

Regional Transit Task Force Summary of Meeting

**August 5, 2010, 5:30 – 8:30 PM
Mercer Island Community Center**

Task Force members present: Chuck Ayers, Shiv Batra, Gene Baxstrom*, Fred Butler, Suzette Cooke, Grant Degginger, Kevin Desmond*, Bob Drewel, Chris Eggen, Noel Gerken, Chris Hoffmann, Carl Jackson, Kate Joncas, Josh Kavanagh, Jane Kuechle, Steve Marshall, Ed Miller, Lynn Moody, Tom Pierson, Tom Rasmussen, Jared Smith, Jim Stanton, Ron Tober*, Larry Yok

Task Force members absent: David Freiboth, Rob Johnson, Estela Ortega, Carla Saulter, Bob Swarner, Liz Warman

Facilitator: John Howell (Cedar River Group)

I. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. John Howell asked task force members and attendees to introduce themselves, and then reviewed the meeting agenda. An addition to the agenda is to discuss the proposal by three task force members to request an extension to complete the task force's work. Mr. Howell added this topic toward the end of the agenda, before public comment.

II. Summary of Progress Developing SubGroup Recommendations

Cost Control and Efficiency SubGroup (John Howell)

The county's budget office sent a memo to the subgroup to answer questions about county overhead and internal service charges, how they are calculated, and to explain that there is no double-charging of overhead when Metro uses the services of another county department. Since the answers are complex, the Budget Director has offered to meet with subgroup members in person. That meeting is set for Monday, August 9. The subgroup will then decide if they want to make any recommendations to the full task force on the subject of overhead and internal service charges.

The subgroup is doing some further work on policy statements regarding two other topics: contracting out some services, and cost control.

Performance Measurement SubGroup – Draft Performance Measures (Victor Obeso)

The subgroup has been working closely with Metro staff on two topics: clarifying the sources and uses of funds for Metro's services, and developing a proposed performance measurement system. Mr. Obeso reviewed draft documents, see meeting handouts "Metro Service Product Sources and Uses Summary Sheet" and "King County Metro Transit Performance Measurement – Draft 8/4/10."

The Sources and Uses document provides an graphical overview of Metro's products (Fixed Route, Access, Vanpool, ST Express/Link/Streetcar) in terms of their funding sources and operating costs. The sheet also shows several measures of outputs and performance metrics. Additionally, the sheet shows sources and uses information just for fixed route services, and for fixed route services by subarea. This document is intended to make the fund sources and uses information clear and easy to understand, and to allow comparisons across products and, for fixed routes, across subareas.

* Non-voting member

The performance measurement document shows a process chart for how performance measures will be used to measure individual route performance, system performance, and for peer comparisons. Another chart showed what will be included in the development of standards and guidelines for each type of service offered by Metro. The standards and guidelines will be guided by policy criteria, then used to design Metro services, address service characteristics such as frequency of service on routes, route spacing, and on-time performance, etc. Mr. Obeso pointed out that this draft document does not include operational performance measures for other Metro business units, such as management, communications, etc. Some operational measures are already reported by Metro on their web site, others would be developed.

The subgroup has spent several meetings reviewing the draft performance measures for system performance. Included in the task force materials was a chart of possible performance measures for the system as a whole. The chart also indicates which of the seven “key factors” of transit system design each measure relates to. Each performance measure will include a target for desired performance, then periodic reports can track Metro’s actual performance against these targets.

Metro’s work to develop a full performance measurement system is a work in progress that will extend into next year.

Answers to Task Force members’ questions:

- *Missing cost data:* In the Sources and Uses document, some of the cost data are shown as N/A because not all the numbers sort easily into the categories shown on the sheet. This is a work in progress.
- *Collaborative effort:* Metro came to the subgroup with ideas on performance measurement and some work underway. The subgroup made suggestions about which indicators are more useful and how to deliver the information to be transparent and easy to understand. Each piece in the handout could be a section in an annual report Metro would produce on performance results.
- *Role of task force:* Metro would like to get any comments that task force members have on the draft performance measures document. The overall purpose for presenting the draft is so that the task force can say in its final report to the County Council that the performance measure work is underway, provide comments on that work, and that the effort needs to continue to fully develop, adopt, and implement a performance measurement system. Typically, Metro seeks the Regional Transit Council (RTC) and County Council’s guidance on the direction of work such as this.
- *Performance measure related to job centers:* A question was raised about whether the measure “percentage of HOV use to CTR employment sites” is the best way to measure Metro’s ability to get people to and from work. It is one measure related to employment that Metro could use. One challenge in creating performance measures is that they need to be tied to a regular and reliable data source. The proposed measure has a data source with annual updates. Metro does a biennial rider and non-rider survey and includes a question on the purpose of the trip. Another possible data source is the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) journey-to-work study. Metro will consider other measures supported by data sources.
- *Internal performance measures:* The draft measures are for Metro’s transit services. There are separate measures for internal operations, but those are management tools and are not included with the system measures. Some management measures that can inform policy makers and the public on how well Metro is doing providing customer service are on Metro’s Web site. Some people have suggested that all performance measures be in one place and accessible to the public. That is the approach Metro is pursuing. There is always the question about how much detail to provide.

Discussion:

Mr. Howell clarified that the task force's interest in performance measures is to know that Metro is developing a performance measurement system and to provide comments. But it is not part of the charge to the task force to approve particular performance measures.

Task force members' comments included:

- The presentation communicates the information well and quickly.
- The task force placed social equity fairly high in ranking the criteria for service reduction, but only one of the performance measures is for social equity. Would like to see other measures added.
- The draft performance measures provide a paradigm for what a transit system with less resources would look like and what the basis is for service design decisions. Based on this paradigm, Metro can move forward to develop specifics.

Task force members should send any further comments to Mr. Obeso. The performance measurement document or something similar will likely be part of the task force's final report and recommendations.

III. Criteria for Potential Service Additions

Mr. Obeso presented information on projected population and employment growth in King County based on the regional planning coordinated by PSRC and reported in *Vision 2040* and *Transportation 2040*. Based on these plans, Metro staff has developed possible criteria for service growth. See the presentation slides titled "King County Metro System Growth Concept" and the handout, "Housing Unit and Job Densities for King County Cities, 2006 and 2031."

All King County cities have adopted growth targets for 2031. In the pie charts (slides 2 – 4), "metropolitan cities" are the five largest cities in the county; "core cities" are those that have designated growth centers; and "large cities" are those that do not have designated growth centers. All cities project significant growth between 2006 and 2031 in both housing units and jobs. However, the distribution of population among the different types of cities and unincorporated areas is roughly the same as today. The growth projections are at the city-wide level, and do not provide estimates by neighborhood or corridor, which would be required to do detailed scenario development.

Slide 9 shows the transit corridors from *Transportation 2040* on a county map, and how they connect the designated urban centers and manufacturing/industrial centers. These corridors are for rail, light rail, bus rapid transit (BRT) and other high-capacity transit services, and include Sound Transit's current plan and master plan for expansion. By 2040 bus transit is expected to double the current number of riders. The Transit Investments charts (slide 10) show the total funding needed for rail and bus to implement the 2040 plan. Two pie charts show that 64 percent of total operating and capital investments will be for bus service, and that of that 64 percent, how the investments would be broken out by Metro's service categories of Frequent Arterial, Peak/Commuter and Local/Hourly, with nearly half going to Frequent/Arterial. The current projections for revenues, however, fall quite a bit short of the totals shown that are needed.

Slide 11 displays the potential reductions in service through 2016 based on Metro's anticipated revenues. Slide 12, "Restoration of Service," shows three options for the basis on which service could be restored following service reductions:

- Restore service on the **same routes** that were cut.
- Restore the service investment in the **same area** from which it was cut.
- **Grow from the new base** using the new service growth concept.

Slide 13, “Criteria for Service Growth,” shows three possibilities for the criteria on which to plan the growth of service (detailed in slides 14 – 16):

1. Support **employment** and **population** patterns consistent with the 2040 plan, and ensure **social equity**.
2. Establish performance metrics, standards and guidelines, and use them to manage system design and levels of new service to ensure **productivity**.
3. Provide **geographic balance**.

“Geographic balance” would mean to provide service in all areas of King County, taking into account where the jobs and population are, and where alternative services might perform better and cost less than fixed route services.

Slide 17 introduces the “lead versus follow” concept. Metro’s concept proposes that guidelines and standards for service growth should provide opportunities for investments that both *lead* development and *follow* ridership growth. Leading would mean providing service to designated centers where development is planned but may not yet be in place. Following would mean establishing guidelines and standards for how to respond to overcrowded routes.

The next steps to develop the growth concept are for Metro staff to develop a rough picture of the system in the next 10 years, and to develop a network description. The staff suggests the 10-year picture because it is very difficult to project all the changes that might occur in 30 years, and precisely where the growth will occur. To demonstrate the “follow” concept, they will look back to the peak ridership demand from 2008 to describe the level of investments that might be needed when the system experiences that kind of overcrowding. To demonstrate the “lead” concept they will estimate what the bus network might look like to connect the designated urban centers with 15-minute service. They can estimate by subarea, but the 10-year concept will not be a full scenario or network picture. It will describe the backbone of the system and connections and targets.

Answers to Task Force members’ questions:

- *Reliance on 2040 plan:* Although the growth concept relies on the regional 2040 plan, Metro would need to recognize where growth is actually occurring and revise the service plans as needed.
- *Performance measures in growth criterion 2:* The performance metrics in this criterion would measure the service that is shaped by criterion 1 (based on employment-population and social equity). Modifications to the system would respond to performance results.
- *Geographic balance:* This concept does not have an allocation formula. A task force member commented that it will be important to provide a definition. Some people might think that “balance” means providing the same type or amount of service in each geographic area.
- *Changes in the 10-year picture:* The 10-year picture will take into account the nature of Sound Transit’s planned service additions, and possible Metro structural changes in response, but it won’t be possible to show the specific changes at the route level.
- *Priorities:* The priorities for service growth are shown in slide 13 (e.g., first serve employment and population patterns plus social equity).
- *Growth criteria and standards/guidelines:* The three proposed growth criteria represent the policy direction that shapes the standards and guidelines for service. In essence, Slide 18, “Standards and Guidelines,” should show the growth criteria/policy on top of the organization chart, with the standards and guidelines document supporting it. The policy level (growth criteria) is what the task force was charged to develop.

Discussion:

Task force members' comments included the following:

- Add to slide 16 (Provide Geographic Balance) the following bulleted statement: Enhance cross-agency service or service across boundaries (for example, from Metro to Pierce Transit).
- Agree with the priority of supporting the population and employment centers identified in the 2040 plan.
- Concerned about tying the first criterion for service growth to employment. This leaves out institutions such as colleges, which have a much larger number of students who need transit than employees. Colleges generate much traffic in excess of CTR indicators.
- In slide 19 (the questions to the task force), social equity needs to be added to the first criterion that prioritizes employment and population patterns. We also need to consider how we define social equity.
- In terms of the types of service, emphasize efficiency and frequency rather than commuter service, since commuter is not one of Metro's most cost-efficient services.
- Commuter routes are in transition, with the addition of BRT and more Sound Transit services. Commuter routes on fast access corridors can be very efficient.
- Will growth be likely in the next 20 years? Maybe there should be a criterion to address low growth.
- Geographic balance or equity is very complex. We might not need a rigid formula, but there needs to be some kind of equity.

Regarding commuter service, Kevin Desmond noted that half of Metro's fare revenues are connected with commuter routes serving CTR areas. These routes also generate support from business and the community.

There was extended discussion about the concept of leading service. Task force members made the following points:

- Providing "lead" service connects to land use. It will be important to be clear in defining what it means to lead. It may be clearer by deciding where the thresholds are at which Metro decides there is enough of a market to be served. There needs to be a lead concept, but because it is longer-term, it should have a relatively high threshold for when more frequent service is provided.
- Lead service could be defined by the type of housing or development that is being created: with X type of housing, Metro would provide Y amount of service.
- The lead concept should involve a partnership within the area—a commitment from a local jurisdiction or developer to make sure the projected ridership is generated by the development. Would not support the lead concept without a partnership commitment. Because of local control, there is a lot of inconsistency in how/whether the growth areas are being developed. Metro does have a mechanism today for a similar model. This is to work with employers, such as Microsoft, to split the cost of routes that would provide services their employees need
- The lead concept has some risk. Circumstances can change before development plans achieve their promise. Metro would need to be able to be nimble in undertaking lead projects. We should make a cautionary note about taking a lead approach. Bus transit has the advantage of flexibility, and can follow growth fairly easily and quickly.
- Lead projects would not have to be direct service, but could involve creating new service nodes.
- The cost of lead service should be: (1) shared with other transit agencies; (2) shared with the jurisdictions being served; and/or (3) where there is a gap, there should be a mechanism to pay into the needed service.
- We have to make investments in leading in order to meet the goals of the 2040 plan.

- Leading will be driven by the market. The challenge is that while we have a Growth Management Act and a regional plan that direct cities to increase density, there is only Metro to serve that density with transit. There should be other tools to offer cities besides paying for partnership.
- Cities have some options for how they increase density. For example, they could allow more development along existing transit routes.
- Transit is an economic engine. If developers want to build new developments, Metro should have a way to work with them to help fund transit.

Regarding the risk in leading, Mr. Desmond noted that funding is not predictable, but Metro can have tools and develop some revenue to allow some leading. Currently the tools Metro is using are the partnership contracts, which engage support from business and/or local jurisdictions, and RapidRide, for which there are some federal grant funds and partnerships with 11 cities. So even with scarce resources, the County Council prioritized these tools and maintained them in the budget. It will be important to look at other possible funding sources.

Mr. Howell summarized the conversation, saying that there is mixed opinion on the lead/follow concept. Some think we can't lead in the current economic climate; some would favor leading only if there are significant partnerships; some suggest setting a high threshold. In addition, the task force needs to have more conversation on geographic balance and on criteria for restoring service. Some of these topics may become clearer once the task force sees them reflected in the 10-year network concept that Metro staff will develop.

IV. Memo Proposing Extension of Task Force Schedule

On August 5, task force members Grant Degginger, Jim Stanton and Tom Rasmussen sent a memo to the task force proposing that the task force request an extension to at least November 30th to complete their work and present their recommendations to the County Council. The purpose is to give the task force adequate time to review and make recommendations on the Performance SubGroup's work on performance measures, and to more fully consider alternative service allocation concepts for both service additions and cuts.

Three task force members who could not attend this meeting—David Freiboth, Rob Johnson and Carla Saulter—sent messages to the task force agreeing with the idea of extending the task force's work one month, until the end of October.

Mr. Howell noted that the task force's authorizing authorities are the County Council and County Executive. The original schedule was based on the assumption that the task force would deliver its recommendations before the Council needs to make final decisions on the mid-biennial budget in November. The budget discussions usually take place in September through November. The task force is currently a little behind schedule on its meeting topics and decisions, as laid out in the updated schedule from June 23. By that schedule, this meeting should have been the second review of proposed criteria for service additions, and should also have initiated the discussion of funding options. The task force has three scheduled meetings remaining—one more in August and two in September.

In discussion, task force members raised the following points:

- The task force is just starting to get to the policy discussions we need to have. We should complete this work.
- Good work is being done by subgroups that still needs task force review. If another month or two would make a difference, we should request it.
- Would like the chance to review the new service guidelines at the policy level.

- The outlook is not good for revenue opportunities in this year's legislative session. So if the legislative session dates are driving the September deadline for the task force, those dates should not stand in the way of producing a robust set of recommendations.
- Would be concerned if extending the task force process means lost opportunities for funding. We need to know more exactly when the Council needs the task force's work.
- Mr. Howell's contract would need to be extended if the schedule were changed.

In response to questions about the report drafting process, Mr. Howell said that he has a draft outline for the task force report and could start to fill in some of the bullets. But the task force still needs to discuss and come to consensus about service additions, revenue options and the timing of service reductions and cost efficiencies. It would be a stretch to complete these discussions and prepare the report by the end of September, but it could be done. Drafting the report, getting the task force's review and comments, and revising and finalizing the report will take approximately one month, depending on the nature of the comments.

Mr. Howell asked for a show of hands on three possible courses of action:

- Keep the schedule as it is, with completion at the end of September: 5 votes
- Add one month, to extend to the end of October: 16 votes
- Continue through November: 1 vote

Mr. Howell said he would forward the request for a one-month extension to the Executive Committee members.

V. Task Force Member Proposal on Service Reduction Scenario

Task force member Fred Butler provided copies of a memo, entitled "Proposal for Addressing Geographic Equity through Alternative Scenarios for Service Reductions and Growth." In his view, the scenario for service reduction presented at the last meeting had some unintended consequences for geographic equity and fairness. It would have East King County taking the biggest share of the service reductions, at 20 percent, while the other two areas would be cut by only 10 percent. He said that East King County generates \$100 million in revenue but would get only \$70 million in service. He requested that Metro develop another scenario to provide fairness by geographic area.

VI. Public Comment

Hil Hornung

Mr. Hornung is from Bellevue with the Lake Washington School District. He is concerned about Metro's proposal to raise the cost of student transit to \$36 to correspond with what Metro says are its peers. He said this price would represent a 66 percent increase in the price of a youth pass. He referred to Metro's report to the County Council, "Regional Fare Coordination Report and Recommendations," dated July 1, 2010. He said that the peers Metro used for this analysis are Community Transit, the transit systems in Pierce and Kitsap counties and Everett, and Sound Transit. He proposed that Metro instead use peers that are similar in size and economy, such as Portland, Boston and San Francisco. In these cities, youth passes are \$20 and \$26, and are the same as their senior and disabled pass prices. Mr. Hornung said that Metro's revenue plans cite elasticity of demand, but that this principle does not apply to student transit, where students do not decide what transit to ride. He recommended that the County Council take this concept into account and also set a single price for student, senior and disabled passes.

Doug MacDonald

Mr. MacDonald questioned whether Metro's plans should rely so heavily on PSRC's *Vision 2040*. In the past, growth in the designated regional growth centers has been erratic. He suggested that Metro needs to be in a position to assess actual growth rather than relying on the *Vision 2040* projections. He also noted that *Vision 2040* has no funding plan on the capital side for transit, and that there would be a large funding gap to fill. The plans for this funding should be part of a broader funding structure.

Georgine Foster

Ms. Foster lives in Kirkland, which she noted was found in 2006 to be the densest city on the East side. She said that while King County does not have funding to expand transit, nor do cities, nor does the state, Sound Transit has \$50 million for a partnership in the rail corridor on the East side. However, this corridor is severed in Bellevue and ends in Renton. She proposed that instead of pursuing this rail corridor, the region look for ways to use the funding to serve the East side areas that have the most need for transit service.

Don Gerend

Mr. Gerend is the Mayor of Sammamish and the Chair of the Eastside Transportation Partnership. He invited the task force members to attend a meeting of the partnership on August 13, which will feature a presentation about the work of the Regional Transit Task Force.

The meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM.