

DRAFT

July xx, 2017

Rob Gannon, General Manager
King County Metro Transit
King Street Center, KSC-TR-0415
201 S. Jackson St.
Seattle, WA 98104-3836

Dear Mr. Gannon:

The Kirkland City Council appreciates the coordinated and phased outreach by King County Metro and Sound Transit in their process to evaluate and develop transit service options on SR 520. The City of Kirkland has a vested interest in the SR 520 bridge and transit service using the bridge because it is a vital transit link that connects people and jobs between Kirkland, other Eastside cities, and Seattle. Today the critical nature of this corridor as a vital transit link can be demonstrated by buses such as Metro's 255 and Sound Transit's 545 being at capacity and leaving passengers stranded at stops during peak times of the day. Service changes, including adding a significant transfer for a large volume of people, will have a dramatic effect on travelers. This transfer must work seamlessly for all users. Service that is not seamless and convenient could result in increased trip travel times, reduced reliability and increased rider frustration. This could have the unintended consequence of increasing drive-alone trips.

The City of Kirkland's objectives for any change in service are as follows:

- **Maintain current markets and expand to new markets** – All day, frequent service should be maintained to downtown Seattle; and all day, frequent service should be added to the University of Washington and South Lake Union.
- **Maintain or improve current service levels** – Any excess transit service hours generated by the route restructure should be reinvented to increase frequency and span of service on routes that serve the Eastside.
- **Maintain or decrease transit travel times** – A change in the transit route structure should result in an overall reduction in trip travel time.
- **Minimize impacts to the traveler experience** – Service changes would not introduce more than one "convenient" transfer into any existing transit trip in order to maintain as seamless a trip as possible for transit riders.
- **Be forward compatible** – Any changes to the transit system will not only be beneficial in the short-term, but support and help take full advantage of future changes that will take place to the transit network service. These include implementation of I-405 Bus Rapid Transit, future extensions of Link light rail, the closure of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel, completion of the SR 99 Tunnel, and completion of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement Program.

City of Kirkland staff and City Council members have reviewed the three Service Concepts presented by Metro and Sound Transit and compared them to our objectives for this service restructure. Based on this assessment the City has the following recommendations for Kirkland transit service:

Service Options

Each Service Concept illustrates a different strategy for how service would be oriented in the future. The City recommends that the Draft Service Proposal that will be prepared for Phase III of outreach be based on the following Service Concepts:

- **“Existing” Service for North Kirkland** – Continue to provide direct peak service from North Kirkland to Downtown Seattle. We are opposed to truncation of Metro’s Route 255 as there are no redundant services off peak. Instead this route must continue to serve the Kingsgate neighborhood, as well as parts of Woodinville and Bothell.
- **“Frequent” Service for Downtown Kirkland and South Kirkland** – Kirkland accepts the need to re-orient Metro’s route 255 to transfer downtown Seattle bound passengers at the Montlake Triangle Link light rail station because this is shown to provide travel time benefits to travelers. The City also supports efforts to eliminate the existing practice of the 255 terminating at multiple points. Additionally, this concept includes new Sound Transit Route 542 direct service to South Lake Union linked to Kirkland at the S. Kirkland Park and Ride and Overlake. As a growing transit destination, this concept is strongly supported by Kirkland. We would request that Sound Transit Route 540 be re-oriented to downtown Seattle instead of Children’s Hospital and that existing service levels be maintained. This would continue the option for a peak one seat ride from Kirkland to downtown Seattle for those that may not want to or have trouble making the transfer. Re-orienting the 540 also reduces the amount of redundancy in the system by the 540 and 255 essentially traveling the same route. With any changes we would request broad public outreach and education.

Montlake Triangle (a.k.a. Montlake Hub) and Convenient Transfer

While the final set of Montlake Hub transfer options has not been defined, we support Metro’s and Sound Transit’s commitment to providing solutions for improving the transfer environment and transit operations at Montlake Hub prior to moving forward with Phase 3 Link Connections SR-520 community outreach. Any solution at the Montlake Hub must address the following:

1. Continued involvement of Kirkland staff in the development and evaluation of these solutions.
2. Development of an implementation plan that documents capital and operational changes. These must be functional and in place prior to the service change.
3. Once in place, the improvements will provide a “Convenient Transfer” as defined by the following:
 - Bus Stops and walkways that are weather protected
 - Clear wayfinding with real time traveler information
 - Minimize barriers with fewer, shorter and more level street crossings and pathways
 - There is enough transit system capacity for all transfers both ways between rail and bus, all passengers will be accommodated (No one gets left behind)
 - Reasonable options for individuals with disabilities
 - A safe transfer environment at all operational hours that meets performance standards that can be accomplished 90% of the time:
 - Less than 7.5-minute time (including walk and average wait times) for the transfer during the AM and PM peak

- Less than 15-minute time (including walk and average wait times) for the transfer during the off-peak
 - Less than a total 5 minute walk for the average person
4. Finally, the City of Kirkland anticipates that any improvements that are likely to be in place by the change any service changes take place in either 2018 or 2019 will likely be interim in nature and that there will be the need for future improvements at this location to further enhance the transfer environment. These could include expanding the system of bus lanes in the vicinity of the Montlake Hub and further grade-separation of pedestrians from crossing busy streets in order to complete their transfer.

Increase ORCA Use

To reduce boarding times and reduce the penalties for those paying with cash that result from implementing a system with more transfers between buses and Link Light Rail we recommend implementing a broad marketing campaign to increase ORCA Card usage in Kirkland, as well as in other areas that will see increased transfer activity. With these in place, all door boardings and off-board fare-payment would make sense.

Future and On-going Coordination

To the extent future construction phasing and staging could impact service in the near-term. Strong coordination must continue between the transit agencies, Seattle and the Washington State Department of Transportation in the development of Area Traffic Management Plans with construction of the SR 520 “Rest of the West” to ensure maintaining travel time and priority for transit. As issues related to transit service for eastside cities and their commuters is discussed we recommend continued discussion and involvement with City technical staff.

Other Considerations

In addition to these recommendations, the City remains concerned about transit service and transportation choices for our community. We offer the following suggestions:

- **Cash Payments for Transfers** - People who pay cash should ***not*** be penalized and pay twice to transfer between Metro and Sound Transit service. Future fare discussions should address this inequity.
- **Montlake Hub and Montlake Station** – While the Montlake Freeway Flyer station is in operation transfers between that and the Montlake Hub should not be impacted by SR 520 “Rest of the West” construction. Walkways and transit should be a priority for this connection and management plans should address events and bridge closures. Operations at the Montlake Hub and connecting to the Hub should be designed to address congestion and eliminate “bus bunching”.
- **South Lake Union** – provide details for the current and future potential terminus for service to South Lake Union (the proposed ST 542). Ensure service connects to a logical terminus with other connections and is forward compatible with the future SR 99 North Portal and long-term Sound Transit Ballard to West Seattle service.

The City looks forward to working with Metro and ST as they finalize the service restructure.

Sincerely,

Mayor Amy Walen

CC: Peter Rogoff, Sound Transit CEO
King County Executive Dow Constantine
King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski, Transportation, Economy and Environment
Committee Chair
King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci, Regional Transit Committee Chair
Seattle Mayor Ed Murray
Seattle City Councilman Rob Johnson
University of Washington President Ana Mari Cauce
Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar, Washington State Department of Transportation

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