

Metro Service Guidelines Task Force

Meeting Summary

June 16, 2015, 3:00 – 6:00 PM

Bellevue City Hall, Room 1E-108

Task Force members present: Paul Bachtel, Amy Biggs, Vic Bishop, Josh Brown, Fred Butler, John Chelminiak, Suzette Cooke, Dorene Cornwell, Chris Eggen, Jim Ferrell, Hilary Franz, George Frasier, Josh Kavanagh, Scott Kubly, Matt Larson, John Marchione, Gordon McHenry, Lynn Moody, Shefali Ranganathan, Edna Shim, Jim Stanton; *Ex-Officio members:* Kevin Desmond, Mike Harbour; *Facilitator:* John Howell (Cedar River Group)

Members not present: Nancy Backus, Tim Burgess, Lauren Craig, Mahnaz Eshetu, David Freiboth, Patrick Green, Matt Koltnow, Tom Rasmussen, Carla Saulter, Jon Scholes

Presenters: Victor Obeso (Deputy General Manager, Planning and Customer Services, King County Metro), Chris O’Claire (Manager, Strategy & Performance, King County Metro)

Welcome and Meeting Objectives

John Howell welcomed task force members and reviewed the agenda and purposes for the meeting. He noted that the meeting packet included two items for task force members’ information: an email from a Kirkland City Council member, and a response from Metro staff to task force members’ questions from the May 21 and June 3 meetings. Later in the meeting a task force member asked if the charts showing hours of service by planning subarea separated out the additional hours that the recently approved Seattle transit levy will fund. Mr. Obeso offered to respond to any questions after the meeting.

Review of Ideas Emerging from June 3rd Discussion

Mr. Howell introduced his write-up of ideas from the last task force meeting (see “Ideas Emerging from June 3rd Discussion Regarding Alternative Services”). In the discussion, task force members offered the following comments:

- Mention all types of alternative services.
- Be strategic with expansion of alternative services since funds for all transit services are limited.
- Van pools (last bullet):
 - The goals for expanding van pools with lower fares should be for: (a) areas where the Van Pool would not duplicate other transit service; (b) where there is a gap in service, such as outside of peak hours; (c) to extend the network, such as bringing rural residents to transit centers; and (d) where other shuttle services are at capacity.
 - Put funds into increased promotion of Van Pools.
- In the second to last bullet (“Consider using private service providers as a way to augment . . .”), change “Consider” to “Further integrate.” This is being done, but more could be done.
- In the fourth bullet (“Create a new metric . . .”), it is not clear what a “cost per route” might mean, since routes differ by time and length.

- The third from the last bullet (“Differentiate the types of alternative service in evaluating . . .”) needs a geographic element.
- Instead of starting with a bullet about spending more (“Increase the funding support for alternative services . . .”), lead with strategies for service.

Proposed Task Force Schedule Changes

Mr. Howell described changes proposed to the task force’s schedule to complete its work. The primary reason to reschedule was to allow Metro staff enough time to do an analysis of service type options the task force has discussed, and the potential impact of these changes. The revised schedule would cancel the July 7 task force meeting, hold a technical workshop in early August on the possible changes to service types, and hold task force meetings in the week of September 14 to review preliminary recommendations and in the week of September 28 or October 5 to review final recommendations.

In discussion several task force members said they would be interested in Metro’s suggestions for service types based on the concerns that task force members have voiced. Later in the meeting, there were suggestions to test suburban/urban/rural, express/all-day/local, and to differentiate Seattle and urban centers outside Seattle, and how these service types would shift resources. There was also a request that Metro staff consider different metrics for different kinds of alternative services.

Regarding the proposed meeting schedule, a task force member was concerned that waiting until mid-September to discuss the draft recommendations would not allow enough time for reflection and discussion. Mr. Howell noted that the task force was about to discuss at this meeting a preliminary draft of principles and recommendations, and that the task force has consensus on many recommendations, outside of the service types issue. Another task force member requested that future meetings not be held on Tuesdays, when several cities have City Council meetings.

The task force agreed with the proposed schedule changes.

Discussion of Preliminary Draft Principles and Recommendations

Mr. Howell reviewed his June 12 memo to the task force, providing a preliminary draft of principles and recommendations drawn from the task force’s discussions to date. The principles were high-level statements that provide context for the recommendations. The recommendations were specific strategies to address elements of the charge to the task force. The draft identified the recommendations where the task force has had a strong consensus in its prior discussions.

Draft principles: Task force members’ comments and suggestions for the draft principles were as follows:

- 1st bullet (“Different parts of the county . . .”): Add that the service types need to reflect the differences in travel demands in different parts of the county.
- 3rd bullet (“Right-size service and seed new markets”):
 - Delete the last sentence (“The recent budget action . . .”) as it is out of place for principles.

- The concept of mobility gets lost in this principle. The focus should be on the goal of mobility rather than on the solution of alternative services.
- Alternative services should include connections to all forms of mobility, including biking and walking.
- Keep the focus on the regional nature of the system.
- Be clearer about new markets, such as seeding where communities are planning for growth and making land use and infrastructure investments.
- In response to a question on what “seed new markets” means, Mr. Howell said that this would be providing alternative services in areas or situations that are not yet ready for regular, fixed route services, such as the example of a shuttle to North Seattle Community College.
- There was a question about the word “values” in the first sentence (“While the current system values appear to be about right . . .”) and a suggestion that if this refers to social equity and geographic value, this should be stated clearly.
- Second to last bullet (“Maintain and improve productivity . . .”):
 - It discusses productivity, but there is no discussion on social equity and geographic value. Perhaps a separate principle is needed.
 - There needs to be recognition that productivity is different for different kinds of services, and they should be evaluated differently.
 - There was a suggestion that productivity needs to be weighted more heavily, while still considering the factors of social equity and geographic value.
 - In the last sentence (“Changes to the Guidelines must continue to focus on . . .”), change “must” to “should.”
- Last bullet (“The demands for transit service . . .”):
 - Split the last sentence into two parts, since they are separate thoughts. It would read: “Each part of the county should feel value for the transit services they receive. The services will not always be in the form of fixed route scheduled service.”
 - There was a suggestion to emphasize that residents throughout the county, whether they are riders or not, need to feel they get value from the transit system.
- Add a principle that we value all forms of partnership for the transit system. These might include park and ride lots, dedicated lanes, etc.
- Add a principle about public infrastructure to support transit and how to value it. Communities that have expectations around transit need to have policies and infrastructure to support and use it effectively.

Mr. Howell will use the comments to revise the principles and circulate a new version to the task force. Ultimately, the principles will become part of the task force’s recommendations.

Draft recommendations: Mr. Howell introduced the draft recommendations, noting that they were based on task force members’ discussions and review of prior “emerging ideas” documents. Members offered the following comments and suggestions:

- Changes to Service Guidelines:
 - In the second two bullets on a point system that allows for scaling of points, specify that the system should enable a linear progression of points.
 - There was a concern that scaling points might have the effect of eliminating the differences among options. Mr. Howell said this is one of the questions Metro staff will test in the work they will do for the August workshop.
- Changes to planning process:
 - Specify that the planning process reach out to people who are not using transit, as well as riders, and seek to understand the needs of the whole community.
 - Use the planning process to ask people in low-income and minority areas what destinations are important to them, and what times of day they need to travel. Get a list from local jurisdictions of the services in their community, such as food banks, and their hours.
 - In the second bullet, there was a question about the definition of “traditionally hard-to-reach communities.”
 - Shefali Ranganathan agreed to draft a definition.
 - In the third bullet on addressing the needs of youth, disabled and elderly populations, include also the low-income and minority communities discussed under social equity.
 - In the last bullet, delete “holding planning/guidelines workshops” and replace it with “conducting extensive outreach” since workshops are just one method to collect information.
- Alternative services program:
 - Add that funding for alternative services needs to be significantly increased in order to be effective and take advantage of technology.
 - Mr. Howell will revise the bullets according to the discussion earlier in the meeting about the “emerging ideas” on alternative services.
- Partnerships:
 - On the second bullet, there needs to be a review of all the park and ride resources, and decisions on where they do not provide value and could be improved.
 - Partnerships for park and ride lots might include private businesses and institutions that have their own shuttles. Kevin Desmond noted that there are state and federal laws governing such arrangements with private entities.
 - Add a bullet about recognizing local jurisdictions’ actions to improve traffic flow, signals, land use, bike paths and other resources to support transit, and/or to develop transit-supportive environments that would attract riders.
 - Recognize the type of partnership Metro has offered where a city or private entity provides matching funds to support specific routes or services.
 - Jim Stanton agreed to provide some language on this point.

Mr. Howell will revise the draft recommendations to incorporate the task force members’ comments, and send out a revised version for members to review.

Presentation and Discussion on Policies for Purchasing Service

Victor Obeso presented a summary of Metro's financial partnerships (held over from the June 3 meeting, see slide presentation, "Financial partnerships"). Examples included the Rapid Ride services, for which Metro has worked with 11 cities; Metro's current effort with the City of Tukwila to contact owners of parking facilities; past work with the University of Washington, Microsoft and other private entities; and the Seattle voter-approved levy for additional service in line with Metro's Service Guidelines and the Seattle Transportation Master Plan. Where jurisdictions have proposed to partner on services, Metro analyzes routes for productivity based on the stipulations of each partnership.

In response to questions, Mr. Obeso provided the following additional information:

- Metro's Strategic Plan includes partnering with other entities on facilities and improvements to improve regional mobility.
- Metro has engaged in partnership with small cities in lower density areas. An example is Metro's technical assistance to North Bend to create a park and ride.
- In situations where jurisdictions provide funding for services for a length of time, such as the Seattle levy, the partnership agreement spells out what will happen at the end of the funded time period. For example, for the Seattle levy, if Metro buys a trolley bus it cannot use when the service ends, Seattle will be responsible for that cost.

A task force member commented that there is great opportunity in partnerships to address service needs cost effectively, and suggested emphasizing this in the recommendations.

Next Steps

Mr. Howell will revise the drafts discussed at the meeting and provide new versions for task force members' review. Chris O'Claire noted that there was a small data error in one of Metro's follow-up responses in the meeting handout. A revised document will be sent to all task force members. [Note: The revised document was sent to task force members the week after the meeting.]

The workshop on service types will be scheduled for early August, and a call-in option will be arranged. The next task force meeting will be in the week of September 14. Jana Demas will send out a scheduling poll to members.