Item No. SS 2(a)
May 6, 2013

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT:
Bellevue Transit Master Plan and King County Metro Status Report.

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FISCAL IMPACT:
None

POLICY ISSUES:

Comprehensive Plan:
Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan acknowledges that responding to anticipated growth in travel necessitates a multi-modal transportation solution that offers the public real choices about how they travel within, to, and through Bellevue. Comprehensive Plan Policy TR-50 recognizes the need to "Work with transit providers to implement the Bellevue Transit Plan as an attractive travel option for local residents, employees, students, visitors, businesses and other users of regional facilities."

Bellevue Transit Plan:
On June 2, 2003, Council adopted the Bellevue Transit Plan (Resolution No. 6859). The 2003 Plan was a major step forward in articulating what improvements are needed in transit service and capital investments throughout Bellevue and served as an important reference document for collaborations with the City's transit service providers. The service and capital partnerships resulting from this vision have enhanced transit's role in Bellevue.

Bellevue Transit Master Plan:
On July 9, 2012, Council initiated the Bellevue Transit Master Plan (TMP), an update of the City's 2003 Transit Plan. The TMP is being overseen by the City's Transportation Commission whose work is guided by Council-approved project principles (see Attachment 1) and input from members of the Planning, Arts, and Human Services Commissions and the Parks and Community Services Board.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL:
___ Action
_X_ Discussion
_X_ Information

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Because the state of transit funding cannot accurately be predicted, three distinct funding scenarios are considered in the Bellevue Transit Master Plan (TMP) including reduction, stable, and growing resources to address the full range of potential outcomes (see Funding Scenarios Report http://www.bellevuewa.gov/pdf/Transportation/Funding-Scenarios-Report.pdf, Attachment 2). By planning for each of these financial scenarios, TMP proposals will be more readily adaptable to changing circumstances over the course of the plan's twenty-year implementation period.

On May 6, 2013 Victor Obeso, King County Metro Service Development Manager, will join the Bellevue TMP discussion and provide Council with a status report on Metro's financial outlook. This Metro briefing is intended to provide Council with one of multiple potential near-term scenarios for transit service delivery.

Attached to this agenda memo is a pamphlet that reflects an illustration of how Metro might close a projected $75 million revenue shortfall (see Attachment 3). If Metro does not receive additional revenue, up to 17 percent of current service - about 600,000 annual service hours - might be affected. The following is a summary of the routes serving Bellevue that are highlighted in this illustrative example as potentially affected:

- Deleted: 114, 210, 211, 215, 216, 237, 243, 244, 246, 250, 265, and 280.
- Reduced or revised: 221, 226, 232, 234, 235, 241, 245, 246, 255, 269, and 271.
- Unchanged: 111, 167, 212, 217, 218, 240, 241, 342, and B Line.

It is important to note that Attachment 3 is not an actual service change proposal -- the estimated number of deletions, reductions and changes would likely be altered through consideration of current data, additional restructures, and public input. A final proposal would have to be approved via ordinance by the King County Council. Metro's adopted 2013/14 budget assumes that an initial reduction of 150,000 annual service hours would be adopted by the King County Council in spring 2014 and would occur in September 2014.

Background

Consistent with the 2003 Plan, the Bellevue Transit Master Plan (TMP) process comprises service, capital, and policy elements supported by extensive public outreach and data-driven technical research.

- **Service Element:** The service element will identify the City's transit service priorities – a refinement of the project principles adopted at the onset of the project – including route-level recommendations that are responsive to different financial scenarios (reduced, stable, and growing resources) and attuned to different time horizons (short-, medium-, and long-term).
- **Capital Element:** The capital element will identify strategies to improve access to and circulation of transit service in Bellevue. A secondary purpose is to identify facilities and amenities for passenger comfort and convenience. The capital element will be closely coordinated with Bellevue's station area planning studies and the Downtown Transportation Plan Update and will draw off of other recent plans (Eastgate/I-90 Project, Bel-Red, etc.).
- **Policy Element:** The policy element will explore different strategies the City could undertake to achieve the maximum benefit from transit. This may include consideration of development guidelines, transportation system management policies, and other actions that

help to better fit transit into the Bellevue landscape.

On March 11, 2013 staff presented Council with a status report on the Service Element, including the market driven strategies that will govern Bellevue's transit service vision. These strategies are based on guidance from the Council-approved Project Principles, a detailed review of the current transit network, an assessment of the attitudes and preferences that drive traveler choices, and an evaluation of future travel markets. Key findings from this community engagement effort, along with an extensive assessment of demographic, route performance, and travel demand model data is detailed in the documents posted on the project webpage (http://www.bellevuewa.gov/transit-plan-documents.htm) and available in the Council Office.

Also on March 11, staff introduced Council to the concept of "Abundant Access" (outlined in the Draft Market Driven Strategies Report http://www.bellevuewa.gov/pdf/Transportation/Market-Driven-Strategies-Report.pdf) which aims to develop a network whose extent, frequency, duration, and speed liberate citizens to access the riches of the City and region without requiring them to drive (see Attachment 4). The key elements of this vision are that transit must be:

1. **Convenient**, making it the logical choice for the largest possible share of trips.
2. **Frequent**, to minimize waiting times and improve connections.
3. **Efficient**, in terms of being designed for high ridership and cost-effective operations.
4. **Simple**, with the fewest possible discrete lines, so that each can have the best possible frequency, speed, and duration without complicated redundancy.
5. **Direct,** to major activity centers in Bellevue by minimizing the degree to which a route deviates from the shortest path between its start and end points.
6. **Regionally Connected**, with a complete network of regional links in all directions, with particular focus on abundant north-south service along I-405.

Staff arrived at this vision through a deliberate network design process involving Bellevue's Boards and Commissions, transit agency officials, and other stakeholders in an assessment of the fundamental trade-offs concerning transit service allocation. These can be difficult decisions because they involve choosing where to invest limited resources in the transit system. To achieve the vision of "Abundant Access" participants in this collaborative design process determined that the network should:

1. **Focus on diversity of ridership and trip purpose.** Great transit networks arise from designing services that are useful to the broadest and most diverse possible spectrum of user groups and trip purposes.
2. **Create a civilized experience.** Transit should focus on creating an attractive product at an appropriate price point for the widest possible spectrum of the population.
3. **Make connections easy and attractive.** The only way to efficiently serve multi-centered cities like Bellevue is with routes that are frequent and that make it easy to connect from one route to another at attractive and safe connection facilities.
4. **Meet peak commute needs but encourage the growth of the all-day market.** In addition to moving peak commuters, transit has an important role to play in improving the mobility of people who want to access family and friends, recreation, education, entertainment, health care, and the many activities that contribute to individual and community well-being.
5. **Focus on high–ridership markets.** Transit needs to maximize the return on investment on existing and anticipated public transportation projects by providing transit service where high ridership is anticipated, typically where there is some mix of higher residential or commercial density, major activity centers, and measures that discourage driving, such as limited parking.

6. **Encourage walking and cycling.** As the transit network moves towards attracting more patrons who take transit by choice, it will be increasingly important to factor in the pedestrian and bicycle experience as part of a more holistic ridership strategy so that transit can run more efficiently.

These insights into participants' priorities for frequency, coverage, span, and the many various concepts for how to connect Bellevue's centers of activity, its neighborhoods, and the forthcoming East Link light rail with a robust bus transit system were considered by the City and its consultant when developing the market driven strategies. On May 6Bellevue staff will revisit the proposed market driven strategies that lead to "Abundant Access" with Council and respond to any remaining questions on this concept.

NEXT STEPS:

On May 20staff will return to Council seeking concurrence on the proposed market driven strategies. Council's endorsement of the market driven strategies on May 20 will provide Bellevue staff with the guidance required to more effectively assess and respond to current and future proposed service adjustments from Sound Transit and King County Metro. Having documented the City's transit service priorities, staff will initiate work on the Capital and Policy Elements. By the end of 2013, Council will be presented with the final TMP report; which, upon acceptance, will inform the region's transit service providers of Bellevue's priorities and updates to the Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Code, and potential City-led transit initiatives.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment 1 – Council Project Principles
- Attachment 2 – Draft Funding Scenarios Report (provided under separate cover)
- Attachment 3 – Illustrative Examples of Potential Service Reductions
- Attachment 4 – Draft Market Driven Strategies Report (provided under separate cover)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL OFFICE FOR REVIEW:

- Transit Network Design Workshop Report (April 2013)
- Market Driven Strategies Report (March 2013)
- Funding Scenarios Report (March 2013)
- Existing and Future Conditions Report (February 2013)
- Network Profile Report 2011-12 Update (February 2012)
- Briefing Report (October 2012)
- Transit Improvement Survey Report (October 2012)
- Forum Report (October 2012)
- Phase 1 Outreach Report – Technical Appendix (June 2012)
- Network Profile Report (April 2012)
- Project Principles (July 2012)

Bellevue Transit Master Plan

Project Principles

Approved July 9, 2012

The City Council envisions a fully integrated and user-friendly network of transit services for Bellevue that supports the city's growth, economic vitality, and enhanced livability, and has developed the following set of project principles to direct development of the Transit Master Plan.

1. Support planned growth and development in Bellevue with a bold transit vision that encourages long-term ridership growth.	The dynamic nature of Bellevue's economic expansion requires a bold transit vision supported by practical, achievable strategies in the near term that set a solid foundation for longer term improvements through 2030. The Transit Master Plan should identify, evaluate, and prioritize transit investments that are responsive to a range of financial scenarios (cuts/status-quo/aspirational) and attune to different time horizons (near/mid/long term).
2. Engage community stakeholders in setting the priorities for transit delivery.	A comprehensive public engagement strategy should result in meaningful input on transit services and facilities from a range of stakeholders including residents, businesses, major institutions, neighboring cities, transportation agencies, and others (e.g., community associations, Network on Aging, Bellevue School District, Bellevue College, Chamber of Commerce, Bellevue Downtown Association). Special attention will be required to enlist the participation of "under-represented" communities such as immigrants, low-income and non-native English speakers.
3. Determine where and how transit investments can deliver the greatest degree of mobility and access possible for all populations.	The Transit Master Plan should look to the future and be compatible with Bellevue's land use and transportation plans and the challenges and opportunities of changing demographics, land use characteristics, and travel patterns. Following consultations with the community, demand forecasting, and a review of industry best practices and emerging technologies, this initiative will identify the steps required to create a public transportation system that is easy to use by all people in Bellevue for trips within Bellevue and to regional destinations.
4. Incorporate other transit-related efforts (both bus and light rail) underway in Bellevue and within the region.	The Transit Master Plan should incorporate local and regional transportation projects and plans that have been approved and/or implemented since the Bellevue Transit Plan was adopted in 2003. Transportation system changes include East Link, SR 520 expansion and tolling, and improvements to I-90 and I-405. Planning changes include the updated Bel-Red Subarea Plan, the Wilburton Subarea Plan and the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project. Through coordination with local and regional transportation plans, the Transit Master Plan should outline a strategy to leverage the investment in public transportation projects to the benefit of Bellevue residents and businesses.
5. Identify partnership opportunities to further extend transit service and infrastructure.	While transit infrastructure is typically funded through large capital funding programs, other less traditional funding mechanisms can be utilized to pay for improvements vital to support transit communities and/or achieve higher transit ridership. The Transit Master Plan should undertake an analysis of partnership opportunities that the City might want to consider with other government organizations (e.g., Bellevue School District, Bellevue College, Metro, Sound Transit), human service agencies, and private corporations, to improve transit service delivery in Bellevue. This analysis will explore alternatives to traditional transit service delivery.
6. Develop measures of effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress.	The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan presently includes the following metrics/benchmarks related to transit: (i) mode split targets within each of the City's Mobility Management Areas [Table TR.1 – Area Mobility Targets]; (2) transit service frequency improvement targets between Downtown, Overlake, Crossroads, Eastgate, and Factoria [TR.8 – 10 Year Transit Vision]; and, (3) guidance found in 44 transit-supportive policies. The Transit Master Plan will revisit these metrics, and where necessary, propose modifications to better reflect present and future conditions.

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King County METRO

More bus service is needed, but funding shortage might force deletion of 65 bus routes, report finds

Another 86 routes might be reduced or changed to cut costs

Metro's latest analysis of its transit system found that about 10 percent more bus service is needed to meet demand—but instead of increasing service, Metro might have to reduce the transit system by as much as 17 percent (about 600,000 annual service hours) because of a projected funding shortage.

Metro's 2012 Service Guidelines Report found that nearly 335,000 more hours of bus service are needed annually just to meet current target service levels, reduce crowding and keep buses on time. Even more is needed to serve increasing rider demand and move toward our region's adopted goal for transit growth. The report identified 90 highly productive routes that would likely attract many more riders if funds were available to expand them.

But starting in mid-2014, after some temporary funding sources have run out, Metro will face an annual $75 million revenue shortfall. King County is working with local and state leaders to seek sufficient, ongoing funding for transit. However, if no new funding tool is approved, Metro will have to eliminate, reduce or revise roughly two-thirds of its bus routes to close the budget gap.

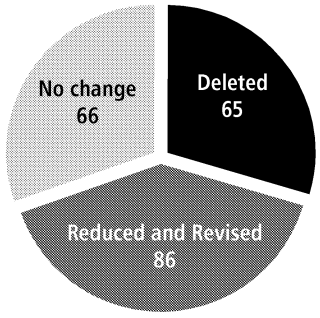
A reduction of that magnitude would have broad impacts on the public transportation network, bus riders, and communities across King County. Impacts on riders would include fewer travel options, longer travel times, more transfers, and more-crowded and less-reliable buses throughout the transit system. Traffic congestion would get worse for everyone.

Learn more about what's at risk

Illustrative examples of potential service reductions and impacts

- **Roughly one-third of Metro's routes (65 routes) might be deleted, and about 40 percent (86 routes) might be reduced or revised** if Metro must shrink its system by 600,000 annual service hours.
- **One-third of Metro's routes might remain unchanged, but would likely carry more people and be more crowded**.

Number of Routes in Each Category



- **People in neighborhoods throughout King County would get less service, or would lose service entirely.** See potential reductions in different areas of the county at www.kingcounty.gov/metro/future
- **Metro would have to cut well-used service that it would not normally consider reducing.** The first routes Metro would consider for reduction would be those the report identified as the least productive 25 percent in Metro's system. But those routes account for only about 490,000 of the 600,000 annual service hours that would have to be cut—and some of those routes would be maintained because they play critical roles such as serving low-income communities where many people depend on transit.
- **Reductions would mean longer, less-convenient trips to work and school.** Fifty-five percent of Metro's riders take the bus to school or work, and more than 1,500 businesses, universities and other institutions buy bus passes for their employees or students. If 17 percent of service was reduced, commuters would have to wait longer, walk farther, make extra transfers or stand in the aisle more often. Some might not be able to get to their jobs or classes.
- **People who rely solely or heavily on transit would have fewer travel choices** because there would be fewer bus stops, fewer routes, and less service on remaining routes.
- **Major service reductions would force thousands of people into their cars, worsening congestion and slowing everyone's travel, the movement of goods, and the delivery of services.** Travel costs would increase as well; public transportation in the Puget Sound Region yields more than $365 million per year in time and fuel savings for drivers, according to the Texas Transportation Institute. Current Metro service takes about 175,000 vehicles off our roads every weekday—mainly during the busiest times of day on the most heavily used corridors.

How did Metro analyze service needs and potential reductions?

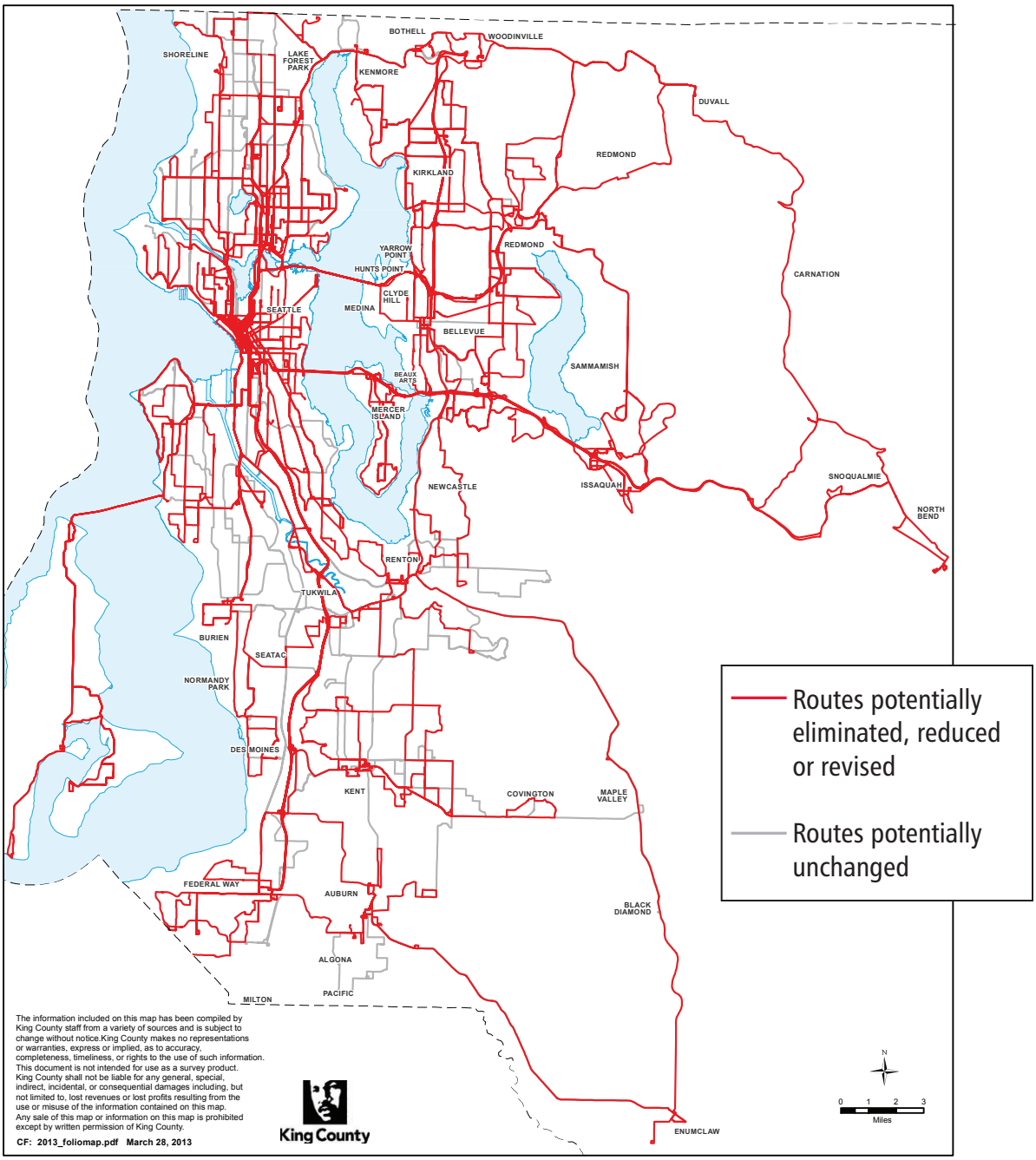
Metro's analysis of its transit system used objective data defined in service guidelines. The guidelines were recommended by a public task force and adopted by King County in 2011.

The 2012 Service Guidelines Report identified where the transit system needs investments to improve service quality and meet demand, and where routes might be changed or reduced because they are not performing well. Metro used the findings to illustrate how routes might be deleted, reduced or revised to achieve a 17 percent system reduction.

The potential reductions described here are not proposed changes. Before making an actual proposal, Metro would do a more comprehensive analysis using recent data, public comments, and look for opportunities to restructure service to cut costs while serving as many riders as possible.

Find the full 2012 Service Guidelines Report at http://metro.kingcounty.gov/planning

Routes that might be eliminated, reduced or revised in a 600,000-hour reduction



Routes potentially deleted: 7EX, 19, 21EX, 22, 25, 27, 30, 37, 48NEX, 57, 61, 76, 77EX, 82, 83, 84, 99, 110, 113, 114, 118EX, 119, 119EX, 123EX, 139, 152, 154, 157, 159, 161, 173, 179, 190, 192, 197, 200, 201, 203, 205EX, 210, 211EX, 213, 215, 216, 237, 243, 244EX, 250, 257, 260, 265, 268, 277, 280, 304, 308, 601EX, 907DART, 910DART, 913DART, 914DART, 919DART, 927DART, 930DART, 935DART

Routes potentially reduced or revised: 1, 2S, 2N, 3S, 3N, 4S, 4N, 5, 5EX, 7, 8, 9EX, 10, 11, 12, 14S, 16, 21, 24, 26, 26EX, 28, 28EX, 29, 31, 36, 41, 43, 47, 48N, 60, 65, 66EX, 67, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 106, 107, 116EX, 118, 121, 122, 125, 148, 156, 177, 181, 182, 186, 187, 193EX, 202, 204, 209, 214, 221, 224, 226, 232, 234, 235, 236, 238, 241, 245, 246, 248, 249, 255, 269, 271, 309EX, 311, 312EX, 331, 355EX, 372EX, 373EX, 901DART, 903DART, 908DART, 909DART, 931DART

Routes potentially unchanged: 13, 15EX, 17EX, 18EX, 32, 33**, 40, 44, 48S, 49, 50, 55**, 56**, 62, 64EX, 74EX, 75, 101, 102, 105, 111, 120, 124, 128, 131**, 132**, 140, 143EX, 150, 153, 155, 158, 164, 166, 167, 168, 169, 178, 180, 183, 212, 217, 218, 240, 242, 252, 301, 303EX, 306EX, 316, 330, 342, 345, 346, 347, 348, 358, A Line, B Line, C Line, D Line, 773, 775, 915DART, 916DART, 917DART

** Routes not reduced because we expect productivity to be above the bottom 25% threshold due to changes since spring 2012

Abbreviations: EX=express, N=north, S=south, DART=Dial-A-Ride-Transit

Without new funding, $75 million annual revenue shortfall is ahead

Beginning in mid-2014, Metro's annual revenues are projected to fall $75 million short of what is needed to maintain the current level of service–$60 million for operations and $15 million for bus purchases.

Metro's largest source of funding is sales tax revenue. Since 2008, the weak economy has caused a substantial ongoing revenue shortfall. Metro and King County have taken sweeping actions to reduce Metro's costs, increase revenue and preserve as much transit service as possible (see below).

However, some temporary funding sources will run out by next summer. Although Metro continues cost-cutting efforts and will request a fare increase in 2014, we are not able to close a $75 million gap without reducing service.

The state legislature is considering funding solutions for transportation needs statewide, including transit. King County has joined with the Sound Cities Association and the City of Seattle to ask the legislature for local transportation funding tools.

If new funding does not become available, deep service cuts will be necessary. Metro's 2013-2014 budget assumes that Metro will cut up to 600,000 annual hours of service beginning in fall 2014 and continuing in 2015.

Metro's financial reforms

Ongoing cost reductions

- Eliminated about 100 staff positions and reduced programs
- Adopted efficiency measures recommended in a performance audit, saving about $20 million annually
- Made modest reductions in bus service
- Negotiated cost-saving labor agreements
- Eliminated Ride Free Area in downtown Seattle
- Participates in the County's Healthy Incentives program to control employee health costs, which saved about $10 million between 2007 and 2011

Ongoing revenue increases

- Following a previously planned fare increase in 2008, raised fares in 2009, 2010, and 2011—an unprecedented total 80 percent increase in four years
- Shifted property tax from county ferries to Metro

Temporary actions

- Dug deeply into reserve funds
- Deferred replacement bus purchases
- Deferred most planned service expansion
- Adopted congestion reduction charge to help fund transit for two years

Throughout 2012, Metro used its new strategic plan and service guidelines to make the transit system more productive and effective, to get the most value for the public's tax and fare dollars. Metro restructured major parts of the bus system and also eliminated or reduced low-performing routes and reinvested the service hours to reduce crowding on buses and improve reliability.

Learn more and play a part in Metro's future: www.kingcounty.gov/metro/future

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