

Section Six:

Implementing and Paying for the System

Implementation Strategies

Successful implementation of the proposed service and capital program strategies depends on the availability of new, sustainable transit resources and on an effective service change process. Seven strategies (IM-1 through IM-4, and F-1 through F-3) are proposed to address these requirements.

Implementation Priorities

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.**

During plan implementation, those service investments and integration efforts identified in Strategy IM-1A) will be made first. As described in the context of Strategy S-10, restructuring of King County Metro bus services related to Sound Transit services is not expected to use any new King County Metro transit resources. Reinvestment of existing resources will be used to integrate Sound Transit investments and King County Metro Services.

Additional service investments during this period to refine route operations resulting from major service investments including Fall 2001 or from the above system improvements may also be made under this plan, at such times as they are deemed necessary and affordable. These resources would be in addition to schedule maintenance resources to be used for schedule and route management purposes on the remainder of the system's services.

The sample network described in Appendix A assumes the availability of 400,000 new hours added to the current service network, consistent with the type and nature of changes described in this strategy.

Service Implementation Phasing

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.

New service investments associated with the expansion of park-and-ride capacity identified below will take precedent over other new service investments during this period. New service resources projected in future year financial plans will be reserved for this purpose in order to ensure that they are available when facility capacity increases are completed. Some phasing of new park-and-ride service investment is possible. Lower service levels may be implemented at the time a facility initially opens or is expanded, until such time that ridership demand requires additional bus trips.

Similarly, King County Metro service integration with Sound Transit Express Bus and Sounder Commuter Rail will occur when Sound Transit service improvements or modifications are implemented.

Description of Phasing Consistent with Current Completion or Startup Schedules:

2002

Park-and-Ride Service Expansion. Approximately 5,000 annual service hours will be used to expand service capacity associated with new park-and-ride parking capacity at Northgate. An interim lot with approximately 500 new parking spaces will be opened in 2002.

Integration with Sound Transit Express Bus Service. In conjunction with the expected spring 2002 Sound Transit board decision regarding the implementation of regional express bus services on SR-522, the King County Council will consider and adopt a proposal for reconfiguration of Metro services along that corridor. The outcome of a coordinated King County Metro and Sound Transit public review and council/board approval process will enable Metro and Sound Transit to integrate

service, as called for in this plan. The coordinated response will include an increase in service capacity to address additional transfer activity and expanded parking at the Northgate park-and-ride lot.

Revision of King County Metro Service at Sounder Commuter Rail Facilities. In 2002, commuter rail stations in Auburn and Kent will be completed. The routing of peak and all-day services in these locations will be revised to serve these facilities.

Revision of Metro Services in Downtown Bellevue. In 2002, the new and expanded Bellevue Transit Center will be completed. Completion of this facility will enable implementation of transit service changes in downtown Bellevue called for as a part of September 2001 service changes.

2003 - 2004

Park-and-Ride Service Expansion. Approximately 36,000 hours will be used to expand service capacity and provide new service connections to park-and-ride lots with new parking capacity. These service investments will address expanded parking capacity at key park-and-ride locations in east and south King County, namely at the Issaquah Highlands, Eastgate and Redondo Heights locations. At Issaquah Highlands, new service to downtown Bellevue and downtown Seattle will be implemented. At Eastgate, service to downtown Seattle will be expanded, and new service to downtown Bellevue will be provided. At the Redondo Heights lot, service to downtown Seattle will be provided.

2005 to 2007

Integration with Sounder Commuter Rail Services. In 2005, service investments will address integration with Sound Transit's commuter rail services in south King County. It is anticipated that Sound Transit's Sounder Commuter Rail will reach full service levels in south King County in 2005. Metro's services that are duplicative of Sounder will be reoriented to feed passengers to Sounder stations. Approximately 10,000 to 15,000 service hours are likely to be made available for concurrent redeployment to other South subarea service priorities.

2002 to 2007

Additional Higher Priority Investments. During this period, service changes will also be conducted in each of the three planning subareas to restructure or otherwise modify existing services and fine tune prior service changes. In some cases, these will be prompted by conditions such as significant increases in ridership, coach overloads or long-term service re-routes caused by construction or other conditions not directly anticipated in this plan.

For routes that comprise core network connections identified for priority investment in this plan, BRT service implementation, responses to overload conditions and attempts to capture high ridership demand, will be among the highest priorities for new service investment.

Lower Priority Investments. Additional system improvements are planned as resources allow and after completion of the highest service priorities.

For other non-core routes, King County Metro will continuously review and evaluate service structure, ridership demand, land use conditions and operating characteristics to develop proposals consistent with the service and capital strategies of this plan, local subarea priorities and to respond to changing conditions and resource availability.

Metro will pursue an array of partnership initiatives that will help leverage limited public resources with additional financing from both public and private partners. Strategy S-9 summarizes initiatives that Metro continues to pursue with local jurisdictions, institutions, and employers to help finance alternative public transportation products and provide financial incentives for users of those products. Metro is also working closely with local jurisdictions and the State of Washington to maximize funding from federal grants, primarily for capital projects. However, grant funds are often restricted as to when they can be used and typically support only one-time capital costs and/or short-term service demonstrations. Therefore, operating grants cannot be considered sustainable resources for service.

Service Resource Allocation

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.

The size of transit system improvement packages called for in this plan will vary from year to year, based upon the adoption of the Public Transportation Fund budget and associated financial plan analysis for the period. From year to year, the location of improvements will be based upon those priorities described in Strategy IM-1 above, the amount of sustainable service resources available for investment each year, and the logical packaging of service improvements.

For the purposes of reviewing the system-level effects of the allocation policy, net change in service hours from a baseline established for fall 2001 services will be measured and reported. Actual net change in service hours will be calculated in 2005 for the period 2002 through 2004 and again in 2007 for the period 2002 through 2006. Projected net change in service hours between 2002 and 2007 will be measured prior to the end of 2007 and based on adopted service changes through fall 2007.

During plan implementation, measurement of the share of service hours allocated to each subarea will be based on investment decisions as determined through the subarea-based community planning process and as adopted by the King County Council. The subarea-based community planning process may result in service recommendations for investments in services assigned to a different subarea. In particular, priorities for cross-subarea improvements identified in one subarea may not coincide with the priorities of another subarea. In those instances, the recommendation of service changes by the King County Executive and the adoption of service changes by the

King County Council will be guided by the overall objectives of the plan. In order to maintain rational system-level development, one subarea's unique priorities will not dictate system-level decisions.

Measurement of the resulting share of hours will be based on the baseline bus route allocations that assign one-way routes that originate in a subarea or two-way routes that operate wholly within a subarea to that subarea. Further, all-day, two-way routes that operate between two subareas will be attributed in hours at 50% to each subarea. See Appendix A for a list of current routes and their assignment by subarea.

Subarea and Community Based Planning

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.

Subarea-based Community Planning. The subarea-based community planning process implementing the Six-Year Plan will involve the following:

- Defining subarea priorities within the parameters of the Six-Year Plan
- Working with individual communities to define the specific improvements to be implemented, consistent with Implementation Strategies IM-1 and 2

Task	Recommendations to County Executive			Metropolitan King County Council		
	Subarea Steering Committees (ETP, SCATBd, SeaShore)	Local Jurisdictions	Community Involvement	Regional Transit Committee	Transportation Committee	King County Council
Select subarea priorities	Review and refine alternative service priorities for the subarea. Recommend subarea service priorities to the County Executive.	Help subarea steering committees define priorities by participating in the steering committees and at the staff level.	Use information from Six-Year Plan outreach efforts and from existing research in discussions with local jurisdictions and subarea steering committees.	Receive progress reports on subarea discussions.		System approval of system priorities and expenditure levels in annual budget.
Develop service changes	Review service change proposals developed by Metro, local jurisdictions and communities for consistency with defined priorities.	Work with Metro staff and community members to develop specific service change proposals.	Representatives from a broad range of community interests work with Metro staff and local jurisdictions to develop specific service change proposals.		Review and recommend service change ordinance to Council.	Final Council action on service change ordinance.
Update Six-Year Plan	Recommend Six-Year Plan modifications to the County Executive.	Help subarea steering committees develop recommended Six-Year Plan modifications.	Representatives from a broad range of community interests help develop recommended Six-Year Plan modifications.	Review and recommend Six-Year Plan update ordinance to Council.		Final Council action on update of Six-Year Plan

Table 6-1 – Six-Year Plan Roles and Responsibilities

Defining Subarea Priorities. King County Metro will work with the subarea transportation groups (ETP, SCATBd and SeaShore) and other stakeholders to identify service priorities not specifically identified in this plan for each subarea. This effort will seek to establish a broad-based understanding of the priority service investments identified in Implementation Strategy IM-1 and phasing identified in Strategy IM-2 prior to the beginning of a more detailed community process identifying specific changes to be implemented. During this stage partnerships and other means of gaining additional resources will be also pursued.

Making Changes. Formal King County Council approval of detailed service proposals concludes the annual service change process, which provides opportunities for the public to help design and implement changes. Current service will be changed, and new services will be developed through this process. Although the exact schedule of events may vary during each service change process, depending on the complexity of the changes being discussed, and the decision timeline associated with them, processes should be designed to include:

- Riders, nonriders, citizen advisory committees, elected officials, community leaders, city and county staff, school districts, social service agencies, and Metro staff and operators will be involved.
- Make use of information on public and community needs and preferences, research on other transit systems, and data on the performance of the current system.

Working partnerships will be created between King County Metro and communities affected by service changes. This approach assumes the following:

- Public involvement occurs early in the planning process
- The public is advised about opportunities for involvement throughout the planning process
- An extensive public information effort uses a variety of media and communication media to keep discussion open
- Clarity is needed as to who contributes to decisions and who is responsible for the final decision
- Flexibility is necessary

The goal of this approach to community involvement is to ensure that Metro Transit is responsive and accountable to the community during implementation of the Six-Year Plan. Depending on the complexity of a given service change proposal, the community involvement process may take up to eighteen months, including Council adoption of the final service recommendations.

Additional Factors. Beyond consistency with plan objectives and strategies, during any given service change process a number of factors will influence the selection of a specific set of service changes. These considerations include federal requirements, cost, capital requirements, relationship to other proposals, and subarea priorities.

Federal Requirements. King County Metro is required to comply with two federal requirements - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - that are integrated in all service proposal assessments.

The objectives of Title VI are to ensure that the level, quality and distribution of transit services, as well as participation in transit planning, are provided to ensure equal access and mobility without regard to race, color or national origin. In anticipation of significant transit system modifications, King County Metro Transit will identify resulting service levels and quality of service for minority and non-minority communities, and make such information available to policy makers.

The Americans with Disability Act (ADA) requires that complementary paratransit service be comparable to non-commuter, fixed route service for the general public in several ways, including service area, days and hours, response time and fares. The minimum complementary paratransit service area, as defined by federal regulations, is based on Metro's non-commuter fixed route service. When non-commuter fixed route service changes occur, the paratransit service area is adjusted to reflect these changes as needed.

Cost. Some service changes may have to wait for implementation because of funding constraints. To the extent that additional revenues become available, the magnitude and timing of service improvement implementation will vary.

Capital Requirements—Integrating Service with Capital. The establishment of service priorities will influence the timing for implementation of critical supporting capital program elements (fleet procurement, transit hubs, speed and reliability improvements, etc.).

Relationship to Other Proposals. Different service proposals may complement each other by mutually enhancing their effect on overall mobility or system efficiency. Circumstances such as these could require that certain changes be linked.

As individual services are agreed upon, periodic reviews with the subarea groups will be made to update them on progress towards their implementation. In addition, the groups will be used as a “clearinghouse” to address issues regarding the direction of service changes and any issues resulting from the community work and affecting the overall network for the subarea in question.

Figure 6-1 illustrates the service change process.

Financial Strategies

Paying for the System

Relationship of the Six-Year Plan to the Financial Plan. The ability to implement the priorities discussed in this plan is dependent upon the availability of resources. An overview of the financial planning process is useful in understanding how and why resources change.

The Northwest is currently in the midst of what is hoped to be a short ‘recession’. Economic activity is projected to continue to decline in 2002 but then begin to gather upward momentum. For the period of this six-year plan, population, employment and the local economy are currently projected to grow and the resulting sales tax revenue will grow faster than inflation for the period as a whole. While the rate of growth is forecast to be faster than inflation, the rate of growth that is currently projected is significantly below earlier estimates made during the 2001 and initial 2002 planning processes. The impact to sales tax revenue is that the original 2002 projection of \$321 million will not be achieved until 2004.

A central goal of the Transit Division’s financial planning activities is stability of the transit system and the 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. Planning is done on an ongoing basis, and not just as part of the county’s annual budget process.

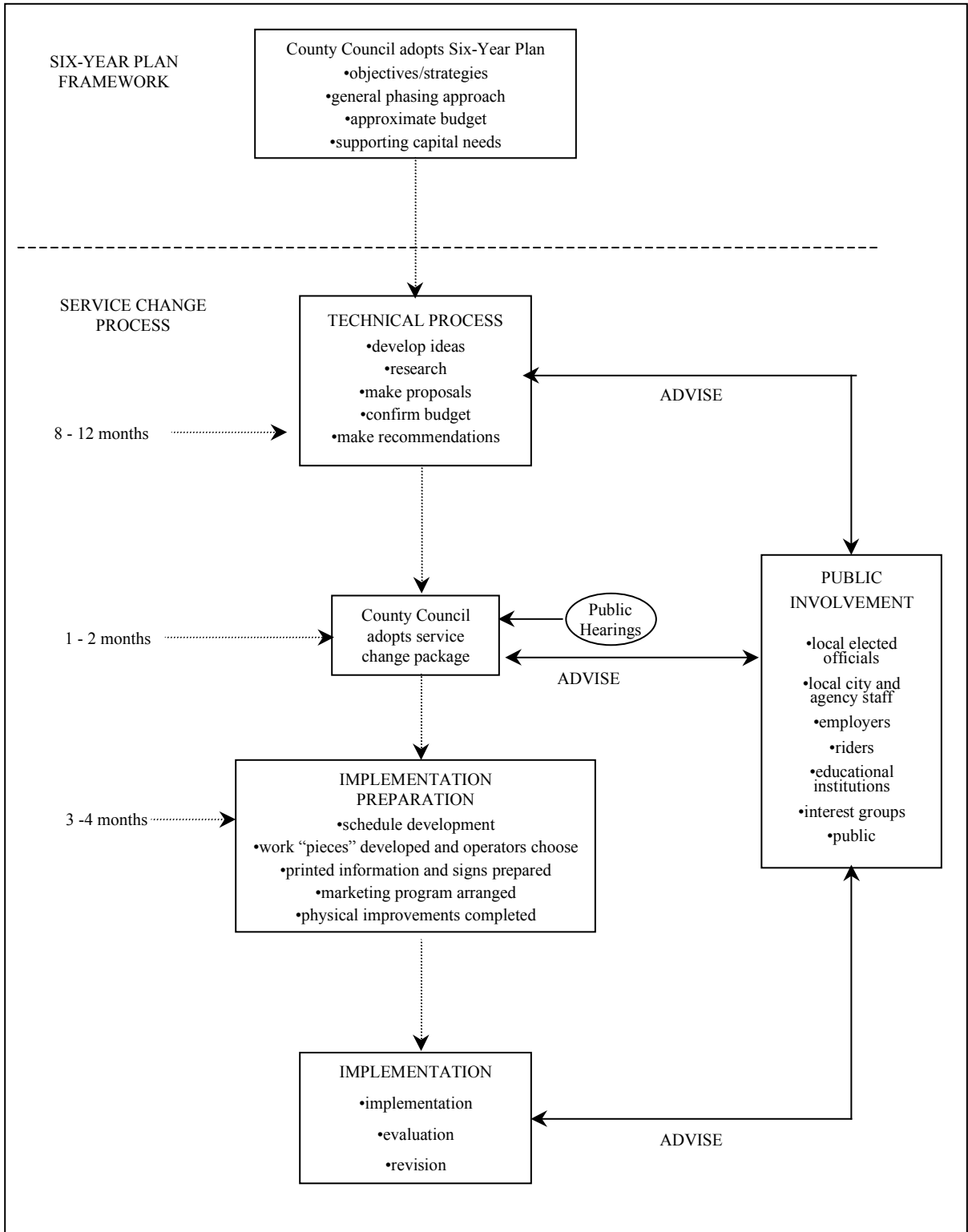


Figure 6-1 – Service Change Process

Comprehensive financial planning, combined with ongoing forecasting, allows the system to respond effectively to change in the economic environment, without detrimental impacts to existing services. Anticipation of changes in financial conditions and forecasting beyond the current year enable the transit system to project sustainable levels of transit service and to accelerate or delay new service implementations based on these changing conditions.

Financing for this six-year period is fundamentally different than that provided previously. The largest single change is the loss of Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET) revenues, which previously provided as much as 30 percent of the funding for transit operations. While a significant share of the lost MVET was replaced with additional sales tax proceeds, the resulting increased reliance on sales taxes with its somewhat volatile nature increases the need for prudent financial planning. When the sales tax rate was increased in Fall 2000, it was not increased to the maximum amount allowed by the state legislature. Local policy makers could choose to ask the voters for an additional .1% sales tax without the need for legislative action at the state level.

The detailed revenue and expenditure assumptions used as the basis for the Six-Year Plan are identified in the Metro Transit Division's 2002 operating/capital budgets and supporting six-year financial plans for 2002 to 2007. The financial plan associated with the 2002 adopted Public Transportation Fund budget, as well as the most recent forecast incorporating the current recession, are included in Appendix F.

Based on the most recent financial forecast, Metro will only be able to sustain an additional 65,000 annual hours of new service by 2007, although the sample network that accompanies this plan identifies changes that total about 400,000 annual hours. Planning for more than is available allows Metro to respond to additional revenue—through growth in the economy or other unanticipated sources—without significant modifications to the plan. It also presents a larger menu of service options from which to choose, while providing reasonable financial boundaries to avoid building false expectations for improvements. Of course, the possibility exists that the economy will further falter, or the recession will continue, and that fewer resources will be available during this six-year period.

Future updates of the plan will incorporate changes from the current forecast, changing 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.

Operating Revenue and Grants

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.

Fare revenue is a significant source of financing for public transportation. Policy choices influencing how existing service is reoriented or how new services are added, as well as local economic conditions impact ridership and the resulting fare revenue. In addition, the fare structure influences demand for service, impacting both ridership and revenue. The current financial plan assumption is that current fare levels will remain until 2007.

Grants from federal sources remain strong. However, current federal grant legislation, TEA21, expires in 2002. Future federal awards will be based on federal appropriations, the proportionate share of Federal Region X compared to other regions and the proportionate size of King County relative to other transit providers in the region.

The availability of state grants has been influenced by Initiative 695, and a number of state-funded programs have been dissolved. At the time this plan is being written, the Washington State Legislature has not yet adopted a comprehensive transportation funding strategy at either the State or local level. Until the legislature takes action to identify projects and potential funding packages, the future effects on King County Metro are unknown.

Financial Partnerships

Additional funding may become available as a result of new state or regional initiatives or through partnerships with other parties. The Long-Range Policy Framework (LRPF) directs Metro to maximize the effectiveness of local public transportation funds by pursuing joint financing of service and capital projects. Such partnerships can take the form of cash contributions or in-kind contributions, such as joint development of facilities.

Strategy F-3

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.

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD). The Transit Division holds a significant real estate portfolio, which changes to accommodate new facilities and to expand or relocate existing operations. The TOD program seeks to increase development of housing, jobs and other transit trip generating activities in close proximity to major transit facilities such as transit passenger transfer hubs and park-and-ride lots. The TOD program is intended to increase transit ridership and to meet larger growth management goals by facilitating development inside urban centers and within the urban growth boundary. These partnerships maximize the public investment in the transit system by increasing system capacity through expansion of facilities or the generation of revenue that can be used to increase service. The goals of the program are met by forming partnerships with developers and jurisdictions. Projects are evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Projects are evaluated to determine how they fit with not only transit goals and business objectives, but those of King County in general.

The Transit-Oriented Development Section of the King County Department of Transportation has been working on bus-related TOD joint-development projects since 1998. A number of King County TOD projects are currently underway. The county is investigating the feasibility of TOD at sites in Burien, Kenmore, Kent, Shoreline and other locations.

The mix of sites/facilities being considered in King County's TOD projects includes transit centers, park-and-ride lots, off-street bus-layover facilities, and residential, institutional, retail, office, hotel and entertainment uses. Project concepts range from 308 apartments above a park-and-ride lot in Redmond's Overlake area, to four skyscrapers above an underground bus-layover facility in downtown Seattle near the Washington State Convention & Trade Center.

The projects selected for TOD will be influenced by the funds available within the program to fund King County's portion of the project. If revenues decrease from projected levels, it is possible that fewer projects will be selected during the course of this plan. Figure 5-3 shows current targeted TOD sites and Appendix D provides an overview of current projects status.

Commute Partnerships. As described under Service Strategy S-9, King County Metro also works with employers including local jurisdictions in the Puget Sound region, providing products and services to help motivate employees to commute to work by alternative methods, rather than driving alone.

Metro looks for opportunities to create partnerships with employers, many affected by the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law, as well as with businesses that are complying voluntarily. Within such transportation partnerships, Metro works with employers, cities, neighboring transit agencies, business organizations and community groups to offer a full array of transportation services and assistance to employers. These partnerships also extend to private and public landowners that enter into agreements to provide leased land for park-and-ride use through Metro's leased lot program.

Metro contributes technical expertise along with product and service options, and under certain circumstances, also contributes partial funding or grant resources for projects designed to promote alternative commuting methods.

King County Metro will continue to encourage contributions from local jurisdictions for assistance in funding existing services for the purpose of attracting more riders through increased service, or for the purpose of operating as a fare-free service. The pursuit of partnerships that result in new bus routes with only partial funding of their operation by public or private partners may be explored, but should be considered temporary improvements to the transit network that exist only so long as the partnership contribution exists.

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.**