



King County

Metropolitan King County Council
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MANAGEMENT LETTER

DATE: December 19, 2011

TO: Metropolitan King County Councilmembers

FROM:  Cheryle A. Broom, King County Auditor

SUBJECT: Transit Service Guidelines Audit Follow-up

This memorandum provides the results of our review of Transit's response to our 2009 performance audit recommendation to develop and implement service guidelines. We find that Transit has been diligent in the process to implement the recommendation, and that the agency met the criteria for its new guidelines. In order to provide timely and thorough information, we are reporting on this recommendation, B1b in our 2009 report, separately from the formal audit follow-up process. We have conducted follow-up review of approximately half of the recommendations made in the 2009 performance audit.¹ We plan to conduct formal follow-up review of the remaining audit recommendations in 2012.

Discussion

Our 2009 Performance Audit of Transit found that Transit did not have adequate guidance in place to assist in making service development decisions. The audit recommended that Transit develop guidelines that would be formally adopted by the King County Council and then serve as a policy guide for both Transit and stakeholders.

In response to the performance audit, and in conjunction with its strategic planning process, Transit first conducted a review of their existing guidelines. Transit found that they covered many of the key areas of service and facilities planning, but they had not been updated. Therefore, the guidelines were not well matched to the current Metro system.

In order to update and consolidate its service guidelines, Transit reviewed best practices and guidelines produced by other agencies, and also researched how peer agencies set their guidelines.

The review found several common areas addressed by other transit agencies that Transit thought should be addressed in its own guidelines. These areas include:

- *Service classifications*
- *Service availability*
- *Travel time and capacity*

¹ This follow-up memo is available on our website:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/operations/auditor/Reports/Year/~media/operations/auditor/documents/2011Documents/TransitfollowupMgmtLtr.ashx>

- *Service delivery*
- *Vehicle standards*
- *Service equity*
- *Productivity*

The review and planning effort culminated in the publication of the King County Metro Service Guidelines that the King County Council adopted in July 2011 as part of Transit's Strategic Plan.² As stated in an introduction to the plan, the guidelines

... are designed to address productivity, social equity and geographic value. These factors are applied within the guidelines in a multi-step process to identify the level and type of service, along with additional guidelines to measure service quality, define service design objectives and to compare the performance of individual routes within the Metro service network to guide modifications to service following identified priorities.³

Conclusion

In reviewing the sources consulted by Transit and the process by which the agency incorporated best-practice knowledge, we find that Transit was diligent in implementing the recommendation from the 2009 performance audit. We further find that Transit met the criteria it established for having guidelines that are current, concise, transparent, and action-oriented. We note that there are several areas where professional judgment and values enter into decisions, such as the weights to give to productivity, geographic value, and social equity. The process being followed by Transit has the advantage that stakeholders can see how the factors influence decisions, which gives them the ability to be better informed about those decisions.

Bob Thomas, Senior Principal Management Auditor, conducted this management review. Please contact Bob Thomas at 296-0375 or Kymber Waltmunson, the audit team leader, at 296-0383 if you have any questions.

We appreciate the assistance provided by Transit in our follow-up review.

CB:BT:jl

cc: Fred Jarrett, Deputy County Executive, King County Executive Office (KCEO)
Chris Arkills, Transportation Policy Advisor, KCEO
Harold S. Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)
Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Jim Jacobson, Deputy General Manager, Metro Transit Division, DOT
Victor Obeso, Manager, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, DOT
David Hull, Supervisor, Service Planning, Service Development, Metro Transit Division, DOT
John Resha, Policy Staff, King County Council
Paul Carlson, Policy Staff, King County Council

² Ordinance 17143- Relating to public transportation; adopting the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021. Enacted July 13, 2011.

³ King County Metro Service Guidelines, p. 1.