Part 7: Implementation

DELIVERING BUS PRIORITY REQUIRES PRACTICAL, CONTEXT-SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS

Our vision for bus priority throughout the region is achievable.

The Bus Priority Vision reflects the realities of Metro Vancouver's road network, where limited space must support multiple users and functions. The challenge is to translate that vision into practical improvements that can be delivered on the ground, in varied local contexts, and within existing processes and constraints.

Delivering bus priority is a shared, practical effort

Implementing bus priority requires coordination across TransLink, municipalities, and the BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit (BC MOTT). Each plays a distinct role in shaping, approving, and delivering projects, and no single organization controls all of the tools needed to improve bus performance. Advancing improvements depends on aligning priorities, working within local conditions, and integrating transit priority into broader roadway programs.

Progress depends on moving from plans to projects

Delivering bus priority involves identifying opportunities, working through trade-offs, and implementing changes—often alongside other planned investments. Many of the most effective improvements are well understood, but their success depends on how they are applied, adapted, and coordinated in practice.

The need to act is clear

Roadway delay continues to increase the cost of operating bus service and reduce reliability for customers. Addressing these impacts through targeted, practical improvements will allow resources to be used more effectively and support better service across the region.

IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS REQUIRES COORDINATION ACROSS MULTIPLE AGENCIES

The tools for improving bus speed & reliability are controlled by different authorities.

In Metro Vancouver, no single entity controls all the interventions that improve bus performance. Making transit better therefore is a shared responsibility between TransLink, CMBC, municipalities, and the BC Ministry of Transportation and Transit (BC MOTT).

TransLink has control or direct influence over operating considerations such boarding and fare payment policies, route design, and service frequency. Coast Mountain Bus Company (CMBC), a subsidiary of TransLink, operates the bus fleet and manages the schedules.

Municipalities and BC MOTT own the roadway and control traffic signals. This means they have ultimate authority over changes to the right of way, such as the addition of bus lanes, the management of parking, and the programming of traffic signals.

TransLink, the municipalities, and BC MOTT share responsibility for many interventions. For example, if TransLink wishes to move a bus stop—or modify its design—municipalities must approve the change, which occurs on their property.

Private property owners and municipalities also share control over parts of the roadway. These include street patios, the addition of which can impact bus operations.

The table below illustrates what TransLink has control over in the right-of-way and what is controlled by municipalities, MOTT, and private property owners—or is a shared responsibility.

TransLink Control	TransLink and Municipality Control	Municipality and MOTT Control		Municipality and Property Owner Control
Operations	**Bus Stops**	**Travel Lanes**	**Intersections**	**Public Realm**
Boarding policy (e.g., all-door boarding)	Stop relocation or consolidation	Bus lanes	Turn and movement restrictions	Street patios
Route design	Bus platform design	Transit approach lane	Transit signal priority	Connecting shuttles or bike share
Bus fleet size and type	Bus bulbs	Queue jump	Turn lanes and pockets	
Frequency and hours of service	Boarding islands	Roadway channelization		
		Parking restrictions		

Multi-agency partnerships are required.

Although bus priority improvement projects can be done cost-effectively and quickly, they are not always easy to accomplish, in part due to their multiagency nature. No agency can successfully deliver these projects alone. In addition to having different authorities over road-space, each offers unique skills, perspectives, and resources.

TransLink has staff with expertise in transit operations and design. They can identify causes of delay and propose potential solutions. TransLink also provides funding resources to municipalities to design and deliver projects.

Municipalities and BC MOTT have staff with expertise in transportation engineering and traffic signal operation and design. They can also identify causes of delay and potential solutions. But they also bring local knowledge of conditions, including previous and planned initiatives, and they have the ability to integrate bus priority elements into already-planned roadway maintenance and upgrade projects.

In recent years TransLink, BC MOTT, and some Metro Vancouver municipalities have ramped up their efforts to improve bus performance, in support of regional and provincial goals. That collaboration has been aided by the launch of the RapidBus brand of service, which focused new transit priority measures along some of the highest ridership corridors in the region. In parallel TransLink has also dedicated funding for the BSR Funding Program—nearly $50 million between 2019 and 2025. (See "Regional Investments in Bus Priority" on page 47.) This has been supported by the development of new data analytics and visualizations that support analysis of existing bus delay.

City of Vancouver, TransLink, and CMBC staff on a project site visit.

The launch of new RapidBus routes requires close coordination between TransLink, municipalities, and BC MOTT.

Even apparently "simple" changes can be complex.

Even projects that do not require major civil works or roadway reconstruction – such as changing signage, adjusting pavement markings, or relocating a bus stop – are regulatory changes that entail coordination across agencies and often involve careful engagement with those affected.

TransLink and its partners value consultation with bus customers, residents, and local businesses. This feedback helps ensure that bus service remains responsive to local conditions and is well understood by the communities it affects. Both technical staff and elected officials must also balance the often-competing interests of road user, such as drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, and bus riders. Taking time to address these issues can help build lasting support for transit priority improvements and reduce the risk of backlash that might undermine future projects.

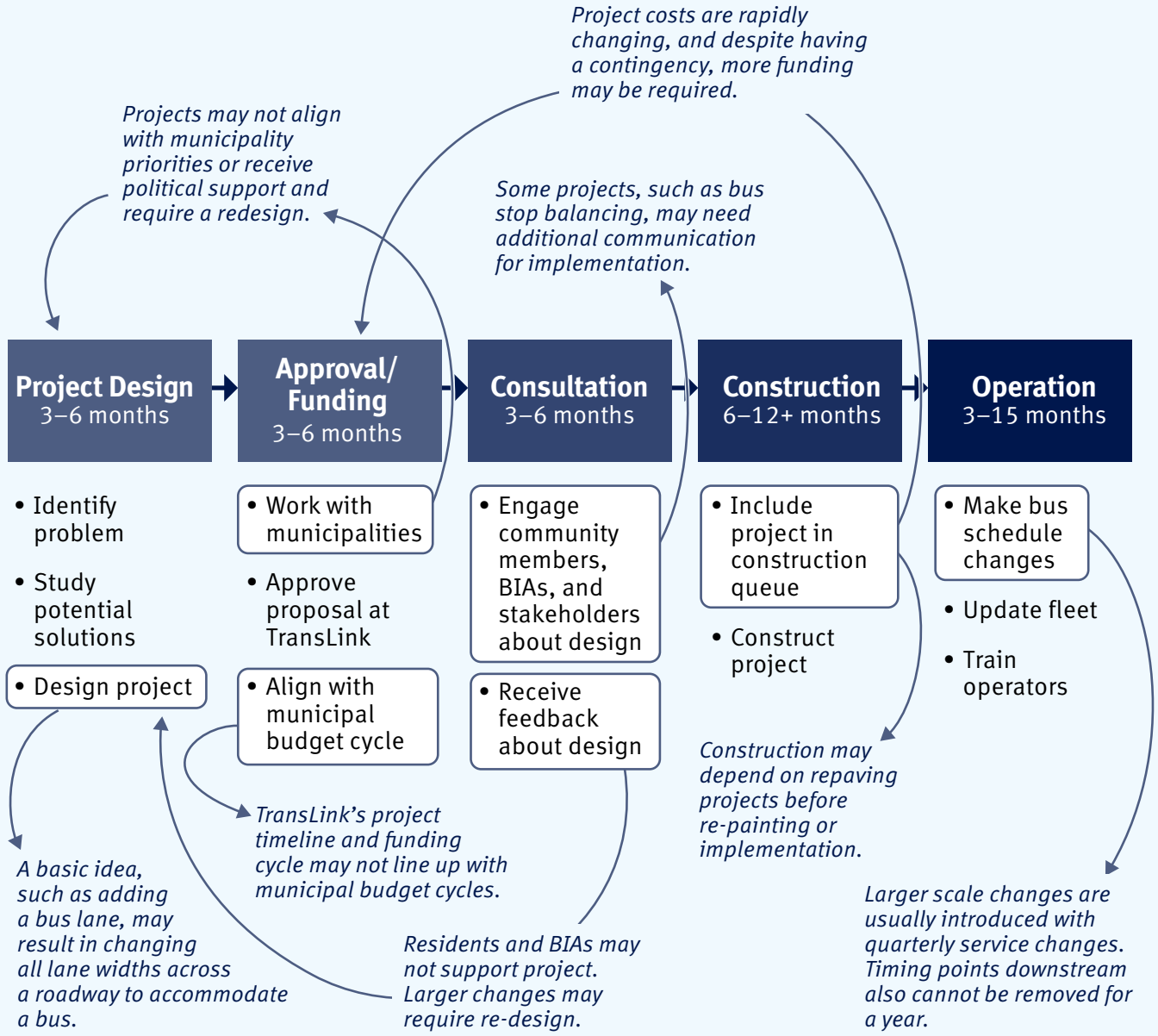
Safety and clarity are also important considerations. Even when bus priority projects are introduced as pilots or temporary measures, safety standards can require using durable materials and standard roadway markings rather than informal installations. Confusion can cause accidents, and even undermine projects goals. For example, if a bus stop is closed but its pole is left in place, customers can be left stranded, or bus operators will continue to stop, slowing them down. Coordinated implementation ensures that infrastructure, signage, and service information are aligned.

Institutional processes—such as funding cycles and project queues—can also extend timelines. Budgets and construction both follow a seasonal cycle, and projects are not prioritized simply because they're theoretically quick to build. Roadway construction is least disruptive when multiple changes are made simultaneously, but this means bus priority measures may be implemented alongside other projects like utility upgrades or new bicycle infrastructure—slowing down implementation.

Municipal and TransLink staff consult the community before implementing significant changes.

Despite these complexities, the TransLink Bus Speed & Reliability Funding Program prioritizes projects that deliver meaningful improvements quickly and cost-effectively. Many comparatively minor interventions—such as targeted curb restrictions, signage clarifications, and bus stop consolidation—have already produced measurable benefits. (See "Part 4: Bus Priority Infrastructure" on page 40). Building on these successes, TransLink and its partners aim to continue delivering practical improvements that make bus service faster and more reliable across the region.

Project Timeline: Actual



THESE CHALLENGES ARE SURMOUNTABLE WITH COORDINATED ACTION

Most municipalities and BC MOTT face similar challenges to providing fast, reliable bus service.

Although each city has unique characteristics, they all must balance competing demands on public roadways and sidewalks. In addition to transit vehicles, roads must also accommodate personal cars, taxis, goods movement and delivery trucks, emergency services, bicycles, and pedestrians. Similarly, regional authorities like BC MOTT must balance competing demands for the space on provincially managed highways.

Sometimes bus priority improvements have benefits to other users of the roadway, such as widening projects that add bus or HOV lanes. But, in general, the most impactful and inexpensive interventions are the most politically sensitive—because they require an explicit trade-off between users of the roadway. For example, converting general travel lanes or parking lanes into bus lanes is a fast, effective, and low-cost way to improve bus service. However, it can be challenging to reallocate space—or time in the traffic signal cycle—from one user to another, especially when changes are subject to public comment or approval from the City Council.

In particular, major corridors often serve many different modes of travel at once, notably buses, cycling, and goods movement. Along these, multiple goals must be balanced, and the impact on overall people-moving capacity of the road should be considered.

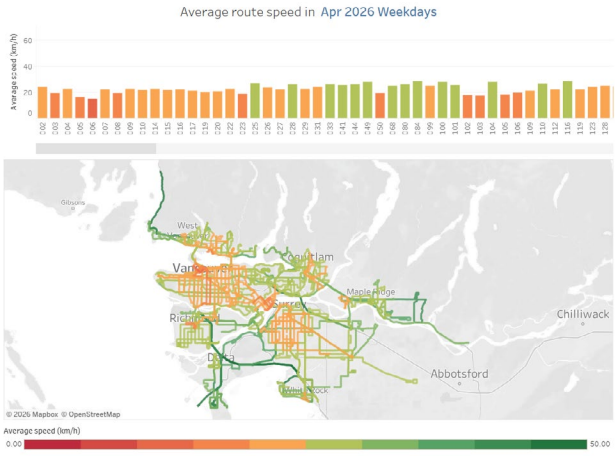
Many cities have been successful at improving bus speed and reliability.

Fortunately, many cities across the globe, including several in Metro Vancouver, have successfully reallocated road space. Many of these efforts were accelerated during the pandemic, when very low levels of traffic prompted a unique opportunity to rethink priorities.

Road reallocations to support transit are often done in recognition of the fact that transit riders already make up a major share of the people moving through major corridors. But many cities have made changes to encourage mode shifts in the future. For example, most cities have some experience reallocating road space to provide safer facilities for cycling or walking. The same can be done to protect people on transit from congestion.

Data helps leaders make more informed decisions about trade-offs.

As the manager of Metro Vancouver's integrated regional transit network, TransLink has enormous amounts of data to identify where, when, and by how much buses are slowed down. In tandem, municipal and provincial agencies have information about traffic volumes, and other roadway activity such as parking usage. Using this data to develop analytics and visualizations on bus delays, traffic conditions, and parking has helped municipal and provincial leaders make informed decisions and balance competing needs.



RETAIL CORRIDORS ARE PARTICULARLY CHALLENGING – BUT ALSO WORTH IMPROVING

The most-delayed corridors typically contain retail areas.

Implementation challenges are particularly visible on retail streets, where multiple demands on limited space must be carefully balanced. Of the most-delayed corridors in the region, 14 of the top 15 have notable retail areas (all but 49 Ave)—which can impact bus operations. (See Part 3: Ranked Priorities.) "Traditional" retail zones feature on-street parking, frequent deliveries, and rideshare pick-up/drop-off—each of which have potential to interfere with bus movements. Likewise, "auto-focused" retail areas have access driveways, which bring turning cars into the buses' path, and many retail strips have few parallel roads for traffic to divert onto. Both types of retail development may have constrained or non-existent sidewalks, limiting the space available to optimize bus stop locations.

Surveys have shown that transit is important for the vitality of retail streets.

Improving and promoting transit supports local businesses. Locations with convenient access to good public transport are more valuable, and improving transit access to business districts increases the customer base. Notably, employees who commute by transit are also interested in shopping without going home to get their car, and tourists and visitors often don't have one at all.

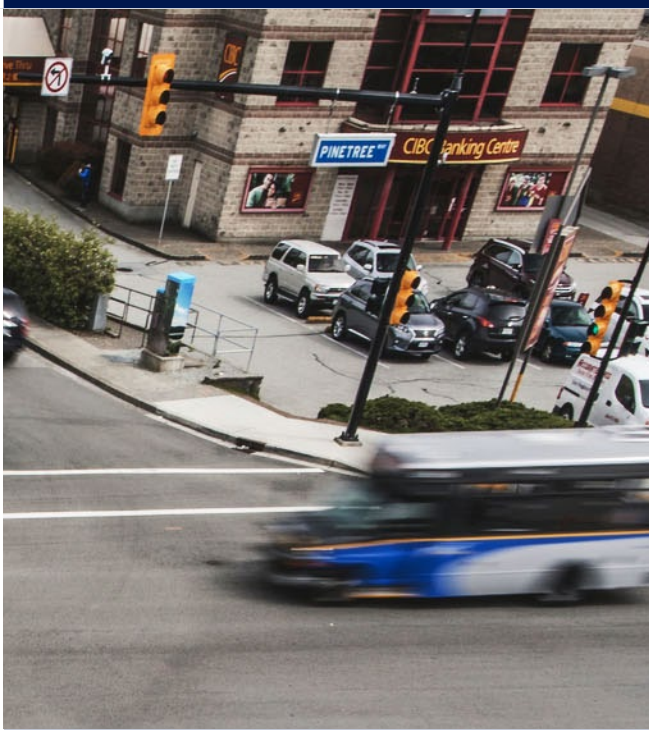
Examples from several Canadian and US cities found that transit brings new and existing customers, who then spend more time in shops and businesses.

Toronto, ON: 76% of people surveyed felt that "complete street" installations that supported bus access in Summer 2021 helped local businesses, and 31% of respondents visited the area more often.[35]

San Francisco, CA: An intercept survey on Mission Street showed that 60% of people arrived by transit. Transit riders also spent more than those who arrived by other modes such as walking, cycling, driving, or ride share.[36]

Seattle, WA: An intercept survey in downtown Seattle found that workers who take transit are also much more likely to spend more time in the neighbourhood to shop or eat, spending more than triple that of car commuters.[37]

Comparison of Traditional and Auto-Oriented Retail Characteristics that Affect Bus Operations

Traditional Retail (e.g., on-street parking)	Auto-Focused Retail (e.g., off-street parking)
	
Examples • Hastings St • W 4th Ave • Lonsdale Ave • Robson St	**Examples** • Scott Rd • Lougheed Hwy • No. 3 Rd
Characteristics that affect bus operations • On-street parking • Deliveries • Rideshare pick-up/drop-off • Constrained sidewalks	**Characteristics that affect bus operations** • Driveways • Constrained sidewalks • Lack of parallel roads

Recent bus priority projects support both transit riders and local businesses.

These successes share several common principles.

Early and direct engagement builds workable solutions. Effective transit priority projects on retail streets have relied on extensive, on-the-ground consultation. On Granville Street, TransLink and City of Vancouver staff engaged directly with business owners and residents, including visiting individual businesses in South Granville, to understand access needs, delivery patterns, and concerns about parking and loading. This hands-on engagement helped shape designs that responded to local conditions and built trust as projects moved from concept to construction.

Benefits for buses do not require major losses for riders or retailers. Experience shows that meaningful improvements to bus speed and reliability can be achieved without large disruptions to access. For example, bus stop balancing on Granville Street addressed one of the primary sources of delay—closely spaced stops—while maintaining convenient access: over 96% of riders continue to use a stop within one or two blocks of their previous location. These changes reduced dwell time and bus bunching, delivering faster and more reliable service for riders while preserving walkable access to retail destinations.

Parking can be managed to support both transit and local access. Parking is often a central concern on retail streets, but audits frequently reveal more available supply than merchants may be aware of, including nearby side streets, off-street lots, and underutilized spaces outside peak periods. In current projects, municipalities have used this information to adjust curb regulations to improve turnover and make spaces more available to customers—for example, by reducing unregulated parking, introducing time limits (e.g., one- or two-hour parking), or converting free parking to paid parking. In some cases, there may also be opportunities to create or formalize parking nearby to offset spaces reallocated from the street.

Curb management and design flexibility are critical. Retail streets require flexible approaches. Successful projects have paired bus lanes with dedicated loading zones, adjusted curb regulations, and turn pockets to maintain goods movement and short-term access. In locations where continuous curbside parking and loading are essential, offset or median bus lanes can provide transit priority while preserving curb access for businesses. These design options expand the toolkit for applying bus priority in constrained retail environments.

Incremental improvements can deliver real results. Rather than relying on a single large intervention, recent retail street projects have combined multiple small, targeted measures—bus lanes during key periods, improved signal timing, stop spacing adjustments, and turn restrictions—to collectively improve performance. This approach has proven effective on corridors such as Granville Street and is being advanced on Hastings Street, where extended bus lane hours and bus stop changes are planned to address some of the region's highest bus delays.

Endnotes

1 Systemwide boardings. TransLink, 2025 Transit Service Performance Review, pre-publication data.

2 TransLink, 2024 Transit Service Performance Review, p. 4.

3 TransLink, 2025 Transit Service Performance Review, pre-publication data.

4 Bus loads measured by TransLink Automated Passenger counts; Vehicle estimates from StreetLight Data.

5 TransLink, 2024 Transit Service Performance Review.

6 TransLink System Analytics, 2018–2021, based on Compass farecard data.

7 TransLink, 2021 Transit Service Performance Review, page 20.

8 TransLink, 2025 Transit Service Performance Review, pre-publication data.

9 TransLink, 2021 Transit Service Performance Review, page 16.

10 Bus loads measured by TransLink Automated Passenger counts; Vehicle estimates from StreetLight Data.

11 Estimated total annual driving costs from CAA Driving Costs Calculator (British Columbia, compact vehicle category). Cost of TransLink Annual Transit Pass from TransLink Pricing and Fare Zones webpage (Compass 3 Zone).

12 Metro Vancouver, Housing and Transportation Cost Burden. Data from 2011.

13 Vehicles: Based on up to 800 to 1,100 vehicles per lane per hour, and 1.3 people per vehicle on average. Buses: Based on 95 people per bus, at 75% to 100% of capacity and up to 20 buses per hour per direction in mixed traffic (every 3 minutes) and up to 40 buses per hour per direction in a priority lane (every 1.5 minutes).

14 Existing: Vehicles – Based on existing vehicles per direction along Hastings Street at Gilmore in the PM peak hour and 10% of vehicles in the HOV lane and 1.3 people per vehicle on average. Buses – Based on existing transit volumes on Hastings at Gilmore (Fall 2019).

15 Conceptual with Bus Lanes: Vehicles – Based on up to 1,000 vehicles per lane per hour, and 1.3 people per vehicle on average. Buses – Based on 95 people per bus, at ~85% of capacity (85 people), and up to 30 buses per hour per direction in a priority lane (every 2 minutes), plus a local bus with 50 people every 10 minutes.

16 TransLink, Climate Action Strategy, January 2022, page 5.

17 Metro Vancouver, Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventory, 2019.

18 Metro Vancouver, Climate 2050 Roadmap: Transportation, November 2021, page 22-23.

19 TransLink, Climate Action Strategy, January 2022, page 5.

20 TransLink, Low Carbon Fleet Transition Plan, 2020.

21 Hastings Street in Burnaby Heights. The estimate of people traveling through the corridor was based on traffic counts, bus volumes, and bus passenger loads at Gilmore Street in Fall 2019. It assumed each auto carried 1.3 passengers, which is the regional average.

22 Range between 20th and 80th percentile travel times.

23 Data is based on the comparison of bus speeds on weekdays in February 2020 to speeds in April 2020, for AM peak, midday, and PM peak hours. Values exclude dwell time.

24 Data represents savings on Rapid, All-Day Frequent and Peak Frequent routes. Savings on other routes are not included, but would increase these values.

25 See Figure 4 of the 2021 Transit Service Performance Review, page 19, for a chart illustrating boardings by time of day in Fall 2021 compared to Fall 2019.

26 TransLink, 2021 Transit Service Performance Review, page 12.

27 TransLink, Transport 2050: 10-Year Priorities for TransLink, June 2022.

28 TransLink, Transport 2050: 10-Year Priorities for TransLink, June 2022.

29 The number of routes does not include night bus.

30 Government of British Columbia, HOV lanes webpage.

31 Anecdotally, most of the buses merge out of the bus lane to bypass right-turning cars at this time of day.

32 Based on the number of riders on board buses entering an area with transit priority, plus riders boarding within that area.

33 The Twin Cities region has a wide network of lanes designated all-day busways lanes on freeways and highways (including use of shoulders), making it an outlier among agencies; all-day lanes of freeways and limited access highways were excluded from the comparison of all-day bus lanes.

34 Data for SFMTA reflects only bus-only lanes within the City of San Francisco, and does not include rail-specific transit-lanes in the city.

35 The City of Toronto, ActiveTO Midtown Complete Street Pilot Public Intercept Survey Evaluation Report, March 2022.

36 San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, Results of Intercept Survey, April 2015.

37 Downtown Seattle Association, Tourists spend $195 a day in downtown Seattle—that's twice as much as local visitors, December 2017.

38 City of Boston, Summer Street Pilot Program webpage and brochure, September 2023.

39 City of Seattle, Route 40 Freight-and-Bus Only Lane Pilot Project, February 2024. and Draft Freight Lane Policy, June 2022,

40 King County Metro, MetroConnects, November 2021, p. 22.