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Hello,

I appreciate the opportunity to share my thoughts on local transportation. I have been an avid reader of the Seattle Transit Blog for quite a while and appreciate its role in spurring the local conversation about transit solutions. Growing up, my father was a King County Metro machinist and I spent my childhood hearing about Metro's decisions, both good and bad. Reading the Seattle Transit Blog is a welcomed return to the type of spirited discussions about Metro operations that we often had at our dinner table. I am proud of my father's 36 years of service to Metro, and I believe as he did, that transit is a social justice issue for working families, the disabled, young adults, and senior citizens.

- 1) Should King County Metro obtain new revenue to maintain existing service levels and/or add new service?

I believe King County should obtain new revenues to add Metro services. As a Deputy Ombudsman for King County, I have worked for the past four years with countless residents who have concerns about county government. All too often these residents have included single parents and senior citizens whose lives are thrown into chaos when a service cutback makes it virtually impossible for them to get to work on-time or access a doctor's office.

From a demand perspective, Metro Transit has been a glowing success for King County as ridership levels have risen dramatically over the past two years. The economic decline increased public reliance on transit as county residents struggled to pay for all of the costs associated with personal vehicles. Unfortunately, the economic decline simultaneously decimated the county budget and so, like many counties across the country, we face increased ridership and decreased funding.

At this point, maintaining existing service levels does not meet the steadily increasing demand for Metro services. When we fail to meet the demand for service, we are either pushing county residents back to their personal vehicles or restricting their ability to be productive members of our community. The King County Council must find a more durable funding source for Metro that allows us to not only maintain service but also add service to support the professionals, working families, senior citizens, young adults, and disabled residents, who have embraced public transportation over the past decade.

2) Is your support dependent on the revenue source not being regressive?

Yes, my support on a revenue source is dependent upon it not being regressive.

A question that we need to ask ourselves is how much more regressive can we get? King County Metro currently receives approximately 60% of its funding from sales taxes. As a result, we have one of the most regressive approaches in the country for funding transportation. In addition, because sales taxes are more prone to fluctuation than other potential revenues sources (e.g., MVET, payroll taxes, tolls, etc.) our reliance on this revenue source limits long-term planning and investment.

Transit clearly represents a public good for those of us who use it regularly; however, it also benefits the rest of the community who experience less traffic, better air quality, and can rest assured that their employees, coworkers, and extended family, have a reliable way to get around the county. As we determine future revenue sources, we must consider the widespread public benefit of public transportation and fund it in a more progressive manner.

As a King County Councilmember, I will work closely with my fellow Councilmembers and the County Executive to lobby the state legislature for a more progressive source of tax revenues. Based on my experience as a mediator, I know that when two sides are locked in a protracted disagreement that successful parties often make it "easy" for the other side to move toward their position. With that in mind, I believe that our county's elected leadership could make it easier for the state legislature to support a long-term funding solution if we are able to present a long-term plan, with majority support from the Council, that clearly describes the additional transit service that will emerge from additional taxing authority.

3) Is it important to you that any tax increase for King County Metro go before the voters?

While it is important that county residents have ample opportunity to express their opinion of on tax increases, I do not believe that every tax increase must go to a vote. As voters, we elect candidates who represent us and then rely on them to make difficult decisions about human services, public safety, transit, and whether these government services warrant additional taxation.

In 2011, County Council approved the Congestion Reduction Charge (CRC) with a 6-3 vote that enabled the county to increase vehicle licensing fees without referring the issue to county voters. In the words of Councilmember Lambert: "Without this compromise on funding for Metro, we all would pay more for gas, spend more time commuting, and lose some of our quality of life. Transit cuts of this magnitude will further undercut our fragile economy, and we can't afford that risk." While this agreement effectively ended the Ride-Free Zone, I commend the Council for recognizing the direness of the situation and showing leadership to create a solution.

4) Please rank your priorities (1 being highest priority, 4 the lowest) for the King County Metro budget:

- _5_ preservation of one-seat rides to major job centers
- _1_ better local connections to high-capacity, express, or RapidRide lines
- _2_ capital expenditure to speed up service in important corridors
- _3_ expansion of service to outlying areas of the county
- _4_ Other (please explain):

#4

As a Councilmember, I am committed to working closely with our community's senior citizens to ensure that Metro Transit is a safe, reliable and comfortable method of transportation for them during their retirement years. According to census estimates, in the next twenty years the percentage of senior citizens will increase dramatically and by 2030, one in every five people you see walking down the street will be over the age of 65. I will work closely with our district's seniors to ensure their needs are fully considered in our transit planning.

5) Do you support Sound Transit's current plans to construct light rail to Lynnwood, Redmond, and Des Moines?

Yes, I support the Sound Transit plans to expand light rail service to Lynnwood, Redmond, and Des Moines. If we can agree that one of the broad goals of light rail is to promote transit oriented development with nearby housing and jobs, then light rail expansion in these areas clearly makes sense. Each of these cities are population and job centers in our region and if the plan is properly conceived and executed, light rail will enable these communities to grow in sustainable ways. Residents of Lynnwood, Redmond, and Kent/Des Moines currently struggle with some the most congested traffic corridors in the county and given a reliable alternative, light rail will dramatically expand our current pool of transit users in these areas.

In addition, I also support an extension of light rail south of Kent/Des Moines to the Federal Way Transit Center. As anyone who has spent any time in Federal Way can attest, this community is highly reliant on public transportation and would realize a tremendous benefit from this investment.

6) Would you support additional taxing authority to allow Sound Transit to continue building the rail in their long range plan?

Yes, Sound Transit's long range plan provides the certainty necessary for our communities to begin developing transit oriented development. In the past six months, I have had the opportunity to visit Sound Transit open houses for the Roosevelt and Northgate stations.

The excitement at both of these events was palpable and I look forward to significant changes in the development patterns in both of these neighborhoods as we draw closer to the project completion dates.

7) If so, what areas of the county would be your priorities for these projects?

As I mentioned in a previous answer, continuing the planned Des Moines line on to Federal Way is a worthy project that would offer a more reliable, permanent transit option for that community.

As we look at District 1, I believe that the proposed light rail plan is a good one, but as Councilmember Von Reichbauer has correctly pointed out, "You can't ride a plan." While the completion dates may seem to be a long way off, there are a myriad of decisions on right-of-way, parking, zoning, and environmental protection, that must be made in the next few years. As a Councilmember, I will be closely involved with this process and the residents of District 1, to advocate for smart decisions on these building block matters that will ultimately determine the plan's success.

8) Is it important to restrict development in unincorporated areas of King County?

As a Deputy Ombudsman, I have worked on a wide array of land use matters and recognize that this is a very passionate issue for many county residents. Ultimately, I believe that sensible restrictions are required to protect our environment and the quality of life throughout King County. In this oftentimes thorny debate, smart investments in light rail and mass transit can function as a carrot that helps align development with the future of the region.

Given our limited resources, it is important that a synchronicity exists between transit and land use policy. As a Councilmember, I look forward to continuing the nearly fifty year evolution of the King County Comprehensive Plan which guides land use and development throughout the county.

9) Do you think tolling is a good revenue source for transportation?

Yes, I believe that tolling is a good revenue source for transportation. The hard truth is that Metro Transit is rapidly approaching a fiscal cliff. The combination of revenues derived from the Congestion Reduction Charge (CRC) and Metro's draw-down of reserve funds has allowed the county to continue providing basic services. However, these are not permanent solutions and when the CRC expires in 2014, Metro is projecting that the agency will need an additional \$75 million annually, simply to maintain the current system. If the county is unable to find an additional revenue source, Metro Transit is projected to lose nine million transit rides a year which would add an additional 15,000 car trips a day to our roads and highways.

As I discussed in a previous answer, the county needs approval from the state legislature to establish a more progressive, stable source of revenue. As we look around the country at comparable regions, tolling is often used to help subsidize public transportation. I support tolling as part of our solution for local transportation funding and remain open to including other revenue sources, such as motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) and payroll taxes.

10) Should toll revenues be:

- (a) restricted to the roadway being tolled, or
- (b)** should some be used to fund transit?

As we look broadly at our entire public road system from sidewalks to highways, we need the fiscal latitude to allocate resources where they will have the greatest impact. Toll revenues should maintain the transportation corridors they originate from, but our understanding of "maintenance" must take into consideration more than simply labor and materials. Using a portion of toll revenues for public transit supports the ultimate goal of our highways; i.e. to move as many people as possible, as quickly as possible.

11) Around suburban rail stations, is it MORE important to have

- (a) park-and-rides so that a wider area can access it, or
- (b)** transit-oriented development so that housing and jobs are nearby?

We should promote transit-oriented development (TOD) that supports nearby housing and jobs. The economic, health, and social benefits, of living in walkable communities are well-established and light rail stations should function as a magnet for this type of development.

That said, while TOD is the long-term goal, we may need to show patience in some of our region's more suburban areas where park and rides may be a useful short-term policy that encourages the positive changes in local transportation use that will underlie eventual demand for TOD.

12) At park-and-rides that are full, does it make sense to charge people to park to manage demand?

Yes, I believe that it makes sense for King County Metro to charge for parking in the areas where the demand for parking currently exceeds the available space; however, there are a few factors that we should consider before we move forward with a paid parking model:

Convenience: In most neighborhoods outside of downtown, parking is relatively cheap. If we decide to charge a rate for parking that is competitive in these neighborhoods (e.g. \$2-5) then we must ensure that the payment options are convenient so that this relatively small transaction is convenient for users.

Profit: While I do not believe that free parking is something that Metro must provide we have to be certain that the agency would realize an actual profit by transitioning to a paid parking model. In a 2010 report, King County Metro estimated that paid parking could generate between \$850,000 – 2.3 million dollars annually. This is obviously a wide range of potential revenue and before we implement paid parking we would need to know all of the capital, maintenance and ongoing staffing costs, that will be required to monetize our parking lots.

Ridership: The central goal of Metro is provide reliable transportation. If drivers consider the cost or hassle of paid parking to be exorbitant, they will simply vote with their right foot and drive right past the park and ride.

Equity: A paid parking model simply doesn't make sense in areas where the parking rate would be too low to actually generate revenue. One way to address the equity issues that would emerge from some lots charging for parking, and others not, would be to designate that any revenue raised from parking fees would be dedicated to local bus service in that area.

While we should not overlook any potential revenue streams given our current funding shortfall, the prospect of charging for parking appears to be a more useful tool to encourage riders to utilize local connecting buses to access the transit station and as a method of managing parking demand, rather than a significant revenue generator.