



We'll Get You There

# King County Metro Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021

2015 UPDATE

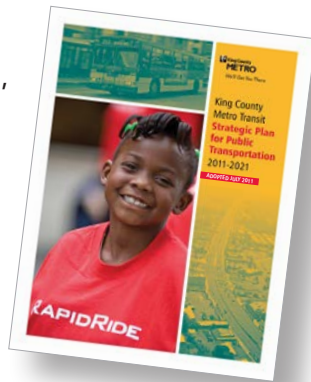


## ■ LETTER FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

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Dear Friends,

Our strategic plan cover girl, Anaya, was only six when she appeared on the first edition of the plan in 2011. She has changed in the years since then, and so has Metro as we put the strategic plan and service guidelines to work.



Some highlights of what we've done:

- Enhanced safety—our number one goal—through more frequent bus operator safety training, a pedestrian awareness campaign, and stronger measures to protect our drivers.
  - Launched the groundbreaking ORCA LIFT reduced fare program, making transit more affordable for people with low incomes.
  - Supported our region's economy by getting more people to work as the job market rebounded. Metro delivered an all-time record of 121 million passenger trips in 2014.
  - Brought new-generation hybrid buses and zero-emission electric trolleys into our fleet as we move toward our goal of an all-electric and hybrid fleet by 2018. We also completed a Sustainability Plan with goals for conserving energy and water, reducing climate pollution, managing waste, and growing transit ridership.
  - Earned high marks from customers—90 percent of riders surveyed in 2014 were very or somewhat satisfied with our service. Service improvements, such as the six RapidRide lines we completed between 2010 and 2014, and improved communication tools like our new TripPlanner mobile app, are factors.
  - Continued to focus on containing costs. One way we're doing this is to involve employees in Lean and process improvement projects.
- Engaged tens of thousands of county residents in planning services as we started RapidRide lines, restructured bus networks to serve customers better and more efficiently, coordinated Metro's services with Sound Transit's Link light rail, and developed alternative services to meet local community needs.
  - Enhanced programs to help employees move up in the organization and to develop the next generation of leaders. The Partnership to Achieve Comprehensive Equity, formed in 2013, continues working to build and sustain an inclusive, fair and equitable workplace.
  - Used the service guidelines every year to evaluate our transit system and help us provide efficient, high-quality service that meets the county's most important public transportation needs.
  - Produced annual reports showing our progress toward the strategic plan objectives using the metrics defined in the plan. The reports also compare Metro's performance with that of peer transit agencies. Our online Accountability Center makes it easy for the public to find performance reports as well as monthly and annual data.



The first edition of the strategic plan didn't sit on the shelf—we actively used it. The same will go for this updated version, and by incorporating recommendations from the Service Guidelines Task Force and Access to Transit Study, this 2015 plan improves the strategies and tools we're using to make real progress toward our vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Kevin Desmond'.

Kevin Desmond, General Manager  
King County Metro Transit



# King County Metro Transit **Strategic Plan for Public Transportation** 2011-2021

**2015 UPDATE**

April 27, 2016



*We'll Get You There*

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## ■ METRO'S MISSION

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Provide the best possible public transportation services and improve regional mobility and quality of life in King County.



## ■ METRO'S VISION

# What we aspire to be.



**Metro provides safe, efficient and reliable public transportation that people find easy to use.**

We offer a cost-effective mix of products and services, tailored to specific market needs and well-integrated with the services offered by other public transportation agencies.

Our fixed-route bus system meets the public transportation needs of most of our customers, particularly in areas of concentrated economic activity or urban development and along the corridors that link them. Metro's other public transportation options include paratransit service for people with disabilities who can't use the fixed-route system, alternative services designed for communities where regular bus service isn't the best fit, commuter vanpools, and ridesharing programs. No matter what community people live in or what needs they might have related to age, disability, income, or other circumstances, people can use public transportation throughout King County.



Expanded and improved products and services make public transportation attractive to a growing segment of the population, and public transportation **ridership increases** as a result. With more and more people switching from single-occupant cars to buses, carpools and other alternative transportation options, roadways are more efficient—carrying more people and goods and moving them faster. Less land is paved for parking, and the region can reduce its reliance on highway expansion.



Public transportation is **contributing to a better quality of life** in the Puget Sound region. The local economy is thriving because transit keeps the region moving. Public health is improving because people are walking, biking, and using transit more. Emissions from transportation have leveled off and are starting to decline, and Metro is using new technologies to reduce our energy consumption.



**The public is engaged with Metro**—informed about our plans and performance and a big part of the decision-making process.

Customers find the public transportation experience to be positive at every stage, from trip planning to arrival at a destination. People understand how to use Metro's products and services, and are happy with the variety of transportation options available.



Metro has **quality employees who enjoy their jobs**. Their satisfaction shows in their good work ethic and responsiveness to customers.



Metro is **financially stable**—able to sustain transit products and services in both the short and long term by emphasizing productivity and efficiency and by controlling costs. Metro receives sufficient funding to fulfill the public's expectations for service and the region's vision for a robust public transportation system.







## ■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### A plan for moving toward our vision

Public transportation is vitally important to the Puget Sound region, providing connections to jobs, schools, and other destinations; enabling people with limited mobility options to travel; enhancing regional economic vitality; providing an alternative to single-occupant driving on the most congested roadways; helping accommodate growth; and benefitting the environment.

King County Metro Transit, King County's public transportation provider, is committed to serving the public with the highest quality products and services possible as we work toward our vision of a sustainable public transportation system that helps our region thrive.

The Strategic Plan for Public Transportation outlines key opportunities and challenges Metro faces:

**Population and economic growth:** To accommodate 28 percent more people and 40 percent more jobs, Metro's annual service is expected to grow by 2.3 million annual service hours (roughly 60 percent) by 2040.

**Demographic changes:** The percentage of residents in King County over age 65 is increasing, younger people are increasingly choosing transit, the number of people with low incomes is growing, and our population is becoming more diverse—with associated disparities in education, employment, and income. Metro will continue to provide mobility for people who, for these and other reasons, have limited transportation options or are increasingly choosing transit.

**Customer service and satisfaction:** An ongoing aspiration is to make every customer's public transportation experience positive at every stage of a trip. Among the drivers of customer satisfaction are the frequency of service, personal safety on buses and at stops, comfort and cleanliness on buses and at stops, customer information, bus drivers' performance and the number of transfers.





**The environment:** Metro has a major role to play in helping King County meet its greenhouse gas reduction targets: reduce countywide sources of greenhouse emissions by 25 percent by 2020, 50 percent by 2030, and 80 percent by 2050; and reduce emissions from County operations by at least 15 percent by 2015, 25 percent by 2020, and 50 percent by 2030. (Targets are compared to a 2007 baseline.)

**Funding:** Metro’s heavy reliance on sales tax makes it challenging to provide sustainable bus service, because revenue from this source is likely to decline in an economic downturn. While Metro’s finances are on relatively stable footing as of late 2015, all of the region’s transit agencies need additional long-term, sustainable funding to deliver the services our region expects. Metro’s annual service guidelines analysis consistently finds that the transit system needs substantially higher investments in service than Metro can make with available resources. The 2015 analysis found a need of more than 470,000 annual service hours, equivalent to a 13 percent expansion of our system.

**Access to transit:** People’s access to transit depends on factors such as their proximity to bus stops, the quality of walking and biking pathways, the availability of parking spaces at park-and-rides, and the type and amount of transit service provided at the access point. Working in partnership with other transit agencies and local jurisdictions, Metro can help improve access across King County.

**Evolving transportation system:** Continued and increased collaboration with other agencies will be necessary to deliver efficient, well-integrated services as the region’s public transportation system evolves.

## Pathway to the future

This is a plan for addressing these challenges and opportunities and moving toward our vision for public transportation. A companion long-term plan, slated for adoption in 2016, will contain more detail about Metro’s future public transportation network.

Our plan builds on the foundation of King County’s mission, vision, guiding principles, and goals, which were adopted in 2010 and updated in 2015. The revised County goals highlight the importance of transportation by adding a new goal: Deliver a seamless, reliable network of transportation options to get people where they need to go, when they need to get there.

Metro’s plan and attached service guidelines also reflect the recommendations of two public advisory groups:

- **The Regional Transit Task Force**, which in 2010 proposed a groundbreaking new policy framework and service guidelines for transit in King County.
- **The Service Guidelines Task Force**, which in 2015 reviewed Metro’s experience using the service guidelines and recommended a number of revisions.

The plan establishes goals, objectives, and strategies for achieving our vision, as well as performance measures to track progress. These are summarized in the table that follows.

TABLE 1: Summary table of Metro strategic plan elements

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<b>Goal 1: Safety.</b> Support safe communities.		
<p><b>Keep people safe and secure.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Metro’s services and facilities are safe and secure.</p>	<p>Promote safety and security in public transportation operations and facilities.</p> <p>Plan for and execute regional emergency-response and homeland security efforts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Preventable accidents per million miles</li> <li>• Operator and passenger incidents and assaults</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction regarding safety and security</li> <li>• Effectiveness of emergency responses</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 2: Human Potential.</b> Provide equitable opportunities for people from all areas of King County to access the public transportation system.		
<p><b>Provide public transportation products and services that add value throughout King County and that facilitate access to jobs, education and other destinations.</b></p> <p>Outcome: More people throughout King County have access to public transportation products and services.</p>	<p>Design and offer a variety of public transportation products and services appropriate to different markets and mobility needs.</p> <p>Provide travel opportunities and supporting amenities for historically disadvantaged populations, such as low-income people, students, youth, seniors, people of color, people with disabilities, and others with limited transportation options.</p> <p>Provide products and services that are designed to provide geographic value in all parts of King County.</p> <p>In areas that are not well-served by fixed-route service, seek to complement or “right-size” transportation service by working with partners to develop an extensive range of alternative services to serve the general public.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population within a ¼-mile walk delete to a transit stop</li> <li>• Number of jobs within a ¼-mile walk to a transit stop</li> <li>• Number of students at universities and community colleges that are within a ¼-mile walk to a transit stop</li> <li>• Percentage of households in low-income census tracts within a ¼-mile walk to a transit stop</li> <li>• Percentage of households in minority census tracts within a ¼-mile walk to a transit stop</li> <li>• Population within ½ mile of stops with frequent service</li> <li>• Number of jobs within ½ mile of stops with frequent service</li> <li>• Households within specific ranges of distance from frequent service</li> <li>• Average number of jobs and households accessible within 30 minutes countywide (total population, low-income population, minority population)*</li> </ul>

\* See note on next page.



OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average number of jobs and households accessible within 30 minutes from regional growth centers, manufacturing/industrial centers, and transit activity centers*</li> <li>• Vanpool boardings</li> <li>• Transit mode share by market</li> <li>• Student, reduced fare (youth, seniors, people with disabilities) and low-income fare permits and usage.</li> <li>• Accessible bus stops</li> <li>• Access registrants</li> <li>• Access boardings/number of trips provided by the Community Access Transportation (CAT) program</li> <li>• Requested Access trips compared to those provided</li> <li>• Access applicants who undertake fixed-route travel training</li> </ul>

\* These two metrics measure the accessibility of the county using the transit system, or what can be accessed via transit within a given time from a given location. Because buses run on schedules, trip times can vary greatly depending on the exact time the trip begins. For this reason, we compute the number of jobs and households that a person can reach from particular locations at multiple different times, averaged throughout the day. For the countywide measures, we conduct the same computations, but we choose multiple starting locations throughout the county. These results provide a picture of how many jobs the average King County resident can access via transit within 30 minutes.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<b>Goal 3: Economic Growth and Built Environment.</b> Encourage vibrant, economically thriving and sustainable communities.		
<p><b>Support a strong, diverse, sustainable economy.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Public transportation products and services are available throughout King County and are well-utilized in centers and areas of concentrated economic activity.</p>	<p>Encourage land uses, policies, and development that lead to communities that have good access to transit and that transit can serve efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>Partner with employers to make public transportation products and services more affordable and convenient for employees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All public transportation ridership in King County (rail, bus, Paratransit, Rideshare)</li> <li>• Transit rides per capita</li> <li>• Ridership in population/business centers</li> <li>• Employees at CTR sites sharing non-drive-alone transportation modes during peak commute hours</li> </ul>
<p><b>Address the growing need for transportation services and facilities throughout the county.</b></p> <p>Outcome: More people have access to and regularly use public transportation products and services in King County.</p>	<p>Expand services to accommodate the region's growing population and serve new transit markets.</p> <p>Coordinate and develop services and facilities with other providers, local jurisdictions and the private sector to create an integrated and efficient regional transportation system that takes innovative approaches to improving mobility.</p> <p>Facilitate convenient and safe access to transit by all modes.</p> <p>Work in collaboration with transit partners, WSDOT, and other public and private partners to address transit parking capacity demand through a range of approaches that use resources efficiently and enable more people to access transit.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employer-sponsored passes and usage</li> <li>• Park-and-ride capacity and utilization (individually and systemwide); capacity and utilization of park-and-ride lots with frequent service</li> <li>• HOV lane passenger miles</li> <li>• Bike locker capacity and utilization (including number of locations with bike lockers)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Support compact, healthy communities.</b></p> <p>Outcome: More people regularly use public transportation products and services along corridors with compact development.</p>	<p>Encourage land uses, policies, and practices that promote transit-oriented development and lead to communities that have good access to transit and that transit can serve efficiently and effectively.</p> <p>Support bicycle and pedestrian access to jobs, services, and the transit system.</p>	
<p><b>Support economic development by using existing transportation infrastructure efficiently and effectively.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Regional investments in major highway capacity projects and parking requirements are complemented by high transit service levels in congested corridors and centers.</p>	<p>Serve centers and other areas of concentrated activity, consistent with Transportation 2040.</p>	

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<b>Goal 4: Environmental Sustainability.</b> Safeguard and enhance King County’s natural resources and environment.		
<p><b>Help reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the region.</b></p> <p>Outcome: People drive single-occupant vehicles less.</p>	<p>Increase the proportion of travel in King County that is provided by public transportation products and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average miles per gallon of the Metro bus fleet</li> <li>• Vehicle energy use (diesel, gasoline, kWh) normalized by miles</li> <li>• Vehicle fuel use (diesel, gasoline, kWh) normalized by boardings</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minimize Metro’s environmental footprint.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Metro’s environmental footprint is reduced (normalized against service growth).</p>	<p>Operate vehicles and adopt technology that has the least impact on the environment and maximizes long-term sustainability.</p> <p>Incorporate sustainable design, construction, operating and maintenance practices.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total facility energy use</li> <li>• Energy use at Metro facilities: kWh and natural gas used in facilities, normalized by area and temperature</li> <li>• Per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT)</li> <li>• Transit mode share</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 5: Service Excellence.</b> Establish a culture of customer service and deliver services that are responsive to community needs.		
<p><b>Improve satisfaction with Metro’s products and services and the way they are delivered.</b></p> <p>Outcome: People are more satisfied with Metro’s products and services.</p>	<p>Provide service that is easy to understand and use.</p> <p>Emphasize customer service in transit operations and workforce training.</p> <p>Improve transit speed and reliability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer satisfaction</li> <li>• Customer complaints per boarding</li> <li>• On-time performance by time of day</li> <li>• Crowding</li> <li>• Use of Metro web tools and alerts</li> </ul>
<p><b>Improve public awareness of Metro products and services.</b></p> <p>Outcome: People understand how to use Metro’s products and services and use them more often.</p>	<p>Use available tools, new technologies, and new methods to improve communication with customers.</p> <p>Promote Metro’s products and services to existing and potential customers.</p>	



OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<p><b>Goal 6: Financial Stewardship.</b> Exercise sound financial management and build Metro’s long-term sustainability.</p>		
<p><b>Emphasize planning and delivery of productive service.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Service productivity improves.</p>	<p>Manage the transit system through service guidelines and performance measures.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service hours operated</li> <li>• Service hours and service hour change per route</li> <li>• Boardings per vehicle hour</li> <li>• Boardings per revenue hour</li> </ul>
<p><b>Control costs.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Metro’s costs grow at or below the rate of inflation.</p>	<p>Continually explore and implement cost efficiencies including operational and administrative efficiencies.</p> <p>Provide and maintain capital assets to support efficient and effective service delivery.</p> <p>Develop and implement alternative public transportation services and delivery strategies.</p> <p>Provide alternative or “right-sized” services in the context of overall system financial health and the need to reduce, maintain or expand the system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ridership and ridership change per route</li> <li>• Passenger miles per vehicle mile</li> <li>• Passenger miles per revenue mile</li> <li>• Cost per hour</li> <li>• Cost per vehicle mile</li> <li>• Cost per boarding</li> <li>• Cost per passenger mile</li> <li>• Cost per vanpool boarding</li> <li>• Cost per Access boarding</li> <li>• Fare revenues</li> <li>• Farebox recovery</li> <li>• ORCA use</li> <li>• Asset condition assessment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Seek to establish a sustainable funding structure to support short- and long-term public transportation needs.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Adequate funding to support King County’s short- and long-term public transportation needs.</p>	<p>Secure long-term stable funding.</p> <p>Establish fare structures and fare levels that are simple to understand, aligned with other service providers, and meet revenue targets established by Metro’s fund management policies.</p> <p>Establish fund management policies that ensure stability through a variety of economic conditions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For new or nontraditional alternative services, cost per boarding, ride, or user, as appropriate</li> </ul> <p>(Note: Different performance measures may be used to evaluate different types of services.)</p>

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<b>Goal 7: Public Engagement and Transparency.</b> Promote robust public engagement that informs, involves, and empowers people and communities.		
<p><b>Empower people to play an active role in shaping Metro’s products and services.</b></p> <p>Outcome: The public plays a role and is engaged in the development of public transportation.</p>	<p>Engage the public in the planning process and improve customer outreach.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public participation rates</li> <li>• Customer satisfaction regarding Metro’s communications and reporting</li> <li>• Social media indicators</li> <li>• Conformance with King County policy on communications accessibility and translation to other languages</li> </ul>
<p><b>Increase customer and public access to understandable, accurate and transparent information.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Metro provides information that people use to access and comment on the planning process and reports.</p>	<p>Communicate service change concepts, the decision-making process, and public transportation information in language that is accessible and easy to understand.</p> <p>Explore innovative ways to report to and inform the public.</p>	
<b>Goal 8: Quality Workforce.</b> Develop and empower Metro’s most valuable asset, its employees.		
<p><b>Attract and recruit quality employees.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Metro is satisfied with the quality of its workforce.</p>	<p>Market Metro as an employer of choice and cultivate a diverse and highly skilled applicant pool.</p> <p>Promote equity, social justice and transparency in hiring and recruiting activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demographics of Metro employees</li> <li>• Employee job satisfaction</li> <li>• Promotion rate</li> <li>• Probationary pass rate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Empower and retain efficient, effective, and productive employees.</b></p> <p>Outcome: Metro employees are satisfied with their jobs and feel their work contributes to an improved quality of life in King County.</p>	<p>Build leadership and promote professional skills.</p> <p>Recognize employees for outstanding performance, excellent customer service, innovation and strategic thinking.</p> <p>Provide training opportunities that enable employees to reach their full potential.</p>	