

Section One:

Executive Summary

The Six-Year Plan for Public Transportation 2002-2007 (“the six-year plan,” or “the plan”) will continue the successful efforts of the 1996 - 2001 plan to move people throughout urban King County with a network of restructured services, and supporting passenger facilities. The 1996 - 2001 plan triggered a countywide reorientation of transit services in the late 1990s to make transit more relevant to changing travel needs at all levels—regionally, locally, and among the numerous cities and neighborhoods of King County.

This plan constitutes King County Metro’s six-year transit development and financial program in compliance with state law requirements (RCW 35.58.2795).

The plan sets forth objectives and strategies for transit, paratransit, rideshare services and supporting capital facilities in King County, and establishes the policy basis on which annual operating and capital program decisions are made.

The transit investments identified and prioritized in this plan are focused on congestion relief and improved mobility. Congestion relief investments target congested corridors and activity centers to increase ridership and improve the operating environment to increase bus speeds and reliability. Mobility investments emphasize improvements in frequencies and increased span of service in areas of King County with transit-supportive land use and higher ridership potential. Complementing the focus on congestion relief and mobility is a continued focus on service efficiency—improving capacity utilization, reducing duplication, improving unproductive service or re-allocating resources away from it, and creating transit-oriented development projects.

Service, capital and management elements in this plan include:

- More convenient and frequent services, particularly to and between activity centers outside of downtown Seattle
- Strengthened linkage between service and facility investments and the actions of others
- Increased parking capacity and service at a number of park-and-ride locations
- Improved coordination with regional transit services
- Continued emphasis on private and public partnerships
- Ongoing evaluation of services and plan progress

Figure 1-1 summarizes the process used to develop the Six-Year Plan.

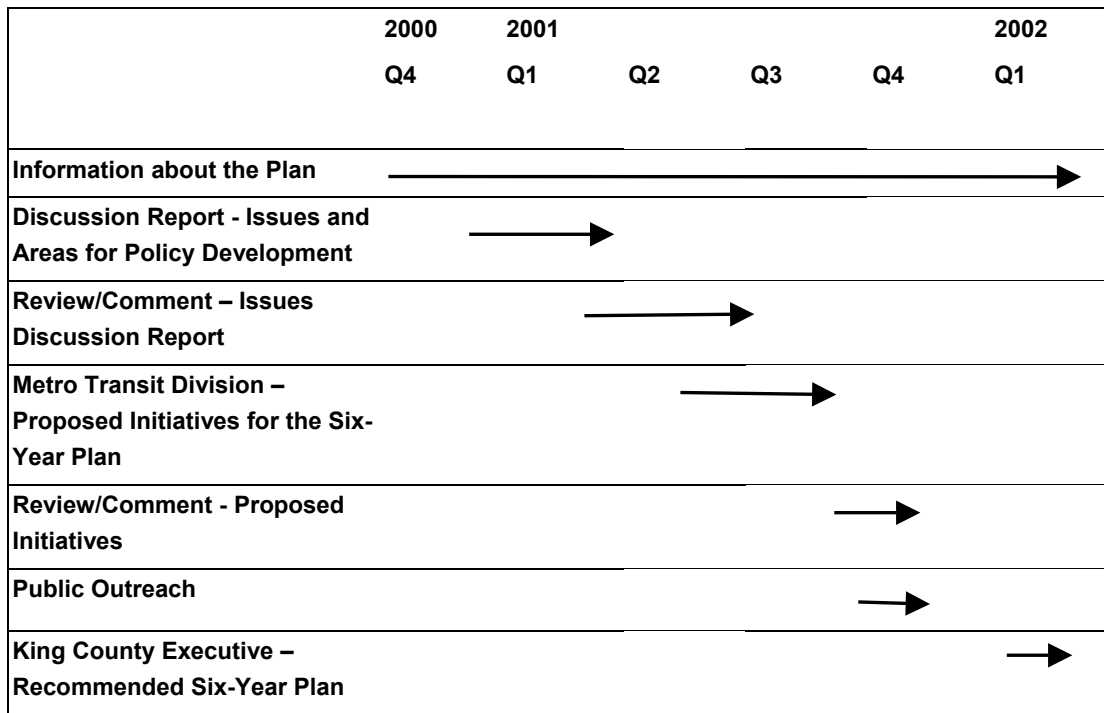


Figure 1-1 Six Year Plan Development Schedule

The detailed revenue and expenditure assumptions used as the basis for the Six-Year Plan are identified both in the Metro Transit Division's adopted 2002 operating/capital budget and financial plan. An updated forecast for 2002 to 2007 incorporates the current recession. This updated forecast would enable system growth of about 110,000 annual service hours. The plan addresses the next 400,000 hours of system growth and prioritizes services to be phased in, given actual revenues from current sources in the next six years. Future updates of the plan will incorporate significant changes from the current financial forecast, affecting the phasing, quantity and types of both service and capital projects to best meet the goals of the plan within the resources that are available.

Planning for transit must start with the recognition that new transit investments are needed in the entire Metro system. All urban areas of King County need new investments in order to increase transit ridership. It is especially important that Metro invest in routes with long-term growth potential, recognizing that ridership may initially be at lower levels. Routes serving transit-dependent, low-income neighborhoods, Urban Centers and other densely populated neighborhoods also need increased investment. In many such locations, buses are overcrowded and riders need relief. In others, large numbers of riders could be quickly attracted, with significant impacts on congestion and air quality.

It is a high priority for future planning to increase the transit resources available to all of King County. Communities that are accommodating housing and employment growth consistent with the Growth Management Act must have the transit resources to meet the needs of their growing residential and employee populations. New service and capital investments should further the goal of building a productive, high-quality transit system that will merit increased public support in the future.

The objectives, strategies and priorities in the six-year plan are consistent with the King County Long-Range Policy Framework for Public Transportation, the King County Comprehensive Plan, the King County Countywide Planning Policies and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan "Destination 2030" adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The plan also takes into account other regional planning efforts completed or underway in the region including Sound Transit's regional transit system plan, and state and local plans for major transportation facility investments.

Consistent with the State Growth Management Act requirement that transportation planning be coordinated with local comprehensive plans, this plan focuses the improvement of transit services and facilities in the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA) of King County. The plan also establishes a strong link between land use and transit actions in order to make development as well as transit services and facilities more efficient. The continued support of development within the UGA with higher levels of transit service is a central component of the region's growth strategy and of this plan. Enhanced transit service is an incentive to jurisdictions that accommodate growth and create more transit-friendly developments.

Changes in the 2004 Update

The 2004 Update to the Six-Year Transit Development Plan for 2002 – 2007 makes housekeeping modifications, modifies Strategy M-3 to include development of an approach to provide a peer agency comparison as part of performance monitoring, and adds two new service strategies to the plan. The first new strategy addresses activity center mobility, and the second establishes a work programs to explore the condition and circumstances King County might participate in the provision of passenger ferry service.

Six-Year Plan Objectives:

The objectives of the plan describe the areas of emphasis of the long-range vision for the transit system during the 2002 to 2007 period. These objectives form the basis for specific plan strategies to carry out the plan.

1. Improve public transportation access to travel destinations by reconfiguring current service, adding new services and passenger facilities, and pursuing innovative solutions and partnerships.
2. Provide higher bus service levels to established urban and manufacturing/industrial activity centers in King County. Develop service improvements within urban areas along key freeway and Regional Arterial Network (RAN) corridors.
3. Enhance service to and within jurisdictions that aggressively implement local land use plans, growth management strategies and regulations to facilitate development that is supportive of transit service.

4. Provide and support transportation demand management actions in coordination with major employers, local jurisdictions, and other agencies.
5. Design and modify services and infrastructure to be more efficient and effective. Reinvest resources from unsuccessful services in a manner that is consistent with the overall system development concept.
6. Design and provide efficient service to major destinations and along corridors through an integrated network of service provided by King County Metro, Sound Transit, Community Transit, Pierce Transit, and the Washington State Ferry System.
7. Make improvements to the transit operating environment in locations and along corridors where actual or potential for high ridership exists and where local jurisdictions provide the necessary supporting plans, policies, permits and/or funding to do so.
8. Improve access for pedestrians (including persons with disabilities) and bicyclists as well as the waiting environment at transit facilities with the highest use.

Six-Year Plan Strategies for 2002 to 2007

Twenty-nine plan strategies provide the direction for service and system development from 2002 to 2007. These strategies fall into five categories:

- Management
- Service
- Capital
- Implementation
- Financial

Management Strategies

The plan's management strategies provide methods to assess the success of plan implementation and the development of service and system improvements through ongoing performance and outcome measurement.

Strategy M-1

Establish a series of targets for measuring success in meeting the objectives of the Six-Year Plan in each of four long-range policy areas, as shown in Table 3-1. Evaluate progress using these targets periodically and at the time of Six-Year Plan updates.

Strategy M-2

Regularly monitor customer satisfaction using measures that assess system changes and improvements through regular surveys of riders and non-riders.

Strategy M-3

Regularly monitor and report bus service performance and ridership system-wide and at the route level to identify services that may require modification, expansion or termination based on their performance. Develop and recommend to the RTC an approach to peer agency comparison that identifies:

- The appropriate measures of performance;
- The major factors, internal and external, that vary among transit agencies and affect performance;
- The extent to which those factors can be tracked for a small group of peer agencies to inform the performance comparisons, and
- A list of five peer agencies considered to be most comparable to King County Metro Transit based upon agency characteristics and the ability to track major performance-related factors.

Service Strategies

The plan's service strategies direct a continued emphasis on efficiency and improved service design; increased service levels on a core network of routes connecting major activity centers, particularly in East and South King County; the addition of services in the peak commuting period; new or improved services in each subarea consistent with local priorities that will serve the highest ridership demand; and improved connections to employment areas outside the traditional central hub of downtown Seattle. King County Metro will continue efforts to integrate bus, vanpool and rideshare services with other innovative and complementary services and programs to increase HOV use and establish commute partnerships with public and private partners. The paratransit program will continue efforts to provide and develop the most cost-effective transportation options for people who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, disability or income. Finally, two strategies address the integration of services with the network of other regional transit providers and the mobility requirements of students.

Strategy S-1

Pursue efficiencies in existing services in major transit corridors including, but not limited to, those listed in Table 4-1. Reinvest savings from these efforts within the planning subarea in which they are generated.

Strategy S-2

Improve transit on-time performance through service design, shortening of route length, splitting of unreliable through-route pairs, and schedule maintenance of existing services. Schedule maintenance hours shall be reserved in amounts equal to one-third of new service investments up to 0.5% of total annual service hours with the remaining two-thirds of new service hours allocated according to Strategy IM-3. The schedule maintenance hour allocation shall be achieved in accordance with the timetable established in Strategy IM-3 without regard to subareas. Schedule maintenance hours that are not used for schedule maintenance in each year shall be used for new service. To the extent that schedule maintenance requirements exceed the service hours available under this policy, reduction of existing services within the same subarea will be used to fund schedule maintenance needs.

In the event that schedule maintenance hours are proposed at a level exceeding 0.5% of total annual service hours by the Department of Transportation, the Regional Transit Committee shall review this proposal and recommend any change in allocation policy to the Metropolitan King County Council.

Strategy S-3

Improve service levels on existing routes and create new routes serving established urban and manufacturing/industrial centers and urban areas where, because of population or employment clusters, ridership and transit use is projected to be the highest. Improve frequencies to support existing demand and attract more riders on a core network of key connections as listed in Table 4-2 and shown in Figure 4-1.

Strategy S-4

Identify areas of urban King County to become eligible for enhanced transit service when they meet the following criteria:

- By meeting or exceeding prorated established housing and population targets, or
- By encouraging higher density development and pedestrian activity through adopted regulations and policies that promote mixed-uses, establish minimum densities, reduce parking requirements, and carry out other efforts that support transit supportive development.

Preference will be given to areas that realize community or neighborhood development consistent with these criteria.

Strategy S-5

Coordinate with the appropriate jurisdictions and agencies to define the project elements and costs associated with the development of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system identified in Figure 4-4. Utilizing West Subarea new and existing service hours, move towards full implementation of BRT service in the Aurora Avenue North Corridor and develop strategies for implementation of a future BRT system.

Strategy S-6

Provide more service capacity at newly built or expanded park-and-ride lots as warranted by ridership demand at those locations. When identified as a subarea priority, make a portion of the new service investment available for innovative vanpool programs to support park-and-ride lot based transit service.

Strategy S-7

Improve community mobility options through increase in service levels on existing routes or through the creation of new service in transit-supportive higher household and/or employment density areas. Within each subarea, develop service proposals to serve residential and employment areas with the highest ridership demand and to promote circulation within communities. In the communities where flexible service and other King County Metro mobility products and services connecting to the all-day service network can be provided more cost-effectively than fixed-route service, those services should be expanded in conjunction with modifications and improvements to the existing system.

Strategy S-8

Develop cost-effective alternatives to supplement federally mandated paratransit service and to provide transportation services to persons who are transportation-disadvantaged due to age, disability or income. Explore ways to help paratransit-eligible persons and other persons with disabilities and seniors on mobility products and services available to the general public, such as vanpools.

Strategy S-9 (New strategy November 2004)

Using a combination of fixed route service, transportation demand management actions and additional transit and HOV products, develop transportation alternatives to reduce single-occupant vehicle (SOV) use in the targeted areas shown in Figure 4-5. Develop partnerships with local jurisdictions, employers and institutions, using pricing strategies and packaging services and products so that these alternatives benefit the partners and their employees, residents or community.

Strategy S-10 (New strategy November 2004)

Work with the appropriate agencies to achieve integrated, cost-effective and efficient operation of public transportation services in King County addressing the needs of current and potential riders. Participate in transportation system planning efforts including state and regional projects of countywide significance to identify potential transit service and capital elements and funding.

Strategy S-11

Ensure that the mobility requirements of student passengers are recognized on a par with those in school districts that choose to participate in Student Transit programs. Participating districts will reimburse King County for all student transit expenses.

Strategy S-12

Work with private and public agencies to develop strategies for using public transportation services to address congestion due to special events. Strategies may include street use, transit priority, and other strategies under the jurisdiction of King County Metro or local governments. By March 2003, report on these potential strategies to the Regional Transit Committee. The strategies shall address extending tunnel operating hours for expanded special event service where current requirements for 100 percent cost recovery are met.

Strategy S-13

Enhance circulation within activity centers through changes in transit service design and other programs to encourage transit use including, but not limited to, proposals for consideration of ride free areas. Preserve existing revenues and encourage financial partnerships with others to cover additional expenses associated with the provision of new services and programs for this purpose.

Strategy S-14

Carry out a work program to determine the conditions when King County investment in waterborne transit may be appropriate and determine under what conditions and circumstances King County could choose to participate in the provision of passenger ferry service.

Coordinate the work program with appropriate stakeholders and others currently working on waterborne transportation issues.

Capital Strategies

The plan's capital strategies provide for the necessary maintenance, expansion and improvement of transit facilities and equipment to support the objectives of the plan. The strategies provide for capital infrastructure and operating environment improvements integrated with the delivery of service, including the ongoing maintenance of transit assets and the expansion of maintenance base capacity. Investments in facilities and systems will take advantage of opportunities for efficiencies by using cost-effective advanced technology. Additionally, the plan directs capital resources to the expansion of park-and-ride capacity in highly congested corridors and adopts a systematic approach to improving transit speed and reliability while making route and passenger facility improvements on corridors with higher service levels and ridership.

Strategy C-1

Maintain, replace, and upgrade current facilities, equipment and systems based on customary and reasonable public transportation and engineering practices and the anticipated use of such facilities, equipment and systems.

Strategy C-2

Improve transit passenger facility access, shelter, lighting, bus stop locations and other amenities to enhance the waiting environment. In addition to general improvements throughout the system, focus a portion of resources on the target

corridors identified in Figure 5-1, through cooperation and coordination with local jurisdictions.

Strategy C-3

Partner with state and local governments to improve transit operating efficiency and route facilities, and to create speed, safety, and reliability improvements on important transit corridors. In cooperation with local jurisdictions, focus on the target corridors identified in Figure 5-1.

Strategy C-4

Expand park and ride capacity in congested corridors with full or overcrowded park and ride facilities as identified in Figure 5-2. Support development of a series of small owned or leased park and ride lots along low density suburban routes in order to create artificially higher densities to enhance the ridership base. Use the Transit-oriented Development (TOD) program to further expand park and ride opportunities through joint use of new parking capacity and financing partnerships. Where these lots have unused capacity, encourage their use by vanpools and park-and-pools.

Strategy C-5

Replace and expand the transit fleet so that the size, fleet mix, and individual fleet procurements are consistent with service projections and operating characteristics. Achieve more efficient operations using features including efficient propulsion systems, advanced maintenance technologies and integrated on-board systems on transit coaches. Encourage expansion of the vanpool program.

Strategy C-6

Expand transit operating base capacity in the areas identified and as described in an adopted King County Metro Transit Operating Facilities Strategic Plan to support transit fleet growth projected to occur through the year 2020.

Implementation Strategies

The implementation strategies of the plan provide a phasing timeline and establish priorities for the use of new service resources to implement service improvements, given a forecast of future system growth that is currently very low. Due to the volatility of the primary current revenue source – the sales tax – the plan establishes a range of service improvements that would be accomplished should increased revenues be available.

Strategy IM-1

Investment Priorities: For the period 2002 to 2007, available operating resources shall be invested in:

- A) Higher priority– Provide up to 65,000 annual service hours of new service resources or re-invest existing resources for the following purposes (not listed in priority order):
 - i) Bus rapid transit service in candidate corridors when identified as a subarea priority;
 - ii) Selected new or expanded park-and-ride locations in King County identified in Strategy IM-2;
 - iii) Services with overcrowding or showing the highest potential for growth in ridership. These include but may not be limited to those core network services identified as priority investment connections in Table 4-2;
 - iv) Re-investment and restructuring of services to integrate with Sound Transit Regional Express and Sounder programs
- B) Lower priority – Provide new or re-invest existing bus service resources in the following amounts and for the following purposes:
 - i) Use up to 100,000 annual service hours, including those investments resulting from implementation of Strategy IM-1, Section A) i), to improve additional peak period services, respond to ridership growth in key corridors or to selected destinations with high peak period ridership potential

- ii) Use up to 200,000 annual service hours, including those investments resulting from implementation of Strategy IM-1 Section A) ii), to improve span of service and frequency towards 2007 target levels on the core network services identified as priority investment connections in Table 4-2;
- iii) Use up to 100,000 annual service hours, in addition to those investments resulting from implementation of Strategy IM-1.A to improve services identified as subarea priorities in the subarea-based community planning process.

Strategy IM-2

Optimize the timing and implementation of service and capital investments to maximize the efficient use of transit resources in meeting public transportation goals. Phase service to match completion dates of planned park-and-ride expansions, start-up of new Sound Transit services and to complete service investments consistent with priorities identified in Strategy IM-1 as new, sustainable service resources allow.

Strategy IM-3

The implementation of transit service hours as stated in strategy IM-1 and IM-2 above shall use the following framework for transit service allocation.

With the implementation of each 200,000 annual hours of service investments described in Strategy IM-1, each King County Metro planning subarea would receive a share of actual service hours implemented as follows: East 40%, South 40% and Seattle/North King County 20%.

Any systemwide reduction in service investment shall be distributed among the subareas in proportion to each subarea's share of the total service investment.

Strategy IM-4

Conduct a community planning process in which transit riders, local jurisdictions, unincorporated area councils, employers, and educational institutions participate in the design and implementation of significant changes to existing service. Use service and capital strategies consistent with the service priorities described in Strategy IM-1. Involve the community, local jurisdictions and subarea groups in the development of recommendations for updates of the Six-Year Plan at least every two years or more frequently if changing conditions or priorities dictate. Utilize overall roles and responsibilities as shown in Table 6-1.

Plan updates shall address significant operating changes and capital improvements anticipated in the next six years as well as any revision to adopted strategies necessitated by significantly changed circumstances affecting the transit program.

Financial Strategies

A central goal of King County Metro's financial planning activities is stability of the transit system and financial integrity of the Public Transportation Fund. This goal is accomplished through prudent planning that uses reasonable economic assumptions along with specific programmatic plans to project future revenues, expenditures and resulting fund balances.

The financial strategies of the plan include pursuit of available state and federal grant sources and continues the long-standing policy of pursuing financial partnerships and economic development with local jurisdictions and other public and private entities. Additionally, a goal to achieve 25% operations revenue to operating expense ratio is maintained.

Strategy F-1

Pursue a combination of farebox and other operations revenue to maintain a target bus operating revenue-to-operating expense ratio of at least 25 percent.

Strategy F-2:

Pursue grants to fund projects that have been identified as necessary to support system service priorities or maintain the system as outlined in this plan.

Strategy F-3 (Amended November 2004)

Pursue opportunities for partnerships and economic development with communities, employers, other transit agencies, federal and state governments and vendors to expand resources to support transit services and supporting capital facilities. Explore the use of advertising to support shelter program expansion and enhancements.

Strategy F-4

Ensure the maximum benefit is derived from available transit revenues by:

- Focusing capital expenditures on projects that directly support service investments;
- Refining capital improvement program expenditure assumptions to improve annual accomplishment rates;
- Revising lifespan assumptions to reflect actual experience when planning for the replacement of the transit fleet and other equipment and facilities;
- Increasing the amount of service in the operating program by reducing annual underexpenditure levels, and
- Replenishing the Transit Fare Stabilization and Operating Enhancement Reserve to enable the operating program to respond to unforeseen revenue or expenditure circumstances.