

Proposal for Addressing Geographic Equity through Alternative Scenarios for Service Reductions and Growth

As the Regional Transit Task Force considers criteria for reductions to, restoration of, or long-term growth in Metro transit service, the objectives of productivity and geographic equity should be equal priorities. As has been discussed by the task force, a more productive system enhances efficiency and helps to ensure long-term financial sustainability. Geographic equity, another very important principle for a great many suburban communities, encompasses 1) service coverage to all communities, 2) fairness in provision of robust transit service to areas that produce the most tax revenue to sustain the system, and 3) meeting the mobility needs of communities that have experienced the most growth.

To date, the task force has not fully considered geographic equity. What is called for at this juncture is that discussion and analysis. At the very least, I would like to have Metro generate an alternative scenario for service reductions that gives more weight to geographic equity among the three transit planning subareas. Further, looking forward to system growth, the task force should consider at least two alternatives, one of which gives equal weight to geographic equity and productivity.

The table below summarizes the proportional statistics that highlight geographic equity concerns regarding Metro service. Key points are:

- West subarea currently receives a disproportionately large share of transit service hours compared with its share of population, growth, and sales tax receipts
- The R1 scenario for service reductions would exacerbate the current imbalance, most acutely in East County, which is projected to lose twice the share of its current transit service compared with the other two subareas

Subarea	Service Hours (current)	Population (current)	Population Growth (2000-09)	Sales Tax Receipts	Growth Policy (current)	Reduction Policy (current)	R1 Reductions (share of total reductions)	R1 Reductions (share of current service)
South	22%	37%	37%	31%	40%	22%	20%	-10%
East	17%	28%	40%	35%	40%	17%	29%	-20%
West	61%	35%	23%	34%	20%	61%	51%	-10%

The task force's focus to date on productivity, particularly as measured by current ridership per platform hour, as the preeminent factor guiding service allocation decisions, is inherently biased toward the existing urban core which has a long history of high transit levels of service. As a matter of planning and economic reality, the future of our region is moving toward multiple centers and urban communities spread throughout the county that have and will increasingly grow in ways that support transit demand.

I would like to see the task force directly address the equity concerns of suburban jurisdictions, which make up the largest share of King County population, through analysis of alternative scenarios and discussion of the merits of a reweighted set of design criteria. Ultimately, I can't say what recommendation suburban cities will favor, but we have to have these ideas on the table in the few meetings that remain.