



Puget Sound Regional Council



2021 TRANSIT INTEGRATION REPORT



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Department of Transportation

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Northgate Station



Introduction

The 2021 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 the reporting requirements of RCW 25.58.2796(2)(a), which requires the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to develop an annual report summarizing the status of public transportation system coordination in and between counties with a population of 700,000 or more that border Puget Sound (King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties).

There are six policy areas the state law requires the report to address. Icons will be used to indicate where these topics are addressed throughout the report:

-  Integrating marketing efforts
-  Aligning fare structures
-  Integrating service planning
-  Coordinating long-range planning, including capital projects planning and implementation
-  Integrating other administrative functions and internal business processes as appropriate
-  Integrating certain customer-focused tools and initiatives

The report also fulfills the reporting requirements associated with the Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant, as described in RCW 47.66.110(6). The grant program and related reporting requirement expired on June 30, 2021, but this report continues to provide updates on projects funded by the grants that are still active or were completed this year. These projects are identified with 

In addition to meeting these reporting requirements, the goal of this report is to share information with elected officials and the public, highlighting successes, ongoing work and challenges, and emerging opportunities for future coordination. Successful transit integration requires coordination not only among public transportation providers, but also with local jurisdictions, state and county governments and agencies, and other partners in the region.



Downtown Seattle

Recovering Together

While the [2020 Transit Integration Report](#) highlighted how transit agencies worked together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's report will shift that focus to how providers, government agencies, and other partners are planning for recovery together.



Agencies Coordinate on Pandemic Response and Recovery with Focus on Customer Experience

In mid-March 2020, transit agencies in the central Puget Sound region began making major policy and operational decisions in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Service response discussions were happening in multiple forums, ranging from agency-to-agency information sharing on specific topics to broader efforts. Collaboration ranged from the Snohomish County forum for coordination among Everett Transit, Community Transit, Sound Transit, Paine Field, and transit police to twice-weekly transit public information officer check-ins and a biweekly “regional marketing chat.” Coordination was also facilitated by the regional transit executives, who increased their regular Mobility Partnership Group meetings from monthly to at least weekly at the beginning of the pandemic.



Photo Credit: Pierce Transit

While these forums typically suffice for inter-agency coordination, the rapidly evolving requirements and state of public health during the pandemic required specific attention. King County Metro's COVID-19 response and recovery efforts identified a need to work with regional partner agencies to create a single forum to plan a regionally coordinated customer experience during the pandemic and subsequent recovery.

King County Metro presented this recommendation to the transit executives' Mobility Partnership Group in January 2021. There was unanimous support, and executives directed their agencies to create a Regional Recovery Planning Group. Agency representatives in the group prioritized providing a seamless experience for customers, sharing customer research, creating and maintaining consistent messaging, and providing a forum to discuss partnership opportunities. Other stakeholders (transportation management agencies [TMAs], City of Seattle, and Puget Sound Regional Council) were invited to join the seven transit agencies at weekly meetings.

The group first convened in early March 2021. Though a singular, regional approach may not be suitable for every topic of discussion at the Regional Recovery Planning meetings, coordinating approaches and messaging between agencies has proven valuable. For example, agency representatives in the group agreed to collective implementation of the American Public Transportation Association's Health & Safety Commitments Program in September 2021, ensuring a consistent approach to mask mandates and other protocols across all operators in the region. The group has prioritized consistent and clear messaging as a key strategy to maintaining credibility and trust with riders.



The Regional Recovery Planning Group has discussed a variety of topics, including: messaging, operational policies, impacts of federal and state guidance on masking and employee vaccination, marketing, market research, and communicating with state government and other policymakers. As new patterns and norms emerged, the group has shifted to meeting twice monthly but will continue meeting until the transit system fully recovers from the effects of the pandemic.



Transportation Providers Work Together to Provide Free Rides to Vaccines

One service public transportation provided in addressing the pandemic was offering transportation access to vaccination. Every agency in the central Puget Sound region publicized how their services could be used to get a ride to mass vaccination sites, pharmacies, medical offices, and other vaccine providers. Most agencies offered free rides to vaccination to reduce cost as a barrier. Some examples of these efforts include:

Community Transit Ash Way Park & Ride

In addition to offering free rides to vaccination sites for their customers, Community Transit worked with the Snohomish County Vaccine Taskforce to provide the first transit-focused COVID-19 mass vaccination site in Snohomish County at Ash Way Park & Ride in late April 2021. The site was accessible to Snohomish County residents by 17 Community Transit bus routes serving the park-and-ride. Other residents in the region traveled to the site via Sound Transit Express or transferred to Community Transit routes from other services. In the fall, the site was used again as a Snohomish Health District COVID-19 testing and vaccination site to meet growing demand for these services.

Vaccinations Onboard Washington State Ferries

On designated dates in May and June 2021, riders had the option of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine onboard a Washington State Ferries vessel during their trip. The Washington State Department of Transportation and Peninsula Community Health Services partnered to offer vaccinations to passengers aboard the Seattle-Bremerton ferry to create another convenient opportunity for vaccination.



Photo Credit: Washington State Ferries

King County Coordinated Vaccine Transportation Helpline

Community nonprofit agency Hopelink took a proactive approach to ensuring all members of the community could secure transportation to and from vaccination appointments. In late January 2021, the King County COVID Vaccine Mobility Task Force began meeting to identify and discuss vaccination transportation needs. With multiple transit agencies, specialized transportation service providers, and on-demand transportation options in the region, planning travel to vaccination could be challenging, particularly for individuals who may not be able to ride traditional fixed-route transit (i.e., bus and rail).

Hopelink used preliminary infrastructure being developed for a regional One-Call/One-Click tool as a basis for a centralized helpline—a one-stop shop for identifying and securing transportation to and from vaccination appointments in or near King County. (Read more about [One-Call/One-Click](#) in Section 3.) The helpline emerged as the simplest option for transportation partners across the region to coordinate, while easing the burden of trip planning on the user. The program aimed to support underserved communities and those with the greatest need for access to vaccination sites, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities, older adults, immigrants, refugees, and individuals with disabilities.



The group officially launched the Coordinated Vaccine Transportation Helpline in March 2021, which offered a phone number and online form option for requests. Without integrated schedule data and the technology slated for One-Call/One-Click in the future, Hopelink had to improvise with existing resources. This included reaching out to multiple public transportation providers on behalf of callers. The approach was to look for a trip option first among existing and/or free services like public transit, and then to on-demand paid services like Uber or Lyft, if needed.

As of late August 2021, over 78% of calls to the helpline resulted in a scheduled and fulfilled trip. Hopelink noted the success of the helpline is largely due to successful partnerships with Public Health – Seattle & King County and transportation providers across the region, including: Hopelink’s Non-Emergency Medical Transportation; King County Metro (Access, Community Van, Crossroads Connect, Via to Transit); Northshore Senior Center; Puget Sound Educational Service District; Snoqualmie Valley Transportation; Sound Generations (Hyde Shuttle and Volunteer Driver Program); Volunteer Services – King County (Catholic Community Services), and ride-hailing services Lyft and Uber. These partners stepped up to provide transportation to vaccine appointments and provided them at no cost.

The helpline remains open as vaccine mandates and availability of booster shots for certain populations maintains demand for vaccination. Hopelink intends to keep the helpline open as long as there is need thanks to grant partners like WSDOT and All in WA’s Vaccine Equity Initiative. They plan to take lessons learned from this trial to improve the helpline tool for deployment in the event of a future emergency.



Community Transit



Growing the Transit System

A global public health crisis and increasing costs have required flexibility and adaptability from the transportation system and its providers. Despite new challenges and uncertainties, the central Puget Sound region remains committed to the transit-focused growth strategy outlined in VISION 2050, as demonstrated by the investments in this timeline.



Project Timeline

2021



March 29: Southworth Fast Ferry Service Begins (Kitsap Transit)

Kitsap Transit opened its third Fast Ferry route, providing a one-seat ride between the Southworth Terminal and downtown Seattle. Prior to the launch of this new passenger-only ferry service, walk-on passengers had a few travel options using existing Washington State Ferries, King County Water Taxi, and King County Metro bus services, all of which required at least one transfer and over an hour of travel time. The new Southworth Fast Ferry provides a direct 22-minute trip with no transfers.

Kitsap Transit partnered with Washington State Ferries on shoreside improvements to the Southworth Ferry Terminal and continues collaborating on long-range plans for a second slip to expand docking capacity. The two agencies work together on operations coordination at Southworth to ensure the facility can accommodate sailings by both agencies. Kitsap Transit has contracted with King County Marine Division for shoreside operations at King County's Pier 50 passenger-only ferry terminal in Seattle, which is used by four other routes. As increasing ferry activity in central Puget Sound continues to put pressure on existing facilities, these agencies, along with the Port of Seattle and other partners, will continue working together to manage capacity and collaborate on long-term improvements.



● Ferry ● Light Rail ● BRT





October 2: Link 1 Line Extension to Northgate Completed (Sound Transit)

Sound Transit's latest expansion of the Link light rail network extends the northern terminus of the 1 Line from the University of Washington to Northgate, including three new stations: U District, Roosevelt, and Northgate. Travelers can expect trains every eight minutes during peak hours and a more reliable travel time than a bus or car trip, given light rail's exclusive right-of-way. The Northgate area was already an active bus transfer location and is expected to become an even larger hub with the addition of Link service.



Sound Transit, King County Metro, and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) worked closely to improve multimodal access in the three new station areas. Additionally, SDOT, Sound Transit, and WSDOT were key partners in the construction of the John Lewis Memorial Bridge. The new pedestrian and bicycle bridge spans I-5, connecting Northgate Station to North Seattle College and other destinations on the west side of I-5.

The opening also marked the culmination of extensive service planning coordination between Sound Transit, Community Transit, King County Metro, and SDOT. Over the past few years these agencies worked together to maximize the investment in light rail service through integrated bus-rail service planning and extensive community engagement.

The Community Transit and King County Metro fall service changes were adjusted to coincide with the October 2 opening of the Northgate Link extension. Several bus routes operated by Community Transit, King County Metro, and Sound Transit were adjusted to terminate at Northgate, facilitating a customer transfer to light rail to complete trips to the University of Washington, downtown Seattle, and other destinations served by Link.

The service planning coordination that supported the Northgate Link extension continues with projects like East Link Connections, the ongoing process of reconfiguring service around the 2023 opening of the Link 2 Line.

● Ferry ● Light Rail ● BRT

2022



Tacoma Link (T Line) extension to Hilltop (Sound Transit)
Connections to local Pierce Transit service



RapidRide H Line (King County Metro)
Connections to multiple transit services, include Sound Transit Link, in downtown Seattle

2023



Link 2 Line, from Seattle to Redmond Technology Center (Sound Transit)
Connections to other transit services at Bellevue Transit Center



RapidRide I Line (King County Metro)
Connections to Sound Transit Sounder at Kent and Auburn stations

2024



Link 1 Line extension to Lynnwood (Sound Transit)
Connections to Community Transit Swift Blue Line at Shoreline North and Swift Orange Line at Lynnwood City Center, as well as other King County Metro and Community Transit routes



Link 1 Line extension to Federal Way (Sound Transit)
Connections to the Pierce Transit and King County Metro local bus networks



Link 2 Line extension to downtown Redmond (Sound Transit)
Connections to King County Metro RapidRide service in downtown Redmond



Ferry



Light Rail



BRT



**Stream BRT 1, Pacific Avenue S/SR 7 Corridor (Pierce Transit)**

Connections to Sound Transit Sounder at Tacoma Dome Station and Link T Line at Tacoma Dome Station and Commerce Street Station

**Swift Blue Line extension to Shoreline North/185th Link Station (Community Transit)**

Connections to Sound Transit Link 1 Line and other services at Shoreline North Station

**Swift Orange Line (Community Transit)**

Connections to Sound Transit Link 1 Line at Lynnwood City Center and Swift Green Line in Everett and Mill Creek

**RapidRide G Line (King County Metro, with City of Seattle)**

Connections to Link and ferry services in downtown Seattle



Ferry



Light Rail



BRT

**Re-evaluating Capital Project Schedules**

Revenue uncertainty from the pandemic and increasing construction costs prompted many transportation agencies to re-evaluate long-range capital project schedules to assess feasibility and affordability and adjust, where necessary. For example, the Sound Transit Board adopted a realignment plan on August 5, 2021, to provide a framework for delivering system expansion projects that balanced expediency with affordability.

Projects already in construction (Sound Transit projects shown on this timeline) were not affected. More details on the realignment, including revised timelines for other ST3 projects, can be found on Sound Transit's [system realignment webpage](#). Changes by Sound Transit and other agencies require continued coordination, as these projects all play a role in the regional transit network and impact other services in the network.

Creating a Seamless Customer Experience

To maximize the region's investment in transit, customer-focused tools are critical to ensuring riding transit is an affordable, attractive option. Significant progress was made this year toward the rollout of next generation ORCA, and transit providers continued working together on data consistency as a building block to future trip-planning tools for customers.



Region Prepares to Launch Next Generation ORCA

One of the most significant transit integration successes in the region was the introduction of One Regional Card for All (ORCA) in 2009. ORCA is an integrated fare card, providing customers a contactless cash-free fare payment option, free transfers between agencies, and pass options and programs that can make transit more affordable.

Trips on Community Transit, Everett Transit, King County Metro, Kitsap Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and Washington State Ferries, as well as the Seattle Streetcar and Monorail, can be paid for with ORCA. The integrated fare card has improved the customer experience and reinforces that, though there are multiple providers, the regional transit network should be experienced by customers as an integrated network that allows for easy traveling and transferring, regardless of mode or service provider. Sound Transit reports there are over a million ORCA cards in circulation and 68% of trips in the region were paid for with an ORCA card in 2019.



Photo Credit: Sound Transit

Policy decisions related to ORCA are made by the ORCA Joint Board, which includes representation from each of the seven major transit operators in the region. Technology, equipment contracts, account assistance, marketing, and other day-to-day operations are managed by the Regional ORCA Operations Team, with Sound Transit serving as the procurement and contracting agency. While the current ORCA system has served the region well, the availability of new payment technology and lessons learned from the first decade of ORCA usage have created opportunities to better serve the community.

After extensive public outreach and review of customer feedback, the board and operations team adopted an approach and scope of work in 2017 for the next generation of ORCA (next gen ORCA). The goal was to identify what was working well and where the ORCA products could be improved. After years of strategic planning and decision-making, technology and equipment research and procurement, and implementation and transition planning, customers will begin seeing next gen ORCA in action beginning in 2022.





In early 2022 (official launch date to be determined), the two major changes customers can expect are a new website (myorca.com) as well as the first app (myORCA) for managing their ORCA accounts. These new interfaces will allow customers to add funds more easily to their cards, and the new technology will make those funds immediately available, addressing customer complaints about the lag time between loading their card and those changes taking effect.

Later in 2022, a tap-to-pay option in the app will launch, allowing customers to purchase and use ORCA fare products without having a physical card. There will also be changes to the fare vending machines, the addition of more retail partner points of purchase, and the rollout of the new next gen ORCA card. Transit agencies have worked together extensively on a transition plan for replacing card

readers at stops and stations and on vehicles. The new readers will still accept the existing (legacy) ORCA card as well as the new next gen ORCA card and fares purchased on the app (tap-to-pay).

In addition to the customer-facing improvements, next gen ORCA also improves the operations side of regional fare media. Adding new providers or modes of transit will be possible with minimal-to-no impact on the customer experience. Agencies will still have access to aggregated data on ORCA card usage, aiding in ridership analysis and service planning. Aggregated data is not linked or traceable to individual riders, to protect privacy.

In late 2021, the Regional ORCA Operations Team launched marketing campaigns for business passport ORCA cardholders (purchased by employers) and individual ORCA cardholders, preparing customers for the changes ahead. All customer-facing employees at the transit agencies in the region will be trained on the new fare products and prepared to help customers with the transition. The transit agencies and ORCA team are committed to a smooth transition. The planned next gen improvements should make transit fare payment easier for customers and continue expanding accessibility to transit services.



Image Credit: Sound Transit

Updates on Puget Sound Transit Coordination Grant Projects

Though the Transit Coordination Grant program has expired, updates on funded projects highlighted in past Transit Integration Reports are provided below.



ORCA Youth Marketing and TDM Project

Beginning June 1, 2021, youth residents (ages 6-18) are no longer charged a fee for acquiring their first ORCA youth fare card. (Replacing lost cards will still incur a nominal fee.) A promotion that started in December 2020 waiving the \$5 fee was made permanent by the ORCA Joint Board this year. The promotion was part of the ORCA Youth Marketing and TDM Project funded in previous cycles of the Transit Coordination Grant program.

Waiving the fee not only improves access to destinations across the region for young people, but also encourages early adoption of transit as a mode choice, hopefully instilling a lifelong travel behavior. Senior or disabled riders who qualify for a Regional Reduced Fare Permit and riders in low-income households with ORCA LIFT cards have received their first card free since 2018. This policy change brings the youth cards in alignment with ORCA LIFT and Regional Reduced Fare Permit cards.



Photo Credit: Community Transit



Seamless Seattle Pedestrian Wayfinding Program

With funding from the Transit Coordination Grant (2017-2019 cycle), the City of Seattle worked with King County Metro and Sound Transit to design and implement a pilot wayfinding program, also gathering input from Community Transit, Everett Transit, and Pierce Transit. Beginning in 2019, the Seamless Seattle design standards were implemented on Sound Transit signage at light rail stations within city limits as part of the CONNECT 2020 project.

The Jackson and Westlake hubs in downtown Seattle were identified for the first two city-led pilot installations, aimed at addressing the impacts of moving bus service from the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel to surface streets. Each pilot area covers about a 12-16 block area. The timeline for implementation was delayed twice, largely due to the pandemic, but street-level signs were installed in 2021.



Seattle Wayfinding Sign





Standardizing Transit Service Data for One-Call/One-Click Customer Service Tool

The central Puget Sound region encompasses four counties, a growing population, multiple fixed-route transit providers, several specialized transportation providers, and small urban, rural, and tribal transit providers outside of the urbanized area. This variety of providers aims to ensure mobility for every member of the community. However, the sheer number of providers complicates trip planning for customers, particularly for people with special transportation needs. Community members must be aware of and understand all the complexities of the service network. They must become experts in different programs' eligibility criteria, scheduling practices, service areas, and other details to effectively make use of these services to make their trips.

Referral sources like FindARide.org and 211 lack a single authoritative source of options with trip-level detail. Furthermore, many specialized transportation services are only available through reservations that must be made by phone call (usually a day in advance). With improving technology and the rise of mobility as a service (MaaS), on-demand trips (e.g., Uber and Lyft) can now be booked through mobile devices and trip planning for larger, fixed-route transit can be accomplished simply with Google Maps or another map application. Keeping specialized transportation services available only through analog methods presents a challenge to ensuring equitable mobility and service experiences.

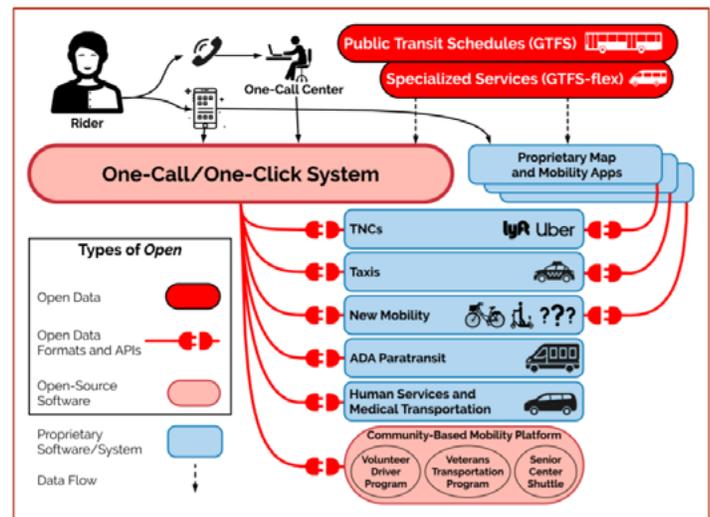


Diagram demonstrates flow of information and connections made by one-call/one-click software and systems.

One-Call/One-Click Offers Solution

Hopelink Mobility Management and the King County Mobility Coalition have proposed a One-Call/One-Click system to address this issue—a centralized trip planning and ride requesting service that is just one call or one click away, removing barriers to service awareness and understanding. A public-facing, web-based system provides a single point of entry for trip planning, paired with phone-based services with staff that will use this same system on behalf of the caller, for those unable to or uncomfortable using the website. This solution will allow consumers, mobility managers, medical and social service providers, and information and referral specialists to have access to comprehensive and complete information on the full range of fixed-route and on-demand transit, paratransit, and personal mobility options, including human service and community-based services.

To create a comprehensive source of all services with trip-level detail, consistent data standards are a critical first step. Over the last decade, fixed-route transit providers have utilized General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS). This format allows for providers to easily update their service information in most public transit planning apps, like Google Maps, Transit app, or Moovit. In the last few years GTFS-flex was developed to capture on-demand services—like those provided by specialized transportation providers or mobility on demand programs—in a format that is readable by most transit planning apps.

Project Collaborations and Next Steps

The One-Call/One-Click project is collaborating with WSDOT on an interstate project called Plan, Book, Pay. The program's goal is to improve data on public transportation, paratransit, and human services transportation through GTFS-flex and other technologies to make trip planning more feasible for every individual. Hopelink was selected to lead a local pilot project for this program with the goal of creating a One-Call/One-Click tool that can be replicated in other regions and states.

Hopelink Mobility Management and the King County Mobility Coalition received funding for Phase One of the One-Call/One-Click system, in part through the WSDOT Consolidated Grant Program for the 2021-2023 biennium. Phase One of the project will cover King County and parts of Snohomish and Pierce counties, providing a regional benefit. Early planning, including GTFS-flex data development and collection from local providers as well as software procurement, has already begun this year. Software development, user testing, and the launch of a beta tool are all planned for 2022.

Planning Service and Operations for the Future

In addition to the coordination of service connections to high-capacity transit investments, agencies are also coordinating on the transit operations and customer access implications of other transportation projects. Operations coordination will also be key to maximizing efficiency as agencies take on major structural changes, like continuing to explore and refine the role of mobility-on-demand services and transitioning to zero-emissions bus fleets.



WSDOT, City of Seattle, King County Metro, and Sound Transit Partner on SR 520 Projects

The 2015 Connecting Washington transportation legislation authorized \$1.64 billion in funding to complete SR 520 improvements from Lake Washington to I-5 in King County. Work continued this year on the Montlake Project and the SR 520 / I-5 Express Lanes Connection Project as part of the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Program.



Image Credit: WSDOT



SR 520 / I-5 Express Lanes Connection Project

Construction began this summer on the SR 520 / I-5 Express Lanes Connection Project. Improvements will expand roadway capacity in the peak direction during peak traffic hours. Once completed, these investments will improve transit vehicle access to I-5 at the Mercer Street Interchange in Seattle's South Lake Union neighborhood and provide an uninterrupted, reversible transit/HOV connection between SR 520 and the I-5 express lanes. Dedicated lanes and access ramps will improve the speed and reliability of bus service, making it more dependable for customers.

The City of Seattle, King County Metro, and Sound Transit are working together to have modified transit service and operations in place for the opening of the new SR 520 / I-5 connection in the next few years. The agencies will also continue working together to devise temporary rerouting and service adjustments during construction for other upcoming SR 520 projects, such as the SR 520 Portage Bay Bridge and Roanoke Lid projects.

Montlake Project

Construction continued this year on the Montlake Project, which has been underway since 2019. This project includes replacement of the West Approach Bridge South; a landscaped lid at the Montlake Blvd / SR 520 interchange with open space, direct-access bus ramps, a transit plaza, and multimodal connections; and a shared-use pedestrian/bicycle bridge over SR 520, connecting the Arboretum with East Montlake Park and the U District. New amenities on the lid will significantly improve transit access, particularly for those walking or biking to transit. Montlake Project improvements are expected to be completed in the next few years.



Mobility on Demand in Public Transit: Challenges and Opportunities

Mobility on Demand (MOD) refers to the ability of individuals to find and use a variety of transportation options through public or private providers, at their own convenience. Technology plays a key role by allowing people to be better informed of the options, timeframes, and costs. The options provided may include flexible- or deviated-route bus service, ride-hailing apps like Uber or Lyft, micro-mobility services (e.g., bikeshares, scooters), paratransit, and microtransit (e.g., shuttle buses, vans).

Public transportation agencies generally use the MOD service model to provide first- and last-mile connections and/or to serve geographic areas not well suited to fixed-route transit to provide a more customer-tailored transportation option and, ideally, a more cost-effective one.



Photo Credit: Kitsap Transit



Current MOD Services and Projects in the Region

Community Transit

- **Lynnwood Microtransit Pilot:** Planning and outreach completed in 2021. Service planned to begin in late spring/early summer 2022.

King County Metro

- **Community Ride:** On-demand, point-to-point pilot service in Sammamish and the Juanita area of Kirkland. Community Rides can be booked in the Community Ride On-Demand app or through the call center and can begin and end anywhere within the designated service area.
- **Via to Transit:** Book rides directly in the Via app or through the call center and travel to/from key destinations across Othello and Rainier Beach/Skyway in Seattle and in Renton and Tukwila.
- **Ride Pingo to Transit:** Use the Ride Pingo app or contact the call center to request a ride to and from Kent Station and the Kent Valley with any destination in the service area.

Kitsap Transit

- **SK Ride and Kingston Ride:** A shared-ride service that operates within the indicated service area by rider request only, with no scheduled arrival or departure times from any specific location.
- **BI Ride Powered by Pingo:** While BI Ride has been serving Bainbridge Island as a deviated-route service since 2014, it experienced some upgrades this year. Starting in July 2021, Kitsap Transit partnered with Ride Pingo, a new mobile app that enables residents to request rides with public transit on demand.

Pierce Transit

- **PT Runner:** Launched on August 1, 2021, Runner is a new service type offered by Pierce Transit, in partnership with MedStar. On-demand van service is booked on the GoIn app, by phone call, or by flagging down vehicle. Door-to-door trips are allowed anywhere within a given zone. Four routes are offered:
 - Ruston Runner
 - Tideflats Runner
 - Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) Runner
 - Spanaway/Parkland/Midlands Runner (still in planning phase)



Evolving Role of MOD

The central Puget Sound region continues to embrace the MOD model across multiple agencies, creating an opportunity for agencies to share lessons learned and best practices. There has been substantial turnover in private sector MOD providers. Early partnerships with transportation network companies (TNCs) like Lyft have given way to new companies designed specifically for public agency partnerships, like The Routing Company, which designed Ride Pingo to Transit.

As the market settles, there may be future opportunities to contract with one provider for the whole region to simplify the customer experience (i.e., one app instead of several) and maximize operational efficiency. Uniform adoption of standard data feeds (like GTFS-flex) for all MOD services in the region would improve customer awareness of these services by showing them in Google Maps, Transit app, and region-specific tools, like the [One-Call/One-Click](#) project. (See story in Section 3.)



King County Metro Crossroads Connect

Challenges and Opportunities for the Region

Transit providers in and outside of the region are still figuring out the logistics of delivering MOD service equitably. Challenges include utilizing vehicles that are accessible to all people (accommodating customers with wheelchairs with ramps, device securement, etc.) and determining which service components (driver, vehicle, customer app/interface) are provided by the agency or contracted out to private operators. Other challenges include equitable service design and delivery ensuring BIPOC and lower-income communities have access to MOD. Additionally, there are hurdles regarding data-sharing protocols with contractors, ensuring compliance with insurance and procurement requirements and certifications and assurances, measuring success, and identifying sustainable funding sources.

Generally, MOD continues to be an expensive service delivery model, whether it is contracted out or provided directly by a transit agency. The mode is still new and quickly evolving, so its future is uncertain, but transit agencies could benefit from sharing information to better understand and shape the role of MOD in the regional transportation system. Regional coordination as agencies continue to test this model may help evaluate and refine existing programs and define a framework for where this service model works and where it doesn't.



Pierce Transit PT Runner



Working toward Cleaner Transportation: Zero Emissions Bus Fleet Transitions

VISION 2050 and PSRC’s Four-Part Greenhouse Gas Strategy call for the region to transition to a cleaner transportation system, including—among other aspects—the transition to electric and other zero-emission vehicles. This includes personal vehicles, fleet vehicles, freight, and transit. Several transit agencies in the region have already started work on this transition. Due to the variety of service and operations characteristics among providers, each agency is at a different point in this process.

Agency Efforts and Accomplishments

- **King County Metro** has been an early adopter of electric buses and has a policy commitment to move to a 100% zero-emissions fleet by 2040. Metro has also begun work to construct charging infrastructure at the Interim Base at South Campus in Tukwila, which will include space for testing, charging, and performing maintenance on the all-electric buses, the first 40 of which were delivered in spring 2021.
- **Everett Transit** has received grant support to bring its 42-vehicle fixed-route bus fleet to 38% all-electric by 2023. (Nine of the buses are already all-electric.) The transit agency plans to have all but two of its buses (95% of the fleet) hybrid or all-electric by 2025. Everett Transit has also invested in “greening” its fleet by partnering with the Snohomish County Public Utility District to introduce inductive charging. The new technology will enhance route efficiencies through in-route charging at various layover locations.
- **Pierce Transit** purchased six new battery-electric buses through a Washington State Department of Ecology grant, diversifying their fleet and replacing older diesel buses.
- **Washington State Ferries** is pursuing diesel hybrid-electric ferries as they replace their older vessels. WSF delivered a System Electrification Plan to the state Legislature in January 2021, evaluating alternatives and proposing near-term and long-term strategies for both vessel and terminal investments.
- **WSDOT** awarded several Green Transportation Capital Grants in the region for the 2021-2023 biennium, including:
 - \$585,000 to Pierce Transit for Commerce Street opportunity charging infrastructure
 - \$1.9 million to Everett Transit for induction charging infrastructure
 - \$1.48 million to Kitsap Transit for Powering Kitsap Transit Toward Zero Emissions
 - \$6.9 million to King County Metro for diesel bus replacement and \$3 million for Route 48 electrification



King County Metro electric charging



Challenges and Opportunities for Coordination

As this work continues and as electrification and other alternative fuel options become more prevalent, there are both challenges and opportunities for the region's transit agencies. The manufacturing of zero-emission transit buses is an emerging field, and demand currently outweighs supply. Issues of adequate electric charging capabilities for larger buses and on longer routes present challenges, and other technologies are still evolving. However, there are also opportunities. New funding streams are becoming available at the federal and state level. Coordination and engagement among agencies on infrastructure planning and construction, procurement, and operations could save time and money.

Some preliminary coordinating conversations have already begun. In spring 2021, Sound Transit started convening its operating partners to share information and collaborate on shared needs, like base conversion, in-route charging, working with utility providers, non-revenue fleet electrification, and more. Further regional discussions and planning efforts will be critical to ensuring investments, such as maintenance facilities and stations, are compatible and aligned with this transition.



Everett Transit electric bus