



# PASSENGER TRANSPORT

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## King County Makes Traveling on Transit a Breeze

Special to *Passenger Transport*

**D**uring the summer of 2003, King County Metro Transit in Seattle began deploying a suite of three online customer information tools—Custom Printable Timetables, Create Commuter Trip Plans, and Create Point to Point Schedules—designed to meet customer requests for enhanced access to transit information. Online customer feedback has been enthusiastically positive so far.

**Custom Printable Timetables**, which became available on June 9, provides online customers with the ability to create and print well-formatted, customized Metro Transit timetables from any printer. A Custom Printable Timetable allows the customer to select up to five stops along a route for a specified period of time.

Well-formatted timetable printing was very difficult before King County Metro introduced this tool because of the awkward dimensions of many online timetables, particularly on routes with many stops. As of Aug. 20, the system reports, customers have created 24,598 Custom Printable Timetables.

On Aug. 11, King County Metro Transit launched **Create Commuter Trip Plans**, a tool that allows an online customer to create an individualized commute itinerary based on his or her origin and destination points and commute time preferences. Typically for commuting between home and work or home and school, the plans provide departure and re-

turn trip options over a 90-minute period to help customers on those days that start or end either earlier or later than usual.

CTP users can view the itineraries they create onscreen, then print them or download them to personal digital assistants or Wireless Access Point enabled devices. As of Aug. 20, 5,776 individualized Commuter Trip Plans have been created.

The final tool, **Create Point to Point Schedules**, is scheduled for introduction this month. This tool allows customers to find all routes that provide service between two locations during a specified time period. The output from Point to Point Schedules can be viewed onscreen, then printed or downloaded to PDAs or WAP enabled devices.

King County Metro was motivated by customer feedback, captured via a form on the agency's Metro Online web site, to develop the suite of tools. Since the system premiered its web site in December 1994, Metro Transit's online customers have contributed many valuable suggestions. Collectively, these suggestions have significantly driven the design and content enhancements of the site, including a major site redesign deployed in 2002.

The online tools were built on top of the agency's Automated Trip Planner System by the system vendor, Trapeze Software Group Inc. This system was originally installed in May 1999 for use by Metro Transit's Rider Information Specialists, who handle customer service on

the telephone. Customers gained web access to the Automated Trip Planner System in December 2001.

The Automated Trip Planner System was purchased cooperatively and installed independently by King County Metro Transit and geographically contiguous regional public transit partners Community Transit, serving Snohomish County, and Pierce Transit in Tacoma, whose customer service employees also use the system to assist telephone customers. Pierce Transit's web site offers an online version of the system, and Community Transit plans to make it available to its web site customers in the future.

The Automated Trip Planner System provides point-to-point itinerary planning across the three-county area using the regional partners' combined set of transit data. Transit information and trip planning services also are available for Everett Transit; Sound Transit's Sounder commuter rail and Regional Express bus routes; and the Seattle Center Monorail. Intercity Transit in Olympia, Wash., and the Washington State Ferry System are considering adding their transit information to the regional trip planning application.

The goal of these services, including the new tools, is to make finding and using information about traveling on public transportation a breeze. So far, usage and feedback indicates that are online customer like what they see.