

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

July 9, 2008

CONTACT: Catherine Cornwall (206)684-8725
catherine.cornwall@seattle.gov

Diane Carlson (425)452-4225
dcarlson@bellevuewa.gov

North and east King County cities, including Seattle, may collaborate on building additional misdemeanor jail capacity

SEATTLE – Officials from cities in north and east King County, including Seattle, are recommending to their councils building a single 640 bed municipal jail facility to serve their collective needs. Preliminary results of a feasibility study show the cities north and east of Seattle would cut their per-inmate costs by half, and Seattle's costs are also reduced, if these cities jointly build a misdemeanor jail. The study is expected to be released by the end of the month.

The cities expected there would be some economies of scale for a single facility but the draft feasibility study shows significant savings, primarily from operational costs. For example, one jail – one jail director; two jails – two jail directors; one jail – one booking center; two jails – two booking centers.

The north and east cities of King County have been working together to address the shortage of misdemeanor jail beds and will now begin the process of identifying potential sites within their jurisdictions for a municipal jail. These will be considered as possible sites for the joint facility in addition to those already identified in Seattle.

Together, the cities need approximately 640 jail beds. Seattle estimates it will need 445 jail beds for misdemeanor offenders over the next 20 years, while the north and east cities in the county estimate they will need almost 200 beds.

Cities are responsible for jailing people convicted of misdemeanor offenses. Most cities located in King County have contracts with the county that allow them to house their misdemeanants in the county's jail. The county is responsible for housing felons and those arrested for misdemeanors in unincorporated areas. Due to space constraints in existing county facilities, however, King County is requiring that Seattle and other cities end their use of the county jail for city misdemeanants by December 31, 2012.

On Monday, the King County Council requested that the county executive extend jail services contracts with local cities in the short and long term, pursue expansion of the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent, and collaborate on planning for additional jail beds. While the cities welcomed the

--more--

County Council's action, it does not formally guarantee any jail beds for cities. Extending the jail services contract to 2014 allows a more realistic timeframe for additional jail facilities to be sited and built but does not allow cities to stop planning for a new jail to house cities' misdemeanants. Cities still face a capacity issue that needs to be addressed by building a new facility or facilities.

Due to geographic considerations, two groups have formed to address the shortage of misdemeanor jail space. These two planning efforts are coordinated and all the cities are working closely together to meet their collective needs. The North/East Cities Committee (NECC) is composed of 23 cities, including Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond, Seattle and Shoreline. Among them, the 23 cities estimate they will need 640 beds for misdemeanor offenders over the next 20 years. In addition, five South King County cities – Auburn, Des Moines, Federal Way, Tukwila and Renton – have formed the South Corrections Entity (SCORE) and are pursuing the construction of a 680-bed jail facility to meet their needs over the next 20 years.

###