



LARRY PHILLIPS
Metropolitan King County Council
District Four

✓
June 18, 2008

Chris Leman, Chair
City Neighborhood Council
PO Box 94649
Seattle, WA 98124-4649

Dear Mr. Leman,

Thank you for your May 28, 2008 letter regarding allocation of new Metro Transit service investments. I appreciate your advocacy for increased bus service in Seattle; indeed Metro has recently experienced record growth in ridership systemwide.

As you may know, I have been a longtime supporter of efforts to increase transit service in Seattle and regionwide, including:

- the 2000 ballot measure raising the sales tax by 0.2% for Metro Transit in order to replace lost Motor Vehicle Excise Tax revenue from I-695;
- the 2006 Transit Now ballot measure to add the final 0.1% of sales tax available for local transit under state law; and
- Sound Transit, including the 2007 "Roads and Transit" ballot measure that failed at the polls, and a potential 2008 ballot measure that would expand Sound Transit service.

You may also know that I voted against the 40:40:20 policy because I share your concern that the policy diverts new bus service hours from Seattle, which has seen a continually growing demand for transit service. Unfortunately, in 2002 when the policy was considered by our Council, the three dissenting votes cast by me and Councilmembers Constantine and Sullivan were overruled by a majority of Metropolitan King County Councilmembers, most of who represented suburban and rural King County, and as a result the 40:40:20 policy was implemented. The following is a bit of history regarding this policy.

King County Metro Subareas divide King County into three regions: West (Seattle, Shoreline and Lake Forest Park), East, and South. Historically and today, Metro's West Subarea has the majority of Metro service hours; in 2006 we had 63%. Originally, Metro's transit system focused primarily on moving people in, out, and around Seattle, but as population and employment has grown on the Eastside and in South King County, the demand for travel within and between cities outside of Seattle has grown.

Beginning in 1996, King County's transit planning began to respond to these growing transit needs outside Seattle, and recommended a policy change to permit Metro to catch up with

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demand for transit in South and East King County. In response, in 2002 the King County Executive proposed a policy, adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council, whereby new bus service hours would be allocated under a 40:40:20 ratio (40% East, 40% South, 20% West); this policy was a compromise between advocates for a more aggressive policy to balance total bus service equally among the subareas and others, like myself, who pointed to undiminished demand for more bus service in the West Subarea. As mentioned above, this was a split vote by the Council; I did not vote in favor of implementing 40:40:20.

Please note that the 40:40:20 policy applies only to new bus service investments; current service levels have not been and will not be reallocated under this formula. Due to a slowing local economy since 2002 and accompanying slowing sales tax revenue, relatively little new service has been allocated under the 40:40:20 policy. The Transit Now initiative has provided some new revenue for new transit service, which will be allocated according to 40:40:20. By 2016, with Transit Now fully implemented, the West Subarea is projected to have 57% of the total service hours systemwide. Specifically, Transit Now will bring the West Subarea an additional 100,000 hours of service allocated under 40:40:20, plus 63,500 in new service hours through the Transit Now Service Partnership program. You will be pleased to note that the West Subarea is receiving 48% of the total hours available through the Service Partnership program.

Despite the 40:40:20 policy, the West Subarea will continue to have more transit service, with more mobility options, than any other part of the Central Puget Sound region. Upcoming expansions of transit options in the West Subarea include Sound Transit's Central Link light rail line and the newly-formed King County Ferry District which will fund the Elliott Bay Water Taxi and other pilot projects for boat transit. Both of these transit systems are being created in addition to Metro Transit bus service.

I will continue to advocate for increased mobility options in Seattle and regionwide, and look forward to reviewing the 40:40:20 policy periodically with the goal of maximizing mobility options and investing in transit where it makes the most sense. I am currently spearheading an audit of Metro Transit to identify ways to put more funds into additional service to benefit transit throughout King County, as demand for transit continues to rise.

Thank you again for contacting me with your concerns.

Sincerely,



Larry Phillips, Councilmember
Metropolitan King County Council, District Four

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Greg Nickels, Seattle City Mayor
Seattle City Council