



**CITY OF KIRKLAND**  
Department of Public Works  
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## **MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Kurt Triplett, City Manager

**From:** Truc Dever, MPA, Interim Director of Public Works  
Doug McIntyre, AICP, Transportation Manager  
Kim Scrivner, Transportation Planner  
Victoria Kovacs, AICP, Transportation Planner

**Date:** April 23, 2024

**Subject:** RAPIDRIDE K LINE PROCESS FOR RECORD OF SUPPORT MEMOS AND  
REVIEW OF RECORD OF SUPPORT MEMO #1: 120TH AVENUE NE  
ROUTING

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

It is recommended that City Council receives a briefing on two interrelated RapidRide K Line items: first, a process for informing the City Council on milestones in planning and design advancement (referred to as Record of Support Memos) of the K Line for development of the locally preferred alternative; and second, a discussion on the first Record of Support Memo related to the northern terminus of K Line routing on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE in Totem Lake. Staff is seeking Council concurrence for these two items.

## **BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

RapidRide is the name of King County Metro's bus rapid transit (BRT) service. RapidRide lines offer high frequency operation; faster, more reliable trip times using exclusive lanes and/or transit signal priority at intersections; improved shelter waiting areas with off-board payment and real-time information at major stops; and branded buses and facilities with a unique ride and feel. RapidRide is the highest level of investment Metro makes in its bus transit system.

Metro currently operates seven RapidRide lines (A-F, H), is working to develop three more lines (G, I, J) for planned openings between 2024 and 2027, and has resumed planning for two additional lines (K, R) that had been paused during the pandemic. The K Line will benefit Kirkland residents as it traverses through Kirkland from Totem Lake, through the NE 85<sup>th</sup> St Station Area and Downtown Kirkland, on to the South Kirkland Park & Ride, then to Downtown Bellevue and finally terminating at the Eastgate Park & Ride. The K Line is currently planned to begin service in 2030.

The K Line is an 18-mile corridor that will connect Sound Transit's future I-405 BRT (STRIDE), Link Light Rail, and the RapidRide B Line (Bellevue to Redmond). Key destinations include Totem Lake, Downtown Kirkland, Downtown Bellevue, Bellevue College, and Eastgate (see Figure 1).

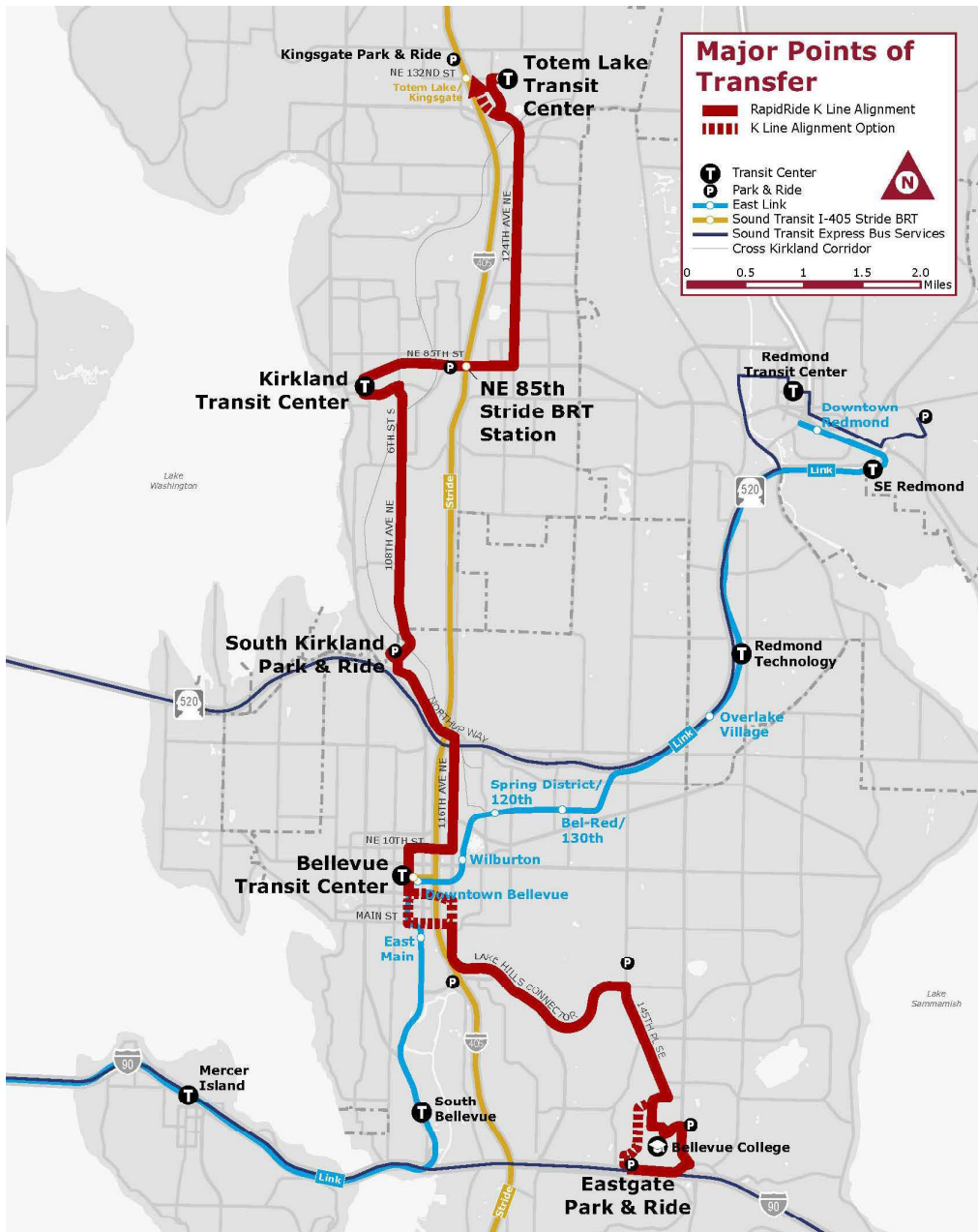


Figure 1 Proposed K Line Routing

The K Line began work in 2019 and was originally slated to begin service in 2025. Metro paused work on the K Line at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic due to funding shortfalls. This ultimately led to the K Line budget being eliminated in King County's 2021/2022 Biennium. At that point, the project had established a preferred alignment, and had entered into Project Development with the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

The budget for the K Line was reestablished in the King County 2023/2024 Biennium and included in the 10-year financial plan. Project work restarted in September 2023, and has been progressing toward the goal of 10% design. The next phase of the K Line is a restart of the community engagement process, where Metro will engage with key partners and communities with the goals of conducting an intentional, inclusive, and equitable engagement process that ensures the community is aware of the project and how RapidRide will impact and benefit the community.

City of Kirkland Transportation Division Staff are currently coordinating closely with Metro staff on advancing the planning and design of the K Line. One of the upcoming major milestones identified is the development and approval of a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA). “LPA” is a term used by the FTA and refers to an alternative evaluated through the local planning process, adopted as the desired alternative by the appropriate agency and identified as the preferred alternative in the NEPA process. In this case, King County Metro is responsible for development of the LPA and will ultimately seek approval of the LPA by the King County Council. A conceptual flowchart for the LPA process is included as Attachment A.

To obtain King County Council approval of the LPA, Metro staff are organizing support from local jurisdictions by seeking concurrence on certain project elements such as routing, access, station locations, and speed and reliability projects. The City’s responsibility is to respond to Metro’s requests for planning and design concurrence on these project elements with formal documentation of local agency support to allow for continued design development. The support for these elements will be formalized via “Record of Support Memos,” which, once signed by the City Manager, feed into the LPA. When the draft LPA is prepared, Metro and City Staff intend to give a presentation to the City Council as a final touch point in this process.

Once approved, the LPA will be included in Metro’s application for a FTA Small Starts Grant in 2025, which, if awarded, will establish an official timeline for project implementation.

### **PROPOSED PROCESS TO REVIEW RECORD OF SUPPORT MEMOS**

To get to an approved LPA, Staff plan to inform City Council of each Record of Support Memo via the Consent Agenda. This will allow for Council awareness and provide the opportunity for additional Council input if desired. Additionally, this process helps keep momentum for the project so that planning and design can continue to the 10% design milestone.

After Council review, staff will send the Record of Support Memo, signed by the City Manager, to Metro to formally record City support for that project element. The memos will outline the caveats to City support, if any, and be clear about the expectations the City has of Metro.

Metro expects to have six Record of Support Memos for consideration by Kirkland with a goal of finalizing the LPA by Q4 2024, when they will seek King County Council approval of the LPA. An approved LPA is needed to prepare the FTA Small Starts grant application to be submitted in 2025.

### **RECORD OF SUPPORT #1 - 120<sup>th</sup> AVE NE ROUTING**

The first Record of Support Memo has been prepared for the routing at the northern terminus at Totem Lake Transit Center. Specifically, the proposal is for the K Line to be routed along 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE between Totem Lake Boulevard and NE 128<sup>th</sup> Street, through the Village at Totem Lake and terminating at the Totem Lake Transit Center off NE 128<sup>th</sup> Street.

The benefits of routing on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE through the Village at Totem Lake include that it would better serve the high density development in that vicinity, including both residential and retail uses, with high frequency transit; that it would take advantage of existing sidewalks on both sides of the roadway as well as existing safe crossings enhanced with Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs) to facilitate safe pedestrian crossings; and that it is the most direct routing for the speed and reliability of the K Line.

The alternative routing would be to utilize Totem Lake Boulevard NE. Given there is no left turn lane from NE 128<sup>th</sup> St to southbound on Totem Lake Boulevard NE, this would result in a longer,

more circuitous route that extends the travel time and reduces reliability while also requiring pedestrians to use some roadways that might lack pedestrian facilities, e.g. west side of Totem Lake Boulevard, to catch the bus. This alternative has buses leaving the Totem Lake Transit Center going north along 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, west on NE 132<sup>nd</sup> Street, and south on Totem Lake Boulevard NE, which is out of direction and not preferred.

To facilitate the use of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE for the K Line, capital improvements are necessary including modifying the parking pockets and expanding the existing bus zones. Modifying 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE for the K Line will also support local Metro Transit service returning to this corridor. Currently Metro does not run local bus service on 120<sup>th</sup> Ave. NE through the Village at Totem Lake due to the narrow constraints and impacts of improper parking. These details are articulated in the City's Record of Support Memo (Attachment B).

Due to revisions to parking stall geometrics and the need to accommodate a 60-foot coach for both front and back doors at the current bus stop locations (which are currently 30 feet in length), approximately 4 to 10 parking stalls may be removed out of the approximately 37 stalls on this corridor. Some of these stalls are perceived to be suitable for parking but are in locations where the curb space is intended for pulling in or out. While these areas are not intended for parking, drivers attempt to do so, often resulting in vehicles protruding into the travel lane and impeding traffic circulation. Providing hash marks in these areas will clarify allowable parking stalls. Roadway modifications needed for transit service implementation are fully within the City's right-of-way and do not require approval of the property owner.

Transportation staff have been in communication with the property management company (CenterCal) for the Village at Totem Lake regarding possible improvements to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to facilitate the return of bus service to the corridor. CenterCal is generally supportive of returning bus service to the corridor and have stated their preference to retain as much on-street parking as possible to best serve their retail uses, while acknowledging that some on-street parking stalls might be lost due to the improvements to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. There are 1,039 spaces for retail use in the lower mall and 406 spaces for retail use in the upper mall. This is in addition to the parking for residential or special uses or bicycle parking.

Costs to implement the necessary capital improvements to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE will be included in the K Line project budget, unless opportunities to pursue the work under alternative funding sources arise earlier.

#### **NEXT STEPS:**

City staff will continue working with Metro staff by reviewing and providing input on project design. Staff will return to the City Council when the next Record of Support Memo is requested to be reviewed and signed by the City.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Attachment A: LPA Flowchart
- Attachment B: K Line Visual Schedule
- Attachment C: City of Kirkland Record of Support Memo
- Attachment D: Original Request from King County Metro for Record of Support Memo on 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE Routing