

To Regional Transportation Investment District Planners,

We remain generally skeptical and very concerned that the long-term transportation planning by the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID) in our region appears to be predicated on the false premise of building our way out of the problem--akin to an obese person simply loosening their belt a few notches. Using this "strategy", we will have to keep building our way out of congestion in *perpetuity*. That is both impossible, self defeating, and doomed to ultimate failure. We believe long-term planning should primarily address how we move people and goods.

We see two basic problems with the RTID legislation:

(1) It prohibits funding for operations--allowing it to be used only for capital equipment. This means the RTID could pay for buses and rail cars, but cannot pay to hire the people to operate them! Funding for one of the state's most cost-effective transportation investments, Commute Trip Reduction (CTR), would also be prohibited. CTR promotes employee-trip-reduction incentives such as low-cost bus passes, vanpool subsidies, flexible work hours and telecommuting.

(2) The legislation requires at least 90% of funds be spent on general-purpose lanes on "Highways of Statewide Significance" (major freeways), even when investing in local arterials or signal prioritization would be more effective. In fact, over 90% of the draft RTID plan funds highway projects--a plan so unbalanced we and many other voters will reject it (Ref. 51, which was overwhelmingly rejected, was 85% road projects). Substantial funding for transportation choices is critical to reducing the impact of congestion on our economy, environment and quality of life.

We need to fix the Regional Package so it reflects our state's priorities:

(1) Maximize flexibility and local control by defining spending authority to include *any* investments that improve system performance--eliminate the restriction that capital projects can only be on "Highways of Statewide Significance."

(2) Provide new user-fee based revenue options and limit the use of sales tax revenues to fund highway construction. Why should we subsidize highway widening with a sales tax? Sales taxes are regressive, unfairly burdening the poor and people who don't use the system with the cost of widening it. This is unprecedented and we strongly oppose it. Rather, we advocate user fees like time-of-day pricing and a sales tax on gasoline. Those who use the transportation system should pay for it. A sales tax on gas would provide a "flexible" funding source, meaning the money raised could be used to fund transportation choices or roads, whatever mix is most effective. Unfortunately, the gas tax we currently pay is restricted to paying for highways only (per the Washington State constitution).

We believe to really solve our transportation problems for the near term and the long term, we must develop a balanced approach that funds a mix of road improvements and transit options that will truly help us get out of traffic. We ask you to pursue planning options that fund transportation choices such as express buses, CTR, HOV lanes for carpools and vanpools, heavy and light rail, ferries, biking, and walking. We urge you to prioritize highway safety improvements over new lane construction, when choosing how to spend our gas tax money. For example, there are dozens of high injury locations and traffic choke points that should be fixed before widening roads. Also, completing the HOV system to provide a seamless commute should be the top priority for new capacity as even more commuters will use car pools or van pools or transit, thereby taking additional vehicles off our roads while successfully moving people and goods efficiently.

Thank you for allowing us to provide our comments and for listening to our recommendations.

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