



 King County  
**METRO**

*We'll Get You There*

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

**2013 UPDATE**



# ■ LETTER FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER

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Dear Friends,

I am pleased to present the *King County Metro Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021*. This is the latest in a series of visionary plans Metro has used to imagine the future we want for public transportation, and then achieve it.

Metro's last major strategic planning effort resulted in the *2002-2007 Metro Six-Year Development Plan*, which had updates in 2004, 2007, and 2009. At the time this earlier plan was written, communities and employment centers were growing around the county, and traffic congestion had become one of the region's foremost problems. The 2002 plan set the stage for Metro to enhance mobility by serving more people throughout the King County and by connecting to more destinations.

The 2002 plan led to a number of successful initiatives. Metro extended service to new locations and restructured several local transit networks to boost productivity and better match service with the destinations people wanted to reach. We helped launch a regional fare payment system, ORCA, making it easier for people to travel by bus, train, light rail and ferries throughout the region. We worked to procure hybrid articulated buses so we could carry more passengers while reducing emissions. We attracted new riders by making buses and bus stops more accessible, developing park-and-ride facilities, and expanding employee commute programs. And we took Metro service to a higher level by launching RapidRide, a new generation of service designed to keep people moving throughout the day on heavily used corridors. Metro accomplished all this and more despite two financial downturns that constrained our ability to grow.

People responded positively to the changes we made. Metro set ridership records in three consecutive years, culminating with 118 million rides in 2008 and outpacing growth in jobs, population, and vehicle miles traveled in King County. As a result of our successes, public transportation has become a more robust and better-integrated part of the Puget Sound region's transportation system.

**Now that we have reached this stage, what challenges does our new strategic plan address?** Many of the old ones, like congestion, climate change, and regional growth, are still with us. The region's *Transportation 2040* action plan calls for an ambitious expansion of public transportation to accommodate the large population and job increases

expected in King County. And we face the urgent need to craft a new funding structure for public transportation. Metro's current revenue sources cannot supply the funds we need to meet our region's expectations. I am proud of Metro's record of delivering promised services even when funding has fallen far short of expectations over the past decade, but we have exhausted many one-time solutions and cost-cutting measures that we have used to get by. A new funding structure is imperative if we are to fully realize our vision for public transportation.

As we crafted a plan to take on these and other challenges, two recent planning processes gave us invaluable guidance. The *King County Strategic Plan 2011-2014* was developed under the leadership of County Executive Dow Constantine in collaboration with King County Council members and other elected officials and input from thousands of residents and County employees. The County plan's eight goals are the framework for Metro's plan.

Second, the Regional Transit Task Force was formed in 2010 to consider a new policy framework for Metro as we face both growing demand for transit services and a worsening financial outlook. The task force members represented many areas of the county and points of view, but they came together on consensus proposals for Metro. While these recommendations are still under consideration, the themes that emerged in this group's discussions—emphasizing productivity, ensuring that bus services are available for those most dependent on transit, and providing value to the diverse cities and communities throughout the county—influenced our plan in many ways.

Thanks to all the groundbreaking work and forward-looking thinking that has contributed to this strategic plan, I am confident that Metro can continue our tradition of prioritizing the customer and creating the future envisioned for public transportation in King County. We will be reporting on our performance in publications and on our website; I invite you to follow our progress.

Sincerely,



Kevin Desmond, General Manager  
King County Metro Transit



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

**2013 UPDATE**



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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### Public transportation in the Puget Sound region: today and tomorrow

Public transportation is vitally important to the Puget Sound region. It provides connections to jobs, schools, and other destinations, and enables those with limited mobility options to travel. Public transportation enhances regional economic vitality by freeing up roadway capacity and improving the mobility of people, goods, and services. It saves the region time and money. It helps accommodate regional growth by making better use of the region's existing infrastructure and it benefits the environment. Public transportation improves the quality of life for residents and visitors to the Puget Sound region.

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



#### ■ This is Metro's vision:

Metro provides safe, efficient and reliable public transportation that people find easy to use. The agency offers a cost-effective mix of products and services, tailored to specific market needs. Its fixed-route bus system meets most public transportation needs, particularly in areas of concentrated economic activity or urban development and along the corridors that link them. Metro also offers alternative public transportation options for people who cannot use the fixed-route system. No matter what community they live in or whether they have special needs because of age, disability or income, 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 and use 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 has kept 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 its energy consumption.

The public is engaged with Metro—informed about its 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 its 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.



## A pathway to the vision

To guide Metro towards its vision, this plan includes goals, objectives and strategies, which build on the work of two major regional planning processes:

**King County’s strategic plan:** In 2010, King County adopted its first countywide strategic plan, *King County Strategic Plan 2010–2014: Working Together for One King County*. The plan is a key tool in Executive Dow Constantine’s work to reform county government by focusing on customer service, partnerships, and ways to bring down the cost of government. Metro’s strategic plan will guide work on portions of the countywide strategic plan that involve public transportation.

**Regional Transit Task Force:** Metro used input from the Regional Transit Task Force in the creation of this plan. The task force was a groundbreaking countywide effort to recommend a new policy framework for transit in King County that took place in 2010. Metro drew on the task force’s recommendations as a way to ensure that diverse points of view are well-represented in the strategic plan.

## Navigating the road ahead

Metro faces complex—and often competing—challenges. The Puget Sound region is growing and evolving. Changes in land use and the region’s population are having an impact on where public transportation should be located, how service is provided, and who uses that service. Major projects that change the footprint of the transportation system have an impact on public transportation and require regional collaboration during planning and construction and upon completion. Public transportation is called upon to help mitigate climate change and meet diverse customer needs. All the while, Metro’s funding structure limits its ability to respond to these challenges.

Metro’s strategic plan is intended to address these challenges and chart a path to the future. Metro has formulated eight goals with 17 associated objectives. Each objective has an associated outcome that is related to an aspect of Metro’s vision. Metro also has established 36 strategies that are intended to move Metro closer to its objectives, and ultimately to its vision. The table on pages iii-vii summarizes these elements of the plan.

## Ensuring success

Metro will monitor its performance and measure its success in achieving the plan’s strategies, objectives, goals, and vision. Metro will measure its objectives through outcomes and its strategies through associated measures. It will compare the performance of its system with that of peer transit agencies. Using this monitoring system, Metro will update and adjust this plan periodically as conditions warrant to ensure that it is moving along the right path.

### What’s new in the 2013 update?

This update incorporates the following changes adopted by the County Council in 2012 and 2013:

- Three new strategies:
  - 2.1.4, provide alternatives to fixed-route transit service
  - 6.1.2, create a long-range transit plan in collaboration with local planning
  - 6.2.4, provide alternative service in the context of financial challenges
- Updates to strategy 2.1.2 reflecting revised requirements for complying with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act
- Several revisions and additions to performance measures
- Revisions of service guidelines to better link transit service and local development and to clarify several technical matters

TABLE 1: Summary table of Metro strategic plan elements

OBJECTIVE	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>Seek to provide to the general public an extensive range of transportation alternatives to regular fixed-route transit, such as ridesharing and other alternative or “right-sized” services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population with ¼-mile walk access to a transit stop or 2-mile drive to a park-and-ride, reported separately</li> <li>• Number of jobs with ¼-mile walk access to a transit stop or 2-mile drive to a park-and-ride, reported separately</li> <li>• Number of students at universities and community colleges that are within a ¼-mile walk of transit</li> <li>• Percentage of households in low-income census tracts within a quarter-mile walk of a transit stop or a 2-mile drive to a park-and-ride, reported separately</li> <li>• Percentage of households in minority census tracts within a quarter-mile walk of a transit stop or a 2-mile drive to a park-and-ride, reported separately</li> <li>• Accessible bus stops</li> <li>• Transit mode share by market</li> <li>• Student and reduced-fare permits and usage</li> <li>• Access applicants who undertake fixed-route travel training</li> <li>• Access boardings/number of trips provided by the Community Access Transportation (CAT) program</li> <li>• Access registrants</li> <li>• Requested Access trips compared to those provided</li> <li>• Vanpool boardings</li> </ul>

OBJECTIVE	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>Through investments and partnerships with regional organizations, local jurisdictions and the private sector, provide alternatives to driving alone that connect people to jobs, education and other destinations essential to King County's economic vitality.</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>• Transit rides per capita</li> <li>• Park-and-ride capacity and utilization (individually and systemwide)</li> <li>• Employees at CTR sites sharing non-drive-alone transportation modes during peak commute hours</li> <li>• Employer-sponsored passes and usage</li> <li>• All public transportation ridership in King County (rail, bus, Paratransit, Rideshare)</li> <li>• Ridership in population/business centers</li> <li>• HOV lane passenger miles</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 to create an integrated and efficient regional transportation system.</p> <p>Work with transit partners, WSDOT and others to manage park-and-ride capacity needs.</p>	
<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 development that lead to communities 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 <i>Transportation 2040</i>.</p>	



OBJECTIVE	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>• Per capita vehicle miles traveled (VMT)*</li> <li>• Transit mode share</li> <li>• Average miles per gallon of the Metro bus fleet</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>• Energy use at Metro facilities/kWh and natural gas used in facilities normalized by area and temperature</li> <li>• Total facility energy use</li> <li>• Vehicle energy (diesel, gasoline, kWh) normalized by miles</li> <li>• Vehicle fuel (diesel, gasoline, kWh) normalized by boardings</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>• Utilization 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>	

*\*Technical amendment: Placement of this measure corrects an error in the version approved by the King County Council.*

OBJECTIVE	STRATEGIES	MEASURES
<b>Goal 6: Financial Stewardship.</b> Exercise sound financial management and build Metro’s long term sustainability.		
<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> <p>Establish and maintain a long-range transit service and capital plan developed in collaboration with local comprehensive and regional long-term transportation planning.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Boardings per revenue hour</li> <li>• Cost per boarding</li> <li>• Cost per hour</li> <li>• Service hours operated</li> <li>• Asset condition assessment</li> <li>• Fare revenues</li> <li>• Farebox recovery</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>• Service hours and service hour change per route</li> <li>• Ridership and ridership change per route</li> <li>• Boardings per vehicle hour</li> <li>• Passenger miles per vehicle mile</li> <li>• Passenger miles per revenue mile</li> <li>• ORCA use</li> <li>• Cost per vehicle mile</li> <li>• Cost per vanpool boarding</li> <li>• Cost per Access boarding</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>	

OBJECTIVE	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>	

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