

MARKET DRIVEN STRATEGIES REPORT

Approved by the Bellevue City Council, May 20, 2013



Bellevue Transit Master Plan

CITY OF BELLEVUE

May 2013

Transportation Department



MARKET DRIVEN STRATEGIES

Transit is not just about getting people from point A to point B. Transit is integral to Bellevue’s livability, economic vitality, and overall quality of life. Looking to the future, we envision a public transportation network that serves a more diverse range of people and trip purposes, and that is the mode of choice for an increasing number of people who live, work, and play in Bellevue. This “bold transit vision”—derived from the Council-approved project principles shown in Figure 1—could be called “Abundant Access” because it is about providing a network whose extent, frequency, duration, and speed liberate citizens to access the riches of their city and region without requiring them to drive. The key elements of this vision are that transit must be:

Convenient, making it the logical choice for the largest possible share of trips.

Frequent, to minimize waiting times and improve connections.

Efficient, in terms of being designed for high ridership and cost-effective operations.

Simple, with the fewest possible discrete lines, so that each can have the best possible frequency, speed, and duration without complicated redundancy.

Direct to major activity centers in Bellevue by minimizing the degree to which a route deviates from the shortest path between its start and end points.

Regionally Connected, with a complete network of regional links in all directions, with particular focus on abundant north-south service along I-405.

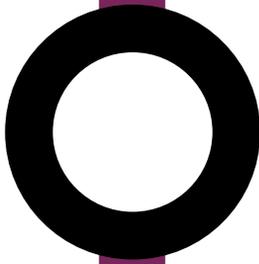
The City of Bellevue recognizes that achieving this kind of network necessitates making a series of choices among competing priorities, as illustrated in Figure 2 on page 9. After carefully evaluating these trade-offs, the *Transit Master Plan* endorses the market driven strategies presented on the following pages as being in the best interest of the community.

The City Council envisions a fully integrated and user-friendly network of transit services for Bellevue that supports the city’s growth, economic vitality, and enhanced livability, and has developed the following set of project principles to direct development of the Transit Master Plan.

- 1. Support planned growth and development in Bellevue with a bold transit vision that encourages long-term ridership growth.** The dynamic nature of Bellevue’s economic expansion requires a bold transit vision supported by practical, achievable strategies in the near term that set a solid foundation for longer term improvements through 2030. The Transit Master Plan should identify, evaluate, and prioritize transit investments that are responsive to a range of financial scenarios (cuts/status-quo/aspirational) and attune to different time horizons (near/mid/long term).
- 2. Engage community stakeholders in setting the priorities for transit delivery.** A comprehensive public engagement strategy should result in meaningful input on transit services and facilities from a range of stakeholders including residents, businesses, major institutions, neighboring cities, transportation agencies, and others (e.g., community associations, Network on Aging, Bellevue School District, Bellevue College, Chamber of Commerce, Bellevue Downtown Association). Special attention will be required to enlist the participation of “under-represented” communities such as immigrants, low-income and non-native English speakers.
- 3. Determine where and how transit investments can deliver the greatest degree of mobility and access possible for all populations.** The Transit Master Plan should look to the future and be compatible with Bellevue’s land use and transportation plans and the challenges and opportunities of changing demographics, land use characteristics, and travel patterns. Following consultations with the community, demand forecasting, and a review of industry best practices and emerging technologies, this initiative will identify the steps required to create a public transportation system that is easy to use by all people in Bellevue for trips within Bellevue and to regional destinations.
- 4. Incorporate other transit-related efforts (both bus and light rail) underway in Bellevue and within the region.** The Transit Master Plan should incorporate local and regional transportation projects and plans that have been approved and/or implemented since the Bellevue Transit Plan was adopted in 2003. Transportation system changes include East Link, SR 520 expansion and tolling, and improvements to I-90 and I-405. Planning changes include the updated Bel-Red Subarea Plan, the Wilburton Subarea Plan and the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Project. Through coordination with local and regional transportation plans, the Transit Master Plan should outline a strategy to leverage the investment in public transportation projects to the benefit of Bellevue residents and businesses.
- 5. Identify partnership opportunities to further extend transit service and infrastructure.** While transit infrastructure is typically funded through large capital funding programs, other less traditional funding mechanisms can be utilized to pay for improvements vital to support transit communities and/or achieve higher transit ridership. The Transit Master Plan should undertake an analysis of partnership opportunities that the City might want to consider with other government organizations (e.g., Bellevue School District, Bellevue College, Metro, Sound Transit), human service agencies, and private corporations, to improve transit service delivery in Bellevue. This analysis will explore alternatives to traditional transit service delivery.
- 6. Develop measures of effectiveness to evaluate transit investments and to track plan progress.** The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan presently includes the following metrics/benchmarks related to transit: (i) mode split targets within each of the City’s Mobility Management Areas [Table TR.1 – Area Mobility Targets]; (2) transit service frequency improvement targets between Downtown, Overlake, Crossroads, Eastgate, and Factoria [TR.8 – 10 Year Transit Vision]; and, (3) guidance found in 44 transit-supportive policies. The Transit Master Plan will revisit these metrics, and where necessary, propose modifications to better reflect present and future conditions.

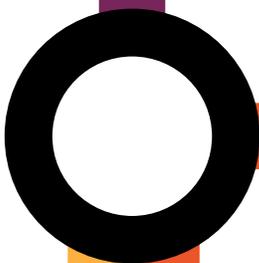
Figure 1 The *Bellevue Transit Master Plan Project Principles*, approved by City Council on July 9, 2012, provide guidance for the planning process and establish a framework within which to develop a vision for transit in Bellevue.





1 Focus on diversity of ridership and trip purpose.

Great transit networks arise from designing services that are useful to the broadest and most diverse possible spectrum of user groups and trip purposes. By way of example, Route 240 that links Downtown Bellevue to Renton (via Newcastle, Factoria and Eastgate Park & Ride) is an example of a productive service (i.e., 22 boardings/platform hour and a cost/boarding of \$5.50) catering to workers, students, and multiple other user groups. Given these diverse attributes, it is understandable why twelve more trips were added to this route in Spring 2012.¹ This high performing route stands in stark contrast to Route 925, a former DART shuttle van operation serving Newport Hills, Newcastle, and Factoria. This highly specialized route lacked the appeal for a broad user group with diverse travel patterns. For this reason, in October 2011, Route 925 was eliminated due to poor performance (i.e., 1 boarding/platform hour and a cost/boarding of \$135). Except as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, we will resist designing specialized services for specialized user groups, and seek instead to design versatile services that many different people find useful for many kinds of trips.



1. In 2009, WSDOT awarded King County Metro Regional Mobility Grant funds to increase Route 240 service frequency. This grant expires in June 2013, necessitating a 4,600 annualized platform hour reduction to Route 240.

Create a civilized experience.

It is sometimes suggested that transit agencies should develop higher-quality services for high-end markets, possibly with lower crowding, particularly nice seating, and so on. Luxury services at high price points should generally be left to the private sector so that transit can focus on creating an attractive product at an appropriate price point for the widest possible spectrum of the population. The idea that everyone should have a seat during peak hours, for example, may be important for very long commutes but is not practical for shorter trips around Bellevue during busy times.

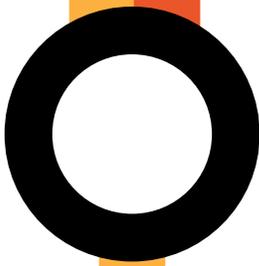
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Make connections easy and attractive.

A transit network is more than the sum of its parts. The usefulness of the network lies in the way all the parts work together, not just how they function individually. A single transit line may be useful for some trips, but it has more value when it is well connected with all the other lines; a passenger can travel along one line but also to anywhere those connecting lines go. The only way to efficiently serve multi-centered cities like Bellevue is with routes that are frequent and that make it easy to connect from one route to another at attractive and safe connection facilities. These improved connections contribute to greater coverage and more direct and shorter journeys. The transit network should be managed to take into account how all the parts—Link light rail, RapidRide lines, and bus routes—work together to enable people to reach more destinations in less time.

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Meet peak commute needs but encourage the growth of the all-day market.

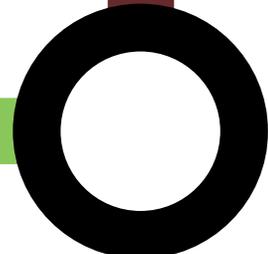
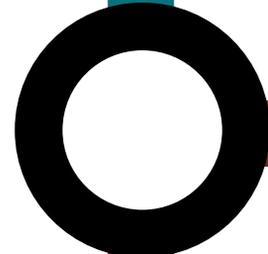
In addition to moving peak commuters, transit has an important role to play in improving the mobility of people who want to access family and friends, recreation, education, entertainment, health care, and the many activities that contribute to individual and community well-being. Transit is also critical to a vast range of work trips that happen all day, all evening, and all weekend, such as to jobs in the service sector or to 24/7 employers.

The existing network in Bellevue is not well designed to capture these non-peak trips, as frequencies during the off-peak (with headways typically more than 15 minutes) are often insufficient. Increasing off-peak frequencies on services like Route 245 (that links Kirkland to Factoria via Overlake, Crossroads, Bellevue College, and Eastgate) has the potential to significantly improve the appeal of transit to a wide variety of trip purposes. In Fall 2011 Metro began operating 15-minute headways mid-day on Route 245.² Today, this route is among the ten highest-ridership routes operating in Bellevue and the most frequent Eastside route that serves neither the Bellevue Transit Center nor Seattle. Indeed, with the majority of its transit patronage occurring in the mid-day, Route 245 is an example of a route with consistent productivity all-day.

The transit network should improve the all-day frequencies on routes like 245 that connect many major trip generators, since these destinations can justify better service along the entire corridor. Peak commuters, too, benefit from off-peak service, as today's complex jobs often require off-peak travel, and many people go to work without being sure exactly when they'll be able to come home.

2. In 2009, WSDOT awarded King County Metro Regional Mobility Grant funds to increase Route 245 service frequency. This grant expires in June 2013, necessitating a 2,500 annualized platform hour reduction to Route 245.

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Focus on high-ridership markets.

Two-thirds of transit patronage in Bellevue takes place in Downtown Bellevue, Factoria, Crossroads, and Eastgate—major activity centers for which traffic is managed and concurrency standards are established to help guide land development and transportation improvement decisions. As land use and travel patterns change, so does demand for transit.

Looking to the future, transit needs to maximize the return on investment on existing and anticipated public transportation projects by providing transit service where high ridership is anticipated, typically where there is some mix of higher residential or commercial density, major activity centers, and measures that discourage driving, such as limited parking. The transit network should provide more frequent bus service to support: (a) population and employment growth in the rapidly developing areas of Downtown Bellevue and the Eastgate/I-90 corridor; (b) areas of redevelopment in the Bel-Red corridor that will require the introduction of completely new services; and, (c) the East Link light rail line that will require feeder bus connectivity to extend the reach of this transformational investment in public transportation.



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Encourage walking and cycling.

The efficiency of the transit network is compromised when bus routes try to get too close to everyone's home—no matter how winding the road network or dispersed the land use patterns. Integrating pedestrian and bicycle use with transit service is an effective means of attracting new riders by increasing the catchment areas of stations and stops without expensive investments in route expansion or new routes.

Since transit cannot provide universal door-to-door access, ensuring that stops are easily accessible to a large percentage of the public is important to enhancing ridership. Walking and cycling are already the predominant methods by which people access transit; today only 16 percent of transit customers access public transportation at Park-and-Ride facilities in Bellevue.

As the transit network moves towards attracting more patrons who take transit by choice, it will be increasingly important to factor in the pedestrian and bicycle experience as part of a more holistic ridership strategy so that transit can run more efficiently. Transit's role is not to compete with walking or cycling, but rather to compete with cars, so it must focus on faster services that are worth walking or cycling to.

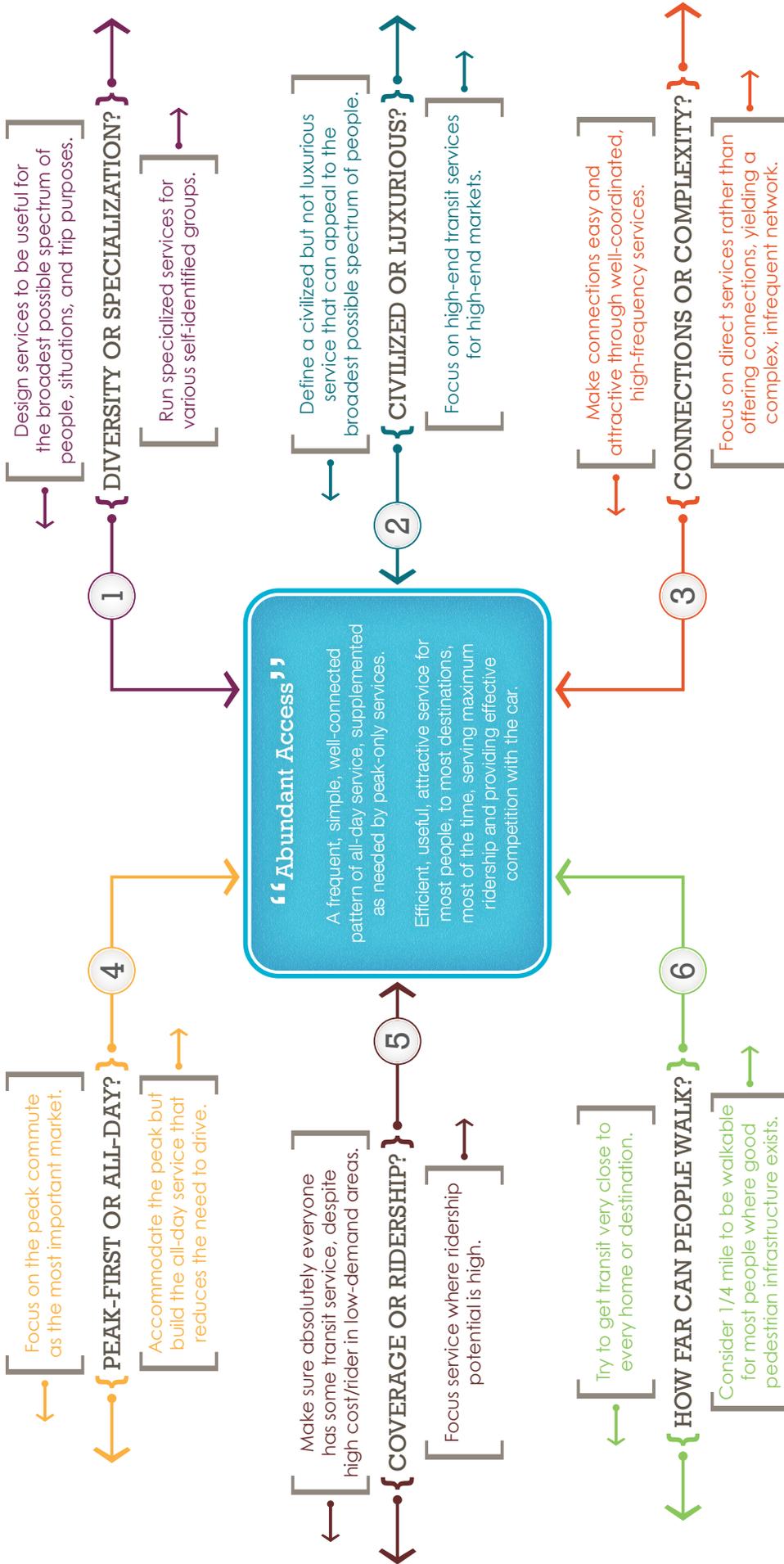


Figure 2 The transit network vision statement arises from a consideration of competing transit service priorities. In these six choices, we are conscious that by moving toward one goal we are moving away from others that have some support. Nevertheless, these choices tend to lead to a network that provides abundant access, and reflect the features of the most successful urban transit networks in the world. [Note: The “Abundant Access” concept was developed by Jarrett Walker & Associates.]