



Gregory J. Nickels
Mayor of Seattle

June 11, 2009

The Honorable Kurt Triplett
King County
701 5th Ave Suite 3210
Seattle, WA 98104

King County Council Members
King County Council
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear County Executive Triplett and King County Council Members:

King County Metro Transit is in crisis. King County and Seattle residents depend upon Metro to boost our economy, support our communities and protect our environment – yet Metro faces severe budget shortfalls and service reductions that could cripple the system.

Metro's current service allocation and service reduction policies seem to only exacerbate the problems. Based on out-dated political compromises, these policies fail to address the needs of today's riders, growth management goals and climate change. If these current proposals for service cuts are pursued, Metro will spare low ridership routes at the expense of service on many of the system's highest ridership routes. This could have devastating effects, limiting transit-dependent riders' mobility and putting others back into their cars. This strategy will only worsen Metro's financial problems.

Community leaders and bus riders alike agree that the current system is broken. The time for reform is now. We are committed to identifying and implementing short-term and long-term strategies to fix our system.

First, transit service should not be allocated by pure geographic distribution, but instead be allocated based on four balanced principles that put riders first:

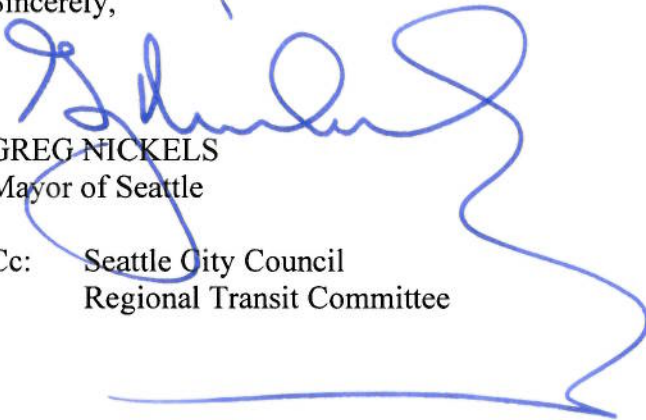
- Maximize Ridership – keep the most riders in the system and meet farebox recovery goals across the system
- Serve transit-dependent communities – get buses to those who use transit the most and depend on transit to get them where they need to go
- Meet Growth Management goals – serve urban centers that encourage density and compact communities, keeping in line with VISION 2040
- Address climate change – provide cleaner alternatives to the car and make reductions in vehicle miles traveled

Next, Metro should treat these service reductions as suspensions, not cuts. If reductions are made, service should be restored to each subarea from which it was suspended to reach today's allocation levels as quickly as possible. Once Metro is in a position to increase its transit service, it should be allocated based on the four criteria outlined above.

Finally, it is clear that existing service levels are insufficient to meet the current demand in communities and urban centers across King County, let alone meet the needs of the thousands of new employees and residents who will call King County home in the next 20 years. As part of this process, we must identify a new, more secure source of transit funding to sustain and expand our existing system.

The City of Seattle represents nearly 67% of ridership and 65% of farebox revenue in the system. Metro has a responsibility to meet the needs of these riders today and in the future. As leaders in the county, we need to come together to listen to these riders and discuss ways to address these challenges. Our future as a city and region depend on a robust transit network, where service is allocated by a clear set of criteria consistent with our land use, social equity and climate change objectives. I look forward to working with you to implement these reforms.

Sincerely,



GREG NICKELS
Mayor of Seattle

Cc: Seattle City Council
Regional Transit Committee