



In Transit

January/February 2007

A Newsletter for King County Metro Transit Employees



*From the desk
of the General
Manager*

2006 — What a ride!

As 2006 began, the title of this column was, "Hang on...here we go again!" As it turned out, the year packed a few surprises in addition to the changes we foresaw last January. Today I'm proud to look back and say that we made it through with flying colors.

The year ended with record ridership on our buses (103.2 million, up 4.3 percent over 2005), vanpools (1.96 million, up 9.6 percent), and Access system (1.13 million, up 2.5 percent). We handled a record 11.9 million customer contacts, a 22-percent increase over 2005 and a whopping 50 percent over 2004. I'm proud of these results and how hard everyone worked to achieve them, taking advantage of both service improvement opportunities and the economy.

I'm especially proud of the way we responded to the adverse weather challenges Mother Nature threw in our path, quite literally, during the post-Thanksgiving snow, the mid-December windstorms and then again with another series of snowstorms in January. We weren't perfect, but we did do a lot of things right (see page 11 for a few of the customer comments we received). We followed well-laid plans, flexed when we needed to and learned where we could improve next time.

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We'll Get You There

Bomb team joins Metro police

Meet the latest two additions to the Metro Transit Police force: Bomb Technician Deputy **Tim Morgan** and **Stevie**, a 16-month-old laborador retriever whose sensitive nose is trained to sniff out 19,000 different scents related to explosives and firearms.

Morgan has been with the Sheriff's Office for 21 years, working as a "bomb tech" in the Special Operations unit for the last 13. When Metro decided to add a full-time bomb dog team, Morgan stepped forward. He and Stevie graduated in December from a 10-week training program run by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms in Virginia, and the pair were assigned to Metro as of Jan. 16.

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Bomb Technician/Bomb Dog Handler Deputy Tim Morgan and Explosive Detection Dog Stevie are on the job for Metro. "We're out there to help," Morgan said. "Our purpose is to assist (Metro employees) with things that they don't want to deal with."

Transit Now rolls out

After its approval by King County voters last November, Transit Now morphed from a promising proposal into a detailed 10-year implementation program aimed at providing better and more transit service across the county. "Some of our customers might think 'Transit Now' refers to the next bus at the curb," quipped Service Planning Supervisor **David Hull**, "but for Metro Transit it really means new products, new partnership opportunities, and a new ability to improve transit throughout our service area."

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General Manager

The November snowstorm was especially challenging, coming on hard at the start of the evening peak period and during a Seahawks Monday Night Football game that exacerbated traffic conditions and put more pressure on the system. It was the first significant snow/ice event to occur at a busy time in a few years. We did take some criticism, particularly on how we communicated to the public about service conditions, but this was at least in part because the public has come to expect extremely high standards of performance from Metro.

The December 13-14 windstorm was a blast of a different kind, and I commend everyone who was in the field and behind the scenes supporting our efforts to meet that unique challenge. Many groups took part in those efforts, but special kudos are in order for the Power and Facilities section. Through very difficult and dangerous working conditions, Power Distribution staff fully restored the trolley system by Sunday and helped Operations and Vehicle Maintenance sustain activities at four bases by supplying them with emergency power until normal power was restored. Never before had more than two bases been without power at the same time. Incredibly, service capability was never lost at any of these bases. Operations and Vehicle Maintenance staff members worked without heat and with bay doors that could not be closed, and their patience was especially appreciated by Power and Facilities staff during that trying time.

In addition, power crews established emergency power for the Eastgate and Issaquah Highlands parking garages, while facilities staff had their hands full removing some 40 downed trees at several park-and-ride lots and transit centers. By Sunday, all public facilities were functional again. Only by working 14-20 hour shifts did the Power and Facilities staff make all this happen. I thank them and all others

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We'll Get You There

Spotlight on

Professionalism

A personal, professional touch helps nearly 12 million customers "Get There"

With no increase in staff or other resources, Metro's Rider Information Systems responded to 11.9 million customer contacts in 2006 — a 22% increase over 2005, when they handled 9.7 million contacts, and a 50% increase over 2004, with fewer than 8 million contacts. The 2006 responses included customer support during at least four major storms, several construction projects, and numerous community events, both planned and unplanned, that had significant impacts on traffic and transit.



More than 11.9 million served in 2006, and ready for more! The CITRS team includes (left to right) front row: Michael Landon, Ruth Andrews, Deborah Johnson. Back row: Mark Gorow, Dick Harrell.

Customer Information Technology Resources Staff (CITRS): **Ruth Andrews, Mark Gorow, Dick Harrel, Deborah "DJ" Johnson, Michael Landon,** and Information Technology Specialist **Gayle Torgerson**, who leads the CITRS team.

Torgerson is a 25-year veteran of customer service at Metro, dating back to 1981 when she signed on as an RIO specialist. Since then, she has consistently put the Metro customer first. After the Nisqually earthquake in 2001, she worked around the clock to help ensure that customers got the most up-to-date information possible. Her dedication and professionalism continue today. During our recent adverse weather, she again worked long hours to ensure that CITRS provided the most accurate and helpful customer support possible. Her commitment to the customer, and her work ethic, are emulated daily by the entire CITRS group.

Together, Torgerson and the CITRS team are an outstanding example of why Metro can proudly say We'll Get You There.

Rider Information Systems encompasses the Metro Online Web site and online Trip Planner, the Automated Trip Information System, the phone-in Bus Time service, and our Rider Information Office (RIO) specialists. While newer technologies allow us to serve our customers more efficiently, there are real, essential people behind the scenes holding everything together. Much of that "glue" comes from the



Gayle Torgerson with the tools of her trade: her computer and "The Book."

Transit Now rolls out



Transportation Planner **Lisa Shafer**, also with Service Planning, is helping to develop the work program for a new Six-Year Plan that will detail the implementation of Transit Now from 2008 and 2013. "It's a bit of a moving target, since a lot of implementation work is already in motion and so much progress is being made in so little time," Shafer said. In February, even before new revenues begin to flow from the added 0.1 percent sales tax, residents throughout the county will see new service on the street that will help alleviate edge-of-peak overcrowding, improve midday and weekend service frequencies, and expand services later into the evening. Expanding the peak frequency of routes 8 and 44, providing 15-minute interval midday service on Route 140, and expanding evening service on Route 234 are a few examples of service enhancements that started in February.

A major Transit Now initiative is to implement five "RapidRide" bus rapid transit corridors that combine frequent service with facility improvements designed to achieve higher capacity and faster, more reliable operation than traditional bus service. Passenger amenities along RapidRide corridors, and the buses that serve those corridors, will be branded with a distinctive look to identify them as a new Metro product. As part of that effort, **David Cantey**, transportation planner with Service Development's Speed and Reliability team, is working with Transit IT staff and various jurisdictions to develop a network of "Real Time Information" signs along RapidRide corridors. The signs will reduce riders' uncertainty about when their buses will arrive, Cantey explained.

Of course, it will take time to provide new peak service under Transit Now and fully implement RapidRide service. "While we have the ability to add substantial service during off-peak hours, we're constrained by the size of our fleet in addressing most peak-period issues over the next couple of years," Hull said. It's no secret that the demand for transit service during peak commute times surpasses available capacity on many routes. By tapping Transit Now revenues over the next several years, Metro will increase its fleet by more than 10 percent, enabling us to better address this challenge. "As buses are delivered, you will see additional peak trips added and RapidRide come on line," Hull said, "but Transit Now doesn't provide enough resources to meet all demands throughout the system."

In addition to remaining a hot topic among local transit riders and voters, Transit Now has also garnered federal attention. In December 2006, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) approved the Pacific Highway South RapidRide for "project development" funds, making it eligible for to receive some of the more than \$14 million in federal funds set aside for investments in cost-effective rail and bus rapid transit programs around the country. Of 12 nationwide applications submitted in 2006 for these funds, Metro's project was one of only four approved for project development. "The FTA said that King County's RapidRide was at the top of their list, and they look forward to being involved in the other RapidRide corridors," said **Karl Otterstrom**, one of the Metro transportation planners involved in submitting the application. "I'm eager to see how we can use this momentum to make RapidRide and Transit Now a real success over the next 10 years."

General Manager

who made heroic efforts on the county's behalf during these year-end weather challenges. They helped Metro make good on its promise, **We'll Get You There**.

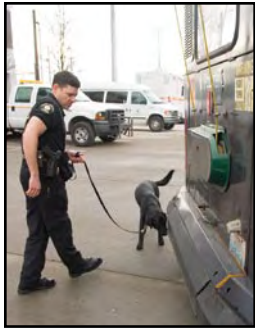
Significant accomplishments came in other areas too during 2006. To name a few: we launched the **We'll Get You There** service theme; completed and opened the Issaquah Highlands parking garage; built a new communications center for bus and future light rail communications and control; further advanced our fare collection technology (Smart Card), service scheduling, and operations coordination (new HASTUS capabilities); and achieved better integration of Rideshare and Vehicle Maintenance systems. We became a "greener" system with the conversion of 39 Breda coaches to trolley propulsion and increased our use of biodiesel fuel to 20 percent at the South, Bellevue, Ryerson, and North bases. We added 12 full-time deputies to the Metro Transit Police unit, stabilized the recruitment and hiring of part-time operators, completed contract negotiations with key labor units, and implemented important Workers Compensation Task Force recommendations. And King County voters approved Transit Now by a wide margin (see related article on page 1.)

This list only begins to touch on our many accomplishments in 2006. It was a good year, and I anticipate that 2007 will be equally rewarding. We'll build on these and other past successes as we continue preparing for the future: implementing the initial Transit Now service improvements; the eventual operation of LINK light rail services, a year-end 2007 start up of the South Lake Union streetcar, and a September reopening of the downtown Seattle tunnel for bus service. Smart Card (ORCA) beta testing will wind up in early 2007, moving that critical regional project one step closer to full implementation in early 2008.

Let's enjoy the ride!
— Kevin Desmond, GM

Bomb team

Their duties will include conducting random sweeps of Metro facilities and coaches, including the downtown Seattle transit tunnel when it reopens later this year. They will also respond



Stevie checks out the rear of a bus.

to bomb threats and even crime scenes, where Stevie can help find evidence such as firearms and ammunition.

To a bomb tech, “the dog is another tool

to do our job,” Morgan said, listing several other specialized tools of his trade: a bomb suit, basically a suit of armor designed to protect the tech from untimely explosions; a portable x-ray unit; and even a robot that can be sent into dangerous situations and controlled from a safe location. “To date, there’s nothing out there as effective as the canine” for finding explosives, he said.

Unlike the other tools, a dog represents a 24-hour, seven-day-per-week commitment. “It’s a lifestyle change,” Morgan conceded, “similar to having another child.” Stevie lives with Morgan and works on the food reward system, so in order to eat he must train every day, searching out training aids about 30 times a day for a few bites of food each time.

In spite of that commitment, Morgan said he’s glad to be part of Metro’s newest police team. “I feel like I was very fortunate to get picked for it,” he said. As for Stevie, he added, “he sleeps on the bed with my daughter every night. She just loves him.”



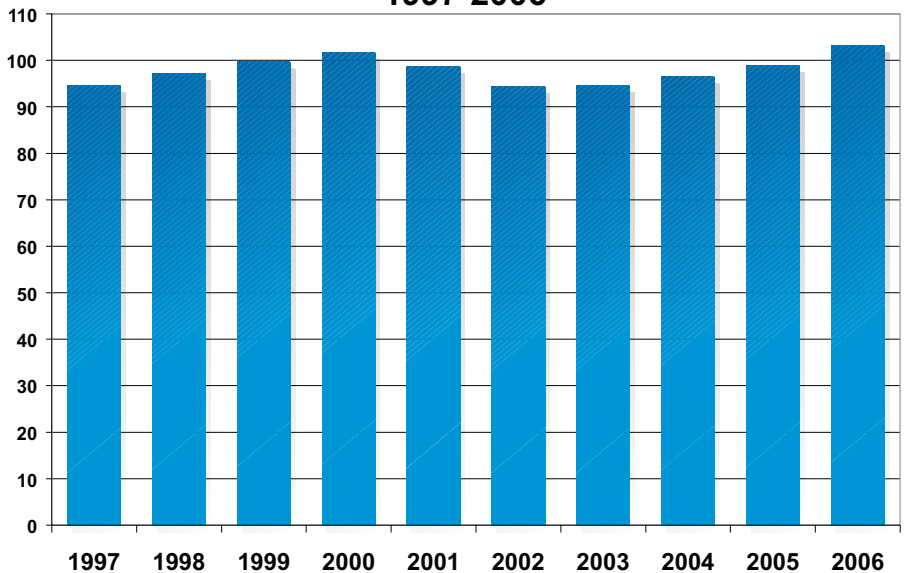
Performance corner

Metro sets multiple ridership records in 2006

Metro buses carried a record number of riders in 2006. Preliminary data lead to a ridership estimate of 103.2 million boardings for the year, 4.3 percent above the 2005 total and breaking the record set in 2000 by more than one million. Three factors were prime contributors to the new record:

- Gas prices rose about 13 percent — not as much as in 2005, but customers continued to find Metro an economical alternative to driving.
- Employment in King County grew about 3.5 percent. With more people commuting to work, many chose to use a Metro bus.
- New and past service improvements attracted new customers. For example, in South King County, the September restructuring of routes 150, 152, and 915, and the extension to new Route 180 from Kent to Sea-Tac Airport and Burien, resulted in more than 1,000 additional trips being made each day. Also, prior year service changes elsewhere in the county continued to register increased ridership.

**Metro boardings (millions)
1997-2006**



Note: Data from previous years have been revised to reflect the current computing methodology.

While it cannot control gas prices and employment figures, Metro can improve transit services in King County and is poised to do just that in the coming years. The Transit Now initiative, passed by voters last fall, will enable Metro to add new routes and restructure existing services to attract even more customers.

Metro also set ridership records in two other key service areas:

- Vanpool services—participation reached 1.96 million rides, up 9.6 percent over 2005.
- Paratransit services—Access provided 1.13 million rides, up 2.5 percent over 2005.

Congratulations, all.

Farewell to PSP after 12 great years!

Current and former facilitators, coordinators, and staff gathered at South Base on Dec. 8 to honor the Public Safety Partnership (PSP) program, which ended at the close of 2006. DOT Director **Harold S. Taniguchi**, Metro Transit General Manager **Kevin Desmond**, and Transit Operations Manager **Jim O'Rourke** led a roster of speakers who highlighted the program's accomplishments.

Curtis Robinson, now retired, was given a standing ovation when he came forward to speak. Robinson declared that of all his accomplishments at Metro, PSP was the program most dear to him.

Small wonder. The PSP program, in which operators educated riders on ways to help make riding transit safer, ran from 1994 through 2006, during which time more than 100 Metro operators facilitated 776 meetings, attended by an estimated 300,000 people.

PSP began modestly with a grant from the Federal Transportation Agency (FTA). Senior citizens in the Rainer Valley had expressed concerns about safety at bus stops and shelters, and Metro responded by developing a program that put seniors in direct contact with operators who provided information on strategies that seniors might use to ride transit safely. The operators also learned to listen to the seniors' concerns and report on them to Metro. One of the early outcomes was the addition of street lighting at selected bus stops.

But the program did not end with the grant. Because of PSP's success, its footprint expanded from Southeast Seattle to the entire county. The program's footprint expanded gradually from south Seattle to the entire county. Wherever there was a



Operator and then-PSP Facilitator Willie Middleton plays the part of an unruly passenger at a school presentation in May 2006.

concern about transit safety, PSP was ready to respond.

As the audience grew to include high-school and middle-school students, the meeting format was adapted for the classroom environment. The schools outreach program included role-playing exercises in which

passengers. The exercises were a huge hit with students, and over the years, some operators had the experience of meeting passengers who recognized and thanked them for school meetings that had taken place years before.

At the farewell event in December, there were stories about connecting

with PSP audiences, how respect was built between operators and youths, how a rapport was established between operators and those in shelters, and how the PSP message was delivered even when language barriers seemed insurmountable. As Metro's Supervisor of Training **Doug Johnson** put it, "Public Safety Partnership has come to an end, but it has left an important legacy. The operators who participated in PSP carry forward a wealth

of experience and knowledge gained from their interaction with riders. And the spirit of the program—one of cooperation and understanding between operators and the public—continues on."

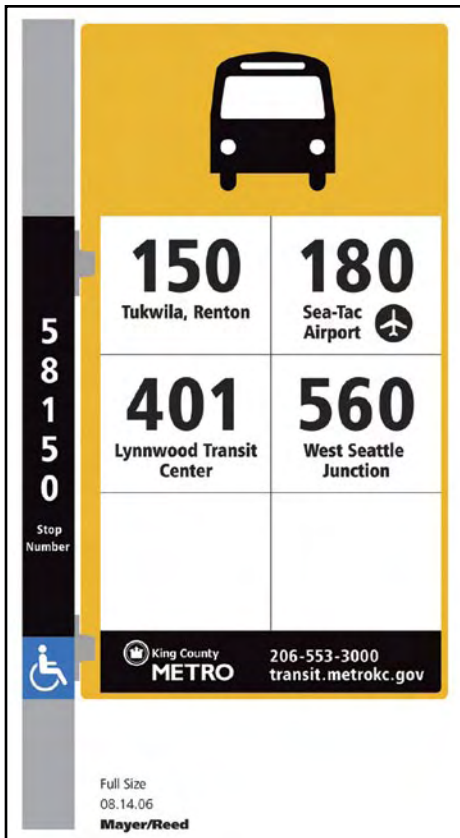


Left to right: former PSP Facilitators Mattie Robinson and Terrie Kennedy and Rider Information Chief Lottie Cross chat at the program's farewell ceremony.

operators would join with students in acting out problem transit situations, with one operator playing the part of the disruptive passenger, another operator coaching the student who played the part of the driver, and other students playing the part of bus

SHORT SHOTS IN TRANSIT

News briefs in and around the Transit Division



New prototype bus signs show more information, including the international airport symbol for routes serving Sea-Tac Airport.

Customers approve of new sign — More than two-thirds of Metro customers surveyed in November think new prototype bus stop signs are easier to use than existing signs, and nearly 90 percent think the new signs are easier to see. The signs, installed in September at about 110 bus stops along new Route 180, are larger, with bigger route numbers, and include major destinations for each route as well as Metro’s Rider Information number and Web address. For use at stops served by up to six routes, the signs have more space for identifying each route’s transit mode (such as

Express or DART) and provider (such as Sound Transit). The posts alongside the signs have vinyl strips identifying the zone number and accessibility status of each bus stop.

Working with a team of Metro employees from various work groups, and with input on customer needs from a group of community members, a consultant designed the signs to increase visibility and readability and to provide more useful information. More evaluations of the prototype will be done, and then, if funding is approved by the King County Council, Metro will design, make, and install new signs for the entire transit system over the next few years.

RideshareOnline.com expands into Idaho — Ada County Highway District (ACHD) is joining the statewide RideshareOnline.com family, expanding ride-matching services into Idaho. ACHD will contribute to the administrative costs of the RideshareOnline.com system and will be responsible for the operational and administrative costs connected with providing ride-match services within its jurisdiction. The online self-help tool, developed by King County Metro, expands the public’s ability to form carpools and resolves ride-matching problems across the Washington-Idaho border.

Desmond delivers green commute message — Metro Transit General Manager **Kevin Desmond** spoke at the Japan International Transportation Institute’s seminar, “The Environmentally Friendly Commute,” in Washington DC last October.

Desmond’s talk, “A Market-based Approach to the Green Commute,” described Metro’s commitment to a green commute and our use of hybrid diesel-electric coaches, biodiesel, low-sulfur fuel, electric trolleys, and superior maintenance practices, as well as Metro’s successful programs to stimulate demand for our many services. The demand-oriented programs he discussed included FlexPass, VanPool, VanShare, Commute Trip Reduction, and residential programs like In Motion and Partners in Transit.

Metro unveils new tagline ad and song — To see and hear Metro’s newest 30-second tagline ad and song, visit the transit Web site at <http://transit.metrokc.gov/choices/>. The promotion is the latest entry in Metro’s ongoing promise, We’ll Get You There.

GIS team launches digitized street network — In December, Metro’s Geographic Information Systems (GIS) team launched a new, more accurate and more complete digital representation of the street network in King County. This new data layer will become a base for extensive transportation system information, including street names, addresses, and properties such as road classification, speed limits, and height and weight restrictions, as well as multi-modal information for Sounder train, Link light rail, Washington State Ferries, and the county’s extensive trail network. The digital network is used extensively throughout Metro for service planning, real-time bus location, customer information,



This image from the new Transportation Network shows data superimposed over an aerial photo.

and many other functions. Metro collaborated with the Road Services Division, the Department of Natural Resources' GIS Center, the E911 Program Office, and local cities to develop the new digital network, which will be used and maintained by a consortium of city and county agencies.

Redmond Park-and-Ride to get major overhaul — For almost 30 years, the park-and-ride lot in the heart of downtown Redmond has been a real workhorse. Now, with three facility upgrades in the works, it is poised to become a system show horse as well. The ambitious project includes a three-floor, 386-stall park-and-ride garage scheduled to be completed in spring 2009, a new transit center-style bus boarding and layover area along NE 83rd Street that is scheduled to open at the end of this year, and a privately owned transit-oriented mixed-use development in the immediate proximity that is scheduled for completion in 2009. To learn more about these projects, visit www.metrokc.gov/kcdot/transtoday/2007news/jan/tt011607_redmondpr.htm.

Vanpool 2013 plan updated — **Syd Pawlowski**, supervisor of Rideshare Operations, recently presented an update of the Washington State Ridesharing Organization's Vanpool 2013 Plan to the state's Commute Trip Reduction Board. The plan provides ongoing objectives and presents adjusted priorities to help guide biennial investment decisions by the state's legislature and department of transportation to benefit ridesharing programs and projects statewide. Since the plan was first adopted in 2003, vanpooling in Washington State has increased 41 percent, with nine transit agencies strongly reviving their existing programs or starting new ones. Presently, over 2,000 vanpools and vanshares operate in Washington State. Metro alone operates more than 800 vanpools and more than 130 vanshares.

Towards a healthier workplace — The Healthy Workplace Funding Initiative is providing \$25 per benefits-eligible employee to support department efforts to help employees "eat smart and move more." In the Transit Division, a team of representatives from your

work sites will be asking you to get involved in choosing how this money will be spent. You might be asked to participate in a survey or a selection committee at your work site. Watch for more information, or ask your work site representative (see list below) how you can get involved.

- Yesler Building and Exchange Building — **Eileen Kadesh**
- King Street Center — **Terri Lewis**
- Facilities — **Stephanie Erickess**
- Vehicle Maintenance — **Victoria Hughes**
- Transit Operations Bases — **Suzanne Keyport**

In Transit



We'll Get You There

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Key Initiatives for 2007

Service Quality – Improve the quality of transit service, with particular emphasis on reliability.

Downtown Tunnel – Reopen the downtown tunnel for bus service in September.

Safety Audit – Implement a safety audit process for all sections in the Transit division.

Technology Projects – Move toward implementation of the “Big Three” technology projects (radio, smart card and on-board systems), with final preparations for smart card launch completed by the end of the year.

Union Negotiations – Complete contract negotiations with Local 587 in October.

Rail Startup – Begin operation of the South Lake Union Streetcar in December and continue startup preparations for Link Light Rail.

Bus Purchases – Award a contract for the purchase of buses to support fleet replacement and growth over the next five years.

ACCESS – Award new contracts for ACCESS program operations and call taking.

Climate Change – Develop and support initiatives to combat climate change.

Six Year Plan – Submit a new Six Year Plan to the Council this fall, incorporating the elements of Transit Now passed by the voters in 2006.



General Manager Kevin Desmond



Vehicle Maintenance Manager Jim Boon



Service Development Manager Victor Obeso



This banner welcomed the managers, supervisors, and chiefs to their annual meeting at ACT Theater.

Management looks back, looks ahead

Some 180 members of Metro’s management team gathered at the ACT Theatre in downtown Seattle Jan. 24 for the second annual Metro Managers, Supervisors, and Chiefs meeting. The theme was “We’ll Get You There. NOW!” and topics included recognition of 2006 accomplishments, an overview of performance statistics and trend patterns, a discussion of key initiatives for 2007 (see sidebar), an update on the rollout plans for Transit Now service, and a question-and-answer session.



General Manager Kevin Desmond sums up the year’s accomplishments.



Transit IT Manager Larry Calter, left, and Deputy General Manager Jim Jacobson take in the presentation.



Operations Manager Jim O'Rourke



Supervisor of Marketing and Service Information Bob Virkelyst, Special Projects Manager Cathryn Rice, Speed and Reliability Project/Program Manager Rose McCracken, and LAN Administrator John Thrall do last-minute checks of the visual and sound equipment before the meeting begins.



Administrative Assistant Kathy Morgan, Administrative Specialist Carolyn Murakami, Administrator Joan Lewis, and Communication Specialist Kelly Lindsey welcomed attendees and kept things running smoothly.

2007 budget: the bottom line

Metro begins 2007 with an operating budget of \$502 million and a capital program that will total more than \$1 billion over the next six years. Adopted by the King County Council in November, the transit budget reflects a number of difficult decisions that were necessary to reduce operating expenses in response to continuing financial pressures.

“While regional economic growth has resulted in higher revenues for our system, the reality is that expenditures for fuel, wages, and other fixed costs were and are growing even faster,” said **Jill Krecklow**, Transit Division finance and administrative services manager.

The adopted 2007 budget reflects many adjustments and efficiencies to reduce costs, including the elimination of, or reduction in work hours for, 19 positions starting in January. In total, the budget was reduced by \$4.3 million.

New projects and services in the adopted budget:

- **Additional service hours** — 20,000 more hours of bus service, mostly for the south and east areas of King County.
- **Tunnel reopening:** The budget assumes a reopening of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel in 2007 and restores funding for tunnel operation and maintenance activities removed when the tunnel closed in 2005.
- **Paratransit service growth:** Productivity improvements are helpful to control cost growth, but demand continues to grow even faster.
- **Vanpool program growth:** After a few years of decline, demand for vanpool services continues to grow in response to an improved local economy and high gasoline prices.
- **Continued start-up costs for the Link light rail system:** The Light Rail Section will continue to hire staff and move toward activation of the Central Link Light Rail system. These costs are reimbursed by Sound Transit.
- **On-board systems and radio project:** Funding will provide the resources to establish a vendor contract and begin design work on these projects.
- **Twenty-five-foot transit vans:** Funds are provided to purchase 35 small low-floor buses to replace existing vehicles.
- **Atlantic/Central Base expansion:** Additional funds are provided to proceed with the design and construction of the Operations Building expansion.

Transit Now: In November 2006, King County citizens voted to increase the sales tax by 0.1 percent to support the Transit Now proposal, a 10-year program that will add 580,000 hours of much-needed bus service. Transit Now also provides for “RapidRide”, a bus rapid transit system, and supports fleet and infrastructure expansion. For 2007, the Transit Division has requested funds to add 45,000 service hours on core routes, begin capital work on the RapidRide corridors, add to the vanpool and paratransit vehicle fleets, partner with the City of Seattle on a Lander Street overpass, and sign a contract to develop a “real time” customer information system. At press time, the King County Council was expected to approve the Transit Now budget in late January. When and as approved, the amounts related to Transit Now will be added to the Transit Division’s 2007 adopted budget.

KUDOS

IN TRANSIT

■ **2006, a record-setting year** — New ridership and service utilization records were set in 2006 in the following areas: bus — 103.2 million boardings (preliminary count), 4.3 percent above 2005; vanpool — 1.96 million rides, 9.6 percent above 2005; Access paratransit — 1.13 million rides, 2.5 percent above 2005; and customer contacts handled — 11.9 million, 22 percent above 2005. Kudos to all staff involved the development and delivery of these important Metro services and programs.

■ **Vanpool formation at new high** — Through November, Rideshare Operations logged an average of 14.5 new vanpool groups per month for 2006 and delivered 160 vans to customers. This was the best vanpool formation rate since 1999. Over the same period, rider retention efforts limited the vanpool termination rate to 7.2 groups per month, the lowest in nine years. Good work!

■ **Transit sections meet storm challenge** — During and immediately after the mid-December wind and rain storms, Metro units were hard at work beating back everything Mother Nature had thrown at them. In the field, service supervisors were assessing road conditions to determine which routes were clear and which were not. Back at bases, Operations and Vehicle Maintenance staffs worked without heat at four locations, dispatching buses and keeping them in safe running condition. Rider Information staff handled high call volumes, assisting customers with reroute details, and



A Metro bus makes its way through snowy streets after a storm in November.

radio coordinators worked extra hours to track rapidly changing conditions in order to get resources to the right places at the right times.

In sometimes dangerous conditions, Power Distribution crews deactivated live electric trolley wires brought down by falling trees, and eventually had to shut down the entire trolley system to ensure public safety. They repaired damaged trolley lines and had the trolley system completely restored on Sunday, in plenty of time for the Monday morning commute. Facilities crews were busy removing downed trees at numerous customer facilities and other key Metro locations. And, as if dealing with wind damages wasn't enough, Facilities staff also provided emergency sandbagging and water pumping services to control rising water levels at various locations during the height of the storm.

The dedication of, and sacrifices made by, all Metro staff involved in responding to the storm were greatly appreciated.

■ **Metro supports successful search for lost hiker** — In a small but valuable way, Metro staff helped in the successful rescue of lost snowshoe hiker Cindy Wysocki. In response to a call from King County Incident Commander Ed Christian for a bus to shelter King County Search and Rescue volunteers from the cold and damp weather, a 40-foot bus arrived within two hours at the Denny Creek campground search coordination site and remained on location for 20 hours. Kudos to **Jan Berlin**, acting Service Communications chief, Service Quality firstline supervisors **Clay Bateman** and **Fred Olander**, and Vehicle Maintenance and Operations staff from East Base for coordinating the fast and vital response.

Transit operators of the month

December 2006

Atlantic Base: **Egbert Wilson**

Bellevue Base: **Elbert Hecita**

Central Base: **Patrick Hughes**

East Base: (declined)

North Base: **Don Snow**

Ryerson Base: **Kelly Wickham**

South Base: **Paul Dillard**

January 2007

Atlantic Base: (declined)

Bellevue Base: **Michael Huggins**

Central Base: **Victor Arena**

East Base: **Lawrence “Jim” Wood**

North Base: **David Earle**

Ryerson Base: **Joe Kadushin**

South Base: **Edward Brookens**

■ **Access driver delivers on Metro promise** — During one of the recent storms, Access driver **Brian Reed** went beyond the call of duty. After braving the stormy weather to get a customer home in Duvall, Reed discovered his own way home was blocked by flooded roads, and ended up spending the night at the Duvall High School emergency shelter. Reed’s effort on behalf of his customer reflects the true meaning of Metro’s promise, We’ll Get You There.

Customer thank-yous

The following comments came in from grateful customers via the Metro Online comment page after the region was hit by rain, snow, and wind storms in November, December, and January.

“My regular bus never showed up, but every other bus driver was helpful and friendly. A number of buses on their way to the base stopped and offered us rides. Every bus driver that I asked was eager to offer suggestions...I know those drivers must have been tired and stressed out, but they showed their best face for Metro. Thanks for hiring such a good natured crew.”

—Dagny Taggart, Bothell, Nov. 27

“All your drivers and mechanics last night and today are to be commended for doing their best under horrible conditions. Thank you, all of you, for everything you do to keep the rest of us on the move.”

—Trina McCarrell, Shoreline, Nov. 28

“I take the bus to work every day, and I am so grateful for the efforts that you go to to keep us safe and getting where we are going, even under extreme conditions.”

—Jana Ostrom, Shoreline, Nov. 28

“I would like to commend the bus driver and Metro for my commute to work this morning. My bus arrived ON TIME this morning well prepared with chains. The driver handled the extremely icy conditions with caution and control. I arrived at work on time when few others did, and I came from an area with a lot of snow and ice. Thank you.”

—Anonymous, Eastside, Nov. 28

“I’m very impressed with the Metro drivers and their skills in the snow. I feel very safe aboard (can’t say that for my own driving in the snow).”

—Jeanne Kowal, Seattle, Nov. 29

“I would like to commend and send a mighty THANK YOU to all of the drivers who, at the risk of losing their sanity and sense of humor, did their best to get distraught seasoned and novice riders as close to their destinations as possible.

Snow in Seattle is never a pretty thing but without the devoted drivers and backup personnel, it would be downright hideous.”

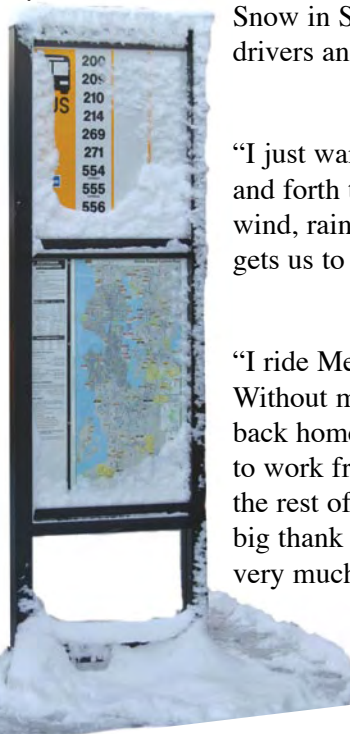
—Cheri Bull, Seattle, Dec. 1

“I just want to thank all of you so very much for getting us back and forth to work each day during these cold winter months of wind, rain, and snow. Our bus drivers are so patient and always gets us to our destinations.”

—Darlene Allenthorp, Seattle-Kirkland, Jan. 12

“I ride Metro every day but rarely think to submit a thank you. Without my bus, I wouldn’t make it to work or school or make it back home again. It’s easy to forget that the drivers need to travel to work from their homes in the worst weather to make sure that the rest of us get where we’re going safely. I’d just like to say a big thank you to all the drivers for what they do every day. It’s very much appreciated.”

—Riona Tate, no location listed, Jan. 19





ON THE MOVE

Transit Division retirements, promotions/job changes, new hires, and remembrances

Retirements

Operations: Operators

East Base:

Ruth Allen — Dec. 29; 22 years

Timothy Shrewsbury — Dec. 1; 24 years

North Base:

Tom Keefe — Jan. 31; 33 years

Jan Larsson — Jan. 31; 17 years

Operations: Non-operators

Merlin Smith, first-line supervisor (East Base) — Jan. 26; 30 years

Paratransit/Rideshare Operations

Sharon Brochu, fiscal specialist II (Rideshare Operations) — Dec. 31; 10 years

Power and Facilities

Wendell Hoyt, maintenance planner/scheduler — Jan. 31; 30 years

Sales and Customer Service

David Craft, rider information specialist — Dec. 1; 16 years

Ruth Santoro, business and finance officer II (Information Production and Distribution Services) — Jan. 31; 21+ years

Service Development

John May, special service coordinator (Scheduling) — Mar. 31; 30 years

Bill Roach, transportation planner IV — Jan. 31; 35 years

Vehicle Maintenance

Corliss Victor-Marshall, supervisor (NRV) — Mar. 31; 35+ years

Promotions/Job Changes

Information Technology

Colene Baker to project program manager II from training and project specialist (Sales and Customer Services)

Rebecca Switaj to budget/finance administrator from business and finance officer III (Roads Division)

Light Rail

Rick Stiles to chief (Light Rail Maintenance Service Center) from lead transit purchasing specialist (Vehicle Maintenance)

Operations

Loretta Brown - to base chief (South) from first-line supervisor (Atlantic Base dispatcher/planner)

Dan Mann to base dispatcher/planner (relief) from acting base chief (North Base)

Dan Nuner to acting base chief (North) from instructor (South Base Training)

Dareyl Plummer to base chief (Atlantic) from first-line supervisor (Instructor)

Sales and Customer Services

Mike Blondin to marketing and sales specialist II (Information Production and Distribution Services) from communications/

publications specialist (CTR Services)

Jim Martin to marketing and sales specialist III from marketing and sales specialist II (Information Production and Distribution Services)

Kathryn Mason return to operator (Operations) from assignment as marketing and sales specialist II (Marketing and Promotions)

Carl Jackson return to operator (Operations) from assignment as marketing and sales specialist III (Information Production and Distribution Services)

Vehicle Maintenance

Donnetta French to lead equipment service worker from equipment service worker

Bill Goodall to mechanic from equipment service worker

Jim King to chief of vehicle maintenance machine shop from lead maintenance machinist

Rene Mathers to acting purchasing specialist from transit parts specialist

Frederick Pine to mechanic from equipment service worker

Jeff Sattler to supervisor of non-revenue vehicles (NRV)

Deb Stenoien to lead mechanic from mechanic

Stephen Stepensiki to mechanic from equipment service worker

New Hires

Information Technology

Rob McClary, deputy program manager — Dec. 27

Paratransit/Rideshare Operations

Wendy Scholtz, rideshare services representative (Rideshare Operations) — Jan. 29

Sales and Customer Services

Peter Brown, rider information specialist — Jan. 2

Susan Rudolph-Loos, marketing and sales specialist III (Information Production and Distribution Services) — Jan. 22

Junker Wong, rider information specialist — Jan. 2

Don Honeycutt, rider information specialist — Jan. 2 (rehire)

Transit Safety

Gabrielle Toutonghi, industrial safety officer — Jan. 10
Vehicle Maintenance

Todd Brown, mechanic — Nov. 13

Brian Hathaway, utility service worker — Dec. 11

Angel Lomuntad, mechanic — Dec. 11 (rehire)

Lloyd Peska, equipment service worker — Dec. 11

Cindy Sattle, data administrator — Jan. 29

In Our Thoughts

Michael Donahue, former radio equipment specialist (Power and Facilities), passed away on Nov. 24

Maria Raisys, former data administrator (Power and Facilities, retired May 2005), passed away on Dec. 2