



Regional Transportation Investment District of King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties

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RTID Board selects highest-priority road, transit projects *King, Pierce, Snohomish projects 'would solve worst problems first'*

The RTID Executive Board today adopted its recommended list of road and transit projects, figuratively stamping “highest priority” on \$12.8 billion in investments in the region’s transportation system.

“This list of highest-priority projects would solve King, Pierce and Snohomish counties’ worst transportation problems first,” said Board Chairman Gary Nelson. “We need to fund these ourselves because the rest of the state will never subsidize traffic-flow improvements for Puget Sound.”

The list consists of projects long considered essential by the region’s transportation planners. Included are major improvements to I-405, SR-167, I-5, SR-9, SR-509 and other highways of significance. HOV lanes would be extended on I-5, SR-167 and SR-509. Enhancements would be made to park-and-ride lots and other transit facilities in the three counties.

Earthquake safety receives special emphasis. The list includes \$1 billion to fund the most critical southern phase of replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct, which Nelson said could provide the local share to leverage federal and state funding to complete the project.

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Another \$1 billion is allocated to replace the SR-520 bridge, a major link across Lake Washington. Both the Viaduct and SR-520 are considered dangerously vulnerable to destruction in a major earthquake.

The list was adopted on a 6-1 vote. Executive Board members approving were Shawn Bunney (Pierce County), Calvin Goings (Pierce), Dave Gossett (Snohomish), Rob McKenna (King), Gary Nelson (Snohomish), and Julia Patterson (King). Dwight Pelz (King) voted no.

The final package could contain light rail as well as the road and transit projects approved today. The RTID Executive Board is still awaiting a decision by Sound Transit on whether to pursue a unified ballot that could allow earlier extension of light rail to the University District and Sea-Tac Airport.

Sound Transit's board will now have the RTID projects and funding recommendation in time for its May 20 meeting, Nelson said. If Sound Transit makes its decision then, he said, it would allow the RTID Executive Board to approve a package including a unified ballot at its June 3 meeting. The RTID Planning Committee could then give its approval at its June 11 meeting.

The RTID recommendation must be approved by voters in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties. Today's decision keeps the recommendation on track to be submitted to voters in November, Nelson said. Under the legislation authorizing RTID, all tax dollars would be spent in the county in which they are raised.

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