



May 14, 2018

Councilmember Lisa Herbold  
Seattle City Council, District 1

Dear Councilmember Herbold,

Thank you for your letter requesting SDOT explore opportunities to improve off-peak connections from the Admiral and Alki neighborhoods to downtown Seattle. Director Sparrman requested I respond on his behalf.

When RapidRide C Line was implemented in September 2012, Metro revised many routes in the West Seattle, including the Route 56. The ridership on the Route 56 did not meet Metro guidelines for continued service and was among lowest performing 25% of routes during non-peak hours (typically midday). Therefore, Route 56 became an express service, operating only during the peak commute periods with alternative service provided on Route 50. This route provides service from Alki and Admiral to Columbia City, with connections to downtown via Alaska Junction or at the SODO Link Light Rail Station.

Through the Seattle Transportation Benefit District (STBD), the City invests significantly in West Seattle. The City currently funds about 35% of the service on the RapidRide C Line, which improves the reliability and geographic extent of the route. Nearly half of this investment goes toward service during the morning and evening commute periods.

The City funds service on nine additional routes that serve the greater West Seattle area, including: Routes 21/21X, 37, 50, 55, 57, 60, 120, 125, and Route 56. These investments increase the frequency of service and improve reliability. Most recently, the City made significant investments in the Route 50 in September 2017 by improving to every 30 minutes, from 6AM to Midnight, seven days a week.

SDOT also identified the Admiral District as the last urban village that is not served by the Frequent Transit Network and prioritized upgrades to Route 50 to address some of this need. However, due to bus capacity and operator constraints at Metro, SDOT was not able to purchase increased levels of service on the Route 50 (or 56) in this last round of service change investments in March 2018. We are continuing to work with Metro to identify potential investments for the next service change in September 2018.

In your letter, you requested hourly service on the Route 56. That level of service would be expensive, costing approximately \$850,000 annually. This estimated cost does not consider the longer travel times for this route when the Alaskan Way Viaduct closes and buses route onto surface streets as early as fall 2018. While understanding the desire for an all-day connection

between Alki and downtown Seattle, hourly service is typically not very productive, as hourly frequency of service does not offer a reliable trip for riders.

SDOT and Metro also face constraints in bus fleet availability, especially in the morning and evening commute periods. Given the current network design and fleet constraints, making this investment in Route 56 will likely result in reductions to service on the Route 50, one of the few routes making east-west connections south of downtown Seattle.

Adding hourly service on the Route 56, and potential associated changes to Route 50, would likely require King County Council approval. King County Council approval is required for service changes that add more than 25% to a route's total service hours or move a stop by ½ mile. Therefore, the earliest potential implementation date for this level of increased service would be March 2019.

SDOT would be happy to evaluate potential alternatives, including working with Metro to explore on-demand connections to the King County Water Taxi, that could both improve access to the water taxi and provide all-day circulator service around Alki and Admiral. We will continue to work directly with your office to understand the transportation needs of residents in West Seattle now and in the future.

Thank you,

Candida Lorenzana  
Transit Service and Strategy Manager, Transit and Mobility Division