hopelink

Helping People. Changing Lives.

January 7, 2014

City of Bellevue
Attn: Bellevue City Council
450 110th Avenue NE
Bellevue, WA

Dear Honorable Council-members,

As usual, we appreciate the opportunity to provide public comment on Bellevue's Transit Master Plan and the city's efforts to support individuals with special needs in its planning process. Hopelink is deeply concerned about King County Metro's proposed service cuts. In earlier public testimony, we encouraged County Council-members to pursue options that would avoid such action. In light of these potential cuts, we are especially grateful for the City of Bellevue's efforts in developing the "abundant access" framework for its updated Transit Master Plan, a framework that would preserve primary transit corridors in a service reduction environment.

Today, the transportation needs of the growing populations of suburban poor families, seniors, and others in need in King County are exacerbated by the weak economy and increasingly limited resources for nonprofits and social service agencies. Many of King County's poor live in suburban areas of South, East, and North King County where transit service is already limited. As a human service agency promoting self-sufficiency in North and East King County since 1971, Hopelink is witness to the adverse impact that lack of adequate transportation has on individuals seeking self-sufficiency.

Transit service offers people with special transportation needs access to vital human services, health care, educational opportunities, employment, and a wide range of other activities that in many cases they would not be able to access without transit. Transit therefore plays an important role in reducing social and economic inequalities by enhancing mobility for people, regardless of age, race, income or disability. In particular, it helps to bridge the mobility divide currently existing for many low-income families, people with disabilities or older adults who lack access to a vehicle. We believe the proposed cuts would have a significant and disproportionate impact on some of our community's most vulnerable citizens and we welcome any opportunity to work with you and King County Metro to assure the city's transit vision, as described in the Transit Master plan, is realized should the cuts occur.

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A community action agency.

Hopelink programs

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Also, as an employer with a staff of over 250 employees, operating in over 15 locations, Hopelink is also very concerned about the impact of lost transit service on our employees. I am sure we share a similar concern with many other Eastside employers when claiming that the loss of service could seriously jeopardize our employees' ability to get to work in a timely and reliable fashion, impacting not only their service to clients, but their employment with Hopelink. Again, the city's Transit Master Plan would help mitigate the adverse impacts of reduced transit service.

We again thank the City of Bellevue for its support of alternative transportation options through the Master Transit plan; we look forward to continued involvement in this effort.

Sincerely,

Lauren Thomas

Lauren Thomas
Interim CEO
Hopelink