

RapidRide I Line Community Engagement Summary

Final design: 30 percent: September 2020 – February 2021

Last updated: April 19, 2021

Introduction

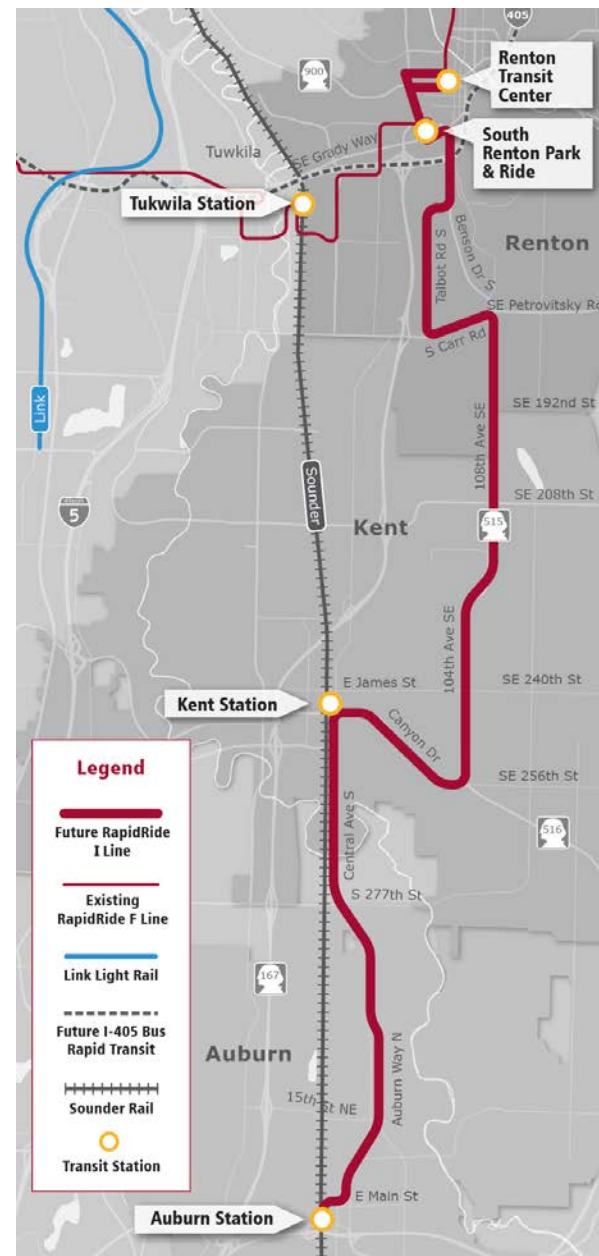
This report summarizes King County Metro's community engagement approaches, activities, and feedback collected during the final design: 30 percent phase of RapidRide I Line.

Background

King County Metro (Metro) is working to connect Renton, Kent, Auburn, and the surrounding areas with high-quality, frequent, and reliable bus service. RapidRide I Line will upgrade the current Route 160, which runs between Renton and Auburn, passing through Kent. Route 160 is an extension of the former Route 169, absorbing the portion of the former Route 180 between Kent Station and Auburn Station. Metro's analysis of the former Routes 169 and 180 show that they were among the busiest routes in south King County and served higher proportions of community members who have low-incomes and are historically underserved than the Metro system as a whole, including the highest proportion of ORCA LIFT riders within the system. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Route 160 continues to be a top ridership route.

The goals of RapidRide I Line are to:

- Increase access to reliable and frequent transit in south King County.
- Improve connections to the places people need and want to go to, such as work, school, shopping, and services.



Timeline

These graphics show the project timeline from planning through service launch, including community engagement activities during the needs assessment and conceptual design phases. Metro will continue to engage the through service launch.



Building on prior community engagement

Needs assessment

In early 2019 Metro focused on introducing the project to community members and gathering feedback on needs and priorities for transit service.

Metro's goals for community engagement during the needs assessment phase included: informing the community about the project, building relationships with community-based organizations (CBOs) serving historically underserved communities, identifying transit priorities and barriers, and understanding community partners' preferred ways to engage and receive information. Metro prioritized outreach to groups most likely to be transit dependent, including seniors, immigrant communities, people living with disabilities, and youth.

Community engagement activities included: convening a 27-member community mobility board to help identify transit needs and priorities in south King County; promoting a survey in English, Russian, simplified Chinese, Spanish, , and Vietnamese through tabling at community events and in-language outreach at bus stops; conducting interviews with CBOs to understand community needs and inform engagement strategies; and holding briefings with local City staff and councils.

Community engagement during this phase informed the I Line route and station locations and helped Metro develop plans for projects to make it easier and safer to access RapidRide. Examples of potential access projects include crosswalks, pedestrian islands, improved pedestrian signals, and filling in the gaps in sidewalks.

Conceptual design: develop initial concept

During the second phase of community engagement, in summer 2019, Metro gathered feedback on proposed RapidRide station locations and other community concerns and interests.

Metro's goals for this phase included sharing the proposed I Line route, seeking feedback on station locations, and continuing to foster relationships with CBOs representing or serving people who are historically underserved. Metro engaged the community through: an online open house available in English, Russian, simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese; tabling at community events; ongoing engagement with CBOs interviewed in the previous phase; and briefings with local City staff and councils.

Community engagement during this phase helped Metro refine station locations and understand other community concerns and priorities. At the end of this phase, Renton, Kent, and Auburn city councils signed letters in support of the proposed RapidRide alignment.

Conceptual design: develop preferred concept

In fall 2019, Metro presented the preferred project concept, including route and station locations staff developed using community input. Metro also introduced and gathered input on speed and reliability improvements and key areas to make it easier to walk, roll, and bike to the bus. Project staff continued to focus on building relationships with CBOs representing people who are historically underserved. Community engagement activities included: an online open house available in English, Russian, simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese; tabling at community events; conversations with CBOs; and briefings with local City staff and councils.

Feedback from the community informed Metro's plans for speed and reliability improvements, station design, and access improvements. In April 2020, the King County Council adopted the alignment ordinance, allowing the RapidRide I Line project to move forward.

The graphic below summarizes community members' priorities across the needs assessment and conceptual design engagement efforts.

Community priorities



The community engagement summary of the first three phases of engagement is included as Appendix A.

Final design: 30 percent community engagement overview

From September 2020 through February 2021, Metro shared information about RapidRide I Line final design process at the 30 percent design completion milestone.

Community engagement goals

Metro had three community engagement goals during this phase:

- Educate the Renton, Kent, and Auburn communities about RapidRide I Line and further promote the RapidRide Expansion Program.
- Conduct a grassroots, inclusive, and accessible public engagement process.
- Grow and maintain community support for the project, especially among groups historically underrepresented, including minority-owned businesses and CBOs serving historically underrepresented groups.

See Appendix B for more detail on phase goals and objectives.

Community engagement approach

Just as community engagement shaped the preferred concept, Metro is continuing to listen to and gather input from community members during the final design process. At the 30 percent completion milestone, Metro reported back to the community and partners how their input was incorporated into design plans, shared refined station locations and features, roadway and intersection changes, and projects that make it easier to get to the bus. Metro also reached out to property owners and businesses to introduce the project and encourage their participation. Finally, Metro communicated the benefits RapidRide I Line will bring to the community.

Practicing inclusive community engagement

Despite the global COVID-19 pandemic, Metro continued meeting people where they were through: partnering with CBOs; providing information through a mailer and an online open house available in English, Russian, simplified Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese; in-language social media content; sharing in-language information with businesses through socially-distanced flyering, and email, phone calls, and virtual meetings. Metro prioritized the health and safety of community members and staff by increasing opportunities to learn about the project online, by wearing masks and gloves and staying more than six feet apart while engaging with people in-person, and by working with CBO partners to inform community members about the project.



**CBO
conversations**



**In-language
outreach
(materials,
online open
house,
briefings,
phone calls)**



**Ethnic media
advertising**



**In-person
flyering**



**In-language
social media**

The engagement approach for this phase included the following activities:

- **Community partner engagement** – Metro continued engaging with CBO partners and community groups to deepen relationships and develop new ones. Metro first engaged community partners in advance of broader communication with the public. Metro briefed organizations who have been involved with the project and offered briefings to chambers of commerce serving the business communities in Renton, Kent, and Auburn. The purpose of these briefings was to provide community partners with an opportunity to

learn more about the project and to offer feedback on how to best reach the people they serve, especially during the pandemic. A summary of community partner outreach is included in Appendix C.

- **Business flyering** – Metro began identifying the right-of-way needed to build the project and other impacts to properties, businesses, employees. Staff followed safety protocols to hand-deliver flyers to businesses along the planned RapidRide I Line route. When possible, staff engaged in short, socially-distanced conversations with business staff. Metro sent the flyer by registered mail to businesses they were unable to reach in person. A copy of the flyer is included in Appendix D.
- **Online open house** – Metro hosted an online open house from December 28, 2020 through January 25, 2021. Online open house content highlighted how feedback from previous engagement influenced Metro’s decisions. Metro included the latest information about station locations and features; roadway and intersection changes to help the bus move more quickly and arrive on time more often; and projects to make it easier and safer to walk, roll, or bike to the bus. Online open house participants could also give feedback on design plans for RapidRide I Line. The online open house was available in English, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Russian, and Vietnamese. A summary of comments shared on the online open house is included in Appendix E.
- **Virtual business forums and briefings** – Metro partnered with the chambers of commerce in Renton, Kent, and Auburn to host two virtual forums for business owners and a briefing to car dealers in Auburn. Briefing participants heard about the project in more detail, asked questions, and voiced any concerns directly to Metro staff. Language specialists interpreted the presentation in Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. A summary of comments made at the business forums is included in Appendix F.

Getting the word out

The following icons represent the channels Metro used to promote the project and opportunities to engage.



Ethnic media & press release



Website updates



Email community partners



Social media



Rider alerts



Flyering

Community feedback

Metro heard valuable feedback from diverse community members throughout this phase of engagement, including:



Themes

Those who expressed support for the expansion are looking forward to more reliable and frequent transit along the corridor and value the station amenities and the changes to make it easier to get to and from the bus.

Most community members expressed general support for RapidRide I Line. Comments during this phase of engagement fell into the following broad categories:

Access

- Community members reacted positively to the planned access projects and expressed hope for access improvements at particular intersections or for improvements to sidewalks more generally.

- Several community members expressed concern that the planned increased distance between stations would make it more difficult for people with mobility issues to comfortably and safely use the bus.

Bike infrastructure

- Community members said they are happy the project will bring new bike infrastructure such as the bike lanes along S 2nd Street in Renton. Others expressed worry that the planned additional bike infrastructure was insufficient.
- Building RapidRide stations along existing or planned bike lanes may require raising the bike lane to the level of the sidewalk in front of the station so the bus does not cut off the bike lane when it pulls up to let passengers on and off. Community members expressed concern that having the bike lane at the same level as the station may cause conflicts between cyclists and bus passengers.

Community engagement

- Community members and CBO partners shared appreciation that Metro was reaching out to ask for their perspectives and inform them about the project.
- Community members frequently asked about where they could find information about the project as it moved forward and how they could stay engaged.

Construction impacts and timing

- Property owners and business owners wanted to know more about how long construction will take and how it will impact them.
- Community members would like the project to happen more quickly.

Safety

- Business representatives expressed concern that stations could attract crime and become unkempt with overflowing trash receptacles.

Service

- Community members reacted positively to increased bus frequency and reduced wait times.
- Community members and business owners explained the need for more east-west mobility in south King County.
- Community members were concerned about recent changes in service, specifically changes to Route 163 and in Kent Hill.

Station locations

- Community members expressed concern about consolidating existing bus stations as part of the upgrade to RapidRide. They worry that the new station locations will no longer be as convenient to their neighborhood.
- Business owners are concerned that stations planned near their storefront will negatively impact business or deter customers from entering their business.

Next steps

Throughout this project, community engagement has influenced Metro's development of the RapidRide I Line route, projects to include speed and reliability, projects to improve access, station locations, and station design. As the project moves to the 60 percent design completion milestone, Metro will focus community engagement on sharing information about next steps and what to expect, as well as reporting back to the community how their priorities are reflected in the design. Metro will also be working closely with business and property owners to understand and, where possible, address their concerns.