

Section Three:

Plan Objectives, and Monitoring System Performance

This section describes the policy framework that defines King County Metro's goals and objectives for public transportation, and how the service concept will advance them. It also addresses the strategies King County Metro will use to monitor achievement of its objectives, performance of its services and satisfaction of its customers in order to manage the public transportation system effectively. King County Metro uses several quantitative methods applied over time to assess how well its services are performing and perceived, and uses this information to direct investments and adjust services to improve the quality of public transportation and its impacts on the communities we serve.

Policy Framework, Plan Concept and Consistency

King County Metro's long-range goals and objectives are defined in the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation (formerly known as the Long-Range Policy Framework). King County Metro's goals are to improve mobility, economic vitality and environmental quality; to support growth management; to be a responsible regional partner; and to work with other jurisdictions to ensure that land use and transportation planning and implementation are coordinated.

Twelve objectives are established to further these goals, shown in Exhibit 3-1. These objectives drive King County Metro's plans and priorities and are reflected in strategies included elsewhere in this strategic plan. These objectives also inform the performance measures developed to assess the implementation of the plan.

System Development Concept

The improvements implemented by this strategic plan are enabled by the voter-approved *Transit Now* program. This program continues a shift toward a more multi-destination network. The concept maintains the quality of existing investments, and adds new resources to programs that have the greatest potential to achieve King County Metro's objectives: high ridership core service connections, RapidRide bus rapid transit, service partnership programs, and transit access in rapidly developing areas.

Exhibit 3-1
King County Metro Objectives Defined in the
Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation

Market Share

- Increase the portion of trips by people using transit and ridesharing within King County.

Mobility

- Reduce average HOV travel time relative to SOV travel by increasing HOV speed and reliability.
- Improve transit access to jobs and other activities
- Increase travel opportunities on public transportation by developing a range of integrated and complementary services and facilities, and making the system easier to use and understand.

Cost and Efficiency

- Provide the most efficient and effective services and facilities possible within available resources.

Social, Economic and Environmental Benefits

- Provide improved HOV services that support local and regional comprehensive plans and policies consistent with the Growth Management Act.
- Encourage creation and enhancement of pedestrian-friendly and HOV-supportive communities.
- Increase transportation options that use less energy, consume less land resources and produce fewer air pollutants.
- Reduce the average miles and hours traveled per day per person in single-occupant vehicles.
- Provide services and facilities that benefit all socio-economic groups.

Financial Feasibility

- Develop a system that is affordable to build, run and use with available funding.
- Identify new funding sources through cooperation with public jurisdictions and the private sector.

In the mid-1990's, King County Metro participated, along with other transit operators in Pierce and Snohomish counties, in development of a regional transit system plan which led to the creation of Sound Transit and high capacity transit connections throughout the three-county region. Development of regional services has given King County Metro the opportunity to invest in improved local service connections in all areas of the county. While Metro Transit service was historically considered "Seattle-centric," over time both Metro Transit and Sound Transit services have evolved to serve activity centers throughout the county consistent with the Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2020 and growth management goals.

A key element of this transition to a more multi-destinational system was King County Metro's development of a network of high-ridership core service connections, and these constitute the largest service investment in *Transit Now*. Core connection routes are primary two-way, all-day connections between activity centers throughout the county. Because core routes have transit attractions at both ends, they are productive in both directions.

The development of RapidRide bus rapid transit service complements Sound Transit rail and regional express bus by providing fast and frequent intermediate capacity transit services that serve more local trips of all sorts using arterial streets. RapidRide has potential to increase ridership for the shorter-distance trips that constitute the majority of trips by providing faster speeds, more frequent service, and a more convenient and comfortable experience.

The service partnership program provides an opportunity for King County Metro to work with public and private organizations to share the costs and responsibilities of providing additional transit service. The program also provides an opportunity for local jurisdictions and employers to provide a higher level of transit service than is possible through regular transit revenues, or to provide service in advance of new development, allowing jurisdictions a new tool to use transit service to help address transportation and land use coordination requirements under the Growth Management Act.

As part of *Transit Now* implementation, King County Metro plans to increase service to growing residential areas within the Urban Growth Area (UGA). King County Metro has previously been able to expand service to respond to rapid development in both the East and South areas of the county only to a limited extent. Investment in park-and-ride lots and service capacity on major corridors has been a priority over the past six years.

Transit Now enabled an additional boost of service to areas where development and population growth have out-paced service growth. The transit system currently provides extensive service coverage to people who live within King County, particularly within the designated Urban Growth Area (UGA). As shown in Exhibit 3-2, nearly 94 percent of all households within this area fall within one-quarter mile of a bus stop, within one and one-half miles of a permanent park-and-ride lot, or within the service area of Metro DART dial-a-ride service.

Additionally, King County Metro extends other transit and high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) services and products, including vanpool, rideshare services, and employer partnership programs, to all King County residents in order to provide them with options to driving alone. Paratransit service that meets or exceeds federal requirements is provided to qualified persons with disabilities in a service area comparable to King County Metro's non-commuter fixed route service.

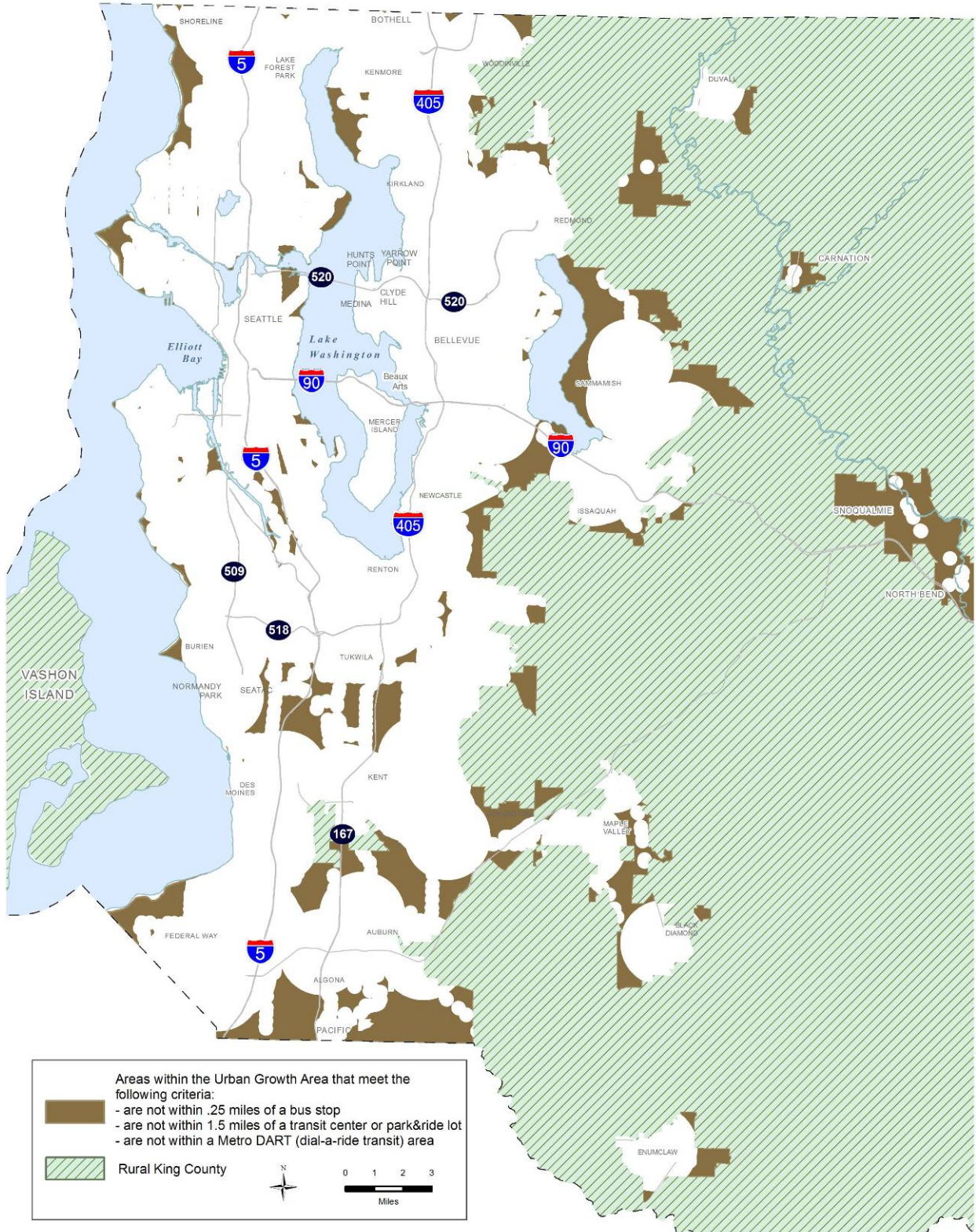
Supporting Growth Management

King County, in accordance with the Washington State Growth Management Act and in coordination with local jurisdictions, has implemented growth management policies to strengthen the link between transit service levels and land use. Development that creates higher concentrations of people and jobs provides economies of scale in the delivery of service. Implementation of related policies, such as limiting parking supply and establishing parking fees, increases the demand for transit alternatives. Within King County, areas where growth and growth management policies have combined to create strong, transit-supportive conditions include downtown Seattle and environs, the University District, and downtown Bellevue. These areas are the strongest transit ridership destinations in the county.

In recent years, policies directing growth into the Urban Growth Area (UGA) have begun to show results. Rapid growth in many cities and in urban, unincorporated King County is increasing pressure on the transportation system to provide additional bus and other transit services within the UGA.

Exhibit 3-2

Metro Transit Service Area, and Locations that are Accessible to Transit Service



The concept of a “transit-supportive area” developed by the Transportation Research Board⁹, is used in the plan to more closely link land use and transit investment where higher population, employment density and potential ridership support a higher level of transit service operating all day. In areas where land use is not transit-supportive, attempts will be made to work with jurisdictions to improve land uses, and to design and provide service most appropriate to the transit market.

Transit-oriented, more densely developed areas can sustain higher levels of transit service. This is especially true of areas that are on track to successfully reach their housing and employment targets established by the Countywide Planning Policies and those areas with limited parking supply, parking charges and/or good pedestrian environment.

By using the concept of a “transit-supportive area”, King County Metro can better work with local jurisdictions to identify how best to provide transit-supportive environments and land use to foster the development of convenient and well-used public transportation.

Monitoring and Management Strategies

Strategy M-1: Monitoring Plan Progress

Establish a series of targets for measuring success in meeting the objectives of the Strategic Plan in each of four long-range policy areas. Evaluate progress using these targets periodically and at the time of Strategic Plan updates.

This strategic plan does not establish measures or targets for plan achievement between 2007 and 2016. The 2008 update to this strategic plan will re-evaluate the measures and targets used to assess plan progress, as well as the frequency and mechanism used for reporting.

⁹ Transit Capacity and Quality of Service Manual, Second Edition. Transit Cooperative Research Program, Report 100. 2003

The following measures have been developed and assessed periodically to evaluate plan progress, based on plan objectives and targets established for 2002 through 2007.

Cost and Efficiency

- **Ridership.** Transit ridership is defined as the number of annual boardings on the bus system at the countywide level. The changes and improvements proposed in the plan are expected to increase ridership over time, as both existing and new customers benefit from more and improved travel choices.
- **Bus Cost.** The cost of service per platform hour (relative to inflation) provides an overall measure of system cost efficiency. Various factors influence the labor, capital and administrative cost of service delivery. This indicator measures the average cost of the service supplied to the public per unit of service.
- **Bus Service Effectiveness.** Two measures of service effectiveness are boardings per platform hour of service and total bus passenger miles traveled. The measure of boardings per platform hour indicates transit's effectiveness in the number of travel occurrences served per unit of service. A measure of total passenger miles indicates transit's effectiveness in limiting the private vehicle miles that might otherwise be driven on limited roadway space.

Growth Management

- **Service Orientation.** Shifts in service orientation show how the overall system structure is changing. Service orientation shifts are measured by changes in the amount (total annual platform hours) of service investment during the plan period made for core connections, peak-only services and local/other services.

Market Share

- **Work Trip high occupancy vehicle (HOV) Mode Split.** The state Commute Trip Reduction Act is intended to increase the portion of commuters who use public transportation. Efforts are targeted at commuters to make their trips to and from work at designated sites within employment target areas where CTR requirements apply. King County Metro will focus resources to capture a higher percentage of total trips taken and reduce reliance on the single-occupant automobile. Progress toward meeting CTR targets to increase the percentage of HOV work trip is expected to occur over time.

Mobility

- **Market Penetration.** The changes and improvements proposed in the plan are intended to increase market penetration by increasing service levels (frequency and span of service) in transit markets with strong ridership or indicators of strong demand. If the changes are effective, the number of households with people who have used transit in the last month will increase over time.
- **Overall Use.** The usefulness of public transportation to people throughout King County is increasingly important. An upward trend in transit boardings per capita is expected over time and is indicative of how well public transportation is capturing all kinds of travel demand.

Strategy M-2: Customer Satisfaction

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

Customer satisfaction provides a measure of service quality and acceptance of system changes and improvements. It is particularly important in retaining riders who have other transportation options (almost 75 percent of current riders) and in attracting new riders to the system.

Rider/Non-Rider Survey

King County Metro's Rider/Non-Rider Survey will be used to assess satisfaction levels with system changes and improvements overall and at the subarea level in areas including:

- Directness of travel
- Wait time between transfers
- Safety, comfort, and convenience
- On time performance
- Service frequency (headway) - the time between buses

Additionally, customer satisfaction should be considered in the context of service evaluation, as an element of each area that is evaluated. This approach will utilize the information gained from regular customer surveys to link the evaluation of service with a corresponding evaluation of the customer's viewpoint under Strategy M-3.

Strategy M-3: Service Performance Evaluation

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.**

King County Metro monitors service performance on an ongoing basis, incorporating detailed route characteristics and data as well as system level indicators such as the customer satisfaction research described in Strategy M-2. The service evaluation process looks at both existing and new services and should include the following:

- Selection of reliable long-term data sources
- Consistent monitoring, evaluation, and reporting procedures
- High performance threshold(s) above which services should be improved to serve more riders
- Minimum performance threshold(s) below which service will be modified or eliminated
- Use of both traditional service performance indicators, customer research data and comparison with peer agencies