



July 15, 2011

Dear Mayor McGinn and Councilmember Rasmussen:

The Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee III (CTAC III) is pleased to submit its recommended transportation priorities for future funding. In developing this recommendation, the CTAC III carefully considered the criteria established in Resolution 31240, the Seattle Department of Transportation's (SDOT's) budget challenges and input from the public related to priority transportation investments.

As you know the CTAC III recommendation for the current \$20 Vehicle License Fee (VLF) revenues stressed funding for maintenance and preservation needs while providing some resources for transit and bicycle system improvements. Our intent is that these funds help address the City's significant backlog of transportation maintenance needs. While the existing \$20 VLF is an important revenue source, it does not eliminate the backlog of system preservation needs, nor does it provide the funding required to make significant progress towards the goals of improved mobility for all, safer streets, healthy communities, efficient movement of goods and services and reduced impact on global climate.

In light of these additional needs, CTAC III did significant public outreach to determine Seattle residents' highest priority transportation investments and to gauge interest in pursuing additional funding to achieve these priorities. We heard a consistent message from the public that the transportation system must transition to a greater focus on improving mobility through reliable and convenient options including strong transit, bicycle and pedestrian connections to key destinations. Residents have a strong interest in preserving the transportation assets that we have in place and in making streets safe for all users. People also expressed a willingness to pay for transportation improvements that were consistent with these priorities. A more comprehensive summary of the public input is provided below.

In response to the public input we received and our review of the Department of Transportation's budget, we have developed a recommendation that prioritizes investments in transit, preservation and safety and key connections that implement the Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans. These priorities provide significant benefits to all users. Aligned with the city's complete street policy, the preservation and safety investments include critical pavement repair and restoration projects that improve mobility for freight, transit, motor vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians. Transit investments improve speed and reliability for transit riders throughout the system. Safe walking and biking facilities promote active and healthy lifestyles and implement the pedestrian and bicycle master plans. We are also recommending that funds be earmarked to maintain the new projects constructed with VLF funds, to ensure that we do not add to the maintenance backlog.



The Committee is providing these recommendations to you within sufficient time for placement on a November ballot, should the Transportation Benefit District (TBD) Board decide to put this before the voters. We have identified funding priorities that could be met with the full \$80 VLF, with the understanding that the Board will have the final determination of the scale and scope of the proposal.

Should the Transportation Benefit District Board decide a ballot measure is appropriate to fund these additional needs, the CTAC III recommends:

1. The Vehicle License Fee, which could generate up to revenues of \$27.2 million annually.
2. The funding be divided as follows: 30 percent for system preservation and safety, 50 percent for transit improvements and 20 percent for pedestrian and bicycle improvements.

We believe our recommendation appropriately balances funding for specific programs, while leaving SDOT the flexibility to accomplish priority objectives in the most cost-effective manner and leverage these funds to make the greatest impact. See the attached spreadsheet for details.

Community Engagement and Public Outreach

Prior to developing a recommendation several community engagement activities were conducted with the participation of all CTAC III members. Activities included:

- Statistically-valid telephone survey with 400 participants
- Online survey with 2,160 participants
- Round table discussions with representatives from neighborhoods, environmental groups, business and freight groups, people with mobility challenges, social justice advocates and public health professionals
- Public workshops in the south, central and north portions of Seattle with more than 100 participants
- Telephone interviews with Asian Counseling and Referral Service Neighborhood House, New Holly - Seattle Housing Authority, Refugee Women's Alliance, Salaam Urban Village Association, Seattle and King County Public Health, Vietnamese Friendship Association and SE Seattle District Council
- Speaker bureaus at the Lakewood Seward Park Community Association, Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Board, Transportation Choices Coalition Event and Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
- Letters from the Seattle Freight, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Boards, Port of Seattle, Seattle Parks Foundation, West Seattle Chamber of Commerce, Feet First and Seattle Chamber of Commerce.

The CTAC III met with the Seattle Freight and Bicycle Advisory Boards and conferred with the chair of the Pedestrian Advisory Board and solicited the Boards' input into the recommendation. The Committee carefully considered the written recommendations developed by these Boards.

Based on the outcomes from the public involvement, Seattle residents support a balance of maintenance and new projects with transit rising to the top as a priority. Highlights include:

- City needs to transition from moving cars to moving people and goods
- Improve transit speed, reliability and connectivity
- Make transit system easier to navigate and affordable
- Repair and replace deteriorating infrastructure including bridges
- Make the streets safe for all users
- Pave streets and repair potholes
- Protect what we have; at the very least, don't let it get worse
- Add pedestrian and bicycle connections in neighborhoods to local destinations such as schools, parks and trails (Neighborhood Greenways)
- Increase connectivity between neighborhoods
- Keep freight moving

Values

In addition to identifying the priority investments of transit, preservation and safety, and non-motorized transportation, the CTAC III felt that transportation improvements should address the following values:

- Accessibility
- Equity, both geographic and social justice
- Economic development and freight mobility
- Environmental stewardship and healthy communities

The following paragraphs describe how our recommendation incorporates these values and uses them to address city needs.

Accessibility

The proposed funding allocation includes pedestrian improvements such as curb ramps, sidewalks and crossing enhancements that connect neighborhoods with destinations and the transit system that remove barriers to mobility. Including additional funding for the Neighborhood Street Fund Large Project Program allows more neighborhood identified projects to be constructed. Often these projects are sidewalks, other pedestrian and bicycle connections and open space that increase the livability, walkability and bikeability of neighborhoods and their business districts.

The Neighborhood Transit Connections category is focused on connecting neighborhoods to transit, allowing commuters, youth, seniors and those with limited mobility to more easily reach their destinations. These projects will provide opportunities to improve the critical “last mile” connections to transit and provide people options to avoid the high cost of auto ownership.

Equity

Equity is a core value of Seattle’s Bicycle, Pedestrian and Transit Master Plans as well as SDOT’s core business. Following the criteria in these plans ensures improvements are fairly distributed geographically and where there is need, with particular emphasis on connecting neighborhoods to each other and making vital connections between transit and community services such as schools, libraries, community centers, parks, hospitals and clinics, shopping and employment. They include educational programs to familiarize users with how to use new infrastructure and the benefits of active transportation.

The recommendation addresses the need for improved access to services in underserved communities by providing funding to expand the range of transit options for those with limited mobility or those who live outside convenient walking distance to transit stations or major bus stops. The Neighborhood Transit Opportunity Fund establishes an ongoing funding stream that can support innovative partnerships with social services and other agencies to provide improved transit connections. It also funds an Alternative Service Delivery Study to identify the most efficient and effective means of making neighborhood connections in underserved areas. This alternative service could be implemented in partnership with Metro and local service agencies.

Economy and Freight

The recommendation recognizes the importance of local freight mobility to the economic vitality of the entire region. It funds pavement preservation, with a priority on improving conditions on the busiest routes that serve all modes, including transit and freight. It also places a priority on the completing a Freight Master Plan by 2013 with funding from the transit category that would not be needed until planning and design of projects is complete. In its recommendation to us, the Freight Advisory Board emphasized the need for a comprehensive freight plan that would identify a freight network and projects to effectively preserve and strengthen it. This plan would guide freight investments needed to maintain economic vitality at the city, state, and national level by supporting Puget Sound ports and Seattle’s two designated manufacturing and industrial centers (Duwamish and BINMIC), home to 77,000 industrial jobs.

Environmental Stewardship and Healthy Communities

The recommendations consider the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled. Investments concentrate on modes and programs that have the biggest potential to make healthy active transportation choices like walking, biking and riding transit a real option. For example, a standalone transit investment is valuable, but not as valuable as a transit project that optimizes investment by including land use changes for compact communities, place making, sidewalk improvements and bicycle facilities, as well as markets the mobility, affordability and health benefits of this transit community. Education and encouragement programs result in the bike lanes and transit service you put in place being more quickly used and provide a more cost effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Investments in Seattle's transit communities, as recently recommended by the Planning Commission, provide healthy, sustainable travel options which have some of the greatest potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Accountability, Reporting and Oversight

Should the TBD move forward with a ballot measure, we strongly recommend an independent oversight committee monitor all expenditures and deliverables. This model has been very successful with Bridging the Gap and we believe it could be accomplished by expanding the existing Bridging the Gap Oversight Committee's mandate to overseeing all of Seattle's voter approved transportation funds.

Another important element of accountability is ensuring that the proportion of the City's general fund for base revenues for transportation, in particular for system preservation and operations are maintained as closely to historic levels as possible. While there are many competing needs for general fund revenues, the committee recognizes that there is a very large backlog of system preservation needs that cannot be addressed at the current time. It is critical that Seattle not lose ground in preserving the transportation system by reducing base funding for transportation. In order to carry this out, the TBD should include a clause limiting the supplanting of funds in any ballot measure placed before voters.

Neighborhood Projects

Our recommendation includes increased funding for the Neighborhood Street Fund Large Project Program. When combined with existing funding, this would provide a total of \$6.6 million every three years for neighborhood driven projects and addresses the strong desire community members have expressed in using their experience and knowledge to guide neighborhood investments.

Bridging the Gap

Based on the telephone and online survey just over half of the participants would support a transportation improvement ballot measure in addition to Bridging the Gap. The City should continue to educate the public on the work Bridging the Gap is completing and have accountability measures in place to minimize confusion between a new ballot measure and the existing property levy. The TBD funds should be seen as complementing the efforts of Bridging the Gap, by supporting progress toward eliminating the backlog of maintenance needs, while implementing improvements that will move the city towards its short term and long term goals.

Proceeds from the Rubble Yard Sale

The CTAC III understands that the proceeds from the recent Rubble Yard sale must be allocated for transportation purposes. In the context of CTAC III's overall recommendation for the potential funding from an \$80 VLF, the committee supports the Mayor and City Council's commitment of using \$3 million from the sale of the Rubble Yard to fund additional system preservation and safety in 2011. We also recommend a significant portion of the sale be allocated to the completion of major transportation projects.

CTAC III in the Future

Finally, the CTAC III acknowledges that a ballot measure using the TBD's VLF authority is only one piece of the funding puzzle. SDOT will continue to face major challenges and it is imperative that the city remain dedicated to preserving our infrastructure and moving forward with viable options for all modes of transportation. For these reasons, the CTAC III recommends that the TBD continue to investigate and advocate for additional revenue possibilities. In particular, transportation pricing mechanisms that provide disincentives for travel options that have a greater impact on the environment would be helpful in addressing the backlog of transportation funding needs. SDOT should aggressively seek grants and partnership opportunities to expand the purchasing power of TBD funds. The City should also find ways to increase the cost efficiency of project delivery by finding low-cost alternatives for infrastructure construction. Finally, the CTAC III encourages partnerships between local agencies and heavy vehicle users to find solutions that address vehicle weight impacts to our streets.

We as a committee have reviewed and evaluated the city's transportation funding system and needs. This proposal is our best recommendation for how additional funding might be allocated. In recommending funding for system improvements, the CTAC III recognizes the importance of strengthening transit, biking and walking to address mobility, sustainability and quality of life goals. The work was done in good faith and the results reflect as accurately as possible the combined sense of the group. There remain some differences in opinion, with a few members strongly valuing system

preservation and safety and others walkability and bikeability. Our intent is to provide the TBD with the greatest amount of flexibility in deciding how to proceed.

Sincerely,

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Cc: Council President Richard Conlin
Councilmember Jean Godden
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Councilmember Nick Licata
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