



**City of Tacoma
Transportation Commission**

July 8, 2025

Subject: Pierce Transit Destination 2045 Long Range Plan – 2nd Draft

Dear Pierce Transit staff and Board of Commissioners:

The Transportation Commission thanks Pierce Transit for their June 18 presentation on the draft *Destination 2045 Long Range Plan* (LRP). We appreciate the LRP's focus on the need to increase frequency and service span. This aligns with the priorities of the City of Tacoma and the Transit Element of its recently adopted *Transportation and Mobility Plan*. We also endorse the choice to exclude from the financial forecasts and growth scenarios all major BRT capital investments, and the agency's commitment to pursue grants to fund such projects.

Transit needs are evolving beyond peak-hour commutes. Today, more riders are using transit to work non-traditional hours and to access daily needs. Ideally, our transit system would be responsive to these changes, offering riders a consistent and frequent service that allows for impromptu trips. While the LRP is a step toward this goal, we feel it does not go far enough.

A Stronger Commitment to Frequency

The Commission is concerned that Scenario A—the scenario representing service under a new 0.3% sales tax increase—delivers fewer 15-minute routes in Tacoma than the “Focus on Frequency” scenario of the 2023 System Recovery Plan, which assumed no new revenue. An aspirational LRP backed by additional funding should enable *more* service and connectivity, not less. We urge Pierce Transit to revise the LRP to reflect a clear commitment to:

- 15-minute service on more of Tacoma's busiest routes, guided by Pierce Transit's own data and the City's Frequent Transit Network Vision
- Prioritize frequency and spans of service *before* expanding the system
- Network sizing and bus stop balancing that matches the agency's capacity to deliver reliable, fast, and frequent service

We believe that system and service span expansions that limit-or-reduce trunk route frequency is an indicator of an inefficient or overextended network.

Prioritize Tacoma's Core Transit Markets

The Commission affirms the importance of Commerce St. Station and the urban core of Tacoma to the region's transit network. The area within a one-mile radius of Commerce St. (i.e., the City) is the busiest transit zone in the county. It is a pivotal hub of jobs, culture, healthcare, education, and services. Pierce County mass transit plans must center the City, not bypass it.

While Tacoma Dome Station (i.e., the Dome) is increasingly vital for regional connectivity, the objective of local network design should remain local mobility. The City is our main hub, and the T Line exists to connect this hub to the Dome. Planners should leverage this rail asset and avoid bus diversions to the Dome at the expense of the City. However, should rerouting to the Dome proceed as envisioned by the LRP, we request an Origins and Destinations study supporting this change and a separate analysis for rerouting all City-terminating lines to the Dome to preserve connectivity. Tacoma requires a coherent transit network downtown and a thoughtful public process to achieve it.

Additionally, any LRP restructuring of the network to prioritize the Dome over the City should be carefully timed with the opening of light rail services at the Dome. Redirecting routes away from the City years in advance of light rail service would displace current riders, reduce access to Tacoma's most active destinations, and degrade system usefulness in the interim. Until such regional services are operational, the City must remain the dominant mass transit hub.

Light Rail and Bus Corridor Investment

We recommend the LRP state that the future light rail alignment to Tacoma Community College is unsettled. The LRP should then commit to a Stream bus transit line on either 19th Street or 6th Avenue if not selected for light rail. We also request a rethinking of the current planning framework that truncates an independent 6th Avenue-Mildred Street bus route at Commerce St. Instead, the Route 1-North bus route should have a terminus at the Dome via the Pacific Avenue/Union Station transit spine. This would allow for significant multimodal integration and develop a premier transit line along some of the city's most important legacy transit streets.

Equity and Access to Destinations

At least 30% of Tacoma residents do not drive due to choice, age, ability, or affordability. These residents deserve access to the city's world-class parks, cultural institutions, and civic destinations. We recommend that Pierce Transit clarify in the LRP how it can work proactively with partners to eliminate last-mile barriers to sites like Cheney Stadium, Point Defiance Park & Zoo, Dune Peninsula, and the Ruston waterfront. We also encourage Pierce Transit to explore innovative access models like King County Metro's Trailhead Direct pilot program, which brings riders directly to prominent destinations and trailheads.

We salute Pierce Transit for innovating with the runner system to provide access to currently under- and un-served areas within the county. We have concerns about the cost per ride and cost per mile of the Runner and thus its long-term feasibility. While serving those communities is important, we want to make sure it doesn't prevent other expansions or possibly putting more consistent service in these areas.

Policy Support

The Commission supports Pierce Transit's efforts to seek a legislative change to the RCW to allow an increase in transit agency taxing authority to 1.2%. In the nearer-term, we support a ballot measure that would exhaust the remaining 0.3% sales tax capacity afforded by law to the agency. We believe that public support hinges on Pierce Transit's ability to provide clear commitments for what this new revenue will deliver and when—particularly around frequency, service span, and facility upgrades—and how the agency will be accountable to those commitments.

The Transportation Commission appreciates the continued partnership between Pierce Transit and the City of Tacoma. As the *Destination 2045 Long Range Plan* moves toward adoption, we urge the agency to strengthen its commitments to frequency, to the core markets in Tacoma, and to the transit users that rely on the system every day.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,



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Co-Chair, Transportation Commission



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Cc:

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