Examples of Missed Opportunities and Inefficiencies Due to Subarea Accounting Rules and Investment/Reduction Policies

Missed Opportunities.
In areas with peak only-routes operating in one direction, the opportunity exists to run in two directions if demand warrants. However, converting a one-way, cross-subarea, peak-only route into a two-way, cross-subarea route, would involve a transfer of hours from one subarea to the other, while simultaneously adding hours in the subarea from which hours were transferred.

Example: A peak-only route currently operates from Overlake to downtown Seattle, costing 10,000 annual hours. This is would be fully allocated to the East subarea. If the "deadheading" buses were then sent to Queen Anne to carry commuters to Overlake, the full cost of the service would likely increase to about 12,000 hours. However, approximately half (6,000) of the 12,000 hours would be now allocated to the West, and the East would see their allocation drop from 10,000 to 6,000 hours. This is very difficult to achieve when the West subarea has very limited resources (and many needs). We have seen the creation of the Microsoft Connector service to fill the need which has the outcome of their empty "deadheads" being from East to West (in the a.m.) and our empty "deadheads" being from West to East (in the a.m.).

Boundary Issues.
At subareas boundaries, subarea accounting rules can impact the way we design service.

Example: Route 22, which currently ends just south of the Seattle City Limits in White Center is a 50-50 route. With the implementation of RapidRide Line C, that will terminate at Westwood Village (within the West Subarea), we may decide to move Route 22, which currently ends in White Center, to terminate at Westwood Village for improved transfer opportunities. However, this would make the route fully a West subarea route and would, from an accounting standpoint, require the West be allocated more hours for the route while the South would have reduced allocation. If we were required to maintain the current distribution between subareas, the West would need to cut service to fund the adjustment. Thus, we may decide not to make the change in order to avoid this situation, causing the riders to suffer from services which do not connect.

Coordinating Service Improvements on 50-50 Routes is Difficult.
50-50 routes which serve the West Subarea are difficult to improve as any improvement requires half of the improvement cost to be allocated to the West Subarea.

Example: Based on current rules which state that at every 200,000 hours of added investment the 40-40-20 rule must be adhered to, we have found that the West is quickly left with few hours to improve 50-50 routes. So while, in times of service growth, the East and South may have the resources to improve Frequent routes, such as routes 101, 120, 150, 255 and 271, the West has relatively few hours and the improvements are not pursued.

Reducing 50-50 Routes would be a key element to the West Subarea under Current Reduction Policies.

The current policy states that 62% of any service reduction must come from West service, so almost all routes which are funded (even partially) by the West will be need to be reduced under a major cut situation. Therefore, there will be significant pressure to cut 50-50 routes that are productive from a system standpoint, in order to meet the required West target of cut.

Example: Route 101 is an important and high ridership connection between Renton and Seattle. While Route 101 is among the most productive routes when compared with other South King County routes, it is only an average route when compared with other West King County routes. Therefore, if reductions are made based on productivity within a subarea, Route 101 would be a higher priority to reduce in the West subarea than in the South subarea.

Shortening a 50-50 Route can Cause One Subarea to Make a Substantial Investment for No Improvement in Service.

When a 50-50 route is shortened within one subarea only, the savings is allocated back to both subareas. The gap created by this change is often needed to be filled in (and allocated to) only one subarea. Therefore, that one subarea is allocated the cost of investment for no improvement in service.

Example: Route 271 currently travels from Issaquah to the U. District. Observed ridership patterns indicate that the most efficient service design would be to only operate Route 271 between Bellevue and the U. District, while a new route would replace the portion between Issaquah and Bellevue. By shortening Route 271, both the West and East would be allocated 50% of the savings (e.g. 10,000 hours each). However, this new route between Bellevue and Issaquah would be allocated fully to the East subarea. If the new route costs more than the savings from Route 271 (which is likely), the East would be allocated more for a level of service that was the same (or possibly even less).

Problems with 50-50 route with peak-only variants.

If a 50-50 route has peak-only variants, the variants are assigned to a single subarea since they are peak only. If staff wishes to convert trips between a peak-only variant and an all-day variant, this impacts the hours distribution in two subareas as opposed to only one.

Example: Route 255's all-day variant travels between Kingsgate and downtown Seattle and is 50-50. In addition, there are peak-only "turnback" trips westbound in the morning from Kirkland to downtown and returning eastbound in the afternoon. These peak-only trips are charged to the East subarea. Riders have requested that these "turnback" trips be extended to begin/end at Kingsgate. But doing that would result in additional hours allocated to the West subarea resulting from the extended trips in Kirkland (conversion from East only hours to East-West 50-50 hours).