SECTION 3

■ ALTERNATIVE SERVICES PERFORMANCE AND PROGRESS REPORT

This section presents the annual progress report for the King County Metro Transit Five-Year Implementation Plan for Alternative Services to Traditional Transit Service Delivery, complying with the request for an annual report in King County Motion 13736. Annual reporting for alternative services is being combined with the Service Guidelines Report to provide a comprehensive overview of services and performance. This section reviews both the actions Metro is taking to plan for and deliver alternative services and the performance of alternative services that were operating in spring 2014.

Historically, alternative services have included non-fixed-route services directly provided or supported by Metro: Community Access Transportation, Vanpool, Vanshare, and the Hyde Shuttle program. All of these programs provide access to local destinations and to fixed-route transit service.

Recently, Metro has focused on expanding alternative services on corridors that cannot be cost-effectively served by fixed-route transit. The first large-scale project in the Snoqualmie Valley resulted in the Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle, a deviated route funded through a partnership and operated by a local nonprofit organization. In 2014, Metro continued operations and support for alternative services, including the Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle and DART routes. We also began planning the Redmond alternative service project, focused on first/last mile connections, and engaged in discussions with several local jurisdictions about ways that alternative services could be provided in the future, primarily to offset the impact of service reductions.

Annual performance report

The Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle provides service between North Bend and Duvall, connecting riders to fixed-route transit service at both ends of the route and local destinations along the way. The shuttle has flexible service areas at the ends of the route. It is funded through a public/private partnership between Metro and the Snoqualmie Tribe, and is operated by a local nonprofit organization, Snoqualmie Valley Transportation. The Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle began operating in fall 2013, replacing portions of low-performing routes 224 and 311.

In spring 2014, both routes 224 and 311 had lower costs per vehicle trip and more rides per hour than before they were revised. Cost per ride increased because growth in cost per hour outpaced growth in rides per hour. The Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle had 2.1 rides per hour at an average cost to Metro of $56.70 per trip, significantly lower than the cost per trip of the two routes it replaced. A comparison of these routes is shown in Table 12.

TABLE 12

Alternative Services Performance – Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle and Routes Changed in 2013

Route	Cost per vehicle trip (2013)	Cost per vehicle trip (2014)	Cost per ride (2013)	Cost per ride (2014)	Rides per hour (2013)	Rides per hour (2014)
224	$201.10	$121.20	$18.84	$18.88	7.1	7.4
311	$319.77	$282.74	$6.57	$6.71	21.7	22.2
Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle	n/a	$56.70 /$64.67*	n/a	$16.88 /$19.25*	n/a	2.1

* Including Snoqualmie Tribe contribution

Fare and policy changes

Metro is assessing the need to modify fare policy related to potential expansion of alternative services. The Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle operates with a suggested donation of $1 per trip. Shuttle riders who connect to regular Metro service pay a fare on the Metro portion of their trip. In the spring 2014 service period, total donations on the Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle averaged about $590 per month which was between 2 and 3 percent of operating costs. As Metro considers an expanded alternative service program, we will assess methods for ensuring that enough revenue is recovered to sustain the program.

Metro is currently considering policy changes that would support expansion of the alternative services program. One potential change would be to extend program eligibility to the general public. We will also consider policy changes relevant to alternative services in the 2015 update of the strategic plan and service guidelines. Metro is currently following policies updated in 2013 by incorporating alternative services more fully into our performance measurement.

Collaboration with local jurisdictions

In 2014, Metro focused on two projects: continuing to support the Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle and working with the City of Redmond to develop an alternative service concept to serve the southeast Redmond and Willows Road employment centers. As we shared information on service reductions, we also worked with stakeholders to discuss options for using alternative services to meet critical needs resulting from those reductions.

Under the Snoqualmie Valley Shuttle service agreement, Snoqualmie Valley Transportation (SVT) is primarily responsible for marketing and outreach. Metro worked with SVT to update the Metro and SVT websites to maximize cross-promotion of the shuttle and connections to Metro services, and provided materials to support SVT's outreach through email and events. Metro and SVT are also collaborating on future outreach campaigns to increase shuttle ridership and promote the connection to Route 224 in Duvall. To help address the deletion of routes 209 and 215 in September 2014, Metro conducted an outreach campaign targeting affected riders that encouraged them to investigate Vanpool and Vanshare opportunities.

Metro and the City of Redmond conducted extensive employee outreach, working through employers in those areas. This project included four focus groups to fine-tune alternative service concepts and a survey to assess receptivity to these concepts that was completed by almost 800 commuters at over 16 worksites. One of the concepts, flexible carpooling and ridesharing, is currently being discussed with stakeholders. The current target for introducing alternative services in Redmond is first quarter of 2015.

Metro also discussed options for alternative services in several areas affected by service reductions. Metro is working with the Daybreak Star Indian Cultural Center in Magnolia to determine possible ways to serve the center after service reductions. Metro is also working with the City of Burien to identify potential services to mitigate elimination of Route 139, including looking at options for starting a Hyde Shuttle as part of Metro's overall program.

Next steps

As part of Metro's 2015-2016 budget, the County Executive has proposed an expansion of the alternative services program. This effort is designed to continue and expand partnerships with local cities and organizations and to provide service better tailored to the unique travel patterns, schedules, and needs of communities.

Specific elements of the program could include:

- Community Shuttle services involve smaller buses that run on a designated route serving a flexible service area provided through a community partnership. Shuttle vehicles would be provided by Metro along with funds to pay a driver. Community partners could contribute resources and marketing/promotion. Shuttles would be open to the general population, operate during pre-determined hours and focus on common destinations helping riders with all-day travel needs.

- Community Hub services include creation of multi-modal transportation hubs where individuals can access services such as community shuttles/vans and bicycles as well as information on transportation options. Community van services, which can provide both regularly scheduled trips as well as one-time trips as necessary, and bike sharing services create a strong centralized focal point within a community and rely on strong community partners to be successful.

- Flexible Rideshare services build on the success of Uber and Lyft; this program provides the opportunity for individuals to participate in variable ridesharing as an alternative to the current vanpool program. Individuals can use their own or a Metro-provided vehicle and use a web-based or mobile application to find rides, designate specific pick-up points and connect to other services such as fixed route bus to complete their commute.