

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: Discussion of Current Transportation Issues: Metro and Sound Transit
DEPARTMENT: Planning and Development Services
PRESENTED BY: Tim Stewart, Director of Planning and Development Services
Sarah Bohlen, Transportation Planner

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this agenda item is for Council to discuss current transit planning processes affecting Shoreline. King County Metro is preparing to update its Six-Year Transit Development Plan for 1996 to 2001 and is seeking input from local jurisdictions. The Six-Year Plan for Public Transportation 2002-2007 will guide the implementation of Metro Transit Service over the next six years. It also provides King County with direction for capital projects to support transit service. King County Metro has also included an Aurora Bus Rapid Transit proposal in this plan and has specifically asked Shoreline to coordinate with the City of Seattle and WSDOT to comment on this proposal.

Sound Transit and Metro are also collaborating on a planning effort to implement Sound Transit's Regional Express Route 522. This route will run from Woodinville to Downtown Seattle, and will be implemented in fall 2002. This is important to Shoreline because some of Metro's current service will be replaced with this Sound Transit route, and Metro will be in a position to restructure service in the North King County area. This will provide Shoreline the opportunity to work directly with Metro to provide better cross-town bus coverage (including better service to North City), as well as implement changes to routes that citizens have been requesting. The public participation process for this effort is planned for summer 2002. Staff will prepare a comment letter to be signed by the Mayor when more detailed information is available.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact to the City associated with this topic.

RECOMMENDATION

No action is required, however Council may wish to provide comments to staff regarding the transit planning efforts described tonight.

Approved By:

City Manager 

City Attorney 

INTRODUCTION

Shoreline has adopted strong policies supporting transit service in the Comprehensive Plan. Framework Goal FG8 reads: "Improve multi-modal transportation systems which provide for Shoreline's present and future population." King County Metro is Shoreline's primary transit service provider. As Metro develops plans for transit service, it is important for Shoreline to provide input as to our priorities for transit service.

Tonight's discussion will focus on Metro's Six-Year Plan proposal, including the Aurora Bus Rapid Transit. The information provided on the cover page of this report regarding Sound Transit Route 522, and the resulting restructure of Metro service is a "heads-up" of a bigger project to come, and staff will return with more information as it is developed.

BACKGROUND

This topic last came before Council in April of 2001, when Metro began this planning effort. At that time, Shoreline stressed the importance of improving cross-town service and was concerned that the Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Project at the Shoreline Park and Ride might be omitted from the plan. Metro released a discussion document as a prelude to the release of the Draft Six-Year Plan "Proposed Initiatives for the Metro Six-Year Plan 2002 to 2007." Metro has incorporated discussions regarding the TOD into this discussion document, and has indicated it will be included in the draft Plan.

There are four proposed initiatives in the discussion document:

- Increasing Peak Market Share;
- Improving Core and Initiating Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Service;
- Connecting with Sound Transit; and
- Local Flexibility.

Metro proposes to spend approximately 25% of the available new service resources to increasing peak market share (attracting commuter ridership). The resources would be spent expanding park and rides, primarily on the Eastside, and improving commuter service to Downtown Bellevue. The Northgate Transit Center would receive approximately 500 new spaces, but no new resources would be spent in Shoreline under this initiative (the Shoreline TOD funding would come from a different funding source).

The second initiative, improving core service and initiating BRT service, is proposed to use approximately 50% of the available new resources. Metro has identified several "core," meaning all-day routes that serve as the backbone of the system, to receive improvements. Metro has also identified three BRT routes, one in each funding subarea, with the intent to implement one within the Plan timeframe. BRT is different from core routes as it uses buses to function more like a light rail system. Bus stops are placed farther apart, and the buses and stops are designed differently to allow for more efficient loading/unloading and fare collection. The plan proposes that the subarea where the BRT is selected would not receive the core route enhancements. The core routes identified in Shoreline's subarea are:

- Shoreline – Aurora Avenue – Downtown Seattle

- Capitol Hill – Seattle Center (via South Lake Union)
- Queen Anne – Downtown Seattle – Central Area
- Beacon Hill – Downtown Seattle
- Loyal Heights (Ballard area) – University District – Rainier Beach
- University District – Downtown Seattle via I-5

If the BRT route is implemented on Aurora Avenue N, proposed improvements to the existing Route 358 would not take place. The BRT would be an "overlay," meaning a new route on top of, Route 358 as it is today. Transit service improvements would occur at stops spaced further apart than Route 358 stops, but with BRT, the trip to Downtown Seattle would be faster.

Two maps may be found as Attachment A. The first map depicts proposed improvements to core routes; the second map depicts candidate BRT routes.

The third initiative, connecting with Sound Transit, would not use any new service resources, and involves minor scheduling or routing changes to Metro routes to integrate with new Sound Transit services.

The final initiative, local flexibility, reserves 25% of the new service resources for each subarea to determine priorities. Each subarea would receive a portion of these resources based upon subarea population estimates. Many of the potential priorities identified for Shoreline's subarea are improvements located within Seattle, although cross-town (e.g. east-west) improvements in Shoreline are included, and many items are general, such as "converting peak-only routes to all-day service."

DISCUSSION

The limited initiatives described in this plan reflect the dire financial situation that affects Metro Transit. Metro has proposed a significant change in the way it allocates transit service funding. The first three initiatives described in the discussion document and funded on a Countywide basis, and only the Local Priorities are split by subarea. The end result of this new system results in only 20% of all new resources going to Shoreline's subarea (to share with Seattle, Lake Forest Park, and a portion of Kenmore). The East and South Subarea will each receive 40% of the new resources. Previously, new resources were distributed based on subarea population estimates. The West Subarea received 36% of new service resources (the East Subarea also received 36% and the South Subarea received 28%); this is a significant drop in the amount of resources to be invested in our subarea and should be addressed by Metro.

King County is just beginning a new process to update housing and employment targets Countywide. Staff is concerned that the discussions regarding these targets are happening in a different arena from the discussions regarding how to invest in public infrastructure such as transit service. We would like to see King County Metro provide better integration of these topics.

The Bus Rapid Transit proposal on Aurora would provide a significant benefit to Shoreline. It represents the highest service investment likely under the proposed initiatives. However, the trade-off is significant for the City of Seattle, and they are unlikely to support BRT if it means no service improvements to their other core routes. Seattle's support for BRT is critical to its implementation. Shoreline can respond to this in two ways:

- 1) Support Seattle's priorities for the money set aside for local flexibility and priorities in exchange for their support for BRT; or
- 2) *Recommended:* Request Metro to adjust its funding assumptions for the initiatives, and use funds proposed for park and ride expansion to fund BRT, regardless of which subarea it is selected for, and keep all the core service improvements described in the plan.

Shoreline should convey to Metro the importance of examining the current service structure in North King County this summer, and implementing changes to provide better cross-town service and more efficient service in Shoreline in conjunction with the implementation of Sound Transit Route 522.

Shoreline should work with the City of Seattle and WSDOT to submit comments regarding Bus Rapid Transit on Aurora. Seattle and WSDOT are not willing to commit to BRT on Aurora until their Aurora Avenue N Mobility Study, encompassing Aurora from the Battery Street Tunnel to N 145th Street, has been completed (a preferred alternative should be selected by summer). Shoreline and Metro are participants in this study as well. Although Metro would prefer to select which BRT to implement for the adoption of the plan, there is no legal requirement to do so. It would be useful for King County Metro, WSDOT, and the Cities of Shoreline and Seattle, to discuss how the scope of this study can be expanded to address issues specific to the Metro BRT proposal. This would be the best way to ensure that these discussions take place in the context of the study, and provide a stronger comfort level for the City of Seattle. Many of the improvements Shoreline has planned for Aurora Avenue N support the BRT proposal, and this should be conveyed to Metro as well.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will prepare a comment letter for the Mayor's signature regarding the proposed Six Year Plan Initiatives. Staff will also coordinate with the City of Seattle and WSDOT to prepare a joint comment letter on the Bus Rapid Transit proposal on Aurora Avenue N, also to be signed by the Mayor. When Sound Transit and Metro develop specific proposals for Sound Transit Route 522 and the resulting Metro restructure, staff will prepare comments for that proposal, and if Council desires, return with more information.

RECOMMENDATION

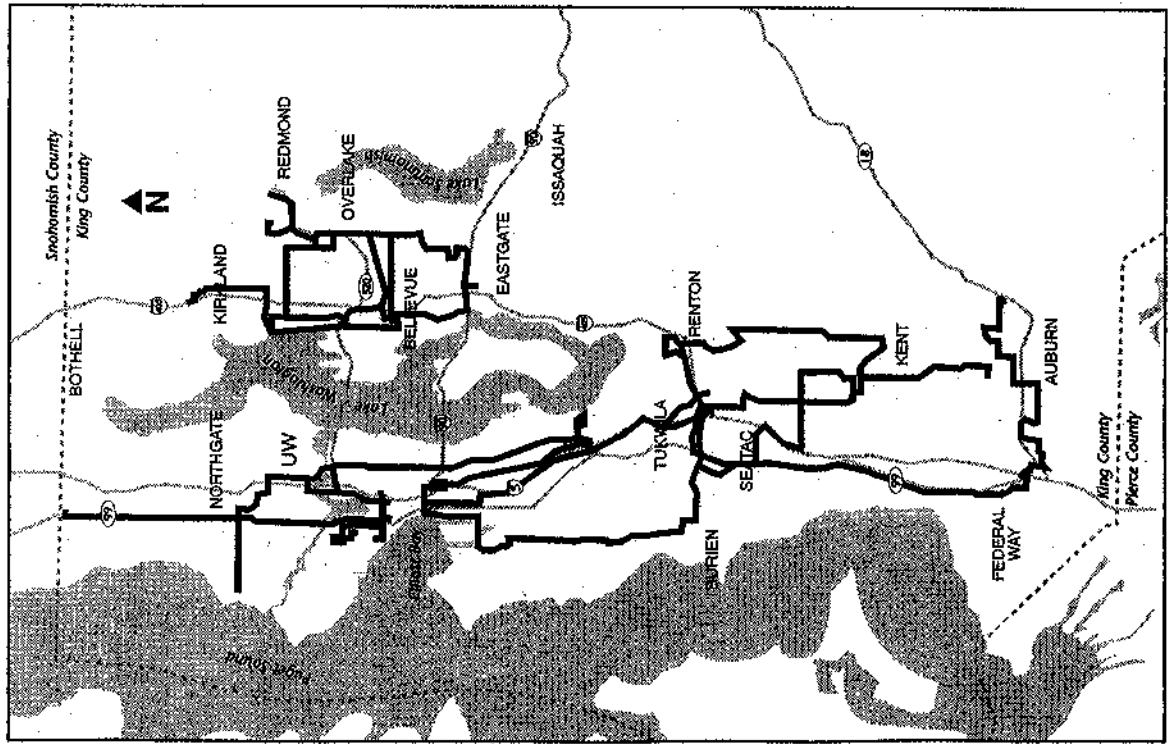
No action is required, however Council may wish to provide comments to staff regarding the transit planning efforts described tonight.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Maps Depicting Proposed Core Service Improvements and Candidate Bus Rapid Transit Routes

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Priority Core Service Investments



King County BRT Candidate Corridors

