

## POLICY NOTE

# Citizens' Guide to King County Metro Proposition 1: to extend and increase Seattle's Transportation Benefit District sales tax

By Mariya Frost, Director, Coles Center for Transportation

October 2020

### Key Findings

1. Metro Transit, which serves King County, is funded primarily by a 0.9 percent local sales and use tax imposed on King County residents.
2. In 2014, Seattle voters approved a \$60 vehicle fee and a 0.1 percent sales tax increase, providing additional funding to Metro Transit. These taxes are set to expire at the end of 2020.
3. Seattle city officials are asking voters in November to approve Proposition 1 to not just renew the sales tax, but to increase it by 50% to a 0.15 percent sales tax.
4. Metro's latest projections show that over the next four years, county sales tax revenue collections will be roughly where Metro anticipated they would be in 2015, despite the pandemic.
5. In 2015, officials forecast that Metro would collect \$6.2 billion in sales tax revenue over the course of the decade (2015-2024). New projections show that even with the impact of COVID, the agency will collect an even greater \$6.3 billion in sales tax revenue by 2024.
6. Although Metro is expecting to receive \$36 million less in sales tax revenue this year than what they projected in 2015, the agency is receiving \$244 million in federal CARES Act money, putting the agency \$208 million above where officials thought they would be this year.
7. Local sales taxes are a broad and fair way to fund local transit. Those who support Metro's proposed uses for the sales tax renewal and increase can choose to support the measure.
8. Those who are more concerned about Metro's financial outlook given the impacts of COVID-19 should know Metro does not need a six-year tax increase to stay afloat.
9. Despite the recession, Metro still plans to spend \$270 million on electrification between 2021 and 2028, and funds the potential full restoration of suspended service hours. These changes can and should wait.
10. Not imposing a tax hike could give struggling Seattle businesses and residents some financial relief during the economic recovery.

### Background

King County Metro, formally known as Metro Transit, was established in 1973 as the first county-wide transit system.<sup>1</sup> It is now the tenth-largest transit agency in the United States, providing bus service, vanpools, paratransit, water taxi, and streetcar service throughout King County.

Public funding for Metro Transit comes primarily from a 0.9 percent local sales and use tax imposed on King County residents (0.3 percent approved in 1972, an additional 0.3 percent in 1980, an additional 0.2 percent in 2000, and an additional 0.1 percent in 2006). Sales tax revenue makes up a little over half of Metro's revenue sources. Other revenue sources for Metro operations include a property tax, state and federal grants, and fares.

### Seattle's transportation taxing district

In 1987, the Washington State Legislature created Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs) as an option for local governments to raise revenue for transportation projects within their jurisdiction, usually through vehicle license fees or sales taxes.<sup>2</sup> Vehicle license fees can be imposed by a majority vote of a city/county council, up to \$50 per vehicle, without a public vote. Beyond that, a TBD can impose up to \$100 in vehicle fees with voter approval. The money collected can be used for projects that range from road improvements to transit and pedestrian improvements.

On September 20, 2010, the Seattle City Council passed an ordinance creating the Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD).<sup>3</sup> The ordinance allows the City Council to impose car tab fees and increase the sales tax up to 0.2 percent. The City Council imposed a \$20 car tab fee in 2011.

In early 2014, King County officials said they planned to cut 550,000 hours of bus service (about 16 percent of total service) in King County,

1 "Transit: The Story of Public Transportation in the Puget Sound Region," by Jim Kershner, Seattle, WA: Historylink/Documentary Media, 2019.

2 Seattle City Council. "Seattle Transportation Benefit District." City of Seattle, 2020. <https://www.seattle.gov/council/committees/sustainability-and-transportation/seattle-transportation-benefit-district>.

3 Seattle City Council. "CB 118667." Seattle Legistar, 2016. <http://seattle.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=2706444>.

with the bulk coming from eliminating routes in Seattle.<sup>4</sup> After the public rejected new tax increases in April, former Seattle Mayor Ed Murray said the impending bus cuts constituted a “crisis” and proposed new tax increases through the Seattle TBD to avoid cuts within the city.<sup>5</sup> The plan was essentially the same as the previously rejected ballot measure. The Mayor emphasized that the TBD taxes would be temporary until the county and state would move forward with a plan to fund Metro.

When this new measure was being written, County officials canceled the majority of their promised bus cuts, largely averting the “crisis” without raising regressive taxes.<sup>6</sup> By finding efficiencies and better managing rising revenues at current tax rates, the Council preserved 95 percent of bus service and made the bus system more efficient.

According to *The Seattle Times*, this action by the County Council, did not “immediately alter Seattle’s November ballot measure for a city-only increase in sales and car-tab taxes, to replace a now-unclear amount of bus service to be lost within the city.”<sup>7</sup> In other words, Seattle officials placed the tax increases on the ballot as a solution to a problem that no longer appeared to exist.

Seattle voters approved the taxes anyway. The proposition included a \$60 vehicle license fee and a 0.1 percent sales tax increase, with a \$20 rebate for low-income individuals. The car tab and sales tax increase were on top of the \$20 drivers paid annually in Seattle-specific registration fees and also in addition to the 9.5 percent sales tax collected within city borders at the time (the current sales tax in Seattle is now 10.1 percent). The temporary taxes approved in 2014’s Proposition 1 were to remain in place until the year 2020, when they were set to expire or be renewed through a public vote.

It is now 2020 and the Seattle City Council has approved Proposition 1 to not just renew but increase the 0.1 percent sales tax, which they recognize as a regressive tax, to 0.15 percent for a period of six years. The Council agreed to let the \$60 car tab fee expire in light of Initiative 976, which was passed by statewide voters in 2019 and cut most car tab fees in the state to \$30, as well as repealed TBDs authority to impose vehicle fees.

The City of Seattle and King County sued to block Initiative 976, and the case is currently pending further legal action.<sup>8</sup> The Council stated that Seattle’s TBD authority to impose car tab fees has been “thrown into question” by the passage of the initiative.

In November, Seattle voters will have the option to authorize the renewal and increase of the sales tax, which is expected to generate \$39 million per year over the next six years.

4 “Citizens’ Guide to Seattle’s Proposition 1: To increase the sale tax and car fees to pay for current bus service in Seattle,” by Bob Pishue, Policy Brief, Washington Policy Center, September 2014, at [https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/library/docLib/Citizens\\_200\\_231\\_Guide\\_to\\_Seattle\\_200\\_231s\\_Proposition\\_1\\_0.pdf](https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/library/docLib/Citizens_200_231_Guide_to_Seattle_200_231s_Proposition_1_0.pdf).

5 “Mayor calls bus cuts a ‘crisis,’ proposes tax increase to fund routes,” by Tom Yazwinski, May 13, 2014, at <https://www.q13fox.com/news/mayor-calls-bus-cuts-a-crisis-proposes-tax-increase-to-fund-routes>.

6 “Metro bus service to get boost with passage of Prop. 1,” by Mike Lindblom, *The Seattle Times*, November 4, 2014, at <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/metro-bus-service-to-get-boost-with-passage-of-prop-1/>.

7 “County Council hopes to avert one-third of bus-service cuts,” by Mike Lindblom, *The Seattle Times*, July 21, 2014, at [www.seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024128928\\_transitcompromisexml.html](http://www.seattletimes.com/html/localnews/2024128928_transitcompromisexml.html).

8 “Seattle, King County Will Sue to Block \$30 Car Tab Measure,” Associated Press, November 7, 2019. <https://www.king5.com/article/news/politics/elections/seattle-king-county-will-sue-to-block-30-car-tab-measure/281-9989bf30-9b9d-4de5-89c5-4517135a39e7>.

## Summary of Proposition 1

The ballot summary for Proposition 1 is:

“The City of Seattle’s Proposition 1 concerns funding for transit and related transportation needs in Seattle.

If approved, this proposition authorizes up to 0.15% sales and use tax expiring April 1, 2027, and as proposed in Ordinance 126115, to replace the current voter-approved 0.1% sales tax, expiring December 31, 2020.

Revenues are dedicated to: transit services benefitting Seattle residents, including frequent transit network maintenance and associated capital improvements; low-income fare programs for Seattle seniors, students, workers, and residents; and transportation needs related to COVID-19 recovery and the West Seattle Bridge closure.<sup>9</sup>

Should this proposition be approved?”<sup>10</sup>

Yes No

In the text of the full ordinance, the City says they want to “maintain sufficient transit service and access to opportunity made possible by Proposition 1, while also facilitating COVID-19 response and the recovery of the economy with mobility for essential workers, job seekers, students, and others who will continue to rely on transit... while also mitigating impacts from the closure of the West Seattle Bridge.”<sup>11</sup>

They also make clear that Seattle supports a countywide transit funding measure in the future, intended to “consolidate or phase-out this funding measure.”<sup>12</sup> Further, if 2019’s Initiative 976 is overturned, the City has the authority to increase the remaining \$20 car tab fee to \$50 over a period of several years without a public vote, and upwards of \$100 with a public vote.

Since the City recognizes sales taxes as regressive, officials note they are committed to enacting Developer Impact Fees to “as early as 2021 to increase funding to buy bus service hours from Metro.” They view these fees as more progressive since they would be paid by “large, corporate developers.” This would be in addition to the sales tax that all residents in the city (STBD) would be paying.

The ordinance further states that the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) will conduct a “Race and Social Justice analysis to inform the City Council in consideration of future STBD spending decisions...to focus on the needs of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and benefit these and other historically underserved communities.”

9 King County Office of Elections. “Ballot Measures.” King County, 2020. <https://info.kingcounty.gov/kcelections/Vote/contests/ballotmeasures.aspx?lang=en-US>.

10 “Ordinance 126115 Council Bill 119833,” City of Seattle, July 27, 2020, at <https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8709931&GUID=8764B4C0-E8AB-4FE0-A381-FDD52DA36CC8>.

11 “Ordinance 126115 Council Bill 119833,” City of Seattle, July 27, 2020, at <https://seattle.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8709931&GUID=8764B4C0-E8AB-4FE0-A381-FDD52DA36CC8>.

12 Ibid.

The complete proposition included in the ordinance states the revenue from the sales tax increase will be used to fund the following:

- Maintain service hours on King County Metro services with more than 65 percent of stops in Seattle;
- Pay for service hours on current and future RapidRide lines serving Seattle;
- Up to \$10 million can be used each year for programs (like transit passes) for low-income residents, workers, seniors, students and others;
- Up to \$9 million can be used in 2021 and up to \$3 million each year after for infrastructure maintenance and capital improvements;
- Up to \$9 million can be used each year to support anything deemed an “emerging mobility need related to COVID-19 response and recovery, and closure of the West Seattle High Bridge” – this includes transit service, as well as first-last mile connections and Transportation Demand Management strategies in the Reconnect West Seattle plan.<sup>13</sup>

The proposition also notes that the City will issue an annual report for the public to review how Metro is spending Proposition 1 money. The Seattle Transit Advisory Board will serve as the public oversight committee regarding the spending of that money.

## **Policy Analysis**

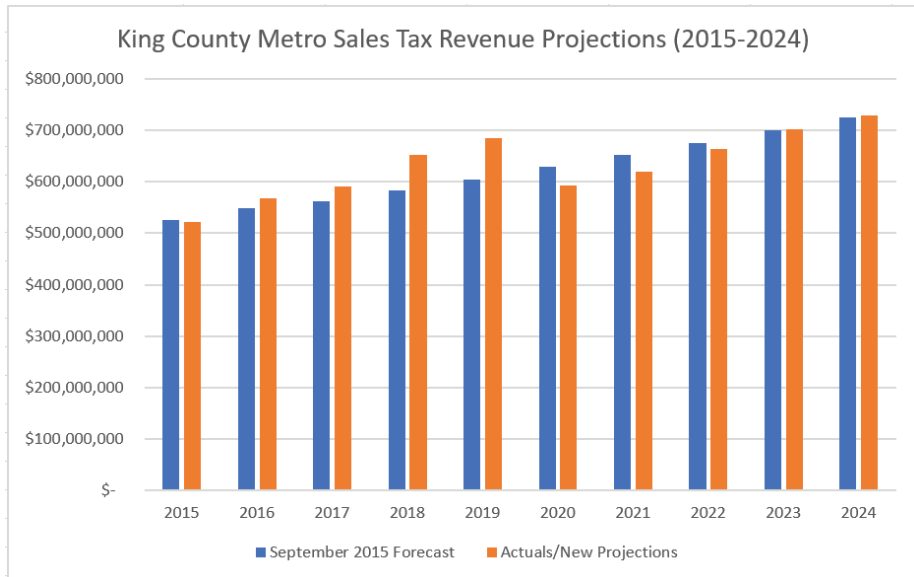
### **Sales tax revenue**

As noted, public funding for Metro Transit comes primarily from a 0.9 percent local sales and use tax. The Seattle TBD sales tax increase from 0.1 percent to 0.15 percent is a separate, Seattle-specific tax on top of the countywide tax.

Washington Policy Center reviewed Metro’s primary, countywide public funding source, since the justification for the Seattle TBD taxes passed in 2014 was that county sales tax revenue was insufficient to maintain service at current levels. We compared the projections officials made in 2015 for the decade (2015 to 2024), to actual revenue and new, post-COVID projections for the same decade. The year 2015 was the first year after the failure of the countywide ballot measure, and the passage of the Seattle TBD’s 0.1 percent sales tax and \$60 car tab fee. It was also prior to the economic growth experienced in subsequent years, and obviously did not account for the 2020 pandemic and economic recession.

---

<sup>13</sup> “Reconnect West Seattle Implementation Plan (Action 4),” Seattle Department of Transportation, September 2020, at [https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/BridgeStairsProgram/West%20Seattle%20Bridge/ReconnectWS\\_Implementation\\_Plan%20\(002\).pdf](https://www.seattle.gov/Documents/Departments/SDOT/BridgeStairsProgram/West%20Seattle%20Bridge/ReconnectWS_Implementation_Plan%20(002).pdf).



As shown in the bar graph above, actuals in the first half of the decade (2015 to 2019) generally came in above what was forecasted for those years. New projections for the second half of the decade (2020 to 2024), which consider the impact of COVID-19 on the economy, are lower than what was projected in 2015, though not by much.

In general, new projections show that over the next four years, Metro’s sales tax revenue collections will be roughly where Metro anticipated they would be in 2015, *despite* the pandemic. In other words, even with the pandemic, agency officials are collecting about as much as they thought they would before the economic boom.

In fact, in 2015, officials forecast that Metro would collect about \$6.2 billion in sales tax revenue over the course of the decade. Actual revenue and new projections show that even with the impact of COVID on Metro’s budget for a couple of years, the agency will still collect an even greater \$6.3 billion in sales tax revenue by the year 2024 (see table below). In other words, despite year-over-year changes from 2020 to 2022, Metro officials will still collect more money than they had previously estimated for the decade.

Year	September 2015 Forecast	Actuals (2015-19) & New Projections (2020-24)
2015	\$ 525,240,587	\$ 521,141,057
2016	\$ 548,398,250	\$ 567,127,402
2017	\$ 562,630,465	\$ 591,088,207
2018	\$ 582,473,276	\$ 652,299,024
2019	\$ 605,456,335	\$ 684,963,001
2020	\$ 628,534,585	\$ 592,262,835
2021	\$ 652,404,597	\$ 620,384,889
2022	\$ 675,364,359	\$ 664,223,642
2023	\$ 699,556,894	\$ 702,911,558
2024	\$ 725,262,458	\$ 728,609,652
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 6,205,321,806</b>	<b>\$ 6,325,011,267</b>

We also looked specifically at the year 2020, which shows Metro receiving about \$36 million less in sales tax revenue than what they anticipated they would in the 2015



forecast.<sup>14</sup> However, Metro will also receive about \$244 million in federal CARES Act money this year.<sup>15</sup> This cash infusion from the federal government puts the agency \$208 million above where officials thought they would be this year in their 2015 forecast.

Using a more recent July 2019 forecast for comparison, federal aid puts the agency \$140 million above where officials thought they would be this year.

This is not to say that the fiscal impact of the pandemic does not present problems for the transit agency - it does. Metro's farebox recovery rate is normally 25 percent of operating costs, but the agency suspended fares from March through September of this year, adding to the agency's revenue loss.<sup>16</sup> The budget for 2021-22 is based on previous years' actuals, and there is a real reduction in sales tax revenue for those two years as well. However, Metro projects sales tax revenue collections will be back at 2019 levels by 2023.

The federal CARES Act dollars Metro will receive this year help offset losses in fares and sales tax revenue for 2020, and Metro officials will need to find ways to make the budget work over the following two years. However, analysis of Metro's sales tax revenue forecasts indicate a tax increase may not be necessary.

## Ridership

The purpose of tax dollars is to fund services the public wants and is willing to pay for. The service Metro provides has a significantly reduced customer-base due to COVID-19 health concerns and economic impacts. As of late July, weekly bus ridership was down 63 percent compared to this time in 2019. Access paratransit ridership is down 61 percent.<sup>17</sup> Though steady, Metro ridership is not expected to recover quickly and some ridership losses will likely remain permanent. Thus, it makes sense for the agency to consider scaling back services for 2021 and 2022, years during which the agency will need to save money and operate more efficiently.

The agency does recognize that it will be important to "build the recovery by phases with an ability to flexibly expand, adjust and contract for all components."<sup>18</sup> The coming years will require the agency to flexibly contract, reflecting fiscal realities given the recession and its long-term impacts, and increasing the public's confidence in their management of public money.

---

14 The forecast used for the year 2020 onward is the most recent August 2020 forecast, which accounts for impact of COVID-19.

15 "King County Metro will run out of federal coronavirus aid by the end of the year, seeks more money from Congress," by Heidi Groover, *The Seattle Times*, May 12, 2020, at <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/transportation/king-county-metro-will-run-out-of-federal-coronavirus-aid-by-end-of-year-seeks-more-money-from-congress/>.

16 "King County Metro begins collecting fares Oct. 1," KING 5 News, September 30, 2020, at <https://www.king5.com/article/traffic/traffic-news/fares-resume-king-county-metro/281-aaeb4b71-8705-4bb2-b4f6-4da8bce22ed3#:~:text=After%20suspending%20fare%20collection%20in,the%20bus%20in%20King%20County.&text=Metro%20and%20Sound%20Transit%20stopped,during%20the%20COVID%2D19%20pandemic>.

17 "COVID-19 update: Summer ridership remains steady, masks required when riding transit," by Jeff Switzer, King County Metro, August 7, 2020, at <https://kingcountymetro.blog/2020/08/07/covid-19-update-summer-ridership-remains-steady-masks-required-when-riding-transit/>.

18 "Taking a big hit to ridership, King County Metro sees COVID-19 recovery as opportunity to 'reset,'" by Mariya Frost, Washington Policy Center, June 24, 2020, at <https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/publications/detail/taking-a-big-hit-to-ridership-king-county-metro-sees-covid-19-recovery-as-opportunity-to-reset>.

When King County voters rejected Metro’s Proposition 1 in April of 2014, despite Seattle officials’ threats of reduced service, Metro became more efficient and gained ridership without increasing regressive taxes.<sup>19</sup>

The table below provides a ten-year outlook of ridership (unlinked passenger trips or UPT) on all of Metro’s services and is followed by a table showing service hours (vehicle revenue hours or VRH) over the same period. We analyzed changes between 2010 to 2014, before the passage of the Seattle TBD taxes, and the period of 2015-2019 with the new taxes in effect.

Notably, motor bus service hours were increased 2.5 percent between 2010 and 2014, for impressive ridership gains of 14 percent over the same period. Conversely, after the Seattle TBD passed in 2014, service hours were increased about 16 percent, but ridership increased only two percent. Sound Transit 3 passed in 2016 and some Metro routes were adjusted to get more people to take light rail, so this may help explain why increased service hours did not generate the ridership Metro officials had hoped for.

Ridership (UPT)	2010	2014	2015	2019	% change 2010-2014	% change from 2015-2019	% change from 2010-2019
Demand Response (PT)	1,177,175	1,012,714	902,626	887,914	-14.0%	-1.6%	-24.6%
Demand Taxi (PT)	80,727	96,244	110,018	177,790	19.2%	61.6%	120.2%
Water Taxi (DO)				701,608		<b>2016-19: 16.6%</b>	
Motor Bus (DO & PT)	88,287,796	100,644,580	102,302,981	104,362,254	14.0%	2.0%	18.2%
Streetcar (DO)	520,932	707,714	622,225	1,863,409	35.9%	199.5%	199.5%
Trolley Bus (DO)	20,721,095	19,464,383	18,769,283	17,373,451	-6.1%	-7.4%	-16.2%
Vanpool (DO)	2,849,584	3,414,782	3,561,398	3,300,186	19.8%	-7.3%	15.8%
<b>Total Ridership</b>	<b>113,637,309</b>	<b>125,340,417</b>	<b>126,268,531</b>	<b>128,666,612</b>	10.3%	1.9%	13.2%

Service (VRH)	2010	2014	2015	2019	% change 2010-2014	% change from 2015-2019	% change from 2010-2019
Demand Response (PT)	672,216	619,175	541,382	702,175	-7.9%	29.7%	4.5%
Demand Taxi (PT)	20,232	30,560	43,515	67,214	51.0%	54.5%	232.2%
Water Taxi (DO)				6,017		<b>2016-19: 18.2%</b>	
Motor Bus (DO & PT)	2,679,501	2,747,775	2,816,221	3,262,605	2.5%	15.9%	21.8%
Streetcar (DO)	11,174	12,155	12,128	42,763	8.8%	252.6%	282.7%
Trolley Bus (DO)	431,474	414,662	410,056	421,315	-3.9%	2.7%	-2.4%
Vanpool (DO)	294,928	499,955	512,681	528,947	69.5%	3.2%	79.3%
<b>Total Service</b>	<b>4,109,525</b>	<b>4,324,282</b>	<b>4,335,983</b>	<b>5,031,036</b>	5.2%	16.0%	22.4%

Some transit advocates like Transportation Choices Coalition (TCC) echo the Seattle City Council’s ordinance that the Seattle TBD taxes approved in 2014 resulted in 70 percent of households now being within a 10-minute walk to 10-minute service, the suggestion being that proximity increased use.<sup>20</sup>

However, TCC also released a report alongside Puget Sound Sage with an analysis of whether greater access would attract people to take transit. The report contradicts TCC’s previous claims, stating that “living close to a transit stop is not

19 “One year after voters defeated King County Metro’s Proposition 1 – the sky didn’t fall,” by Bob Pishue, Policy Note, Washington Policy Center, April 28, 2015, at <https://www.washingtonpolicy.org/publications/detail/one-year-after-voters-defeated-king-county-metro-transits-proposition-1-the-sky-didnt-fall>.

20 “Yes for Transit! Seattle Transit Measure Heads to the Ballot,” by Keiko Budech, Transportation Choices Coalition, August 10, 2020, at [https://transportationchoices.org/yes-for-transit-seattle-transit-measure-heads-to-the-ballot/?&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_source=govdelivery&fbclid=IwAR0f3vjrVJ5g\\_hniTDjvLPPrOSO0AIk36dAgGNcVmx7M4qCkSiG2pqRC-Jk](https://transportationchoices.org/yes-for-transit-seattle-transit-measure-heads-to-the-ballot/?&utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery&fbclid=IwAR0f3vjrVJ5g_hniTDjvLPPrOSO0AIk36dAgGNcVmx7M4qCkSiG2pqRC-Jk).

a sufficient measure of how well transit will work for people.”<sup>21</sup> The latter claim seems to align more with Metro’s motor bus ridership data.

## Policy recommendations

The King County Metro budget that passed in September of this year for the 2021-22 biennium takes steps to save money, including cutting certain RapidRide expansions, and reducing the six-year capital budget by 30 percent.

However, there is still more Metro officials can do to tighten their budget. For example, Metro plans to “bring service back, with the potential to restore nearly all the currently suspended service hours” in 2021 - this would “strain Metro finances, with reserves and fund balanced depleted by 2024.”<sup>22</sup>

Some experts speculate the agency is hoping the public will pass countywide taxes to fund additional service. The King County Executive, in the County’s budget executive summary, states “Metro’s hours likely will rebound to pre-COVID levels by the end of the 2022.” These predictions seem unwise and funding the full restoration of service is likely unnecessary. Current ridership trends and the high degree of uncertainty about the future of telework merit greater caution than this.

Metro is also proceeding with design and construction of new facilities, including an “all-electric South Campus” expansion in Tukwila. The agency plans to spend \$270 million on electrification, “starting with 40 buses and charging infrastructure in 2021-22 and adding charging infrastructure for another 260 buses by 2028.”<sup>23</sup> This alone will cost more than the sum total of the proposed Seattle TBD, which is expected to generate about \$39 million per year over six years.<sup>24</sup> This costly expansion can and should wait.

## Conclusion

Unlike the Seattle Transportation Benefit District’s now expiring car tab fee, local sales taxes that residents approve through a public vote are a broad and fair way to fund local transit. Those who support Metro’s proposed uses for the sales tax renewal and increase should support the measure.

Those who are more concerned about Metro’s financial outlook given the impacts of COVID-19 should know that Metro does not need a six-year tax increase to stay afloat. Given the \$244 million Metro received from the federal government, the agency is well above where they anticipated they would be this year in previous forecasts.

---

21 “More Places, Better Connections: Transit Priorities for Residents of South Seattle and South King County,” Transportation Choices Coalition and Puget Sound Sage, June 2020, at [https://www.pugetsoundsage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/PSS-Report\\_More-Places-Better-Connections.pdf](https://www.pugetsoundsage.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/PSS-Report_More-Places-Better-Connections.pdf).

22 “Metro budget cuts RapidRide expansions,” by Dan Ryan, Seattle Transit Blog, September 23, 2020, at <https://seattletransitblog.com/2020/09/23/metro-budget-cuts-rapidride-expansions/?fbclid=IwAR0NcaEF8BIU8uDkwCRJ25u1fUYldapFpX5qDxdHsR3EA0sdNxOIFeFuBbY>.

23 Ibid.

24 “2021 Proposal to provide reliable transit,” Seattle Department of Transportation, accessed on October 6, 2020, at <https://www.seattle.gov/transit/about-seattle-transportation-benefit-district/2021-proposal-to-provide-reliable-transit>.





**Mariya Frost** is the Director of the Coles Center for Transportation at Washington Policy Center. Born in Russia, she and her family came to the United States in 1993 and she grew up in Washington state. She is a graduate of the University of Washington with a degree in Political Science and has completed courses in accounting and business administration at Saint Martin's University. She spent ten years working in the private sector and as a staff member at the U.S. House of Representatives and the Washington state senate.

Mariya has lived in both Eastern and Western Washington, and believes strongly in the freedom of mobility for all Washingtonians. She is on the Board of Directors for the Eastside Transportation Association, a member of the Jim MacIsaac Research Committee, a working member of the Washington State Autonomous Vehicle Work Group Subcommittee on Infrastructure & Systems, and a member of the Women of Washington civic group.

*Washington Policy Center is a non-partisan, independent research organization in Washington state. Nothing here should be construed as an attempt to aid or hinder the passage of any legislation before any legislative body.*

*Published by*  
Washington Policy Center  
© 2020

**washingtonpolicy.org**  
**206-937-9691**

For the next two years (2021 and 2022), Metro can reduce spending on electrification, scale back services in light of a significantly reduced customer base, and partner with the private sector to provide cost-effective transportation options to remaining riders. By 2023, the agency is forecasting to be back to where it was financially before the pandemic. Not imposing the regressive tax hike would have the added benefit of giving struggling Seattle businesses and residents a break during the economic recovery.

Seattle voters should carefully consider Metro's proposed uses for the sales tax increase, as well as Metro's budget and financial outlook for the next few years, and vote according to what they value and what will best meet their needs.