

November 11, 2013

Secretary Lynn Peterson  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
310 Maple Park Avenue  
Olympia, WA 98504-7300

Commissioner Dan O'Neal, Chairman  
Washington State Transportation Commission  
PO Box 47308  
Olympia, WA 98504-7308

**RE: I-405/SR 167 Project Implementation and Executive Advisory Group Recommendations**

Dear Secretary Peterson and Chairman O'Neal:

On behalf of the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group (EAG), we are writing to convey our recommendations regarding carpool policy for the first phase of I-405 express toll lanes and funding and phasing for the 40-mile express toll lanes system

Our communities and agencies—and particularly our growing urban centers—rely heavily on the I-405/SR 167 corridor and its continuous improvement to move people and goods. Although we've made good progress on funding key elements of the Master Plan over the past 13 years, commuters still face some of the worst traffic congestion in the state – up to 10 hours a day in some locations. In short, any further delay on funding and implementation of additional improvements impedes our ability to realize significant travel time advantage along the corridor. East King County and the region depend on this highway system to accelerate our state's economic recovery.

**Recommendation for carpool policy:** As representatives to the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group, we are writing to convey our shared support and consensus of Scenario C (3+ Carpool Free Peak/2+ Carpool Free Off-peak). Consistent with performance measures outlined in RCW 47.56.880, WSDOT staff developed six scenarios related to carpool requirements for the I-405 express toll lanes in the northern segment (Bellevue to Lynnwood), now under construction and scheduled to open in 2015. This decision will also potentially inform policy for the unfunded southern segment (Bellevue to Renton). Scenario C would allow 3+ carpools to travel for free in the express toll lanes during peak hours and 2+ carpools to ride for free at off-peak times. Transit, registered vanpools and 3+ carpools would ride for free at all times. This innovative hybrid approach appears to best meet the legislature's direction, as it meets both traffic and revenue benchmarks while easing the public's transition to a 3+ carpool system.

In addition to ensuring state legislative criteria are met, we urge WSDOT to ensure that Scenario C be implemented in manner that:

- **Protects our local streets** by managing the corridor in a manner that is the least impactful to our local streets, causes minimal diversionary effects, and commits to mitigating local impacts to the greatest extent possible;
- **Moves more people** by prioritizing transit and vanpools within the express toll lanes;
- **Provides demonstrated benefits for all users of I-405/SR 167**, including those who choose to remain in the general purpose lanes. The analysis performed by WSDOT suggests that the new express toll lanes will allow all users in the corridor to benefit from improved travel times and reliability. Express toll lanes are critically important to moving people and goods the most effectively. WSDOT should continually monitor performance and adjust operations to realize long-term benefits even as traffic demand grows over time.
- **Continues the successful focus on community collaboration.** We have appreciated the collaborative approach to considering complex data and the open discussion fostered by the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group. The meetings have been very informative and have allowed adequate time to process the information while helping maintain momentum on critical projects. We urge WSDOT to continue to use this model going forward as needed. Moreover, we urge WSDOT to integrate all corridor improvements associated with the future development of the Eastside Rail Corridor and I-405 Bus Rapid Transit.

**Recommendation for Funding and Phasing:** There was unanimous consensus that the phasing of the Renton to Bellevue express toll lanes needs to occur as soon as possible. While we prefer the "high traditional funding" option we realize there are competing state priorities. Fully funding the Renton to Bellevue express toll lanes and

the I-405/SR 167 Direct Connector ramp from gas tax revenues and related gas tax-backed bonds if needed will allow the projects to be built as quickly as possible. This option also provides a revenue stream, via toll revenue collected from express toll lanes, to fund future Master Plan improvements. Understanding that the "high" funding option represents a large allotment of resources, we recommend the "medium" traditional funding option, which allows construction of the Renton to Bellevue express toll lanes. If bonding becomes necessary to complete the 40-mile system, we urge WSDOT to seek additional bonding authority from the legislature to ensure the option of using triple-backed bonds, which are often more affordable to the public.

Thank you for the opportunity to transmit our comments regarding next steps for implementing the I-405 Master Plan. We look forward to the next few weeks and are working hard to urge the legislature to reconvene before the end of the year to pass a new state revenue package. I-405 and many other projects around the state need attention now, and we are keenly aware of our citizens' interest in realizing the benefits of WSDOT's work.

Sincerely,



Joan McBride  
Mayor of Kirkland



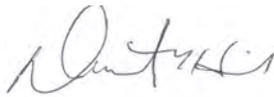
Kevin Wallace  
Bellevue City Councilmember



Dave Gossett  
Snohomish County Councilmember  
Puget Sound Regional Council



Jim Haggerton  
Mayor of Tukwila



David Hill  
Mayor of Algona



Fred Butler  
Sound Transit Board Member



Dave Enslow  
Mayor of Sumner



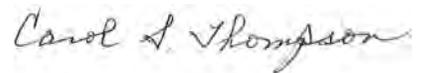
Peter Lewis  
Mayor of Auburn



Harold Taniguchi  
King County



Rich Crispo  
Mayor of Newcastle



Carol Thompson  
Community Transit