

April 28, 2004

Speaking Points for ETP  
To RTID Executive Board – April 29, 2004

**FRED BUTLER**

Principles

Over the past two years, ETP has provided recommendations to the RTID Executive Board about revenue sources and projects and funding levels.

During that time, we have based our recommendations on principles we established at the outset:

- Address safety issues and “worst first” as priorities
- Focus on the major corridors and provide sufficient funds to complete project components that will make a significant difference.
- Provide modal balance

All of these principles remain important to our recommendations and are based on the primary goal of offering the voters a package of improvements that they can support. The package needs to focus on the benefits it will provide and on establishing realistic expectations for implementation.

The Board and the public need to recognize that RTID funding would provide not the last possible source, but the next installment in accomplishing a long list of infrastructure needs. It is critical that we take aggressive steps to ensure that we can complete that package within a reasonable period and show benefit to the public.

If we are successful in accomplishing this and proving accountability to the voters, we can then be more persuasive in convincing them to buy the next installment, be it RTID II or some other package.

**MARY-ALYCE BURLEIGH**

Projects

In order to be successful, the package of improvements needs to focus on the benefits they will provide. Citizens need to see how the proposal will help them and their neighbors.

This does not mean, however, that the RTID package should equally distribute projects and funding throughout the district. Over the past two years, ETP has supported the principle that RTID funds should be generally allocated one-third to each subarea in King County. However, ETP members recently have expressed concern that strict adherence to subarea equity is complicating an already difficult task.

ETP believes that subarea equity does not necessarily mean equal project funding, but fair funding that will show benefits to voters. Polling conducted in the fall of last year confirmed

that the public is willing to support projects that will benefit them throughout the region—not just within their own subarea. In fact, most people are not aware of the subareas at all. Many of them work in one subarea area, live in another, and travel to several for recreation, health care or other purposes. What matters is a transportation system that works and meets their needs, wherever they are traveling, and by whatever mode.

ETP urges the RTID Executive Board to respond to this need, by selecting projects throughout the region that focus on the major corridors and by providing sufficient funds to complete project components that will make a significant difference. to the traveling public.

## **JOHN RESHA**

### Revenue Levels

No one wants to pay higher taxes, and few want to support higher taxes. However, it is clear that additional funds are essential to provide the transportation improvements our citizens need. While the Nickel package was a step, the backlog of needs resulting from many years of inadequate investment and continued growth require additional infusion of significant dollars.

The RTID offers a way to make a real and substantial investment. Even at the highest revenue levels, not all project needs that have been identified can be met. But any RTID dollars should be directed to a meaningful step toward transportation improvements that are critical for our region's economic health and quality of life.

Emphasis should be placed on the benefits these improvements will provide, rather than the taxes that will be required to finance the improvements.

ETP has consistently supported higher revenue levels and will continue to support the RTID Executive Board's decision to approve revenue levels sufficient to build projects that will make a difference.

The RTID Executive Board should not rule out the local option gas tax. As a user fee, the gas tax polls well in surveys, and is dedicated to highways and cannot be diverted. The Executive Board also should not rule out a higher sales tax level. Both may be needed to ensure that the ballot measure includes the right projects at sufficient funding levels to show benefit and obtain the public's support.

We understand that if Sound Transit agrees to a joint ballot, the RTID Executive Board may include in the plan a "swap" of High Capacity Transit (HCT) dollars from Pierce and Snohomish Counties to King County for King County RTID dollars to Pierce and Snohomish Counties. We agree that this may be needed in order to fully fund the priority projects in each County. However, this swap should not occur at the expense of non-HCT priority projects in King County. The funding package must be at a sufficient level to allow adequate investments in road and transit projects that will provide benefit to the citizens of the region.

**PHIL NOBLE**

ETP's Expectation

ETP recognizes the challenge the RTID Executive Board faces in developing a plan. We know that competing needs and interests make this a difficult issue.

However, after two years of review, discussion and refinement, we believe that the RTID Executive Board needs to act. We urge the Board to make the compromises needed and show the leadership necessary to make the difficult decisions.

We recommend that the Board adopt a revenue package and a Draft Plan at its April 29 meeting. Because it appears that the Sound Transit Board will not decide on the joint ballot by that time, we recommend that two options be adopted --one assuming a joint ballot with Sound Transit and one without.

Further, we strongly urge that the RTID Executive Board members in adopting the Draft Plan show unity and common purpose. The Draft Plan will provide ample opportunity for the public to comment on the size, scope and projects.

This is the time for the Executive Board members and all of us elected officials to listen to our constituents so the Final Plan can be refined and improved. This will require a united effort on the part of all elected officials to move forward toward a November ballot.

It is critical that the Executive Board act on a Draft Plan and demonstrate leadership and unity in moving forward.

ETP will be happy to support Executive Board members in this effort.