

Attachment A: Public Transit Recovery Planning Background Information

Information on 2021 transit service levels and transit capital programs has been added since the Committee of the Whole briefing on September 8.

Introduction

The COVID-19 public health crisis and accompanying recession have severely impacted public transit ridership and revenue. King County Metro ridership is down about 62 percent systemwide as of early September, while Sound Transit routes serving Redmond have seen ridership declines in excess of 90 percent. Both agencies rely heavily on sales tax revenue to fund service, a source that has been hit early and hard. With both agencies having largely stabilized service at a reduced level, Metro and Sound Transit are now turning to recovery. Metro and Sound Transit are critical partners in Redmond's recovery because they provide essential mobility services that support the community's economic and social well-being

Redmond's Transit Priorities

Connecting Redmond neighborhoods to Redmond urban centers and connecting Redmond to the region are the principal objectives of Redmond's transit services priorities, which include the following:

- Open light rail service – the backbone of Redmond's transit network – on time in 2023 and 2024
- Restructure the transit network to bring light rail within reach of all Redmond neighborhoods, both through fixed route and innovative services like Community Connections
- Invest in transit service in urban centers to support continued growth and viability of transit-oriented communities like Downtown, Overlake, and Marymoor Village, in support of Redmond's vision and VISION 2050
- In an era of reduced revenue, focus on building toward the future vision in METRO CONNECTS, Metro Transit's long-range planning document
- Conduct robust public outreach this fall for future service changes

Transit Service Impacts in Redmond from COVID-19 and Recession

Metro and Sound Transit have experienced dramatic reductions in demand and revenue across their systems, as summarized above. Some routes, mostly peak-hour express routes, are suspended. Others are running reduced schedules. The September service change, which took effect on September 19, restored service to about 85 percent of pre-COVID levels. Capacity on each bus is 12-18 passengers to support physical distancing. June and September 2020 service levels are shown in Table 1.

Of most concern are the continued suspensions of Metro routes 249 and 931. These suspensions leave riders in the Idylwood neighborhood (249) and along much of Redmond-Woodinville Road (931) without transit service, including residents of affordable homes in the Idylwood neighborhood.

Table 1: Metro and Sound Transit Service Levels in Redmond for June and September 2020

Route	Service Area	Type	Jun. Service Level	Sep. Service Level
B	Redmond TC-Bellevue TC	RapidRide	Full	Full
224	Duvall-Novelty Hill-Redmond TC	DART all-day	Full	Full
930	Totem Lake-Redmond TC	DART all-day	Full	Full
221	Ed Hill-Bellevue College	All-day	Full	Reduced
245	Kirkland TC-Overlake-Eastgate	Frequent all-day	Full	Reduced

Route	Service Area	Type	Jun. Service Level	Sep. Service Level
269	Issaquah-SE Redmond-Overlake	All-day	Full	Reduced
225	Kenmore-Overlake/RTS	All-day	Reduced	Reduced
226	Bellevue TC-Overlake-Eastgate	All-day	Reduced	Reduced
250	Avondale-Kirkland-Bellevue TC	Frequent all-day	Reduced	Reduced
ST 542	Redmond TC-Green Lake	All-day express	Reduced	Reduced
ST 545	SE Redmond-Downtown Seattle	Frequent all-day express	Reduced	Reduced
ST 566	Auburn-Overlake	All-day express	Reduced	Reduced
232	Duvall-Redmond TC-Bellevue TC	Peak-hour	Suspended	Suspended
249	Idylwood-Overlake-Bellevue	All-day	Suspended	Suspended
268	SE Redmond-Downtown Seattle	Peak-hour	Suspended	Suspended
931	UW Bothell-Woodinville-Redmond	All-day	Suspended	Suspended
ST 541	Overlake-U District	Peak-hour express	Suspended	Suspended
ST 544	Overlake-S Lk Union	Peak-hour express	Suspended	Suspended
ST 567	Kent-Overlake	Peak-hour express	Suspended	Suspended

Frequent means 15-minute all-day service. Routes running reduced schedules have reduced service by about 10 to 20 percent.

Recovery: 2021 Transit Service Levels

The recovery work of Metro and Sound Transit is wide-ranging and responds to two major challenges: 1) changes, for an unknown duration, in how people use public transit and 2) new fiscal realities. Recovery work will manifest itself most clearly in proposed service changes that happen in March and September each year. The March 2021 service change will reflect the Seattle Transportation Benefit District expiration at the end of 2020¹; this change will have minimal or no impact in Redmond. The September 2021 service change will comprise changes across the network based on the continued impacts of COVID on demand and revenue; this change could impact service in Redmond.

Metro Proposed 2021-22 Budget

The King County Executive's 2021-22 proposed budget includes appropriation authority to restore in 2021 service that Metro suspended or reduced in 2020. Metro is developing criteria for service restoration decisions with a focus on data, transparency, and equity. These decisions will be implemented in service changes that occur in March and September. According to the proposed budget, Metro will draw on its fund balance to restore service and forecasts the ability to support restored service through 2024. The proposed budget also supports light rail integration on the Eastside in anticipation of light rail opening in 2023-24.

Sound Transit 2021 Service Implementation Plan

Sound Transit makes ST Express service decisions through its annual Service Implementation Plan (SIP). The draft 2021 SIP proposes to continue the suspensions of peak-hour express routes 541, 544, and 567, and continue reductions to routes 542 and 566. Sound Transit also proposes to change the west terminus of route 542 from Green Lake Park & Ride to the University District, coinciding with the

¹ The Seattle City Council approved a Seattle TBD renewal ballot measure for November. The current TBD is funded through a 0.1% sales tax and \$60 car tab fee and raised \$56 million in 2019. The renewal would be funded by a 0.15% sales tax raising about \$42 million/year. The Seattle TBD funds service principally in Seattle.

opening of light rail to Northgate. Because of reduced revenue, the service hours saved by shortening route 542 will not be reinvested in SR 520 corridor express bus service. Sound Transit solicited public input on the draft SIP in September and the Sound Transit Board is expected to adopt the final SIP in November or December.

Transit Capital Programs

Sound Transit Capital Program Realignment

Sound Transit's most visible recovery planning has been in connection with its capital program realignment. Sound Transit is evaluating options for completing its capital program with reduced revenue. The Sound Transit Board is expected to decide how to realign its capital program by July 2021.

Sound Transit's capital program realignment does not affect Redmond's light rail projects, but it may delay implementation of bus rapid transit (BRT) on I-405. Opening the northerly I-405 BRT segment between Bellevue and Lynnwood on time in 2025 benefits people traveling to/from Redmond by improving speed and reliability for BRT riders and allowing riders to transfer to/from local buses serving Redmond such as route 250. BRT on I-405 between Bellevue and Lynnwood is a partnership between Sound Transit and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), which also faces revenue uncertainty. Two critical elements of the project are extending dual express toll lanes between SR 522 and SR 527 in Bothell (funded by WSDOT) and re-constructing the NE 85th St. interchange in Kirkland to accommodate BRT (funded by Sound Transit and built by WSDOT). In the coming months Sound Transit and WSDOT leadership are expected to develop a joint strategy for moving these project elements forward.

Metro

The proposed budget for Metro reduces future capital projects in line with reduced revenues. METRO CONNECTS, Metro's long-range plan, included a new Rapid Ride K line on the Eastside scheduled to open in 2025. In the proposed budget the RapidRide K is unfunded. RapidRide K was planned to run from Totem Lake to Eastgate, connecting customers riding to/from Redmond to frequent north-south service.

Engagement Opportunities

Metro is engaging the public this fall to seek input on transit service changes to be implemented in September 2021, including which currently-suspended or reduced routes will be restored. Beginning in 2021, Metro and Sound Transit will engage the public to seek input on restructuring the Eastside bus service network in anticipation of the arrival of light rail in 2023 and 2024. City staff will continue to engage Metro and Sound Transit in these efforts on how those agencies can best support the Redmond community through recovery.

Metro Policy Updates

Metro is also updating three of its core policy documents in 2020-21: the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation, the Service Guidelines, and METRO CONNECTS. Together these policy documents guide how Metro deploys transit service. The focus of the updates is incorporating equity and sustainability recommendations from Metro's Mobility Framework² into Metro's policy documents. This work had been planned prior to COVID and is now occurring in the midst of the pandemic and recovery. Metro will

² The Mobility Framework, completed in 2019, is a "framework for the equitable implementation of innovations in transit service and mobility," according to the 2019-20 King County budget proviso requiring its completion.

engage community members on policy updates in 2020-21 in addition to engagement around service changes described above. Staff anticipates returning to the Council at a future meeting to discuss Metro policy updates. The Regional Transit Committee³ is expected to review the updated documents in summer 2021 and recommend updates to the King County Council for adoption in the second half of 2021. Service changes that occur in 2022 and beyond will be guided by the updated policy documents.

³ Council Vice President Anderson serves on the Regional Transit Committee.