



CITY OF KIRKLAND
Department of Public Works
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033 425.587.3800
www.ci.kirkland.wa.us

MEMORANDUM

To: David Ramsay, City Manager

From: Daryl Grigsby, Public Works Director
David Godfrey, P.E., Transportation Engineering Manager

Date: March 21, 2008

Subject: Funding Metro Route 255

RECOMMENDATION:

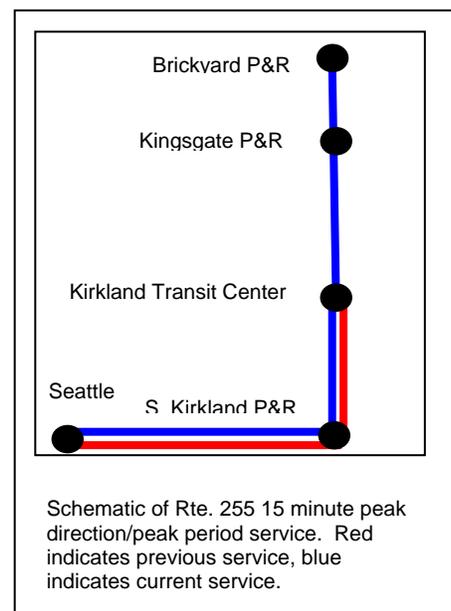
It is recommended that Council approve a proposal to fund continuation of certain peak hour trips on Metro Route 255 by reducing service on Route 277. Metro can make the change administratively, but would like to have the support of the City of Kirkland.

BACKGROUND:

Summary

In cooperation with City of Kirkland Staff, Metro has proposed a service modification which maintains trips on the highly productive route 255. In order to maintain those trips, a service reduction is proposed for Route 277 which is a lower-usage, less productive route. Ridership on the 277 is relatively low, about 12 riders per bus hour (compared to about 26 riders per bus hour on route 255) and ridership has been decreasing over time.

Metro Route 255 currently operates at 15 minute frequencies in the morning peak to Seattle from Brickyard P&R and to Brickyard from Seattle in the afternoon peak. Prior to the beginning of construction of the I-405 nickel project, about half of these peak period trips originated or ended at Kirkland Transit Center instead of Brickyard P&R. WSDOT paid to extend all the peak period trips to Brickyard as construction mitigation for the nickel project. (see box at right) The new trips are very popular, growing by about 30% since their inception in 2006. Now that construction of the nickel project is complete, WSDOT is no longer funding the trips. Metro Transit does not have new funding to continue the trips and is considering trade-offs in service to free up hours to fund the 255 service.



Route 277 travels between Juanita and the University of Washington in the peak periods; to UW in the morning and to Juanita in the afternoon. Ridership is relatively low on Route 277. Metro is proposing cutting some of the trips on the 277 and using the savings to permanently fund the extra trips on the 255.

Metro can make the reduction to the 277 administratively, but would like to have the support of the City of Kirkland.

Route 255

Metro route 255 runs between Seattle and Brickyard P&R via Kingsgate P&R, Juanita, Kirkland Transit Center, and South Kirkland P&R on weekdays and weekends. It begins about 5:00 AM and runs until about 12:00 AM on weekdays and has slightly less coverage on weekends. Except during the peak when it runs every 15 minutes in the peak direction, and late night when it runs every 60 minutes it runs every 30 minutes both directions on weekdays. On weekends it runs every 30 minutes except early morning and late evening when it again runs every 60 minutes.

In June 2006, WSDOT began funding peak-hour, peak-direction trips of Route 255 between Kirkland Transit Center and Brickyard Park and Ride. Previously, in the peak hour/peak direction, half the 255 trips ran between the Kirkland transit center and Seattle. The other half ran between Brickyard and Seattle. Together this provided every 15 minute peak service to the transit center and every 30 minute service to Brickyard. By extending the trips that ended at the Kirkland Transit Center, 15 minute peak hour/peak direction service between Brickyard and Seattle was created.

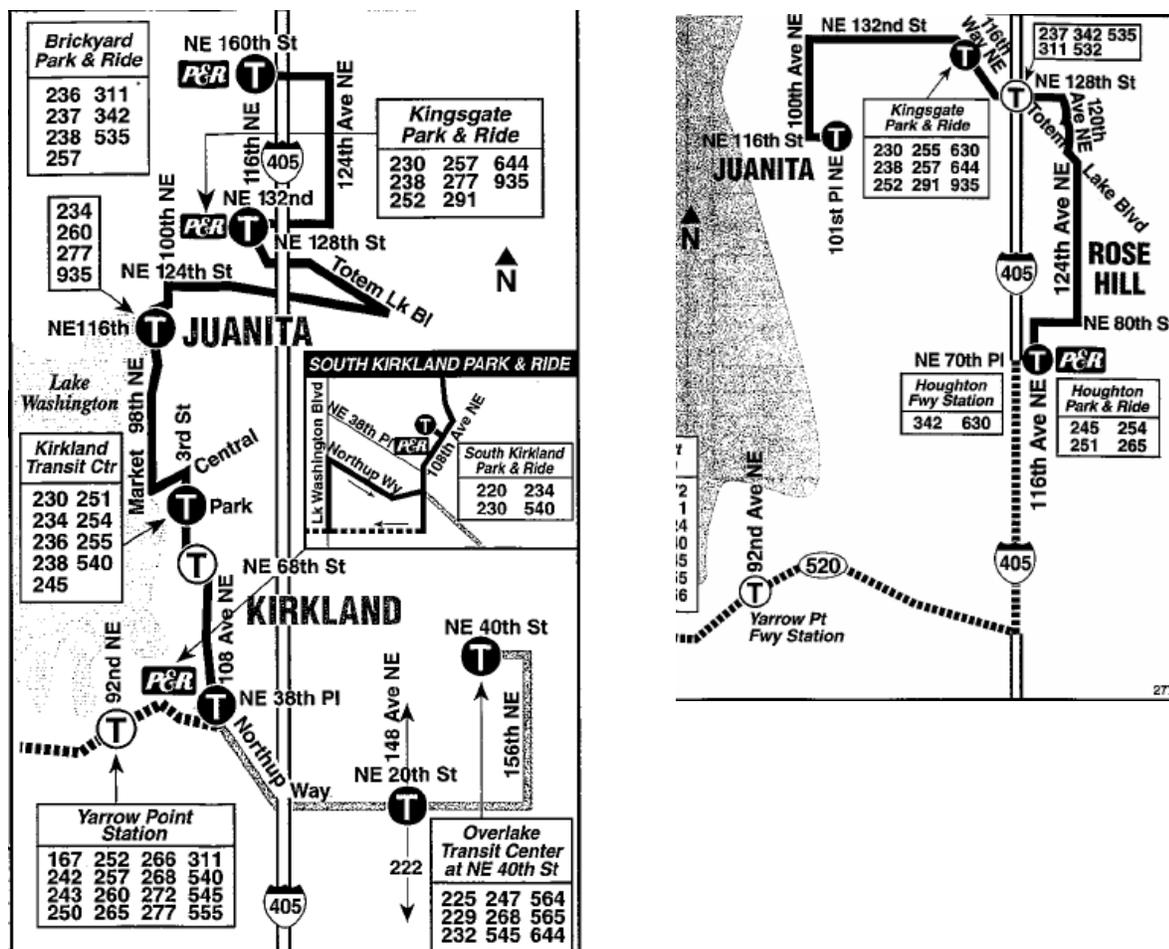


Figure 1. Route maps of Route 255 (left) and Route 277. Non-Kirkland portions of the maps are omitted. Heavy black lines indicate routes, broken lines indicate travel on freeways.

The extra trips have been successful in attracting new riders. Ridership on the route has increased by 32% over the period spring 2006 to spring 2007 measured on extended trips as they approach the Kirkland Transit Center. This is a large increase on an already productive route.

Beginning in June of 2008, WSDOT will no longer fund the extra route 255 trips. Because the extra trips were so successful, Metro and City of Kirkland have partnered to fund the trips through September 2008, with each partner contributing about \$25,000. The way Metro spends new hours is largely dictated by the Transit Now proposal. This means that if Metro is to fund the 255 trips after September, offsetting reductions in other service must be made. Route 277 is a candidate for making these cuts.

Route 277

Metro route 277 is a peak hour/peak direction route that runs on weekdays between Juanita and the University of Washington via Kingsgate P&R, Totem Lake, Lake Washington and Juanita High Schools, and Houghton P&R. It operates on I-405 and SR 520 between Houghton P&R and the University District. When the University is in session, there are 6 trips to UW in the morning and 6 to Juanita in the afternoon. When UW is not in session there are 4 morning trips and 5 afternoon trips. Morning trips are about every half hour between about 6:00 AM and 8:30 AM. Afternoon trips are about every half hour between 2:30 PM and 5:00 PM. Ridership on the 277 is relatively low, about 12 riders per bus hour (compared to about 26 riders per bus hour on route 255) and ridership has been decreasing over time.

The proposal

By permanently deleting the trips that currently run only when the UW is in session and by entirely deleting one other afternoon trip, Metro would have enough hours to permanently fund the 255 extensions. Kirkland staff supports this concept because it cuts relatively unproductive runs on a relatively unproductive route in order to fund service that has proven to be effective. There is a reduction in coverage on Route 277 but it is relatively minor.

Riders of route 277 would be informed of the cuts by postings at key locations and notices in the rider alert that is published for each service change.

Other options

Although Metro and City of Kirkland staff recommend the service changes described above, other options include a) not funding the 255 trips after September; b) deleting trips from a route other than 277 c) funding the extra trips with City funds at a cost of approximately \$150,000 per year.

A Summary of Metro Service in Kirkland

In fall of 2001, a major change to service in Kirkland took place, putting more emphasis on connecting eastside cities in exchange for one-seat rides to Seattle. Other changes have taken place over the following six years. Some routes that serve Kirkland have changed their hours of operation and/or frequency, some have been added and some have been deleted. The Table 1 summarizes, at a very high level the impact of those changes on service and ridership. Bus ridership has increased when considering both the entire routes that touch Kirkland and when considering only stops in Kirkland. Looking only at the stops in Kirkland, the number of weekday opportunities i.e. the number of times a bus goes past a stop, has increased only 3% (from 15,515 in 2001 to 15,998 in 2007) but during the same time ridership has increased 45%.

Any comments Council has on how they would like to see this information further broken down would be helpful. Metro staff has agreed to try to provide any further analysis that Council would find useful.

Table 1. Summary of Service and Ridership changes to routes serving Kirkland.

Time	Number of Routes with at least one stop in Kirkland	Annual Bus Trips	Annual Bus Hours	Total Route Annualized Ridership	Average weekday On + off at stops in Kirkland	Comments
Spring 2000	21	140,540	181,277	2,872,325		Base line for spring-spring service comparison
Fall 2001	20	193,544	253,767	2,981,556	6,688	Major service re-organization/base line for fall-fall ridership comparison
Fall 2007	20	204,224	280,897	4,438,243	9,728	Last period for which ridership is available
Spring 2008	21	227,767	289,141	No data		Latest service change; no ridership available.
Change in ridership, Fall 2001- Fall 2007	-	-	-	+49%	+45%	Calculated as (2007-2001)/2001
Change in service, Spring 2000- Spring 2008	-	+62%	+60%	-		Calculated as (2008-2000)/2000