

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
CITY OF SHORELINE, WASHINGTON**

AGENDA TITLE:	Transit Issues Update
DEPARTMENT:	Public Works
PRESENTED BY:	Kirk McKinley, Aurora Project Manager Alicia McIntire, Aurora Corridor Planner

PROBLEM/ISSUE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this item is to update Council on transit issues in the City of Shoreline. Several activities and actions are underway by the three transit providers to the City – Metro, Community Transit and Sound Transit – which impact service to and through Shoreline. The major items for discussion on December 8 will be:

- The outcome of Proposition 1, the most recent Sound Transit Ballot initiative;
- The 2009 King County mid-biennial budget update and its impacts to the City of Shoreline;
- Bus Rapid Transit activity by Community Transit and Metro;
- Metro Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan updates;
- Potential Redevelopment of the North 192nd Street Park and Ride.

SOUND TRANSIT BALLOT INITIATIVE PROPOSITION 1

Proposition 1, also known as ST2, was included on the November 4, 2008 ballot. This proposition was a funding package that identified specific mass transit projects for the Puget Sound area that expand upon the existing projects and programs currently underway. The current Sound Transit projects and programs include commuter rail service from Tacoma and Everett to downtown Seattle, construction of light rail from downtown Seattle to Sea-Tac airport (scheduled to begin service in 2009) and continued construction to the University of Washington (scheduled to begin service in 2016), and express bus service in high traffic demand corridors in Snohomish, King and Pierce counties.

Proposition 1 included expansion of all areas of transit service provided by Sound Transit. Additions to express bus and commuter rail service, improvements to commuter rail stations and expansion of the light rail lines to the north, east and south were all part of the proposition. For Shoreline, Proposition 1 included expansion of light rail along the east side of Interstate 5, with stops at North 145th Street and North 185th Street, by 2023. Voters within the Sound Transit district approved this ballot initiative and King County indicates that voters in the 32nd Legislative District approved this initiative by 60 percent. Over the next few months, Sound Transit will be developing an implementation plan for ST2, at which time we hope to know more specific information about timing for

construction of light rail to Shoreline. PADS and Public Works staff are discussing the coordination between Sound Transit and Shoreline on land use and transportation around the station areas as part of the Transportation Master Plan update and the Comprehensive Plan update.

KING COUNTY METRO BUDGET IMPACTS TO SERVICE IN SHORELINE

Metro is in the second year of the biennial budget. A mid-biennial budget review recognized that a number of key assumptions had changed since Transit's 2008/2009 biennial budget was adopted last fall. This resulted in an \$83 million deficit for the biennium, despite increased fare revenue from record-breaking increases in ridership. This deficit is driven by factors such as:

- Reduced sales tax collections due to the slumping economy. Sales tax is the largest single revenue source for the public transportation program, accounting for more than 60 percent of annual revenue;
- Increased fuel prices; and
- Inflationary pressures on costs.

As part of the mid-biennial review, Metro is faced with the problem of responding to increased customer demands for service as revenues are declining and costs are increasing. In October, the King County Executive submitted a short-term proposal based on the following goals:

- Preserve existing transit service levels through 2010;
- Maintain the Transit Now implementation schedule through 2010;
- Balance the needs of business and retail customers against the revenue generated by the proposed fare increases; and
- Position the program to explore new revenue sources to address the ongoing financial situation.

The Executive proposed a 50-cent fare increase as part of his 2009 budget proposal. On November 24, the King County Council adopted the 2009 budget, which calls for fares for adults and those using the Access van service to increase 25 cents on February 1, 2009. A second 25-cent increase in adult fares will be implemented on January 1, 2010, with that increase also applied to fares for seniors and persons with disabilities. The youth fare remains unchanged at 75 cents. The first half of the fare increase is expected to generate \$9.5 million in revenue for Metro over the last 11 months of 2009. Enactment of the adult and senior fare increases in 2010 will generate \$13 million a year, for cumulative new annual fare revenues of \$22 million a year from 2010 onwards.

The King County Council was able to delay the second half of the Executive's proposed fare increase by one year, by taking a deep and broad look at how Metro delivers bus service. The King County Council identified \$43.7 million in cost-savings and efficiencies that will:

- Reduce Metro's annual operating expenses by five percent of its roughly \$600 million annual budget, or \$30.9 million. Much of this saving can be realized by locking in diesel fuel supplies at prices that are much lower now than they were last summer, when oil was rising rapidly.

- Scale back or defer entirely \$12.8 million in Metro capital projects, including:
 - Deferring small improvements at Metro bus bases to exterior signage, storage areas, and generators.
 - Delaying the replacement or upgrade of lighting at Park-and-Ride lots where the existing equipment is still working.
 - Canceling non-critical enhancements to the overhead trolley wire network.

The King County Council is also conducting a longer-term performance audit of Metro to focus the agency on its core mission of delivering transit service and to more clearly understand where efficiencies may be found for the 2010-2011 biennium.

In summary, it does not appear that Shoreline residents will experience a change in the level of transit service through 2010. The biggest direct impact will be the fare increase.

As stated above, this budget will maintain the Transit Now implementation schedule through 2010. There are two service improvements included in Transit Now that directly affect the City of Shoreline: 1) Implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on Aurora Avenue, from the Aurora Village Transit Center to downtown Seattle; and 2) Additional service hours on Route 331, which serves Shoreline Community College and the Aurora Village Transit Center (AVTC), then continues to UW Bothell/Cascadia Community College via Ballinger Way NE and Bothell Way NE. This route is scheduled to receive additional service hours as part of a High Ridership/Core Route improvement. The additional service hours on Route 331 will result in 15-minute headways during the two-hour peak periods in each direction. Both of these service improvements are scheduled for implementation after 2010.

Staff has discussed this budget shortfall with Metro staff and inquired about the implementation of Transit Now beyond 2010. The projected Metro budget shortfall will need to be addressed in 2011 and will analyze where to make cuts if revenues do not increase and/or expenses decrease. Metro staff stated that BRT is an important component of Transit Now and the overall success of Metro will depend in part on BRT implementation throughout the system. Metro staff emphasized that just because it is not currently in service, its implementation will not be delayed or eliminated automatically as a way to save costs.

However, Metro has rules regarding how system reductions are determined. Reductions in service hours are distributed in proportion to the service hours of a given subarea. Because the west subarea (which includes Seattle and Shoreline) is currently allotted approximately 63% of the total Metro service hours, approximately 63% percent of any service reduction would occur within the west subarea. Reductions in service hours would be based upon route performance. Because Shoreline is in the same subarea as Seattle, many of our routes perform below routes that serve Seattle and would be identified for reductions and/or eliminations. These may be well performing routes compared to other routes located in the east and south subarea, but Metro's policy

dictates that these routes receive reductions by virtue of their location in the west subarea.

The proposed King County Comprehensive Plan for Public Transit (discussed below), scheduled for release in early 2009, will likely include language that revises this policy to be applied only to the first 50,000 hours of any system-wide service reduction. This will be an issue for us to track very carefully, in order to preserve our existing levels of service. For example, under this proposed policy, if there was a proposed reduction of 100,000 hours system-wide, 50,000 service hours would be subject to this formula, resulting in approximately 31,500 hours being eliminated in the west subarea. The remaining 50,000 service hours would not be subject to this formula and could be eliminated in accordance with other Metro policies. To put this in context, Route 358, which serves Aurora Avenue North from the Aurora Village Transit Center to downtown Seattle, has an annual operating budget of 66,000 hours. By comparison, Route 346, which serves Meridian Avenue North in Shoreline from the Aurora Village Transit Center to Northgate, has an annual operating budget of 14,800 hours. This is only proposed language coming from staff, and it is unknown how the County Council will react to this proposed change.

BUS RAPID TRANSIT – COMMUNITY TRANSIT AND METRO

Both Community Transit and Metro have Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) systems planned for Highway 99. Community Transit will operate BRT along Highway 99 for approximately 17 miles, from Everett to the Aurora Village Transit Center (AVTC). This BRT system will include stops one mile apart along the corridor, and underlying “shadow service” will continue to provide local service at all existing stops (more than 50 stops) along the corridor. The system is designed to be fast and frequent, making the system a convenient option for riders. Community Transit’s BRT service will provide ten-minute headways for most of the day. This service is scheduled to begin in late 2009.

Community Transit is currently in the process of purchasing the needed right-of-way to construct new BRT stations. These stations will have off-board ticket vending machines, which will allow riders to pay before entering the coach, real-time monitors that display next bus arrival times, raised curbs to improve access to the buses and information kiosks for transit riders. Their new, lower floor coaches will have three doors, with on-board bicycle storage and drop ramps for wheelchair access. The station design, bus design and off-board payment will allow for quicker boarding and debarking, thereby reducing dwell time and overall trip time. Buses will be deployed by transit dispatchers based upon the location of other buses in order to ensure ten-minute headways at stops. Therefore, there will be no need for schedules, and buses can travel efficiently along the corridor without needing to worry about specific timepoints for each stop. Community Transit celebrated the beginning of station construction for Swift with a ground breaking ceremony on December 3, 2008.

Community Transit has submitted a building permit application to the City for construction of the BRT station at the AVTC. This station will look different than the existing Metro and Community Transit bays at the AVTC. However, it will not have all of the features of the standard Community Transit BRT station due to limited space for some features, such as a raised platform.

Metro has five BRT routes programmed as part of the approved Transit Now program. These routes include Pacific Highway South, West Seattle, Ballard, Bellevue-Redmond and Aurora Avenue North. The routes have a staggered implementation schedule, with Aurora Avenue North being the last route scheduled for implementation in 2013. Metro anticipates a unified look for all five corridors, with all shelters and buses being the same for the routes. Metro is currently in the process of designing the shelters and buses, and has committed to retain all stops at signalized intersections that currently exist on Aurora Avenue in Shoreline. Other infrastructure improvements, such as transit signal priority and roadway improvements, are needed for operation of the system. Because Route 358, which serves Aurora Avenue North from the AVTC to downtown Seattle, currently has headways comparable to standard BRT levels (at least 15-minute headways all day), Metro has only programmed an additional 5,000 annual service hours to improve this service. Due to the budget constraints described above, it is unknown if Metro's budget will allow for implementation of the BRT system beyond 2011.

METRO TRANSIT PLANNING PROJECTS

Guidance for the delivery of Metro public transportation services is provided primarily by the Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation and the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2007-2016. The Comprehensive Plan for Public Transportation sets the policy basis for King County Metro Transit. It identifies goals, objectives, and high-level policies to guide the management and development of public transportation services. The last update occurred in 2007 and involved the addition of new policies to address locally developed transit services and transit-oriented development, and to incorporate the Transit Now program.

King County Metro Transit's Strategic Plan for Public Transportation provides the framework for transit service and capital investments for the next 10 years. It sets forth strategies for transit, paratransit, and rideshare services and supporting capital facilities in King County, and guides annual operating and capital program decisions that define Metro services. It also incorporates the voter-approved Transit Now program and includes new strategies to address transit-oriented development and locally developed transit.

Both plans are currently in the process of being updated. Staff participates in an advisory group that meets monthly to discuss the content of the Metro staff proposed updates. The Metro policies which staff has been monitoring address distribution of new service hours, elimination of routes/service hours, cross-county service, coordination with other transit service providers (Community Transit), implementation of Transit Now programs and fare policies. Metro staff was originally scheduled to release their proposed updates in autumn 2008. However, the mid-biennial budget review and the financial shortfall discussions have delayed release of the proposed updates and the associated public review. Metro staff will not present the updates to the Regional Transit Committee until early 2009. Shoreline does not have direct representation on the Regional Transit Committee. Our representation is through the Suburban Cities Association, which has eight representatives and four alternates.

POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH 192nd STREET PARK AND RIDE

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and King County Metro have recently confirmed that Metro will be purchasing the Shoreline Park and Ride at North 192nd Street and Aurora Avenue North (SR 99) from WSDOT. Metro anticipates future redevelopment of the Shoreline Park and Ride as a Transit Oriented Development (TOD) site, with a Park and Ride, commercial/retail space and multi-family residential units.

As a City that borders Snohomish County, Shoreline sits at the terminus point for Community Transit and Metro routes. Therefore, residents wishing to travel from Shoreline to neighboring jurisdictions in Snohomish County must transfer between systems at the AVTC. This results in delays in service, as the AVTC is located off Aurora Avenue North and riders must wait for transfers between systems. These delays act as a deterrent to residents wishing to use transit to travel to Edmonds or Mountlake Terrace. Minimization or elimination of these delays could encourage residents to use transit for trips to Snohomish County.

Staff from the City's Economic Development Program and Public Works Department have begun discussions with Metro to ensure that redevelopment at this site meets the City's transit needs and includes appropriate uses and densities. Due to significant budget restrictions at Metro, it is unknown how aggressively this project may be pursued at this time.

SUMMARY:

There are a variety of transit issues affecting the City of Shoreline, and staff is working with multiple agencies to ensure that the transit needs of the City are met.

RECOMMENDATION

There is no official action required; however, input and comments from the Council will be helpful.

Approved By:  City Manager _____ City Attorney _____