

SEATTLE TIMES EDITORIAL - COMMENT

(COPY FOR RTID)

April 7, 2004

The Honorable Jim Horn
Washington State Senator
P.O. Box 40441
Olympia WA 98504-0441

Dear Senator Horn:

I read your recent guest column in the Seattle Time with great interest. The devil is in the details for this voter. Beyond the "bigger" RTID projects are the lesser ones. Among them: \$21m for an Issaquah "bypass." This is a very controversial project that is guaranteed to cost RTID votes. This so-called bypass is an expensive (\$40m) nightmare that will rob Issaquah of resources to do real transportation fixes and will further endanger our precious aquifer and environment. Our Planning Policy Commission just voted 4-3 to keep the bypass project in our 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program -- indicative of the split running through our community. Keeping the Issaquah bypass on your project list will ensure voters like me WON'T be supporting RTID should it make it to the ballot. Sorry, Sen. Horn!

Sincerely,

Jackie Thomas
Issaquah Resident

April 15, 2004

Executive Board Members
Regional Transportation Investment District
411 University St., Suite 1200
Seattle, Washington 98101

Dear Boardmembers:

In my role as King County Executive and Sound Transit Boardmember, I want to compliment the board on the recent progress that has been made toward a Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) package for this fall's ballot. While I wish the State Legislature had expanded the tools available to the region, I am still hopeful that leaders in the Central Puget Sound can come together and find solutions to the deteriorating infrastructure and the congestion that threatens our economic vitality and quality of life. We owe that to our region's citizens.

As I have stated repeatedly, this region cannot afford to have another transportation measure fail at the ballot. Therefore, as regional leaders, our top priority must be to set politics aside and assemble a pragmatic package of real solutions that will be passed by the voters this fall. Recent opinion research showed that voters would approve a balanced transportation package that addresses key regional priorities. As you continue to craft a package, I urge you to keep the following key principles in mind. These are views and concerns that I have shared consistently during the last two years of discussion regarding regional transportation needs.

Balance

Any package must contain a balanced set of investments, using the best technology in each circumstance, to move people and goods efficiently. Discussion at the Sound Transit Executive Committee two weeks ago highlighted the willingness of many Sound Transit Boardmembers to work with the RTID board in developing a joint ballot proposal that addresses the region's *transportation system*. There was a recognition that the wars between the advocates of transit and the advocates of roads have tended to hinder progress toward real solutions.

Should Sound Transit choose to join with RTID, the possibility for a truly balanced package presents itself. The Executive Board can create a package that is two-thirds roads and one-third transit/HOV in the three county area with a one-tenth high capacity transit sales tax, a three-tenths HOV motor vehicle excise tax, a two-tenths sales tax for roads and a seventy-five dollar vehicle license fee.

I remain concerned, however, that current discussions tend to neglect the important role that bus investments can play in a balanced approach. The polling done by the stakeholders group last fall clearly showed that *bus investments rank the highest among all modes tested, surpassing both rail and roads*. The project lists prepared by the King County Department of Transportation (KCDOT) included a number of valuable capital investments that could be used to increase bus service levels throughout the county.

Investing in bus rapid transit and bus purchases will complement the roads and rail projects and offer transit benefits to areas not directly served by rail. And such investments are eligible for both HCT and HOV funding. Our initial KCDOT list included about \$650 million in bus-related transit projects. The board should include these bus projects in its draft plan to fully utilize the HCT taxes for rail and bus, capitalizing on the broad public support for bus investments and confidence in King County Metro's services and spreading the benefits of transit throughout the county.

Bus projects that have been proposed include the following:

- Industrial Way HOV direct access ramp;
- Bus Rapid Transit on SR 99 North/Aurora Avenue;
- Cross-Lake Bus Rapid Transit;
- Bel-Red Road Bus Rapid Transit;
- SR 522 Bus Rapid Transit;
- Implementing the full range of service investments from Metro's Six Year Plan; and
- Transit Oriented Development at key sites including Northgate and Shoreline.

All these projects can be financed by capital swap-outs for bus purchases. I have asked KCDOT staff to provide additional information to you and Sound Transit Boardmembers regarding these concepts.

Safety and Preservation

Any package must address our most vulnerable infrastructure first. As many citizens and Executive Boardmembers have said, "*fix the worst first.*" Significant funding for the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the SR 520 floating bridge must be included in any package. At a minimum, we need a level of regional investment in the Viaduct that can be matched by the state and federal governments and replace this vulnerable, aging structure. A funding level of approximately \$1 billion from the RTID is required. On SR 520 we need a commitment of RTID funds, that when combined with toll revenue, will be enough to replace and improve the structure before it sinks in the next major windstorm. The State Legislature will also need to make the legislative changes necessary to ensure that this funding approach for SR 520 can be implemented.

We cannot look the voters of the region in the eye and tell them we are being responsible regional leaders unless we include funding for these two key projects. Study and design money for SR 520 is not sufficient. I would challenge you to find a way to fund these projects.

Equity

Developing the project list that addresses the most pressing highway and transit needs in the region may require some flexibility with respect to the geographical distribution of funds within King County. The recent opinion research confirmed that voters think regionally when it comes to transportation. With some minor shifts, a package can be developed that addresses infrastructure needs throughout all areas of King County while including significant funding for the Viaduct and SR 520.

Equity can be defined in many ways – by population, by taxes collected, or by the number of registered voters. All of these calculations would lead to different results were equity to be rigidly applied. A member of the Eastside Transportation Partnership perhaps said it best, “The final list does not have to be exact, but it does have to be fair.” Again, I challenge you to craft a proposal that looks beyond a strict definition of equity and work together to provide projects and benefits throughout the county and the broader region so that our transportation system works better.

State Partnership

The voters should expect a major commitment of state funds to help finish the key “mega-projects” that RTID would help fund. The “mega-projects” have unique funding challenges that will require intergovernmental funding strategies, including significant investments by the state and federal governments. Therefore, I would support asking the voters to approve larger scopes on the mega-projects than can be funded from the RTID revenues alone. These contingent scopes could be implemented when the Legislature or Congress provides more financial support or when project sponsors deliver project segments below forecast costs. As mentioned above, the Legislature must also give the region the tools necessary to build these projects, including clarification of tolling authority. We also do not want to leave any money sitting on the table, so state bonding authority must also be provided to maximize the use of the taxpayers’ dollars. I support strong legislative intent language in the ballot measure reflecting these concepts.

Funding Sources

At the Executive Board meeting in March, you adopted a funding package that included a sales tax, a motor vehicle excise tax, a vehicle license fee and a local option gas tax. I am concerned that the relatively small portion of the total funding represented by the gas tax may not be worth the opposition it might generate among the voters and the potential funders of a campaign. We need a package that can win at the polls and one that is supported by the broadest possible array of business, labor and environmental leaders. We also need to ensure that support will be there for an additional state investment in roads through the gas tax. *Therefore, I urge you to consider a slightly smaller funding package that does not include the local option gas tax.*

Executive Board Members, Regional Transportation Investment District
April 15, 2004
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Again, I am raising each of these issues because I believe they are essential if we are to have a successful RTID ballot measure this fall. I appreciate your continued effort and determination at moving a proposal forward. I look forward to the day when, with the voters' authorization, we tackle the backlog of infrastructure needs, both road and transit, in our transportation system.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims
King County Executive

cc: Sound Transit Boardmembers
King County Councilmembers



April 16, 2004

Gary Nelson, Chair
Regional Transportation Investment District
411 University Street, Suite 1200
Seattle, WA 98101

Dear Gary,

Thank you for attending the April 8th Sound Transit Board to explain the interest the RTID Board has in working with Sound Transit on a joint ballot. I wanted to give you a status report of efforts underway by the Board to respond to the RTID request.

As you know, Sound Transit is constrained on what projects and services it could put on a joint ballot this fall by the planning requirements contained in our authorizing legislation. Therefore, we can only consider projects that were part of or consistent with the Sound Move plan authorized by the voters in 1996. In considering how to allocate the revenues that would be generated by an additional .1% sales tax, we may find that eligible HCT projects in each subarea do not correspond to the resources generated in that subarea.

I have asked each subarea of our Board to decide what projects they would be interested in putting on a joint ballot, in the event the Board decides to be part of the RTID. In both Pierce and Snohomish counties, it will be necessary for some road and HCT dollars and projects to be swapped to meet the legislative requirements for Sound Transit and the equity requirements of the RTID.

In Pierce County's case, the four Pierce County ST Board members are developing a list of projects that would be in the range of \$100 to \$150 million for HCT projects. With estimated HCT sales tax revenue of \$400 million, the balance of \$250 to \$300 million would be available for extensions of light rail in King County.

In Snohomish County's case, our two Snohomish County ST Board members are developing a list of projects that would be in a similar range of \$100 to \$150 million for HCT projects. With estimated HCT sales tax revenue of \$300 million, the balance of \$150 to \$200 million would be available to put towards extensions of light rail in King County.

The East King County subarea representatives are also discussing possible HCT projects in east King County.

Pierce and Snohomish County Board members, and the full Board, want to make it clear that this indication of HCT monies to keep/swap in no way reflects their ultimate judgment on whether a joint RTID/ST ballot should go forward to the voters. These ranges are simply to keep the exploration of the idea in play and to see if the joint ballot is feasible.

We are holding a special Board meeting on May 20 to begin our RTID decision discussion with the intent to have a final decision no later than our May 27th Board meeting. In the meantime, our CEO Joni Earl, will remain in contact with Kjris Lund to keep you informed of the status of individual discussions.

I recognize the RTID Executive Committee had asked for an earlier decision, but this is a challenging and important decision for the Sound Transit Board. I am confident that we will be able to finalize our deliberations by the end of May.

Chair

John Ladenburg
Pierce County Executive

Vice Chairs

Greg Nickels
Seattle Mayor

Mark Olson
Everett Councilmember

Fred Butler
*Issaquah Deputy Council
President*

Jack Crawford
Kenmore Councilmember

David Enslow
Sumner Councilmember

Doug MacDonald
*Washington State Department
of Transportation Secretary*

Connie Marshall
Bellevue Mayor

Richard McIver
Seattle Councilmember

Julia Patterson
King County Councilmember

Dwight Pelz
King County Councilmember

Kevin Phelps
Tacoma Councilmember

Larry Phillips
Chair, King County Council

Aaron Reardon
Snohomish County Executive

Ron Sims
King County Executive

Claudia Thomas
Lakewood Councilmember

Pete von Reichbauer
*Vice Chair, King County
Council*

Chief Executive Officer
Joni Earl

Please don't hesitate to call if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "John Ladenburg".

John Ladenburg, Sound Transit Board Chair

Cc: Sound Transit Board of Directors
Joni Earl, CEO



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33530 1st Way South • PO Box 9718
Federal Way, WA 98063-9718
(253) 661-4000
www.cityoffederalway.com

April 19, 2004

The Honorable Gary Nelson, Chair
The Honorable Julia Patterson, Member
The Honorable Rob McKenna, Member
The Honorable Dwight Pelz, Member
The Honorable Calvin Goings, Member
The Honorable Shawn Bunney, Member
The Honorable Dave Gossett, Member
Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) Executive Board
411 University Street, Suite 1200
Seattle, WA 98101

Re: Coalition formed to advocate for Triangle Interchange improvements

Dear Chairman Nelson & RTID Executive Board Members:

We want to make you aware of a private-public coalition that has formed in the Federal Way area to ensure that improvements to the I-5/SR-18/SR-161 Triangle interchange are included and fully funded in any package the RTID puts before voters. We also want to underscore the importance of subarea equity in the crafting of any RTID package.

There is simply no disputing the urgent need for the Triangle Interchange improvements. This interchange in South King County is the fifth-busiest interchange in the state and a designated high-accident location. Queuing and long backups occur seven days per week. This is a congestion problem for motorists and freight haulers, particularly for those haulers using the Triangle interchange as a route for Port of Tacoma-bound freight.

The question becomes one of how the RTID Executive Board will develop a full package of regional transportation and transit projects, within finite resources, that provides meaningful congestion relief, mobility, and travel-time savings to voters in Central Puget Sound.

A group of us in the greater Federal Way area have reviewed that question. We represent more than 110,000 residents and a business coalition that takes in the Federal Way Chamber and many of its most prominent members. We believe there are several key reasons why the Triangle interchange project must be included and fully funded when you settle on a final RTID package:

- Project Merits and Readiness

The Triangle interchange project resolves a number of critical problems in Southwest King County, including seven-day-a-week congestion, freight mobility for the Port of Tacoma, and gridlock on the Federal Way and Milton arterials adjacent to the state highway corridors. It is also very advanced in terms of readiness. A design report has been completed, the 2003 Legislature appropriated funds for environmental work, and construction could be completed as early as 2011. Further, the project is 'bite-sized' in

terms of costs – it can be completed for \$200 million, much less than the cost of several of the mega-projects confronting King County.

- Key Project for Voters

We have engaged in numerous discussions with area residents and business owners. A consistent theme emerged: we must solve problems in any RTID package that goes before voters. The voting public and the business community in our area, which encompasses over 100,000 residents and a series of businesses that depend on freight and overall mobility, have informed us that their vote depends on a willingness to fix the Triangle problem.

- Concurrency with GMA

All of you are aware of the state Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements that call for “concurrency” in terms of infrastructure being available to accommodate population growth and development. Without the Triangle project, we would be putting severe constraints on the ability of the greater Federal Way area to accommodate new growth, new industry, new homes, and new jobs that will be vital to our region as a whole.

As a final note, we want to underscore how critical we believe it is for King County to maintain a 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 shared distribution of revenue and project investment in any RTID package. The needs are huge for South County, East County, and Seattle/North County. All three areas have projects vital to our future mobility, well-being, and economic vitality. It would be unfair to tilt revenues and investment to any one area over the other, which is why the 1/3, 1/3, 1/3 subarea equity principle must be respected.

Thank you for considering this urgent request. You may expect similar letters from members of our business community and state legislative delegation

Sincerely



Dean McColgan
Mayor

cc: The Honorable Tracey Eide, 30th District State Sen.
The Honorable Mark Miloscia, 30th District State Rep.
The Honorable Skip Priest, 30th District State Rep.
Federal Way Chamber of Commerce
City Council Members
David Moseley, City Manager
Derek Matheson, Assistant City Manager
Cary Roe, Public Works Director
Rick Perez, Traffic Engineer



Washington State Legislature

The Honorable Gary Nelson, Chair
The Honorable Dwight Pelz, Vice-Chair
The Honorable Rob McKenna
The Honorable Julia Patterson
The Honorable Shawn Bunney
The Honorable Calvin Goings
The Honorable Dave Gossett

RECEIVED
2004 APR 22 AM 11:19
CLERK
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

c/o: Anne Noris, Clerk
Regional Transportation Improvement District
516 Third Avenue, Suite 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear RTID Executive Board Members:

April 19, 2004

We are writing to express our desire that the I-5/SR-161/SR-18 Triangle Improvements in South King County be included and fully funded as part of the RTID final project list. This project was listed by the Washington State Department of Transportation to improve safety and reduce congestion: the interchange area contains two High Accident Corridors and four High Accident Locations, and congestion extends through both peak hours and into midday.

This project will improve the I-5/ SR-18 interchange by eliminating or modifying the current loop-ramps and by providing direct freeway-to-freeway connections between I-5, SR-18 and SR-161. This project may also include improvements to and realignment of Milton Road South and may include a partial interchange (SB-on, NB-off) at the South 376th Street over-crossing. The state has already appropriated \$3 million in "Nickel Account" funding to complete an Environmental Assessment.

The inclusion of the I-5/SR-161/SR-18 Triangle Improvements project on the final RTID list is critical to helping ensure voter approval in the November election. The populations directly impacted by this project include the Cities of Federal Way and Milton as well as South King County.

Inclusion of the I-5/SR-161/SR-18 Triangle Improvements project maintains the policy of subarea equity. This project is a critical safety and congestion relief transportation improvement need in the South King County area.

RTID Executive Board Members

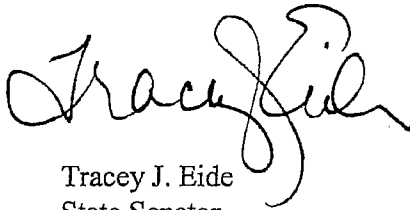
April 19, 2004

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Under the GMA, population growth targets are supported by corresponding public dollars. Implicit in the idea of accepting growth is the idea of providing needed infrastructure. Public funds are necessary to pay for corresponding infrastructure to support the population growth. In the past two decades, South King County and Federal Way have taken on population growth without receiving adequate public funding to pay for infrastructure. Completion of the I-5/SR-161/SR-18 Triangle Improvements project would help fulfill the GMA policy of providing corresponding infrastructure.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Tracey J. Eide
State Senator
30th Legislative District



Mark Milsocia
State Representative
30th Legislative District



Skip Priest
State Representative
30th Legislative District

cc: City of Federal Way
Federal Way Chamber
City of Milton

