

COVID-19 Response and Recovery Report Progress Update

March 2021



In October of 2020, King County Metro released its COVID-19 Response and Recovery Report. That document outlined:

- ▶ The impacts COVID-19 has had on our customers and employees
- ▶ The steps Metro has taken to respond and prepare for recovery
- ▶ Metro's vision and goals for recovery

Since October, our community, customers, and employees have experienced the following:

King County community

- ▶ After late fall and early winter spikes in virus transmission, King County and Washington state are now seeing an early but encouraging trend of steadily decreasing case rates.
- ▶ While the virus is still an ever-present reality, vaccination efforts have begun in our King County community.
- ▶ The State of Washington, recognizing the evolving nature of the virus response, has simplified Washington's reopening phases and key indicators.

Metro employees

- ▶ Our employees, particularly our first responders, continue to focus on delivering great service and maintaining the highest safety standards. Their dedication and resilience represent the best of public service.
- ▶ While even one COVID-19 positive result is too many, Metro's employee COVID-19 case rates continue to be lower than those in King County as a whole. This indicates that the many new safety protocols and procedures we've put in place have been effective.

- ▶ With the issuance of federal guidance on vaccination priority, transit essential employees are being prioritized for vaccines. Metro leadership continues to advocate for quick vaccine access for Metro's essential employees.

Customers

- ▶ Customers continue to use Metro for essential trips, and ridership trends across Metro-operated modes remain stable. The start of an enduring increase in ridership is expected as vaccination becomes more widespread and businesses, schools, and workplaces begin to reopen.
- ▶ Our customers are doing their part to comply with Metro's mask mandate. Mask wearing is observed at over 88% on our buses and continues to climb. Modes such as Water Taxi and Access report even higher mask usage rates.

Future progress updates

Metro will provide quarterly updates on progress similar to this one until widespread vaccination is achieved and a majority of Metro business practices return to standard operations.

Theme	Action area	Duration			What is happening now?	What can employees and customers expect to see next?
		Crisis Response and Recovery Planning*	Stabilization and Recovery	Recovered Future		
How we operate and maintain a safe system	Increased cleaning and sanitization at our facilities, stops, stations, and on all Metro vehicles				Supplementary COVID-19 cleaning and sanitizing protocols remain in place across all modes.	For bus cleaning, we continue to work towards increasing the frequency of coach cleaning, hiring sufficient staff to manage increased cleaning, and understanding best practices for a balance between routine and deep cleaning of our buses. Employees can expect to see these efforts continue in the coming months.
	Provide safe physical distancing by managing capacity on our services				Capacity limits remain in place across all modes, consistent with recent Washington State guidance for transportation (https://www.governor.wa.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19%20Transit%20Agency%20Safety%20Requirements.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery).	We will continue to monitor state and local guidance, and gradually increase capacity on our services as it is safe to do so.
	Change when and how we collect fares for safe physical distancing and contactless options				Fare collection resumed on October 1, 2020, concurrent with the installation of operator safety partitions on our bus fleet and other safe fare collection interventions across all modes. In addition, ORCA regional partners waived ORCA card fees through February 2021 to encourage more use of this contactless payment method.	Fares will continue to be collected. The installation of automated operator safety partitions across our full bus fleet is expected to be complete in Q1 2021.
	Give customers the information they need to ride safely				In December, we launched The Dash (https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/metro/about/accountability-center/rider-dashboard.aspx), our rider dashboard. Available in eight languages, The Dash gives customers easy access to information such as mask usage and crowding. In addition, we continue to see customers doing their part to ride safely by wearing a mask, with 88% of riders observed regularly wearing a mask. Finally, we continue an active public communications campaign to encourage people to ride Metro safely and have increased the number of Transit Alerts to give customers real-time information.	In the coming months, customers can expect to see mask dispensers expand to the entire fleet of Metro buses, making it easier than ever to follow the mandate to wear a face covering while riding. As we gradually emerge from COVID-19 restrictions over the course of 2021, we're committed to keeping customers up to date with the latest information about riding safely and welcoming back customers who have not been riding.
	Develop and implement standards for ventilation on vehicles and in buildings				Wherever possible, we continue to introduce as much outside air into our vehicles and buildings as possible. We also continue to upgrade filters in buildings and on vehicles.	Customers and employees can expect to see techniques for introducing maximum outside air (such as keeping windows open) continue well into 2021. We also continue to explore the effectiveness of air purification technologies (such as HEPA air purifiers) for buildings.
How we care for employees	Focus on our employees' health and wellbeing				King County Metro employees have donated approximately one third of the total hours in on of these programs, the Emergency Leave Donation Program, to help their County colleagues impacted by COVID-19.	As we move toward widespread vaccination in 2021, we anticipate that schools and care facilities will reopen, and therefore leave options and other supports provided by King County will be less needed. At the same time, we are committed to learning from the programs in place during the pandemic as we create a vision for a supportive, post-pandemic workplace.
	Ensure a sustainable supply of PPE for employees				While access to appropriate PPE was a challenge for many first responders in the early days of the pandemic, Metro employees now have stable access to appropriate PPE across all lines of business. While some types of PPE can be recyclable, the solid waste streams of PPE at Metro are not large enough to initiate recycling.	We will continue to monitor solid waste streams to determine if they are sizable enough to begin a PPE recycling program. Employees and customers can expect to see PPE in widespread use at Metro for the foreseeable future.
	Rapidly adjust work protocol for a safe workplace				While the early days of the pandemic required rapid change to many Metro employees' work practices, the pace of change has slowed and employees have settled into new routines. Teleworking employees continue to develop skill and knowledge around best practices for teleworking. For employees at worksites, we've installed health screening kiosks for employee use.	With the rest of King County, Metro is planning for our longer term, post-COVID work practices. For telecommuting employees, this will likely involve continued change even after the current July 5, 2021, end of mandatory telework timeline. For all employees, we will evaluate which new work processes should continue into the post-COVID future.
	Revamp how we communicate and engage with employees				Recognizing the toll the ongoing pandemic and national events have had on morale, we are launching a campaign to recognize and celebrate our employees, particularly those who have been on the front lines throughout the crisis. In addition, we continue to fine-tune our approach to communication in a virtual-onsite hybrid workforce.	In the coming months, we will be launching additional tools to ensure employees get the information they need in a timely manner, including expediting the distribution of county-wide communications within Metro and developing an employee portal for those frontline employees without routine access to county email addresses.

* Includes «Healthy Washington Roadmap to Recovery Phases 1 and 2»; aligns with previously used «Safe Start Washington Phases 4-1»

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Theme	Action area	Crisis Response and Recovery Planning*	Stabilization and Recovery	Recovered Future	What is happening now?	What can employees and customers expect to see next?
How we adjust service	Develop and implement pandemic-responsive service scenarios				In December, as COVID-19 case rates in King County climbed, our customers saw an increase in service cancellations as we experienced larger numbers of staff using COVID-related leave options to care for themselves or impacted loved ones. However, staff availability never reached levels low enough to cause us to move to our prepared reduced service levels. Since December, as case rates have decreased, service cancellations have also stabilized.	While we are hopeful that we are leaving the period when we would need to move to widespread service reductions due to COVID impacts, we remain prepared with pandemic-responsive service scenarios.
	Build back service to meet customer demand				We continue to monitor indicators of increasing demand for transit service in preparation for the spring and fall routine service changes. In addition, we continue to fine-tune our distribution of supplemental service between service changes to alleviate crowding above COVID thresholds.	In March 2021, Metro is investing about 40,000 hours in added service. Most of these investments will go to add trips where crowding is occurring above the current load limits. Metro is also making some minor reductions where demand has not returned, and some reductions to scheduled times where buses are traveling more quickly due to reduced traffic.
	Keep transit moving when traffic returns				Safe, fast, reliable transit will be required for the County's recovery. As a first step, in order to protect the approximately 5,600 daily customers who rely on the RapidRide A Line, we are proposing increased transit priority along Pacific Highway South.	In the coming months, we will be continuing our partnership conversations with the Washington State Department of Transportation and the jurisdictions served by the A Line to determine feasibility, timing, and cost of the proposed changes.
	Accelerate all-door boarding to routes in addition to RapidRide				Metro has been able to include the procurement and installation of onboard, rear door ORCA readers to our standard, non-RapidRide fleet in our Next Generation ORCA project. This change will build Metro's resilience in the face of the next crisis, by speeding up transit travel and reducing bottlenecks at the front of the bus.	The transition to all-door boarding is anticipated in 2022 and will be accompanied by a reimagining of safety, security, and fare enforcement, along with support for customers who currently pay with cash.
	Work with APTA and national peers to explore the post-COVID future of public transit				Metro continues to lead at a regional, state, and national level on understanding the post-COVID future of public transit. While many of the changes begun during the pandemic, such as an increase in remote work, are likely to impact travel patterns for many years, public transit will remain at the heart of a thriving King County.	COVID-specific implications for our long-term approach to transit service will be reflected in Metro's policy updates, expected to be transmitted to King County Council in fall of 2021.
How we partner creatively and are responsible financial stewards	Provide special transportation for COVID-19 positive or symptomatic people				Since this special transportation service started in partnership with King County's Department of Community and Human Services and Public Health - Seattle & King County, we have transported over 4,039 individuals, averaging 13 trips a day.	Looking ahead, Public Health is currently planning to continue this service through 2021.
	Deliver food with Metro contracted vehicles and drivers	Dependent on funding			Metro, with its contracted service operators, has continued this valuable program through early 2021 as funding has continued to support the work.	In the coming months, customers and partners can expect to see Metro working with its partners at the City of Seattle Emergency Feeding Task Force and Public Health-Seattle & King County to review the need for the program and develop an approach allowing Metro to transition its services back to essential transportation as demand for those services grows.
	Review of contracts and billing during reduced service period				Many of the changes put in place in the initial months of the pandemic remain in place.	As travel demand resumes in response to pandemic recovery, we will continue to review and adjust our partner contracts and billing as appropriate. Working with our business partners has enabled the business program to remain relevant as we prepare for recovery, retaining almost 80% of our customer base as a result.
	Support local and small businesses around our facilities				In November and December of 2020, Metro's Employee Giving Campaign included options for employees to support organizations working to stabilize the health of small business surrounding our facilities.	In the coming months, we will continue to work with businesses advocates (for impacted small businesses in Pioneer Square and the Chinatown-International District) to explore opportunities for support.
	Work with regional partners working to address homelessness				Working with regional partners working to address homelessness will become part of Metro's safety, security, and fare enforcement (SaFE) reform work. The larger SaFE reform effort will explore ways to co-create shared outcomes with internal and external communities that create a more safe and welcoming Metro aboard services, at stops/stations, in facilities, and within communities.	Unhoused populations and non-destinational riders, as they related to Metro operations, will be included in the scope of the reform effort. Exact efforts will be determined starting Q2 2021 and recommendations made by the end of 2021.