



MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 7, 2009

TO: Transportation Commission

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Transportation Department
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SUBJECT: Downtown Circulator and Rapid Ride Project Updates

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing is to provide Commission with an update on the Downtown Circulator and Rapid Ride transit initiatives. No action is requested of Commission.

Background

Downtown Circulator

King County Metro's Transit Now initiative, approved by voters in November 2006, provides funding for partnered transit improvements. Direct Financial Partnerships allow agencies and employers to partner with Metro for new or expanded service by contributing one-third of the cost. The Partnership program provided a timely opportunity for the City to revisit options for a downtown circulator service in light of recent growth in both residential and employment populations, increasing transit usage, and increasing pressure on the downtown street network.

Improving downtown service circulation and coverage is supported by Comprehensive Plan policies and service recommendations in the Bellevue Transit Plan (2003). The City undertook a Downtown Circulator Implementation Plan (May 2007) to assess service options to improve circulation and transit coverage, provide last-mile connections for transfers from the Bellevue Transit Center and provide an attractive alternative to the single-occupant-vehicle for intra-downtown trips. Three service scenarios were evaluated, including a downtown "core" circulator route, a "core" + Hospital District route, and a redistribution of existing service to improve coverage and frequency. The Council selected a "core" route in a U-shaped configuration for submittal to the King County Metro regional competition for partnership service hours.

In December 2008, King County Metro and the City entered into a formal partnership agreement for the circulator service, as shown in Attachment 1. The agreement provides for a circulator service beginning in September 2010 with the following characteristics:

- A two-way, U-shaped loop
- 10 minute headways
- Service hours:

- M-F: 6am – 6pm
- Sat: 9am – 7pm
- Sundays: 9am – 6pm (for seven weeks during the holiday season)
- Fare free to riders
- Branded vehicles

The total estimated service cost for the five-year agreement is \$3,022,000. Additional costs include an estimated \$650,000 for fare free reimbursement, to be based on actual ridership, and \$25,000 for branding and vehicle wraps. To partner with the City on the downtown circulator, Metro will be investing an estimated \$6,044,000 in direct service costs, as well as investments in new stops, customized stop signage, automatic passenger count equipment, and continued support of the City's Transportation Demand Management Program.

Rapid Ride

Rapid Ride is a form of bus rapid transit (BRT) characterized by a distinct identity, unique bus shelters, passenger amenities such as real time arrival information, high frequencies, and applications to reduce travel time, such as transit signal priority and expedited fare payment systems. Five Rapid Ride corridors were funded through Metro's Transit Now initiative, approved by voters in November 2006.

The Transit Now initiative specifies that the Bellevue-Redmond Rapid Ride Corridor will serve downtown Bellevue and downtown Redmond via Crossroads and Overlake. Rapid Ride implementation will enhance service provided today by Metro routes 230 and 253 with increased frequencies, improved passenger facilities and vehicles, and signal improvements.

Metro began working with the cities of Bellevue and Redmond on the planning of this corridor in 2007, and service is scheduled to begin in 2011. Completed elements of the planning process include:

- An Advisory Panel, which met from October 2006 to February 2007, provided input on route options, service levels, and station spacing.
- A public involvement effort in early 2008, including a mailing of 23,000 brochures and a series of open houses, seeking feedback on a questionnaire about route options and station spacing.
- Establishment of the Bellevue-Redmond Rapid Ride route and stop spacing plan (Attachment 2).
- Receipt of a FTA Very Small Starts grant award for 75% (\$20.2 million) of the total \$26.9 million project cost. The city submitted a letter of support for Metro's FTA application.
- Development of a unique facilities and branding design for the five Rapid Ride corridors, including station, vehicle, and branding concepts (Attachment 3).
- Development of Speed and Reliability Partnership agreements with the cities of Bellevue and Redmond for transit signal priority (TSP) and capital improvements to reduce travel time along the Rapid Ride route.

The remaining elements to deliver the project by September 2011 include:

March –July 2009:	Preliminary design of the stations and stops
August 2009 – January 2010:	Final design of stations and stops.
January – April 2010:	Permitting of stations and stops. Service planning to adjust other routes and outreach.
April 2010 – August 2011:	Construction of stations and stops.
September 2011:	Begin service.

LEGEND

- Recommended Bellevue-Redmond RapidRide Alignment
- Other Metro Transit Service

RapidRide Stops

- RapidRide Station Stop
- Other RapidRide Stop
- Transit Center
- Permanent Park&Ride (P&R)



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King County

Bellevue-Redmond RapidRide

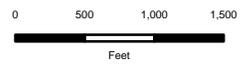


LEGEND

-  Route
-  Current Metro transit routes
- Walking Distances from BTC**
-  5 minute - (1/4 mile)
-  10 minute - (1/2 mile)
-  15 minute - (3/4 mile)
-  Park

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Downtown Bellevue Circulator "U"-Shaped Route

