

## King County Transit Advisory Commission

November 15, 2022

6 p.m. to 7:40 p.m.

Teleconference:

Link to join the meeting via computer: <https://kingcounty.zoom.us/j/83263601850>

Dial in information: (253) 215-8782, Meeting ID: 832 6360 1850

### 6:00 p.m. Welcome & Introductions

- Name
- Pronouns, if you would like to share
- Access needs
- Check in question: What's your favorite activity to do in the winter?
- Present:
  - **TAC Members:** Aaron Morrow, Sonja Tracy, Angela Theriault
  - **Metro staff and guests:** Jessica Vu, Geoff Kaiser, Alle Brown-Law, Tristan Cook

### 6:15 p.m. Consent agenda, Announcements, August meeting recap

- Consent agenda
  - **Vote: Meeting minutes – August 2022**
    - Aaron notes that the meeting does not have a quorum but agrees to approve the August meeting minutes in absence of the quorum. Angela seconds. **August minutes are approved.**
- August meeting recap, reflection, follow up
  - Introduction to Metro's Language Equity and Community Liaison Program
- Announcements:
  - Cascadia Consulting Group
    - Cascadia Consulting has been brought on to support TAC staffing and will be involved in the recruitment effort starting next year.
  - Look ahead to 2023:
    - The December 2022 TAC meeting will be cancelled. Metro wants to make sure we have a full commission before we dive into future projects.
  - Recruitment process for TAC membership:
    - With Cascadia on board, we are moving forward with recruitment for new TAC members.
    - Questions from the TAC:
      - Who is Cascadia?
        - Alle Brown-Law described Cascadia Consulting as a Seattle-based environmental consulting firm with a focus on sustainable transportation.

- Concern about the loss of several TAC members after August 2022. It is very troubling to see so few TAC members return.
  - **Liaison is available to talk to people individually if they have further questions or concerns about TAC membership to discuss.**
- Surprise about the loss of several TAC members who were committed, long-standing members. Is Metro going to try to recruit so we have a quorum by January?
  - **We will start preparing for recruitment in December, and then start recruitment in January. We will keep you updated on timeline, but the earliest we will have a quorum is the February meeting.**

### **6:30 p.m. Metro Budget Update**

Presenter: Geoff Kaiser – Metro Finance & Administration

Refer to presentation. TAC feedback follows:

- So, the \$2.5 billion for the operating budget is separate from the \$4.5 billion for 10-year capital improvement?
  - Those are two separate programs that don't overlap on a budget standpoint. The capital improvement program is focused on building long-term infrastructure and buying materials. The operating budget will only be in place from 2023-2024.
- In the budget update talking points, it says "assume significant service reduction." In the TAC meetings we've been attending, Metro has stated that we're almost at the same service level as pre-pandemic levels. Is that not true?
  - That statement was referring to the current budget, which was set in 2020, and lasted from 2021-2022. Because the 2021-2022 budget was set during the pandemic, it assumed significant service reductions. In this current budget planning process (for 2023-2024), we no longer need to assume that.
- This 2023-2024 budget looked like something from Orange County or LA, it was that big. How much money is coming from government subsidies, like the infrastructure bill, for example? Secondly, with Paratransit, there was \$400 million added for the next two years. I would like to see that broken out year by year, and see where that money is allocated.
  - The budget is incremental. We start with our base budget, which was the budget from the biennium before, and then we propose additions. So, the budget is very specific about where most of that funding is going. We have decision packages that show how the budget is being allocated.
- The TAC would like updates or snapshots in the future about how the budget is changing. As advocates and activists, we must be kept in the loop, either through blog posts or TAC agenda items. One thing I really like about this is that paratransit heard and really listened to the public. So, thank you for being here today, and I would like you to bring the budget back to TAC in a way we understand.

- You mentioned improving technology, like the website. The website needs to be improved, that is essential. Regarding ADA and GPS, I don't any mention of those items in your discussion today. GPS is particularly important to help riders who are Deaf, Deafblind, or Hearing Blind orient themselves to their location when they get off a bus. We also need to improve ADA accessible bus stops, such as stops where individuals who use wheelchairs can easily board a bus, or where there are braille versions of the bus schedule. Are those things included in the budget?
  - Particularly in this last budget cycle, as Metro staff were developing budget proposals, we asked staff to look at equity considerations that came from our community engagement efforts. The accessibility questions you're raising are feedback we can use to inform the next budget cycle.
  - TAC has a feedback form that we developed, and we give this form to each presenter so that they can inform TAC how our feedback was incorporated.
- We, as community members who use the transit system, pay per fare. Are fares going to be increased? How are our fares going to be utilized?
  - We don't want fares to be a barrier for people to use Metro. Metro is not proposing a fare increase for the next two years, and it's been about 10 years since we had a true fare increase. We are also looking to see how we can expand our income-based fare program. However, fares are an important revenue source for Metro in expanding our operations. The Council has documents that say Metro must recover a certain number of operation costs from revenue, and we are not meeting these metrics. There is going to be continued conversation between about fares.
- What is really propping up this budget then? What are the income generators that are keeping this budget alive for the next two years?
  - The biggest source of revenue for Metro is sales tax. In 2020, when we made the current budget, the projections for sales tax revenue were very dire, but projections have gotten better since then. Move Ahead Washington is providing around \$30 million a year to support this budget and long-term planning. This is part of the trade-off with the low fares: how can we use our funds to help focus our investments in equity, safety, sustainability?
- If community wants better transportation system, they're going to have to pay for it. There is no way a sales tax-based transit system is going to survive. Be careful with sales tax projections, because we're basing the whole future of metro on these projections.
- In the next two years, I hope that Metro will focus on Paratransit's first and last mile service to get people from the transit station to their homes. I think that Metro needs to do community partnerships and analysis. Funding needs to go to southeast King County and first/last mile service.
  - I would default to the Mobility division's expertise on what sort of planning we're doing around first/last mile service.
- We're now in November 2022. What is the percentage of ridership from pre-pandemic levels?

- We're somewhere around 50% of pre-pandemic ridership. It's lower than pre-pandemic, but it's grown from what it's been.
- On the lack of the youth fare – is that going to impact Metro's budget much?
  - We've accounted for this youth fare change in the 2023-2024 budget. Somewhere between \$5 to 10 million/year is that reduction in youth fare.

**7:10 p.m.     Anti-Harassment Campaign**

Presenter: Michelle Huynh – Metro Strategic Communications

Refer to presentation. TAC feedback follows:

- It's nice to see you again, Michelle! I'm glad there's a focus on safety and anti-harassment. I ride the bus a lot, as well as the light rail, sometimes late at night. When I saw the idea about texting, I was thinking about an experience I had where a rider seemed like they were getting more and more explosive. It was not an emergency, but it was still scary, and everyone felt tense. If we could text someone about the issue, that would be helpful.
  - We totally understand why people want to text, it's discrete and easy. However, our biggest hinderance to texting is the number of Metro's customer service staff. We don't have enough people to man the phones *and* provide feedback over text. Sound Transit has only one line, so they can send security officers to that one line and make it to the train where someone reported harassment. Whereas we have 1400 buses on many different lines, it's hard to know exactly where the buses are. The best option for riders is to tell the driver; they have a direct line to our transit center. We're working very hard to staff up those teams that are understaffed right now.
  - If you feel there is a threat to bodily harm, please call 911. If you feel physically unsafe, that is always an option. You can also text 911 in King County – depending on where you are in our system, either a local police agency comes out or the Metro transit police.
- I think the more public information we can get out there, and the more advertising we can do about these programs, the better. If I'm sitting on the bus and I feel threatened, texting is not going to be the first thing that comes to my mind. I'm trying to deal with the situation. Texting is not necessarily going to help me through this moment of shock, or whatever it might be. What I wanted to ask is if anyone has collected any data regarding risks or injuries that have happened in real time, with regard to what we're talking about?
  - Our Safety and Security team collects data on assaults, based on what transit security officers fill out in reports at the end of each shift. All of those go into a system so we can report back on assaults. Harassment and assaults are legally two different things, and we wanted address (with this campaign) the instances where behavior hasn't become an assault, or become illegal activity.
  - I can follow up with the Safety and Security team. What kind of data were you looking for?

- I am specifically interested in finding out the different kinds of harassment and assault that happen, and which is the most predominant one. Do you have any statistics about how many assaults are attributed to domestic violence?
  - I can reach out, but I'm not sure if we have a category of domestic violence in our data. I will reach out and get back to you.
- Will your campaign be included in the Access Van?
  - It's not currently included in the access van, because the access van does not have very much advertising space. Depending on how the campaign goes, we can expand it to other services.
- What did you mean when you were talking about harassment versus assault, and what was illegal?
  - There are types of harassment that are technically legal, but Metro does not tolerate. However, you cannot get charged with certain types of harassment unless it passes a certain threshold. What we are trying to do with this campaign is collect data to know what *type* of harassment is happening on our system, so Safety and Security can know what resources we should provide. A lot of these harassment incidents are underreported. We're trying to get to a point where, if we need to have more security officers on our system, we will have the data to justify that request.
- Michelle, what is your next project? What's next for you?
  - I am in the middle of redesigning the colors on the exterior of our buses! We will come back to TAC when we have something to report on. I am working with a consultant right now. As we purchase more battery-powered busses, we hope that the external designs all look the same. Currently we have about 10 different shades of greens, blues, purples.

**7:35 p.m.      Good of the order 7:36 pm.**

- *No comments.*

**7:40 p.m.      Adjourn**