



DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION – 10/12/20

Transit Advisory Commission

Sept. 15, 2020

6-8 p.m.

Zoom

TAC attendees: David Johnson, Aaron Morrow, Jacob Struiksma, Bobby Wooten, Pete Rubin, Ayan Mohamed, Angela, Judy, Gale

Guests (TAC applicants): Henry Rodgers, Mina Martin, Oskar Abian, Kevin Pelstring, Asfaha

Staff: Michelle Huynh, Cindy Chen, Terry White, Allison Miskell, Shelby Cramer, Dave VanderZee

Consent agenda – meeting minutes approved

- Moving ahead with recruitment, few people are on the call tonight and tomorrow and next week will start interviews.
- Aaron – had a very dynamic group of applicants and had a really good pool of applicants and am excited for the unique perspectives coming onto the TAC.

General comments:

- Challenge with there being only one bus route on Vashon Island and the bus was too crowded. They want to work better with service planning to avoid these logjams. In pre-COVID times, the bus often leaves without waiting for the ferry to arrive (especially if it's late).
- Buses get bunched up or run early, especially on the Eastside. There needs to be better management.
- Concerns about people who don't wear a mask or don't wear the mask properly on the bus. This is a safety issue that drives a negative perception of Metro being unsafe if Metro isn't enforcing.
- If you have a petition where people sign, get signatures, could be a way to help strengthen your cause.

Terry White, Interim General Manager – Update

Terry gave a general update on the three point strategy.

- Three point strategy in next 12-23 months where we're positioned to again go after a better funding package than what we have now.
- Solidify our place in the region to continue to move people in these tough times

1. Recovery – ridership coming back, and looking at data to see where the needs are. Seen steady slow increase now at 150k riders (40% of what we would usually carry) and those riders are the ones who have the need to ride. The data shows south King County hasn't taken as much of a hit as east king



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county. Had to deploy additional coaches to have the capacity limits in South KC. We don't know what the new normal will be coming out of COVID. Need to pay close attention to the needs of our riders.

2. Equity-based. Focus on where needs are greatest. Many of us can work at home but many more people who are essential workers depend on our service. We depend on them and they depend on us. Remains important to connect with TAC and different communities to hear the needs.

3. System modernization – transit is slow to modernize. Metro wants to modernize the system so that we can keep our coaches in motion. It takes modernization of our processes and investment in technology (like what we do in light rail, we do active headways to keep the headways consistent and do that on fixed route).

Upcoming September service change: debut key improvements for the Route 160 and the Kent, Renton and Auburn areas. Adding more east-west connections, more evening and weekend service and key destinations. Also providing additional mitigation for the West Seattle Bridge closure.

Ready when you are campaign has launched; Terry highlighted some of the safety features including new partitions for the operators, mask dispensers on some routes and a new public information campaign.

Q: Are there audio announcements about the masks?

- Still working on the announcements with Public Health. There are a few processes to vet how we say what we say.

Q: Some buses “run hot” and some other places like Vashon have buses that aren't coordinated well with the ferry.

- Generally trying to keep buses on time (pre-COVID) but running hot means running early which happens more often when we run early on a reduced schedule, less crowded streets.
- Terry will get info to Pete about Vashon

Q: How do you know how many riders there are that are riding for free and they're not paying? How do you count them? Some people aren't paying fares, so how do you count the numbers accurately?

- Automated passenger count system installed on the buses to determine boardings. It's not tied to fares. In current state, we are doing rear door boarding and not collecting fares.

Q: Are you prepared to start resuming fares on October 1? Are people going to do that and are they prepared for that, and will the fare be the same or be an increase?

- No fare increase when we resume taking fares.

Q: Access Paratransit is a critical service. I would hope that as you overlay your three point strategy, that you are reassuring top to bottom that paratransit is an essential service and will continue to be as we



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look to the future to find creative ways to work in the new normal. People with disabilities are afraid to go back for various reasons. It's bouncing back the fastest. MV is doing really well to get people around.

- Mobility is a human right and Access is critical.

Update about Crossroads Connect (staff: Allison Miskell and Shelby Cramer)

Allison gave a brief overview of the service:

Crossroads Connect is a pilot service funded by a WSDOT grant from 10/1/20 to 6/30/21. The city of Bellevue received this grant and contributing levy funds. New mobility service to connect Crossroads and Lake Hills residents to the RapidRide B Line. On-demand, app service. Connection is to the B line station at Crossroads, 221, 226, 245. It is a feeder to fixed service, so origin/destination needs to be the B line station at Crossroads. The primary vehicle is a wheelchair, ADA accessible van. Functionalities of app can be done by phone. Trying to test new innovative technologies to move people. Nissan leaf and an ADA accessible van. It will have the same fare as a regular Metro ride and the service hours are Monday through Friday, 3 to 9 pm. If wait times are more than 20 minutes then a cab will be called. There will be similar safety measures as fixed route buses such as limited trips to one rider or one party in the same booking, partitions and vehicles being disinfected and an in-app wellness check to screen for symptoms.

Shelby Cramer briefly discussed community engagement. City of Bellevue and Metro developing a feedback loop with a beta tester group who will be responsible for trying the service and reflecting on the service. Those conversations or surveys or facilitated conversations will have feedback to influence the changes needed for the service.

The service will include an additional feature for Access customers, who will be eligible for point to point service in the expanded service area. After being verified, they can use the full functionality of the app and expanding the service area. The origin/destination doesn't have to be the fixed hub. Can go anywhere in the expanded service area.

Q: Will private taxi rides meet same safety standards as Metro?

- No, we don't have control over their service. Customers will need to acknowledge it's not a Metro service. They will have a choice to wait for the Metro service.

Q: What learnings are for other pilots (Tukwila, Eastgate) that would make this one better? Seems like a great opportunity to use the learnings from past pilots.

- Part of the service model has the taxi brokerage, and don't use a fully dedicated vehicle to keep the wait times low. This model balances the user experience to connect people to a somewhat frequent service while keeping costs reasonable and reducing wait times. The taxi portion is a new feature that will hopefully reduce some of the costs. Reducing the number of vehicles in the service area is a lesson learned. The service hour window is intended to mitigate that the bus service in that area goes to lower frequency, this service can pick up some of the slack.



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Q: Disappointed that it's being implemented in the Eastside when it could be in Magnolia. Magnolia has poor bus service. We have a great main line but it's hard to get there. Why can't this be implemented in the city of Seattle, in Magnolia?

- This specific location was picked because it's where the funding came from. Bellevue got the grant and Metro is not launching new service with our own money.

Q: I am excited to see that pilot is going into place. How will you let ridership know about the pilot project? If a person doesn't have the app, what do they do? Wondering about communication with a blind or deaf blind rider. When you get past the 20-minute wait time, how do you communicate the taxi? Can it send a text?

- The team is sending a mailer out to the service area and letters to the Access eligible populations in the service area and using social media and setting up presentations and reaching out to CBOs in the Bellevue area with newsletter content. All functionalities are provided through a phone number which is on the marketing materials. Dispatch on the phone will let the person know if it's a taxi or if it's a Metro vehicle.

Q: Have you tested this for accessibility with Android and Apple screen reader for blind people? Are you sending things electronically?

- Will check if we have tested with accessibility for blind customers. It is live in other areas.

Q: Are any lessons learned from Via being implemented?

- Project team is working with the Via team and working with Community Ride (not quite the same but similar) but we compare notes all the time. This is a different technology provider and we are testing different apps. Via uses a TNC model (self-employed drivers) but this uses a TNC model (Taxi) and some dedicated drivers through Hopelink.

North Link – final concept and final phase of engagement

Dave VanderZee (Service Planner) and Shelby Cramer (Community Engagement) gave an overview of North Link Connections' final concepts and final phase of engagement. This project is responding to the 3 new light rail stations opening in North Seattle in 2021. Will be submitted to Council in January and implemented in the September service change in 2021.

Metro focused on building relationships with underserved populations and partnering with some community-based organizations who serve people in priority populations. Those organizations are U District Food Bank and Hopelink. Refining the service ideas with community for a better transit network. Met with the mobility board several times. In the past two phases of engagement, heard some highlights:

- Transfers between frequent service
- Improving transit connections to community assets

- Provide fast/reliable bus connections to Link
- Improve east/west and crosstown connections – major theme
- Reliable all-day service, esp. During busy times of day, not just peak commute times
- Provide transit connections that are safe, easy to understand, convenient. (particularly important for people with limited English and people with disabilities)

Phase 3 launched in September and the engagement will include a conversation about tradeoffs with communities. Engagement will continue with an online survey, project webpage, video presentations, remote meetings, attending existing community meetings and targeted social media and ethnic media. Phase 3 will close on November 1.

Q: How many Access customers will be affected due to these changes?

We know some of that information in our existing conditions report that was produced in Phase 1. That report was the baseline for the equity impact review for the project.

Q: What's happening with the 31 and 32? Are they being severed from the 75? Are they being rerouted?

The proposal is to separate Routes 31 and 32 from the 75. Those routes would be split. Can't continue on same bus to continue as a 75. 31 and 32 would end at Children's. It would join Rt. 75 and Rt. 45. The 31 and 32 would not run on Stevens Way on campus and would shift to N. 45th and terminate at Seattle Children's Hospital. Service on campus would be through the 45 and 75.

Not happy about this – lots of people work at UW Medical and that creates a long transfer and walk for a lot of people.

Q: Reticent and nervous about these changes. I depend on the 522 and 312, 308, and 41 sometimes and get lost on occasion and there's some issues. If the trains are too packed, will they pass people up? What bus service is still available for people to get downtown and back north?

Should be enough capacity at busiest time of day that people won't be passed up on the light rail. Do have some bus service going downtown but going to parts of downtown adjacent to the downtown core (first Hill and south lake union), downtown core is reachable by link. Will still be buses on I-5. SR 522 will have two new routes. Mostly limited to peak period. Tradeoffs – transfers allow us to make other improvements.

Q: How are the Seattle service cuts factoring into the service change? Basically, are total service hours being reduced with the ability to direct to Link?

This proposal does not assume any STBD resources in it. Right now, there's a planned ballot measure.