

Regional Transit Task Force – August 19

We applaud Metro for developing a service allocation concept that attempts to respond to interests in greater objectivity and transparency.

Is this the right policy direction and the right approach to implement that direction?

1. Should the allocation of resources emphasize supporting the employment and population patterns consistent with the 2040 plan?

Yes. This would be consistent with the recent King County Growth Management Planning Council (King County GMPC) unanimously-adopted policy direction reinforcing the critical importance of aligning land use and transit service. Implementing Vision 2040 will direct most of the county's growth to metropolitan cities, followed by core cities, and then large and small cities.

Policy T-14 sets forth that:

"...transit service throughout the county shall be prioritized to 1) areas where existing housing and employment densities support transit ridership and 2) to Urban Centers and other areas planned for housing and employment densities that will support transit ridership. Transit providers shall also strive to meet the mobility needs of transit-dependent population in allocating transit service."

2. The proposed criteria recommend a combination of services that will **follow** growth (respond to ridership growth), and **lead** growth (supporting the regional growth plan and connecting designated population and employment centers). Should service additions be based on the principle of both following and leading growth?

- We agree with the overall policy direction to emphasize productivity (economic development, land use, and financial sustainability) and social equity and its relationship to both following and leading growth.
- However, the guidelines seem to be weighted too heavily toward leading growth as indicated by the conceptual results on slide #19 where the numbers of hours to follow growth is less than ¼ of the number of hours to lead growth.
- We need a more balanced approach leading closer to a 50/50 split.

Application of the **follow growth standard** is very conservative: essentially it requires a crush load on a regular basis before action is taken. This deters ridership and we should be more proactive in supporting fast growing ridership by using a load factor lower than 1.0.

Application of the **lead growth standard**:

- Does not seem to differentiate adequately between areas which have the highest densities and which are targeted to take the largest amount of growth and areas of moderate density. (Guidelines 1, 2 and 3)
- Guideline 4 seems somewhat arbitrary. It is not clear which benefit this criteria provides to the region and transit productivity.

- Guideline 5 doesn't provide enough emphasis to areas with higher concentrations of transit supportive/ dependent populations. The City strongly supports this guideline; however, it does not provide enough weight to the higher transit riding propensity of minority and low income populations, particularly those who live in moderate density areas. For example, the Delridge corridor appears not to meet the threshold for higher frequency service, but the corridor is characterized by high transit ridership (about 10,000 boarding per weekday). This area has a significant minority and low income population but at moderate density. The guideline appears to fly in the face of actual experience. The points awarded for minority population and low income populations needs further attention and some real world testing.

3. Should the proposed criteria recognize the importance of providing geographic balance, without suggesting a formula for distribution of service?

Yes. Prescriptive allocation formulas do not take into consideration the level and type of service (fixed route, DART, Vanpool) appropriate for the market. Denver addressed the trade-off between equity and productivity by introducing a range or family of services intended to serve their transit markets appropriately.

By adopting a clear set of design principles and meaningful set of performance measures and standards, the transit network can be designed to service the various transit markets with appropriate service levels and types.

Areas with lower demand would be better served by flexible, lower cost service alternatives which provide a basic level of mobility rather than fixed routes.

4. How is new service prioritized, aka where does the first dollar go?

New growth dollars should be pooled with dollars recovered from applying productivity standards -- 50% of the available funds should go to follow growth and 50% to lead growth. The "lead growth" dollars should be spent on the highest scoring, or rank ordered, corridors that do not yet have service levels appropriate to their market demand. Follow growth dollars would be applied to areas with the most serious overcrowding, first.

5. Which of the three approaches should be used for the restoration of service?

The City supports the "grow from the new base using the new service growth concept" with a caveat. Before adding new service, service cut from productive routes, or route segments, must be restored to the same routes or to nearby restructured routes. Priority for service restoration should be focused on existing markets (service with the highest productivity and most significant overcrowding), recognizing that "pockets" of transit dependent populations need to be connected to the high intensity network.

In addition, the scenario fails to identify the base system from which this "service growth concept" was constructed. What is the base system to which the new adds would be made? It would be helpful for the Task Force to see a map showing the base network with the added service, or a table that would show service hours and ridership for the base and the adds.

In addition, the work of the RTFF Performance Measures Group should also inform key considerations and criteria on how Metro should structure their service, including reductions

and restoration in service. Methods for cutting existing service or allocating new service needs to be transparent and based on agreed upon performance measures and outcomes.