

RapidRide K Line Community Engagement Summary Report



Planning Phase: Summer 2024 (June 27–July 24)



Executive Summary

RAPIDRIDE



Updated 11/04/24

Executive Summary

PROJECT OVERVIEW

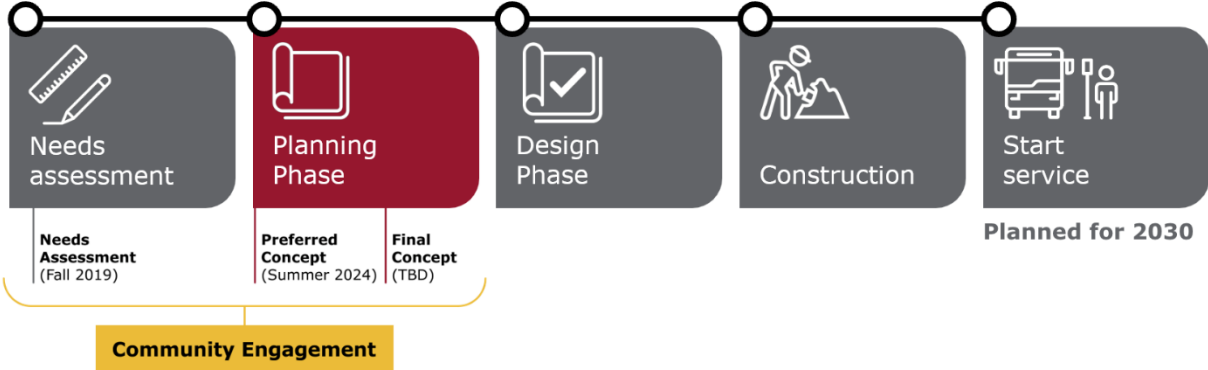
King County Metro (Metro) is working to bring new RapidRide service to East King County, to provide better, more reliable bus service to communities in Kirkland and Bellevue. By 2030, Metro plans to bring RapidRide K Line to the fast-growing communities between Totem Lake Transit Center in Kirkland, downtown Kirkland and Bellevue, and Eastgate Park & Ride in Bellevue. This 16-mile route connects riders to routes 239, 250, and 271, RapidRide B Line, Sound Transit’s future I-405 Bus Rapid Transit and Link light rail.

This report summarizes Metro’s work to engage eastside communities in finalizing conceptual design plans for RapidRide K Line.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Metro is committed to conducting engagement throughout the project’s life cycle, with community input playing a crucial role in the needs assessment and planning phase.

The graphic below shows the project timeline from early planning to the start of service.



During this second phase of engagement, we reintroduced the project and gathered feedback on community priorities and plans for RapidRide K line which metro developed in partnership with local agencies to address project and agency goals. Community engagement activities included in-person engagement, an online survey, virtual meetings, and briefings with community partners, as shown in the image below.



FINDINGS – AT A GLANCE

Online Survey

Metro hosted an online survey to better understand experiences traveling and using transit in the area and to gather community feedback about proposed station locations, access improvements, and speed and reliability improvements. The survey was available June 27 through July 24, 2024, in English, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Overall, we heard from 1,003 respondents broadly representative of the diversity of the project area and broader region. We heard the following key findings from survey data:

Project awareness



Most survey respondents were not very familiar with the RapidRide K Line project, with nearly half (47%) saying this was the first time they had heard of it. In contrast, 13% said they feel somewhat informed and only 7% said they feel well-informed.

Travel patterns



Driving is the most used transportation mode among respondents (72%), followed closely by public transit (68%). Nearly half (47%) walk or roll.

Among respondents who use public transit, many do so frequently, with 65% using transit at least once per week and 32% using transit 4-5 days per week or more.

Community priorities



Speed and reliability improvements would encourage many respondents to ride **more frequently**, including:

- Improvements to speed (69%)
- More frequent service (68%)
- Routes with fewer transfers (61%)
- Improvements to reliability (57%)

In comparison, **improvements to amenities and access to transit** were **less likely** to motivate transit use.

Access to transit: walking or rolling



The most common difficulties to accessing transit near the RapidRide K Line route when walking or rolling include:

- High level of traffic, noise, or pollution (34%)
- Lack of designated crossing points or crosswalks (30%)
- Narrow pathways and sidewalks (25%)

Access to transit: biking or scootering



The most common difficulties when accessing public transit near the RapidRide K Line route when riding a bike, scooter, or other device include:

- Lack of bike paths, lanes, or other infrastructure to safely get to bus stops (33%)
- Limited or no bike or scooter parking at bus stops (25%)
- Difficulty in safely store or secure bikes or scooters while waiting for the bus (21%)

Station locations



Most are satisfied with the proposed station locations:

- 71% agree that the proposed station locations would help them get to and from the places they need to go
- 61% agree that they would help people get to and from their business or property

In-person engagement

Project staff engaged about 650 people in-person at tabling events in Kirkland and Bellevue and street team outreach at bus stops and transit centers along the future RapidRide K Line route. Metro hosted nine tabling events at grocery stores, libraries, and Kirkland and Bellevue farmers markets. The project team also conducted street team outreach twice at bus stops and transit centers along the K Line route, sharing project information in English, Simplified and Traditional Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Spanish, and Vietnamese. At all events, we encouraged riders to participate in the online survey, virtual meetings, and sign-up for email updates on the project website.



Virtual meetings

Metro hosted two virtual community meetings on Zoom on July 17 and 20. About 17 community members participated in these meetings to learn about RapidRide K Line and ask questions in a virtual space.

For both meetings, King County Metro gave a RapidRide K Line presentation that explained the project history, provided a project overview, shared past engagement, and how Metro will continue to engage the community. Metro also gave an overview of next steps, explaining how feedback will be used in the Locally Preferred Alternative design. Following the presentation, Metro facilitated a Q&A session. Metro provided live Spanish and Portuguese language interpretation during both virtual meetings.

Community liaison service

Metro reintroduced the RapidRide K Line project to community partners within the project area through extensive outreach efforts. The project team conducted four rounds of phone and email outreach targeting community-based organizations, businesses, and neighborhood groups. This included distributing multilingual fact sheets, organizing virtual meetings, and providing briefings to ensure broad awareness and engagement.

Metro's Community Liaison Program, launched in fall 2023, played a pivotal role in this process. The program, aligned with Metro's Strategic Plan Engagement goals, leverages staff with lived experience and expertise in connecting with historically underrepresented communities, including low-income, linguistically diverse populations, communities of color, people with disabilities, and immigrants and refugees. Community liaisons focused on fostering trust and facilitating communication through culturally specific and equitable interactions. They updated multicultural and small businesses, community gathering spaces, and places of worship about the RapidRide K Line, gathered feedback, and encouraged participation in the online survey.



Additional email and social media comments

Metro received 58 comments through the RapidRide project email inbox and social media.

Key themes and questions

Below is a summary of commonly asked questions and comments we heard across engagement efforts arranged by topic.

About the project

- What is the project timeline?
- How will RapidRide connect to light rail (1 and 2 line) and other routes on the map?
- Where are the bus station locations?
- How does RapidRide connect to Seattle, specifically Downtown Seattle and SeaTac airport?
- How will RapidRide K Line affect the number of transfers I have to make on my route?
- Will RapidRide change any of the bus routes coming to this stop?
- What are the expected travel times for the full route and between key destinations?
- How did Metro identify the route and bus station locations?
- Will Metro first identify the route before confirming other capital improvements?

Funding and project cost

- What is the total cost of RapidRide K Line?
- Is there a project operating budget?
- This project has been significantly delayed. If there are further budget shortfalls, how will Metro prioritize which projects to delay?

Speed and reliability

- How often will RapidRide K Line buses arrive?
- Will Metro build dedicated bus lanes along the entire route?
- Is there a process for similar speed/reliability improvements for existing Metro bus routes?
- How is Metro analyzing traffic flow and considering impacts to parking?
- Interest in faster service to key destinations and dedicated bus lanes.

System expansion

- What is the difference between RapidRide, Metro buses, and light rail?
- What is the Stride BRT on I-405, and how is that different than RapidRide?
- When will the light rail 2 Line reach Seattle?
- How does RapidRide K Line impact route 255?
- How does RapidRide K Line connect to other buses, such as RapidRide B Line?

Payment options

- Can the ORCA card be used across all transit options (Metro bus, RapidRide, light rail)?
- How does the new mobile ORCA pass work?
- Where can I purchase a senior-discounted ORCA card?
- Can I use my credit cards to pay for my fare?
- Is the RapidRide fare different than other Metro buses?
- Can kids ride free?

NEXT STEPS: HOW COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SHAPES PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Metro will use community input gathered to help develop the Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), which will be presented in the Phase 3 community engagement set to take place in early 2025.

During Phase 3, Metro will present elements of the LPA to the public and other stakeholder groups, such as information about RapidRide K Line route and station locations. Additional information will also be shared about recommended access to transit projects (sidewalks, bike lanes, etc.) and speed and reliability projects.

Community feedback provided in the last two phases will help plan engagement activities and advance design of RapidRide K Line. For example, survey respondents in Phase 2 identified buses that run faster, more frequently, and more reliably to be motivators for using transit. Metro will prepare additional information in Phase 3 to provide further education of the different types of speed and reliability treatments with an emphasis on project benefits, cost, and implementation impacts. Community feedback will also shape project decisions. For example, 49% of survey respondents prefer Downtown Bellevue routing on 110th Avenue, over 108th Avenue (23% prefer). Metro will study the feasibility, cost, and potential impacts of placing stations along 110th Avenue.

The LPA is the final step in the planning phase which summarizes the research and work completed in this stage. Key elements and projects are identified for further development in the following phase, otherwise known as the "design phase". After community input is collected, the LPA will inform the Executive's recommendation of a Locally Preferred Alternative for the King County Council to discuss and act upon in mid-2025. This milestone confirms the RapidRide K Line route and station locations. During the design phase Metro will continue evaluating projects to make the bus easier to access, faster and more reliable.

The adoption of the LPA also allows Metro to begin seeking federal funding for construction.