



King County Metro Transit

Public Transportation Services

What is the program?

King County Metro operates the state's largest public transportation system. In 2007 Metro attracted over 109,500,000 boardings on buses, vanpools, ACCESS vans, and the Elliot Bay Water Taxi. Metro is at the current statutory limit of 0.9% sales tax to fund its operations and a portion of its capital program.

In November 2006 general election, King County voters passed Transit Now, a 0.1% increase in sales tax to expand the system. The measure was intended to help Metro keep pace with regional growth by expanding service by 15 to 20 percent over the next 10 years. Longer-range improvements will include the creation of new bus rapid transit service in five busy corridors, more bus service on high-ridership routes and in growing residential areas, and improvements to Metro's existing Rideshare and paratransit services.

How does the program help reduce VMT?

A significant percentage of Metro's riders are choice riders: they could choose to drive a car for a specific trip if they wished. Therefore, increases in Metro's ridership lead to reductions in VMT. Over 600 million passenger miles were travelled on Metro in 2007. Furthermore, many worksites served by Metro are affected by the state CTR law. Three of the state's seven Growth and Transportation Efficiency Centers (GTECs) are in designated urban centers in King County. The array of employer support services, incentives, and other programs designed to serve these markets all help reduce VMT.

What's happening now?

Overall, business is booming, in ridership, pass sales, vanpool formations, hits on Metro's Trip Planner, etc., in part due to rising gas prices. Some of Metro's bus routes are having capacity problems as ridership has grown so much. Park and Ride lots within King County are also near or well beyond capacity to meet demand.

Under Transit Now, Metro is developing RapidRide, a bus rapid transit service. The first RapidRide project, operating in the Pacific Highway South corridor, will begin in 2010. RapidRide will provide frequent, reliable bus service that will keep people moving throughout the day along certain major corridors. New buses, upgraded passenger waiting areas, synchronized traffic signals, and real-time bus arrival signs are just some of the features that will distinguish this service in the following five corridors:

- Aurora RapidRide—Aurora Avenue N (SR-99) between Shoreline and downtown Seattle
- Ballard/Uptown RapidRide—Ballard to downtown Seattle along 15th Avenue NW and W Mercer Place

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- Bellevue-Redmond RapidRide—Bellevue to Redmond on NE Eighth Street and 156th Avenue NE via Crossroads and Overlake
- Pacific Highway South RapidRide—SeaTac to Federal Way on Pacific Highway S (SR-99)
- West Seattle RapidRide—West Seattle to downtown Seattle using the downtown Seattle transit tunnel or Third Avenue.

Each of these RapidRide routes will connect designated urban centers and will dramatically increase access to activities and services to reduce non-commute car travel and VMT.

What can we be doing with existing resources?

Transit Now included an element called Service Partnerships. This program used the new resources from Transit Now to leverage resources from local jurisdictions and employers to make specific improvements to transit service. The partner cities and businesses are making either direct financial contributions for at least five years or roadway improvements that speed up transit service. The partners' financial contributions must cover at least one-third of the cost of added transit service, and the speed-and-reliability partnerships must increase transit speeds by at least 10 percent.

The Service Partnerships process led to 16 partnership agreements, which will result in a total of 131,000 hours of additional bus service on major urban corridors throughout the county, more trips on at least 25 existing routes, and traffic improvements on city streets that will improve the speed and reliability on two RapidRide corridors for bus rapid transit service.

This type of program could be a model for the state or for other transit systems that wish to expand transit service to meet VMT reduction goals.

What could we be doing with additional resources?

Transit agencies statewide need help in expanding their service levels and any capital investments that would be required (specifically, rolling stock and park and ride capacity). In Metro's case, our system is beyond capacity in many corridors during the peak. In areas and times where Metro has capacity, state assistance in public education, promotion, and customer information technology would help expose residents to how Metro service can help them achieve their mobility needs today.

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