Metro’s COVID-19 Recovery Planning:
Moving Forward Together

July 15, 2020
Washington State Transportation Commission
Agenda

- Impact of COVID-19
- How has Metro responded to COVID?
- Our vision for recovery
- What would a successful recovery look like?
- How do we get there?
COVID-19 Impacts
Why Recovery Planning?

A three-fold crisis:

- COVID-19 pandemic
- National reckoning with racial injustice
- Economic recession

*Thoughtful planning for recovery from this crisis is needed to rebuild toward our long-term goals and center our values of equity, safety and sustainability.*
Disproportionate impact of communities of color

- Significant disproportionate impacts by race/ethnicity: COVID-19 rates per 100,000 residents: 896 for Pacific Islanders; 820 for LatinX, 544 for Black; 332 for American Indian/Alaska Native; 211 for Asian; and 216 for White.

- “Essential” personnel more likely to be people of color, low-income
Early measures taken to slow the spread

- Washington State Governor issues Stay Home, Stay Healthy order
- Businesses begin issuing work from home mandates
- King County issues work from home mandate
- Non-essential businesses mandated to close
- Schools closed
- Essential travel only restrictions put in place
Impacts to King County Metro

• New public health and safety measures
• Impact to employees
• Changed travel patterns
• Disproportionate impact on customers with the greatest need
• Financial constraints
• **Blue: Highest ridership loss during COVID**
• **Yellow: Lowest ridership loss during COVID**
Impact to employees

- Adaptable work practices – telework where possible
- Reductions in workforce and service
- Closure of schools/childcare options limited
COVID changed travel patterns

- Reduced overall travel demand as residents followed guidance
- Telecommuting
- Peak period demand decrease
- Ridership decreased up to 80% (3/2 – 6/19)
- Metro ran a Reduced Schedule until 6/22.
- Service ramped up to 85% of pre-COVID-19 levels (week of 6/22)
Financial and budget impacts

Recession impacts:

- Revenue will be significantly impacted
- 398,000 new unemployment claims filed by KC residents (3/1-6/13)
- Metro suspended fare collection
- Metro had increased COVID-related costs

Budget impacts:

- Before COVID-19, Metro faced a shortfall of $1B over 10 years.
- Metro will use CARES Act funding (~$242M) and our Revenue Stabilization Reserves ($260M) to cover unexpected costs of responding to COVID
- **Even with valuable offsets, we expected a $2B deficit by 2028.**
How has Metro responded to COVID-19?
Metro’s response: Safety

• Fares suspended and rear-door boarding
• Daily disinfecting of all vehicles
• Passenger capacity limits to support social distancing
• Public Health messaging on buses, stops, vans, customer communications
• Requiring masks on Metro
• Redeploying security for safety and social distancing support
• Distributed cloth masks, hand sanitizer, disinfect wipes/sprays, face shields, and safety glasses to frontline staff
• Distributed disposable surgical masks to community-based organizations
• Employed new physical distancing measures at all bases and facilities
Metro’s response: Service changes during COVID

- Metro reduced service and had to balance the drop in ridership, availability of workforce, and new capacity load limits.
- Sharp decline in fixed route bus ridership, a drop of 80% at the peak
- Fixed route bus service reduced three times; focus on retaining service to areas of greatest need
- Most commuter routes suspended, running at peak times only
- Service reductions on streetcar, light rail, water taxi, contracted services
- Vanpool and Access changes to support health and physical distancing
- Developed partnerships to support vulnerable groups during pandemic-(Transportation for Pandemic response-TPR)
Metro's response: Service today

- Service ramped up to 85% of pre-COVID-19 levels (week of 6/22)
- Budget-driven service cuts are planned beginning in September 2020 and at each in March and September of 2021.
- Metro expects staggered restructures and reductions; will engage communities to the greatest extent possible.
- Sept 2020 service changes (*administrative*) respond to budgetary + public health + evolving trip pattern conditions.
Metro’s response: Engaging internally and externally

- Coordination with King County-Seattle Public Health and participation on various task forces including Community Partners task force and Pandemic Community Advisory Group
- Employee Virtual Sessions
  - Weekly sessions
  - 113 virtual sessions since March 17
- Internal task forces with cross-division staff submitted over 70 decision packages with recommendations in response to the crisis
- Ongoing customer and community engagement on specific issues such as service gaps, night service, essential worker service needs and accessibility
- Ongoing engagement with jurisdictions, elected officials and partner agencies
Our vision for recovery:
Public transit is at the heart of a successful recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. We will emerge a more resilient and equitable agency, supporting our community as we grow back grounded in our values of safety, equity, and sustainability.
What would a successful recovery look like?
Metro will emerge from the crisis by:

- Continuing to provide safe transit service for customers and employees, and updating our practices to reflect the latest health guidance
- Better aligning our practices with our values, with equity at the forefront
- Putting our transit-reliant customers at the heart of our recovery
- Becoming a more resilient organization
- Providing the most efficient and climate-friendly travel option as the economy rebuilds
Transit will be a keystone of a successful recovery

• Continue to provide mobility to essential workers and other residents are restrictions are safely relaxed – *In a pandemic we are all “transit dependent”*

• Transit keeps the region moving – congestion will skyrocket if everyone tries to drive alone

• Transit is essential to reopening the economy and for employees to return to work

• Transit is a tool for environmental justice, communities most impacted by air pollution are also more vulnerable to COVID 19

• The pandemic gave a glimpse of a climate-friendly future, transit is central to making that future a reality
How do we get there?
Principles for recovery planning

• Center our core values: Safety, Equity, Sustainability
• Develop meaningful feedback loops
• Begin planning to rebuild now, even as we still respond to the crisis
• Ensure transparency
• Fit recommendations within budget reality
• In line with Metro's ongoing policy updates to Service Guidelines, long-range plan, Strategic Plan
Planning for different scenarios

**Crisis**
First half 2020
- Climbing transmission rate; no vaccine
- New travel patterns
- Recession

**Recovery**
July 2020 - Mid 2021
- Falling transmission rate; no vaccine
- New travel patterns
- Recession

** Interruption**
Possible any time until vaccine
- Rising transmission; no vaccine
- New travel patterns
- Recession

**Post mid 2021**?
- Vaccine
- New travel patterns
- Recession
Recovery Action Agenda

• Action Agenda format: response and recovery actions
• 12-18 month planning horizon
• Will reflect peer agency lessons learned
• Developed in coordination with longer-term policy updates
• Will identify strategic issues day lighted by COVID for further work in policy updates
Next steps

• Continue to understand impacts of COVID (we’re not through this yet)
• Continue community, partner and customer conversations about their needs for recovery
• Evaluate initial response actions for continuation
• Develop 12-18 month action agenda, complete in September
• September service change and budget transmittal reductions
What should Metro prioritize in the recovery planning process?
Questions?

Feedback?

Contact MetroRPT@kingcounty.gov