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Seattle organizations and King County Councilmembers call for Metro pledge to stop transporting police to protests

Seattle — As the protests sparked by George Floyd’s murder at the hands of Minneapolis police spread to Seattle, protesters noticed that King County Metro buses were being used to transport police. On June 3, the Transit Riders Union [released a statement](#) objecting to this use of public transit resources.

In Boston, the [MBTA announced](#) on Friday, June 5 that “it will no longer bus any non-transit law enforcement personnel to and from protests.”

Today, **King County Councilmembers Girmay Zahilay, Jeanne Kohl-Welles, and Joe McDermott** have joined with the **King County NAACP, Rooted in Rights, 350 Seattle, Sierra Club Seattle Group, Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association, The Urbanist, Puget Sound Sage, and the Transit Riders Union** in calling on King County Metro to make a clear public statement and policy change:

We are dismayed to learn that King County Metro assisted in transporting a militarized police force to the Seattle protests demanding justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, and countless other Black Americans killed by police. This is a misuse of our public transit system.

We ask that King County Metro and the City of Seattle provide a full accounting of any public transit resources that have been used to support the Seattle Police Department and any other law enforcement agencies involved in the protests, and for what specific purposes.

We call upon both King County Metro and Sound Transit to make a clear public affirmation that they will no longer, in the future, transport police to or from protests; and that they will not, under any circumstances, transport people who have been arrested or detained.

We understand that King County Metro has ceased transporting police for the time being and may be considering a policy change. We support such an effort, look forward to learning more, and urge Metro to take as strong a stand as possible.

Public transit is public transit, for the people. Let’s keep our transit agencies focused on the mission of providing equitable, affordable and accessible transportation for all people, not being an accessory to policing our communities and our protests for justice.

“It is deplorable, inhumane, and unacceptable that Metro would transport SPD to peaceful protests to beat, pepper spray, and tear gas peaceful protesters,” said **King County NAACP President Carolyn Riley Payne**.

"I was disappointed to hear that Metro had been transporting officers during a time of heightened tensions," said **King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay**. "Public transit should not be used to quell movements for justice. Metro as an organization should stand in solidarity with Black people against police brutality by changing the policies that allowed this to happen."

"It's imperative that our tax payer funded transit services are to be used for purposes of providing transit and providing mobility to ensure our community can get where they need to go – not for the purpose of transporting law enforcement or people detained while protesting," said **King County Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles**. "I applaud Metro for recognizing the need to advance county equity goals as a part of its operations and as such would like to see the practice of providing special law enforcement transportation discontinued permanently. I also encourage all of my colleagues throughout King County government to ensure we no longer utilize buses for anything aside from what they are designed to be used for in the first place."

"At a time when essential workers are facing longer commutes on less frequent transit service, images of King County Metro buses being used to transport police to peaceful protests resonated with Redmond's transit riders," said **Kirk Hovenkotter of the Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association**. "Making Redmond an accessible and inclusive community means our residents and employees feel safe taking the bus. Making a clear public affirmation that Metro will no longer transport police to or from protests is a start to building that trust. We support the call to never put Metro's bus drivers in a position of transporting police or arrested protesters on Metro buses."

"Public transit is a crucial tool to connect people to each other and to opportunity, and it improves our public life, health, and safety," said **Brittney Bollay of the Sierra Club Seattle Group**. "It must not be co-opted by those looking to bring fear and harm to our Black communities."

"Transporting riot police and their prisoners is not an acceptable use of our public transit system," said **Doug Trumm, Executive Director of The Urbanist**. "Do not use buses and trains against nonviolent protesters. Carrying cops while the public is barred from riding sends entirely the wrong message. Either we're all welcome or shut it down."

"I was at the protests in downtown Seattle with other TRU members on that first Saturday," said **Katie Wilson, General Secretary of the Transit Riders Union**. "When Mayor Durkan announced a curfew with just fifteen minutes notice, protesters and other people who rely on transit were left stranded, because buses had been redirected and Link light rail was shut down. And yet, King County Metro buses were there to transport the police, who were escalating the confrontations using tear gas and flash-bang grenades. This is our public transit system, and we don't want it used that way."

The statement's signatories are calling on Sound Transit as well as King County Metro to make this commitment; while there haven't been reports of Sound Transit buses transporting police, the Transit Riders Union says it's concerned that if King County Metro steps away from this role, the Seattle Police Department and other law enforcement agencies might ask Sound Transit to fill it instead.



Photo credit: Darron Lewis

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