



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Kurtis D. Kingsolver, P.E., Public Works Director/City Engineer *KDK*
COPY: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning & Development Services
SUBJECT: Resolution expressing general support of Pierce Transit's Pacific Ave/SR 7 Bus Rapid Transit project – March 26, 2019
DATE: March 11, 2019

SUMMARY:

A resolution expressing general support of the City Council for Pierce Transit's first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line, serving the Tacoma Downtown Regional Center, the Tacoma Dome Station, and the Pacific Avenue corridor from downtown to the Spanaway area.

TACOMA STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

Pierce Transit's BRT project is expected to advance Tacoma's vision and goals related to health and safety, human and social needs, economic vibrancy, and enhancing the natural and built environment, including the following specific policy priorities:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Foster a vibrant and diverse economy with good jobs for all Tacoma residents.

The BRT system will support the City's Comprehensive Plan including the strategic policies within the Transportation Master by creating a top quality and advanced travel option, which will provide greater mobility access for all users and support transit-oriented development along one of the City's key corridors. The enhanced transportation services provided by the new BRT corridor are consistent with the Transportation Master Plan policies calling for significant increases in alternative mode choices to help reduce the use of single occupant vehicles by 30 percent by year 2030, to reduce vehicle miles traveled, and improve air quality. This project encourages transit ridership and helps the City meet its adopted mode shift targets. Additionally, the BRT system is expected to increase opportunities for mixed-use development and greater density along the corridor, improve jobs/workforce balance, and encourage more active lifestyles through enhancements to infrastructure that supports first-last mile connections.

BACKGROUND:

In 2017, Pierce Transit launched a feasibility study for a BRT system along Pierce Transit's current Route 1 serving Downtown Tacoma to Spanaway via Pacific Avenue. Pierce Transit reported on the proposed project to the City Council at three study sessions in October 2017, June 2018, and February 2019. City staff from Public Works and the Planning & Development Services departments has worked with Pierce Transit to help with the BRT system planning. Additionally, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) with representatives from Pierce County, the Washington State Department of Transportation, Sound Transit, and the Puget Sound Regional Council have met regularly to help with the planning and technical analysis of the proposed project.

Pierce Transit has engaged the community with a comprehensive outreach approach including 12 open houses, online open houses, mailers, social media, a dedicated project website, a station location mapping tool, and grassroots outreach to neighborhood groups and businesses along the corridor.

In July 2018, the Pierce Transit Board (PTB) of Commissioners voted on the Locally Preferred Alternative that includes Pacific Avenue as the preferred route through Tacoma's South End and East 26th Street as the preferred route through the Dome District and to the Tacoma Dome Station. The PTB



Commissioners are scheduled to vote on the project station locations, lane treatments, and Tacoma Dome Station access design at their April 8, 2019, board meeting.

Pierce Transit along with its consultant team have been working with City staff from Public Works and Planning & Development Services departments, a multi-agency technical advisory committee, and community stakeholders to help create the framework for the new BRT system including its termini, the number of and location of new stations, lane treatments on Pacific Avenue, and service routing to the Tacoma Dome Station via East 26th Street. The next step for the BRT project is an environmental review process, which will include additional analysis on potential impacts along the project route.

While Pierce Transit is requesting City Council support of the proposed project and preliminary design, further flexibility, and design alternatives may still be considered. Pierce Transit pledges to work with the City and the community to provide acceptable solutions through additional analysis early in the upcoming environmental review. For example, the design phase will evaluate the potential for managed lanes and station orientation options in the mixed-use centers and other key transit-oriented development opportunity areas along the corridor, context-appropriate intersection level-of-service, urban design/pedestrian scaling for accessible and compact pedestrian-oriented growth, and limiting impacts on property owners/businesses. If feasible, Pierce Transit would recognize the City's appropriate refinements and then update, as necessary, the environmental documents to reflect the change.

ISSUE:

In order to reduce the use of single occupant vehicles, to reduce vehicle miles traveled, and improve air quality, the City should support Pierce Transit's first Bus Rapid Transit line.

The Pacific Avenue corridor is currently served by Pierce Transit's Route 1, one of Pierce Transit's four trunk routes, and it has the highest annual ridership in our system. The segment of the Route 1, which will be replaced with the proposed BRT corridor, has an estimated daily ridership of more than 3,500 passengers. The year 2040 ridership projections for the Pacific Avenue BRT corridor are estimated at 8,000 daily boardings. Pierce Transit will develop a transition plan to ensure that existing riders on Route 1 are educated about and transitioned to use the new BRT service.

The BRT project corridor is only at a five-percent design level, so additional design, analysis, and coordination with City staff and the community will be continuing through the upcoming environmental review and design phases for the project. Pending adoption of the lane treatments, station locations, and the route to the Tacoma Dome Station by Pierce Transit's board, Pierce Transit will continue to meet with stakeholders and impacted property owners, and hold community meetings throughout the environmental review and design process. Pierce Transit is in the process of soliciting proposals for the next stages of the project including the design, right-of-way, and construction phases.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could adopt, modify, or reject this resolution.

Recent recommendations by the TAC have included proposed Business Access Transit (BAT) lanes in some specific portions of the Pacific Avenue corridor. In addition, Pierce Transit recognizes that Sound Transit and the City are currently evaluating potential options for the new Central Link Light Rail Station that will be located in the Tacoma Dome District. Pierce Transit has also committed to partnering with the City on a comprehensive subarea/corridor plan along Pacific Avenue that will evaluate land use, urban design,



streetscape, accessibility, connectivity, environmental, and capital needs along this corridor. These projects and continuing community engagement may inform further system design refinements.

RECOMMENDATION:

The City Council is recommended to adopt a resolution to express general support for the Pacific Avenue/SR 7 Bus Rapid Transit Corridor project including the Pacific Avenue and East 26th Street alignment, with the understanding that Pierce Transit will include an additional analysis early in the next phases to ensure the project appropriately balances the shared goals of Pierce Transit, the City, and the community to improve transit access and service while promoting livability, walkability, and transit-oriented compact development along this urban corridor.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact associated with the adoption of this resolution.