



KING COUNTY AUDITOR'S OFFICE

Transit Audit Program: 2022 Biennial Report

ADVANCING TRANSIT PERFORMANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND EQUITY

Adapting transit oversight during the COVID-19 pandemic

Through our work with King County Metro Transit Department (Metro Transit), we continue to focus on ensuring county residents have access to equitable, efficient, and effective transit services. Because the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted bus operations, we temporarily shifted our work to help ensure Metro Transit could dedicate its resources toward responding. To continue to provide timely and useful analysis and recommendations during this period, we included Metro Transit in our audit of King County's pandemic response, which covered topics including employee safety and controls over federal emergency funding, among others. In 2021, we resumed conducting direct engagement with Metro Transit following up on previous recommendations and auditing bus collision and injury prevention and capital project management.

Audit results in 2020–2022

- **Identified best practices for bus fleet electrification.** We published an interim audit report highlighting best practices Metro Transit should adopt as it moves toward full fleet electrification.
- **Implemented recommendations improved service for riders and ensured cost-effective maintenance decisions.** Metro Transit implemented recommendations from our paratransit, fare enforcement, service reliability, and bus part rebuild audits.
- **Reduced risks of bus collisions and injuries.** We fully reviewed Metro Transit's incident response process and made recommendations to reduce risk of collisions, injuries, and damage by better aligning Metro Transit's approach with emerging federal guidance and ensuring operators receive regular safety training.

Delivering on electrification goals

Helping Metro Transit improve its ability to implement the electrification of its bus fleet was a significant area of focus for our work. Metro Transit has committed to full electrification of its bus fleet by 2035. To date, Metro Transit has added 11 battery-electric buses to its fleet with plans to purchase only zero-emission buses beginning in 2023–2024 to meet its timeline.

Metro Transit must improve its ability to deliver capital projects to meet electrification goals and successfully incorporate a greater percentage of battery-electric buses in its fleet. In 2021, we started an audit of Metro Transit's capital project management and delivery processes to focus on the growing importance of timely, cost-effective capital delivery and make recommendations in area in which Metro Transit has historically struggled.

Key results

Metro Transit has implemented many significant recommendations since 2020. Examples of positive outcomes from our recommendations include:



More consistent data and communication to customers on service reliability



Goals and performance metrics for making improvements to RapidRide



Improved service monitoring and provision for Access paratransit service



Better data and more consistent processes for making cost-effective bus part rebuild decisions

Positive relationships maximize change

County staff and auditors both seek positive outcomes, so good relations magnify results. During this period, we found several indicators of good relations. For example, 100% of our post-audit survey respondents from Metro Transit noted that auditors made good use of their staff’s time, and 92% said that the audit process was collaborative. Metro Transit also concurred with all six of the audit recommendations we made since 2020.

100%
TOOK ACTION

Action toward implementation

Following up on our recommendations increases transparency and accountability and creates momentum for positive change. Since 2020, we followed up on 40 audit recommendations. We track recommendations until they are complete.



Publications

Our office completed two audits focused on Metro Transit and has one report in progress. We also followed up on recommendations from five audits. All reports are available on the [King County Auditor’s Office website](#).

Performance audit reports

- *Metro Transit: Proactive Analysis and Training Could Further Improve Safety*
- *King County Metro Transit Bus Electrification: Best Practices Review*

Work in progress

- Capital Project Management

Follow-up reports

- Bus Part Rebuilds
- Paratransit
- RapidRide Fare Enforcement
- Transit Reliability
- Transit Cybersecurity

Team

KyMBER Waltmunson · King County Auditor
Ben Thompson · Transit Audit Manager
Elise Garvey · Principal Auditor, Program Lead
Brian Crist · Auditor
Cindy Drake · Senior Principal Auditor

Peter Heineccius · Principal Auditor
Megan Ko · Senior Auditor
Mia Neidhardt · Senior Auditor
Zainab Nejati · Capital Projects Principal Auditor
Kayvon Zadeh · Senior Auditor