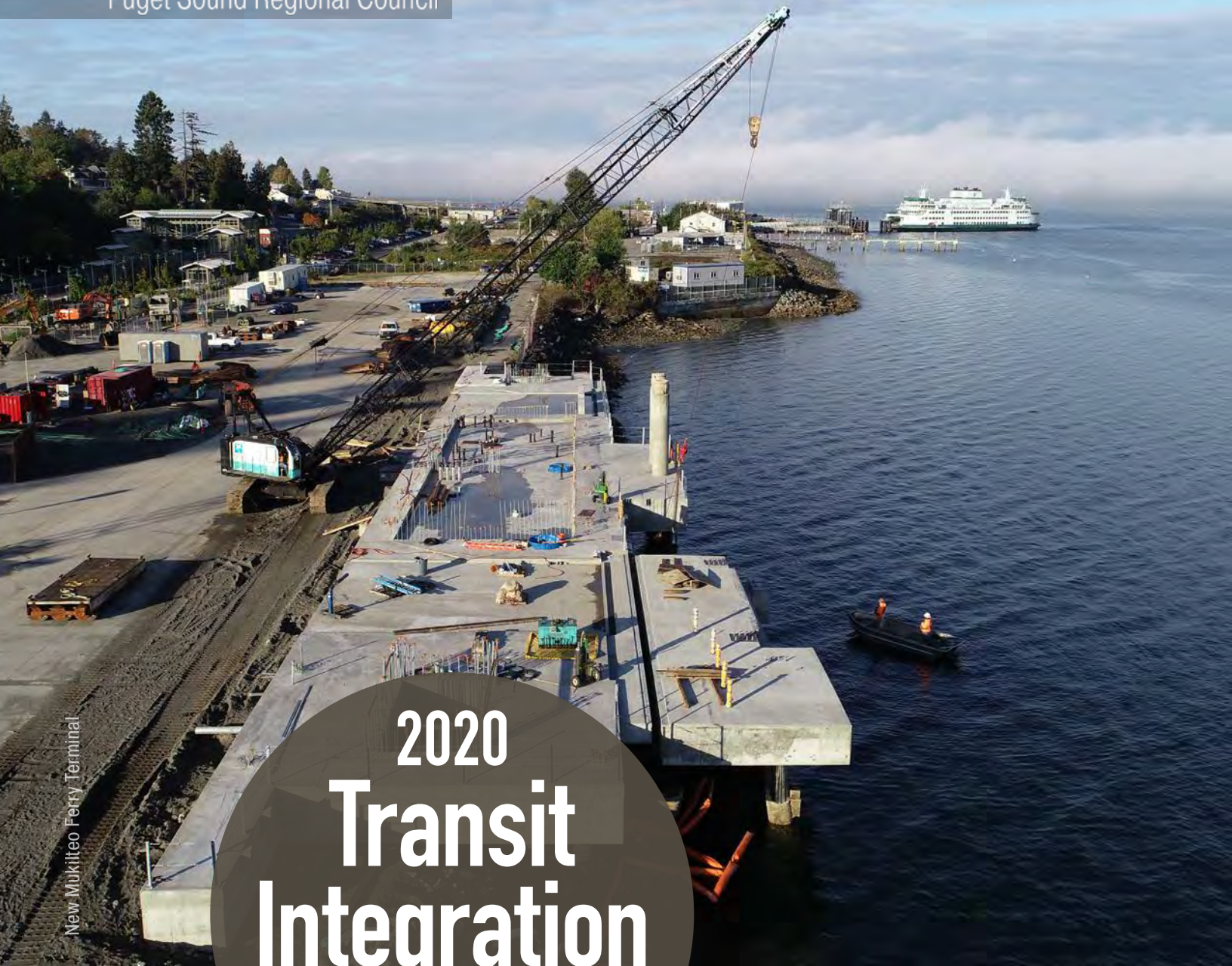




Puget Sound Regional Council



New Mukilteo Ferry Terminal

2020 Transit Integration Report



Washington State
Department of Transportation

— November 2020 —



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2020 Transit Integration Report / November 2020

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2020 Transit Integration Report


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2020 Transit Integration Report

The 2020 Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Transit Integration Report documents transit coordination activities underway and anticipated in the central Puget Sound region.

The Transit Integration Report fulfills reporting requirements in RCW 35.58.2796(2(a)), requiring the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to “develop an annual report summarizing the status of public transportation system coordination” in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The report also fulfills reporting requirements of the Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant identified in RCW 47.66.110(6). Grant recipients are highlighted with .

This report continues to document the efforts of transit agencies and other regional transportation stakeholders as they coordinate to improve transportation system performance and lay the groundwork for significant expansion of the region’s transit network over the next several years. Many stories include future steps that stakeholders will take to continue coordination.

Next
Steps



Impacts of COVID-19

COVID-19 has had a significant impact on travel behavior across the country and here in the central Puget Sound region. The region's transit agencies have been highly impacted by the changes in travel behavior, evolving safety precautions and funding uncertainties due to COVID-19. Ongoing coordination is taking place to ensure service is available, safe, and affordable for customers.

During the first month of the pandemic, average transit ridership fell by up to 74% compared to 2019 baseline levels.¹ Transit routes serving employees who could easily work from home saw the largest drops in ridership, resulting in temporary suspension of service. An example is the South Lake Union Streetcar, whose ridership is heavily comprised of commuters in the technology sector. Other routes that serve employees who cannot easily do their work from home, such as bus routes serving the U.S. Navy facilities in Kitsap County, saw lower drops in ridership.

Executive leadership of transit agencies throughout the region convened and coordinated their early responses to the pandemic, instituting rear-door boarding, fare free rides, and reduced capacity on transit vehicles to support social distancing and protect front-line transit employees. Agencies also instituted more frequent cleaning of transit vehicles to maintain a safe passenger environment.

The region's transit agencies are dedicated to maintaining transportation options that are safe for customers and operators. Many residents in the region live in households without vehicles or otherwise depend on transit to access their daily needs and jobs. Throughout 2020, the agencies have coordinated on how best to continue to provide service for these transit dependent customers. This has included assessing routes and time schedules for the periods with highest need and assigning additional transit coaches to those routes to promote social distancing on transit vehicles.



As sectors of the economy opened under the terms of the Stay Home, Stay Healthy Order, transit agencies noticed an uptick in ridership and began to take measures such as reinstating fares. By September 2020, average weekday transit ridership was between 55%-65% below the 2019 baseline.

It remains unclear how COVID-19 will impact transit development and ridership over the next few years. Monitoring of conditions and needs is ongoing, and as the economy reopens transit agencies, in coordination with a variety of partners, will continue to evolve the response necessary to provide services throughout the region. Today, transit agencies are focused on providing service for those who rely on it to get to their jobs, health care and other services, yet work also continues to expand the regional transit system. Projects are underway throughout the region to extend light rail, provide new passenger-only ferry service, and enhance speed and reliability on existing bus routes. Now, more than ever, transit agencies must work together to provide reliable and seamless travel options to customers. The stories highlighted below demonstrate how the region's transit agencies are continuing to work together and with other stakeholders to provide transit to customers today and into the future.

¹ WSDOT (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/covid-19-transportation-report/>)







Building the Regional Transit System

The region has made a commitment to providing a transformative, multimodal transportation system with fast, reliable connections between regional centers and surrounding communities. As these mass transit projects come online, the region's transit vision, articulated in PSRC's VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan, calls for all transit investments and services to be integrated into one easy-to-use network that makes regional and local destinations convenient to get to and is accessible to everyone.

The nine transit agencies in the region coordinate to achieve this collective vision on a wide variety of fronts, including infrastructure planning and design, providing service, integrating fares and customer information, engaging with local communities, and funding operations and capital needs.

Ensuring the success of these investments requires continued coordination between all of the transit agencies, local jurisdictions, and other stakeholders to help achieve the collective vision of a reliable and easy-to-use integrated transit system. This vision underscores the need to work with partner agencies to identify key issues and take steps to resolve them. Transit integration is a foundation for continuous improvement.

Expanding Bus Rapid Transit in the Region

Currently, multiple transit agencies are planning for and constructing bus rapid transit (BRT) to enhance service on existing high ridership bus corridors and to develop new routes that connect population and employment centers and other transit options. Coordination with stakeholders along these corridors is essential for delivering maximum benefit by increasing bus speed and reliability for customers and sharing the costs of improvements.

Effective BRT involves agencies working closely with stakeholders along the corridor to develop roadway improvements and service enhancements to increase transit speed and reliability. The combination of bus lanes, improved fare collection systems, smart traffic signals, and access improvements allows BRT to provide travel time savings to more people along the corridor.



Swift Blue Line Expansion

BRT in the region began over ten years ago with the opening of Community Transit's Swift Blue Line. As Sound Transit's Link light rail expands north into Snohomish County, Community Transit is upgrading and expanding the Swift Blue Line to provide easier access for Swift riders.

In 2024, the new Lynnwood Link extension will include the Shoreline North/185th Station, less than two miles from the Swift Blue Line's current southern terminus at Aurora Village Transit Center along SR99. This is an opportunity for Community Transit to extend SWIFT service to connect to light rail for the first time and improve service along the existing Blue Line.



Improvements to the Existing Corridor

As the Blue Line is extended, corridor improvements on the existing line are essential for continued reliable service for customers. To make improvements on the existing SR99 corridor, Community Transit worked with WSDOT to identify a methodology for determining when and where changes are needed to support more efficient use of the roadway. Using bus travel time data, the agencies determined that current corridor conditions are delaying bus speeds.

The use of bus travel time data along this corridor is the first time WSDOT has determined corridor improvements by relying on transit vehicle speed data rather than on general purpose vehicle speed data. The data analysis conducted by Community Transit and WSDOT helped identify the problems and provided insight into potential solutions, including roadway improvements along the corridor such as alterations to intersections that would allow for new BAT lanes at key sections between 148th St SW and Airport Road to make it a more reliable and convenient travel option for BRT customers using this corridor.



These roadway improvements set the stage for upgrading the pedestrian environment in the future that will further increase the travel options and carrying capacity of the corridor. In addition, as the Blue Line is extended, these improvements will help more customers benefit from the increased access to the future light rail station.

Shoreline Extension

In 2024, with a new light rail station at 185th Street and I-5, Community Transit intends to improve connections for customers and decrease the number of transfers by extending the Swift Blue Line directly to the new light rail station. Community Transit has been working with the City of Shoreline to develop the best route for this extension, taking community input and current roadway conditions into consideration.



The City of Shoreline helped Community Transit distribute a survey that asked customers and the public their thoughts on three possible extension routes. Based on survey results expressing the desire to maintain the bus-to-bus connections at Aurora Village Transit Center, Community Transit determined a near-term plan for the extension. This plan allows for continued easy transfers between buses for customers at the Aurora Village Transit Center and a new option of connecting to light rail at the Shoreline North/185th Station.

Next Steps

The City of Shoreline is working with Community Transit to explore potential funding for business access transit (BAT) lanes on N 185th St. and the possibility to reroute the Blue Line to take advantage of these improvements.

Swift Orange Line

Also in coordination with the extension of Link light rail to Lynnwood in 2024, Community Transit will be constructing its third BRT route in Snohomish County that will provide easy access to the future Lynnwood City Center Station from Mill Creek and Lynnwood. This 11.3-mile corridor will tie together four existing park and rides as well as the two existing Swift lines in southern Snohomish County.

The project is currently in design and is expected to move forward to construction in 2021. The anticipated completion of construction of the new BRT route is Winter 2023, with revenue service beginning in March 2024.

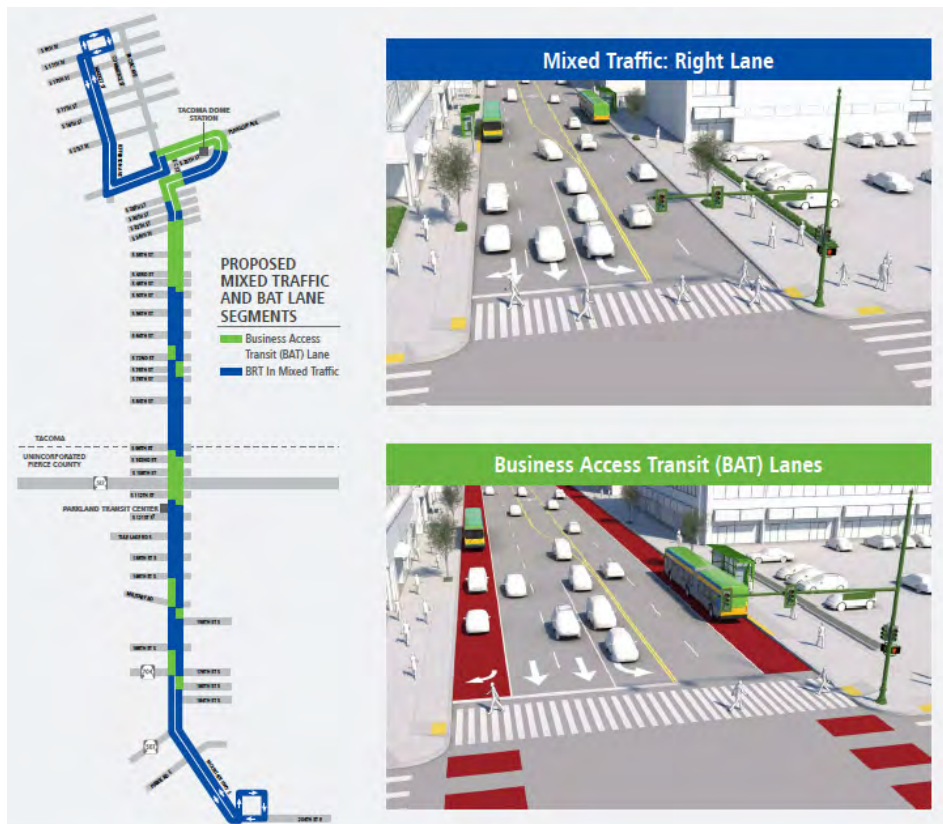
Implementing Stream in Pierce County

Stream, the first BRT route in Pierce County will provide faster and more reliable service along Pacific Avenue and SR 7 from downtown Tacoma to Spanaway. This 14.4-mile corridor is currently served by Pierce Transit’s Route 1, which, year after year, has the highest ridership in the agency’s system, representing approximately 20% of total fixed route ridership system-wide.

The future Stream route will also serve Tacoma Dome Station, a multimodal hub connecting customers to Sounder, Tacoma Link, Sound Transit, and Intercity Transit Express bus routes, along with Greyhound intercity bus and Amtrak rail service.

Pierce Transit actively collaborates with Sound Transit on project development. In 2019 the Sound Transit Board of Directors authorized the \$60 million contribution included in Sound Transit’s ST3 to enhance service through speed and reliability improvements along the corridor.

The project is currently in environmental review and preliminary engineering, with final design to be finished in 2021. The anticipated completion of construction of the new BRT route is summer 2023, with revenue service beginning that September.



Connecting to Northgate Link



As the regional light rail system expands, transit agencies are adjusting the local and regional bus system to connect customers to and from light rail and surrounding destinations.

Opening in 2021, the Northgate Link Extension will add three new light rail stations in north Seattle. Northgate Station is already an active transit hub with more than 5,200 daily bus boardings per weekday, and ridership is expected to grow as light rail arrives. When the Link station opens, customers taking light rail will be able to travel congestion-free to downtown Seattle in 14 minutes and directly to Sea-Tac Airport in less than an hour.

The redevelopment in the Northgate Urban Center, including the construction of light rail, will provide multiple transportation options for current and future customers.

Restructuring King County Routes

The Northgate I-5 corridor is a vital mobility pathway for those who live and work in King County to access family-wage jobs, and essential goods and services in Northgate and downtown Seattle. As light rail arrives, Metro is planning and engaging the community to design restructured local bus services with improved mobility in the project area in an equitable and community-driven way. The integration of bus and rail at the three new stations will offer current and future Metro customers fast, frequent, and reliable connections to jobs, education, and other opportunities and will advance more equitable outcomes for all.

Metro launched the third phase of public engagement for the North Link Connections Mobil-

ity Project in September 2020, including a final draft transit network. Proposed bus service changes will connect people to three new light rail stations, respond to changing transportation needs, and improve mobility and access for historically underserved populations in north Seattle and north King County. Metro is coordinating closely with partner agencies Sound Transit, the City of Seattle, Community Transit, and WSDOT.

Informed by Metro policy guidance, this project is bringing in new engagement and planning elements that center those whose needs are greatest. As the project moves from planning to implementation in 2021, Metro is making changes in several key areas:

- **Delivering integrated service that responds to Link expansion and meets customer needs.** The integrated service network will minimize duplication of Metro service with Link light rail by eliminating bus service between downtown Seattle and Northgate on the congested I-5 corridor. In addition to this central change, Metro will improve connections to Link by providing more direct connections to stations including new adjacent stops. All three Link stations will be served by multiple frequent bus routes, expanding the reach of frequent and reliable light rail service beyond the rail corridor into many parts of Seattle, Shoreline and North King County.



- **Improve mobility for historically un(der)served populations.** In this project, Metro has focused on communities with the greatest need and understanding how to meet needs better. This includes a focus on providing service throughout the day and not limited to typical peak commute time periods, and adjusting service proposals to reflect feedback and serve priority communities. In addition, capital facilities improvements at stops and stations are being built to support easy, comfortable, and convenient transfers between bus and light rail.
- **Equitably inform and engage with current and potential customers traveling in the project area.** Informed by King County’s Equity and Social Justice (ESJ) Strategic Plan and Metro’s Mobility Framework, the North Link Connections Mobility Project prioritized outreach and engagement with those whose voices have traditionally not been included or considered in the decisions that end up affecting them disproportionately. This included more in-person engagement prior to COVID-19; less emphasis on online and survey materials; contracting with community-based organizations to gather input; and convening a paid Mobility Board to develop and review proposals alongside Metro staff.

This project is planned for implementation in September 2021, coinciding with the opening of Sound Transit’s Northgate Link Extension.

Connecting Snohomish County to Light Rail



Connecting to Northgate Station is an early opportunity for Snohomish County residents to access the light rail system. As part of the regional bus-rail transit integration work, Community Transit and Sound Transit have been working jointly on how best to connect Snohomish County bus riders to the new light rail station at the Northgate Transit Center. Starting in fall 2019, both agencies began public outreach to understand how bus riders can connect to fast, reliable light rail service to the University of Washington, downtown Seattle, and other regional destinations.

The initial proposal envisioned truncating all Sound Transit routes serving downtown Seattle and Community Transit’s University of Washington routes at Northgate Station. All passengers would transfer with Link to reach their final destinations. The resulting service hour savings of operating shorter routes would be reinvested into more frequent service and a longer span of service.

Following initial outreach and a public survey, the agencies adjusted their original idea and conducted a second phase of outreach on a revised proposal in spring 2020. Key feedback from customers included a willingness to change their commute patterns, including transfers, if it achieved improved speed and reliability. Public safety, the transfer experience and connections from light rail stations to their destinations were also points riders wanted to understand better.

Based on this feedback, the agencies adjusted their original proposals to retain some routes in peak directions maintaining direct rides to downtown Seattle from locations in Snohomish County. These revisions give customers a choice between accessing downtown Seattle by bus or connecting to Link.

The September 2021 bus-rail integration plans were submitted to Community Transit’s and Sound Transit’s respective boards and final approval is expected in November 2020.



Building and Connecting to the Region's Ferry System

The region's ferry system is one of the region's highest ridership public transportation providers, moving people, vehicles, and goods across the Puget Sound.

The central Puget Sound region has a long history of reliance on waterborne transportation. Many communities are bordered by water, and several communities—including Vashon Island and Anderson Island—are completely reliant on ferries to access the mainland. Ferries play a key role in the regional transportation system and economy by connecting residents to jobs and services and taking both locals and visitors to recreational opportunities.

Work is currently underway across the region to add new ferry routes and make existing routes more accessible to customers.



Enhancing Connections at the New Mukilteo Ferry Terminal

The Mukilteo/Clinton ferry route is part of State Route (SR) 525, the major transportation corridor connecting Whidbey Island to the central Puget Sound region. It is one of the state's busiest ferry routes, with more than 4 million customers every year. While some customers drive onto the ferry, many others walk on and connect in Mukilteo to Sounder trains or buses provided by Everett Transit and Community Transit to get to Seattle, Lynnwood Transit Center, and other regional destinations.

Walk-on ridership has been increasing and will continue to increase, with projected ridership expected to go up 124% between 2010 and 2040. The current terminal design makes it difficult for customers to transfer from the ferry to other transit without coming into conflict with vehicle traffic. Limited space also constrains transit agencies' ability to layover, hindering on-time departures.

WSDOT has been working alongside the city of Mukilteo, the tribes, transit agencies and other stakeholders for years to plan for and construct a new Mukilteo ferry terminal. The new facility will improve transit connections, passenger safety, and provide new opportunities for transit agencies to serve their customers. Collaboration with local tribes led to a terminal building with design elements commemorating the cultural significance of the site and acknowledgment of the Coast Salish lands.

Creating Closer and Safer Transfers for Customers

The existing terminal requires walk-on passengers to use the car ramp to enter and exit the ferry in Mukilteo. The new terminal facility will allow walk-on passengers loading and unloading the ferry to do so directly from the terminal facility to the top level of the ferry. This faster and safer process brings passengers to the brand-new terminal building where they can take an elevator or stairs directly to the new transit center, and transfer to Community Transit and Everett Transit buses.

A new walkway is also being constructed to bring customers to the Mukilteo Sounder Station, providing connections to downtown Seattle's King Street Station.



Improving Transit Operations

With no significant changes since the early 1980s, the ferry terminal has been long overdue for an update. The terminal's current location does not have room for more than a few buses, and buses cannot pass each other or depart independently from the terminal. If drivers do need to layover they often must travel to the nearby park or local streets, taking them farther away from passengers and providing more opportunity for delays. On a busy day, the vehicle queue can stretch 1.5 miles along SR 525, snarling traffic and interfering with bus operations.

The new terminal's location has space to build a new transit center and a self-contained loop with ample accommodation for current transit needs. Layover space is also conveniently located nearby, increasing efficiency for buses that previously traveled away from the stop to layover. The new space also provides opportunity for future transit growth as needed.

Next Steps

Currently, the vehicle queue on SR 525 has limited Community Transit's ability to have bus stops up the hill from the terminal leading to downtown Mukilteo. The new terminal's configuration could reduce the vehicle queue in this location and allow Community Transit to work with the City of Mukilteo and WSDOT to restore these stops that were previously part of the network. The City and agencies will monitor how the new terminal is operating to determine what improvements can be made for customers.

Sound Transit is continuing to work on the timing of Sounder trains to best meet customer needs. Community Transit has worked with the City of Mukilteo, WSDOT and Sound Transit to create new bus stops that will be conveniently located adjacent to Sounder services.



Bringing More Travel Options to Southworth

Over 1 million passengers travel each year through the Southworth Ferry Terminal in southeast Kitsap County. Kitsap Transit is currently planning for their newest Fast Ferry service to connect customers directly from the Southworth Terminal to downtown Seattle.

Currently, walk-on passengers must take one of two options: Washington State Ferries; Southworth to Vashon route, then a transfer to the King County Water Taxi to get to the downtown core, or Washington State Ferries' Southworth to Fautleroy route, then a transfer to a King County Metro bus. Each of these trips, in their entirety, take in excess of one hour. The new fast ferry will be a direct trip taking 22 minutes, reducing the amount of commute time for users. The new fast ferry is expected to carry over 200,000 annual passengers when it opens in 2020.



For its Southworth-Seattle passenger-only ferry service, Kitsap Transit is partnering with Washington State Ferries on shore-side improvements to the Southworth Ferry Terminal, as well as on long-term planning for a second slip to expand docking capacity. In addition, the agencies are coordinating on joint operations at Southworth, such as sailing schedule, passenger queuing and raising and lowering of the transfer span.

Similarly, Kitsap Transit continues to coordinate with King County Marine Division on sailing schedules and shoreside operations at King County's Pier 50 passenger-only ferry terminal in Seattle. The Pier 50 facility has a single float accommodating two vessels simultaneously and is used by four passenger-only ferry routes: King County Water Taxi service from West Seattle and Vashon Island and Kitsap Transit's Fast Ferry service from Bremerton and Kingston. The addition of Fast Ferry service from Southworth would add pressure to an already congested ferry dock and may not lead to optimal sailing schedules.

Kitsap Transit is exploring a dock-sharing partnership in Seattle with the owners of Argosy Cruises, which would relieve congestion at Pier 50 during peak commute times.



Enhancing Customer Experience

As the previous section of this report noted, transit agencies in central Puget Sound are greatly expanding transit services that will make it faster and easier to travel around the region and meet the needs of customers. These investments are made possible through continued cooperation between the implementing transit agencies as well as other stakeholders. The following stories highlight how agencies collaborate to make the transit system easy to use.

Increasing the Use of ORCA (One Regional Card for All)

The introduction of ORCA in 2009 has been one of the region's foremost transit integration success stories. ORCA allows customers to seamlessly use public transportation provided by Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, Washington State Ferries, and the City of Seattle. For customers, ORCA allows contactless and cash-free fare payments, free transfers between agencies, and programs that make transit more affordable. For transit agencies, ORCA reduces the costs associated with fare collection, maintenance, and revenue allocation.



Expanding Access and Affordability for Riders with Low Incomes

People living in low-income households face a higher burden when making transportation choices as they often pay a higher

percentage of their income for transportation. Such households may also lack the means to own a vehicle. Public transit can reduce the burden of costs associated with vehicle ownership. However, full price fares may still be unaffordable for many customers.

Building off a model established by Kitsap Transit in 2009, transit agencies in the region have offered reduced fares for customers who fall within the income guidelines. While a great opportunity, the customers who need these programs the most may not know about them or how to access them. Agencies are working together to continue expanding the usage of ORCA LIFT and other low-income fare programs and developing new products to make transit affordable for all people living in the region.

Expanding the reach of ORCA LIFT

Started by King County Metro and Sound Transit in 2015, ORCA LIFT expanded to provide access to all of King County and Sound Transit's modes, and to Community Transit, Everett Transit, the Seattle Streetcar, Kitsap Transit, and the Seattle Center Monorail.

The 2019-2020 Transit Coordination Grant is being used to expand the reach of ORCA LIFT. Oftentimes transit customers do not know about ORCA LIFT or how to apply for the program. The grant includes several programs to leverage existing partnerships with public health agencies for customers in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties to have access to these cards.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the transit agencies stopped collecting fares in spring 2020. Slowly, agencies have begun to collect fares again, and the need for reduced fares continues. The grant is providing ORCA LIFT cards loaded with a \$10 incentive to new and renewing ORCA LIFT customers in Pierce, King, and Snohomish counties. Since these cards are traditionally distributed in person at locations throughout the region, King County Metro has been working alongside Seattle and King County Public Health to develop new processes for enrolling new ORCA LIFT customers and re-enrolling existing customers remotely. Using state systems to verify eligibility, King County Metro and Public Health Seattle and King County are allowing customers to register for ORCA LIFT over the phone and online and receive the \$10 incentive. Additionally, work is being done to prepare Catholic Community Services, an important provider of these cards, to resume customer outreach as their offices reopen.



Next Steps

This grant funds a multi-pronged expansion of transit assistance to low-income residents throughout the region, building on recent successful program models and employing new approaches to reach additional low-income transit customers. As the program continues, new approaches to expanding the reach of ORCA LIFT will be deployed.

New Subsidized Annual Pass Program

To further expand affordability and reach customers at the lowest income levels, King County Metro and Sound Transit have partnered to create a new, subsidized annual pass program at no cost to eligible customers. This program targets customers who have the lowest incomes in the region, less than 80% of the federal poverty level, and are enrolled in one of six state benefit programs.

Eligible customers enroll at Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Public Health – Seattle and King County, and Catholic Community Services (CCS) locations. Then, the annual pass is loaded onto their ORCA LIFT or Regional Reduced Fare Permit (RRFP) card at no cost to the customer.

The subsidized annual pass gives customers greater mobility on all services provided by Sound Transit, King County Metro, the Seattle Center Monorail, and Seattle Streetcar. The ability to use these modes can help customers access services throughout the region, including jobs, recreational opportunities, health care, and school.

Next Steps

The transit agencies are dedicated to ensuring that this program is effective in providing access to opportunities for their customers. Annual evaluation reports will provide information on the program's reach and benefit for people with the greatest need.

Sound Transit is currently participating in this program as a two-year demonstration. In 2022 the program will be evaluated, and the agencies will work together to determine if it is meeting the evaluation criteria to determine potential program changes, including adjustments to eligibility and design.

Connecting with Nonprofits in Pierce County

Pierce Transit's Transit Pass Program provides One Ride Tickets and All Day Passes to Certified Human Services Agencies (HSAs) in Pierce County. Additionally, nonprofit HSAs that are exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of Title 26 of the United States Code can purchase tickets and passes at half price.

This 501(c)(3) program allows nonprofit organizations to purchase these passes at a significant discount and give them to their clients at no cost.

The Transit Pass Program connects the clients and community members served by over 350 HSAs in Pierce County to transit passes, allowing people to access health care, jobs, and educational opportunities. Organizations include youth mentorship programs, services for people who are homeless, and other nonprofits providing essential resources in the county.

Through the Transit Coordination Grant, Pierce Transit is distributing 70,000 All Day Passes at no cost to certified 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations. The agency has over 100 partnerships with these organizations.

Next Steps

Pierce Transit will continue strengthening existing relationships and building new partnerships with nonprofits in the county to assist the agency in distributing essential transportation opportunities to those most in need in their communities. By leveraging these relationships with nonprofits, more people in Pierce County may be able to access transit, providing mobility to opportunities throughout their county. The agency is monitoring which nonprofits are receiving the passes and if these relationships continue after the grant-funded promotional passes are distributed.



Developing the Next Generation of ORCA

ORCA has dramatically changed how people in the central Puget Sound region pay for transit. It helps them transfer seamlessly between agencies and board buses, trains, and ferries faster. Customers enjoy the convenience of having a single card that can be used on multiple modes and agencies for travel.

However, the system that launched in 2009 is showing its age. Customers dislike the time and process it takes to load products and value onto cards. The fare payment industry has advanced into new technologies that are more adaptable for the growing transit system.

The transit agencies that comprise the ORCA system have been working together to design and develop the next generation of ORCA (next gen ORCA). This new system is being designed to allow for flexibility into the future. This will allow new technologies and modes to be added into ORCA without interrupting how customers use the system.

In 2020 this work has been focused on laying the groundwork for these changes. Across the region, the card reader mounting equipment is being replaced on buses so they will be ready to accept the new technology. The new ORCA website and app are also being designed to be ready for the launch.

By the end of 2022, this improved system will provide customers with convenient, flexible, and secure fare payment. The system will be designed to accept innovative ways of paying for transportation and accommodate new modes as the regional transportation network expands. Next gen ORCA will make it easier for customers by updating the user experience with a modern website and app, providing them with many new fare purchase options (including web, retail, vending, and mobile solutions) and will support immediate availability of purchased products and value.



Wayfinding and Downtown Seattle Pilot

Providing customers with accurate information for walking, transit, and accessibility options greatly impacts their ability and willingness to use these investments. The lack of a coordinated wayfinding strategy and system often means that people are less likely to explore walking routes on their own, including routes to bus, train, and ferry hubs. Without coordination, multiple individual systems can cause duplicative and disconnected information, and crowding of public spaces.

Funded by the Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant, the City of Seattle has been working with King County Metro and Sound Transit, with input from Community Transit, Everett Transit, and Pierce Transit, on the Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding program.



Overview Sign

Area Sign

Nudge Sign

Route Marker/Description

Transit Local Area Map

Sidewalk Medallion

Tactile Pole Panel



Pilots are currently underway at the Jackson and Westlake hubs in downtown Seattle. They are meant to support these major hubs that were impacted by changes in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel operations.

This year, the program is moving ahead with sign fabrication and foundation installation efforts for the initial phase of signs at these hubs, despite some impact on the schedule of installation due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of creating high-quality pedestrian environments and infrastructure to support and encourage walking in Seattle. The Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding program will directly support walking by providing consistent, map-based wayfinding information for users to be able to easily orient themselves (with heads-up orientation of maps) and find key destinations in the area where they can walk.

In addition to the new signs in the right-of-way, the Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding signs will be installed at select King County Metro bus stops, Seattle Streetcar stops and Sounder station entrances in the hubs in order to advance the transit integration aspect of the wayfinding sign system. These are further complemented by area maps (map-based wayfinding signs); Sound Transit has installed a number of area maps within the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel stations as part of their CONNECT 2020 effort.

Next Steps

This project has generated interest from a variety of public and private organizations, including the Washington State Convention Center, WSDOT, and private developments where conversations of adopting the Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding system are happening for various projects. Additionally, a number of capital improvement projects within the City of Seattle are planning for the installation of the Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding program.



Critical Delivery Services in the Age of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an impact on almost everyone's travel in the region, but the impact has been uniquely felt by older adults and other members of vulnerable populations. For years, many older adults and individuals with disabilities have taken part in group meal services, which transport older adults and individuals with disabilities to senior centers and other community-based organizations for both a meal and a social connection. Meanwhile, food delivery services provided by organizations like Meals on Wheels serve adults who are homebound. This year, the number of effectively homebound people increased dramatically due to the pandemic. Although several agencies transitioned to a curbside pick-up model, it became clear that many residents had begun sheltering-in-place and were unable to travel for food and other critical needs.



In response to these needs, at least 20 public, private, and nonprofit agencies are now providing meal and/or grocery delivery, while at least seven are providing prescription delivery to older adults and other vulnerable populations within our region. In Pierce County, for example, transportation partners decided to provide food delivery service to older adults, individuals with disabilities, and others in three unique ways.

In April, Road to Independence (RTI) started delivering meal boxes from Renton to seven Tacoma Public Housing (TPH) senior apartments complexes. TPH’s previous food delivery partners were no longer in operation so RTI ended up delivering 8,448 food boxes to 352 residents’ doors between April and June. Meanwhile, the Beyond the Borders (BTB) transportation program, serving East and South Pierce County, experienced an overall ridership decrease of at least 50% by April. They responded by utilizing unused driver hours for food delivery in partnership with Catholic Community Services and Meals on Wheels of Pierce County. Lastly, BTB’s route transporting seniors to the Eatonville Senior Center was transitioned to a meal delivery route three days a week.

Pierce County says the greatest resource they have utilized during this time is a newfound flexibility to meet their community’s needs. During this crisis, partners have been able to work together across silos, removing past barriers to collaboration. Additionally, a three-county coalition, the Regional Alliance for Resilient & Equitable Transportation (RARET), facilitates bi-weekly countywide meetings for transportation partners to share best practices and problem-solve. RARET also develops bi-weekly Transportation Impact Summaries to provide transportation updates during COVID-19, including information on transportation providers’ ability to assist with food/pharmacy delivery. Going forward, Pierce County hopes that these partnerships can help the region continue to innovate and improve critical transportation services to meet the diverse needs of the county’s communities.

Matrix of Areas of Coordination

The annual report as required in RCW 35.58.2796(2) identification of coordination efforts in six areas. These areas, and the stories that fall into them, are highlighted in the matrix below.

	Marketing Efforts Structures	Aligning Fare Planning	Service Planning	Long Range Function	Other Admin Focused Tools	Customer Focused Tools
COVID 19	X	X	X		X	X
Northgate Link			X			
Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)			X	X		
Mukilteo Ferry Terminal			X	X		
Southworth Fast Ferry			X	X		
ORCA Next Gen update						X
ORCA LIFT	X	X			X	
Coordinated Wayfinding						X
Delivery Service						X



