



# KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE




DECEMBER 1, 2021

## Follow-up on Metro Transit Reliability

**Metro Transit completed three recommendations and made progress on two, resulting in better data and information for customers and better decision-making and reporting on hot spot improvement.** Metro Transit hired a consultant to research trip-planning application options and is currently evaluating those options, including the potential for a regional trip planner with other transit agencies. Metro Transit is also working more regularly with third-party application developers and is in the process of restructuring the data it provides to those applications, which will help ensure the data's reliability and completeness. To inform its hot spot program, Metro Transit now tracks a new performance measure on operational costs avoided as a result of hot spot improvements, which it uses internally and in conversations with other jurisdictions to help prioritize projects.

Finishing its work on the remaining recommendations will allow Metro Transit to ensure its trip-planning services are cost-effective while providing the most value to customers, as well as increasing the reliability of the data used by third-party developers—thereby improving the experience of Metro Transit's customers who use these applications.

Of the five audit recommendations:

	3 <b>DONE</b>		2 <b>PROGRESS</b>		0 <b>OPEN</b>
<b>Fully implemented</b> Auditor will no longer monitor.		<b>Partially implemented</b> Auditor will continue to monitor.		<b>Remain unresolved</b> Auditor will continue to monitor.	

Please see below for details on the implementation status of these recommendations.

## Recommendation 1

DONE



**Transit should communicate to riders that buses may leave before the scheduled departure time.**

STATUS UPDATE: Metro Transit includes a disclaimer on its website for the possibility of early departures. Additionally, Metro Transit is taking steps to improve the data available for real-time information to developers (see Recommendation 3).

IMPACT: Implementing this recommendation helps ensure customers are better informed and can plan for potential changes to their trip plans.

## Recommendation 2

PROGRESS



**Transit should conduct an evaluation of the costs and benefits of maintaining its online trip planner and determine whether to continue offering this application given the prevalence of free, third-party alternatives.**

STATUS UPDATE: Metro Transit hired a consultant who researched the department's options for a transit trip planner. Based on the consultant's recommendation, Metro Transit staff are now considering the costs and benefits of its options, which include partnering with other agencies on a regional trip planner or partnering with a private agency on its own trip planner. Metro Transit wants to conduct additional analysis and customer research on these options and plans to develop a proposal for its next steps as part of the 2023–24 budget process.

WHAT REMAINS: We will consider this recommendation complete once Metro Transit has determined whether and in which form to continue offering its trip-planning application. Implementing this recommendation will help Metro Transit ensure its efforts are cost-effective and provide the most value to its customers.

## Recommendation 3

PROGRESS



**Transit should coordinate with major third-party application developers to ensure that real-time service data distributed to third parties is timely, accurate, and complete.**

STATUS UPDATE: Metro Transit is doing more regular work with third-party application developers, including monthly calls with Google, having a representative on OneBusAway's board, and communicating with representatives of The Transit App and Moovit, among others. Metro Transit is also working with a contractor to restructure the data that feeds the data stream used by these developers.

WHAT REMAINS: We will consider this recommendation done once Metro Transit completes its work to improve the data provided to third-party developers. Implementing this recommendation will help improve the efficiency of Metro Transit's data-sharing processes, the reliability of the data used by the developers, and the experience of Metro Transit's customers who use these applications.

## Recommendation 4

DONE



**Transit should review and update the service advisory data it provides on its website to ensure that riders can easily access the information that they need.**

STATUS UPDATE: Metro Transit launched the IBI Alerts Tool in January 2020, allowing the department to create new system alerts that customers can receive through their chosen application or Metro Transit-generated alert function. This has allowed all customer-facing applications to receive the same alert information and more accurate data. Metro Transit noted that these changes have been particularly valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic as trips have been disrupted more frequently during the pandemic period. Metro plans to make additional improvements to the feeds as part of existing capital projects through 2022. Additionally, Metro Transit updated its web-based trip planner in November 2019 to improve usability and access to route-related notifications.

IMPACT: Implementing this recommendation has helped Metro Transit ensure its customers have key information for planning their trips by reducing gaps in the department's transmission of real-time data.

## Recommendation 5

DONE



**Transit should establish and report key performance indicators for the hot spot program, including output targets and outcome measures.**

STATUS UPDATE: Metro Transit now tracks a new performance measure on operational costs that were avoided as a result of hot spot improvements. This measure has been included in its annual reporting and Metro Transit states it is using this measure in conversations with other jurisdictions to help prioritize improvements. The department is also batching and prioritizing spot improvements to support specific service changes, like the North Link service change.

IMPACT: Implementing this recommendation is helping Metro Transit ensure that it is using limited resources in an efficient and cost-effective manner and its work with other jurisdictions is resulting in effective speed and reliability improvements.

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Elise Garvey conducted this review. If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact the King County Auditor's Office at [KCAO@KingCounty.gov](mailto:KCAO@KingCounty.gov) or 206-477-1033.