternative service.
- ***Consider using private service providers as a way to augment the Metro-provided alternative services.*** Explore opportunities to create partnership with other agencies and companies that have mini-buses or vans but may not be in use at all hours of the day. There could be opportunities to augment Metro's services by engaging private transportation service providers.
- ***Consider modifications to increase subsidy for van pool services.*** Metro has created a highly successful van pool program. It requires 100 percent farebox recovery (from riders or employers) as the operating model. Consider reducing the farebox recovery standard and increasing the tax subsidy. Metro should explore whether a lower fare could increase demand for vanpools.