



**The Municipal League of King County**

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November 29, 2006

Hon. Norm Rice, Co-Chair  
Mr. John Stanton, Co-Chair  
Regional Transportation Commission  
c/o Trilogy Partners  
PO Box 53010  
Bellevue WA 98015-3010

**RE: Draft RTC Report**

Dear Mr. Rice, Mr. Stanton, and RTC Members,

The Municipal League of King County is a 100-year old civic organization dedicated to good government in our region. We have been observing with keen interest the process leading up to the issuance of your preliminary report on November 15. We welcome the opportunity to have an open and independent evaluation of transportation governance in the Puget Sound region, and we have been pleased to see the Commission process be accessible to public involvement and neutral with respect to its outcomes.

Your report does a thorough job of laying out the issues and trends related to transportation in this region. We concur with your findings and your conclusion that the region needs a new regional transportation governing entity (a regional transportation commission or RTC). We support the goals for regional governance that you identify in the report. Further, we support your analysis that new financing strategies, *e.g.*, congestion pricing, are needed to accompany the new regional governance entity.

You present a "choice matrix" in Chapter 9 of your report that outlines the key dimensions of the size, scope and composition of the new RTC. We have reviewed and debated the categories you lay out and offer the following comments and recommendations.

- The critical areas needing regional coordination and a regional perspective are planning, prioritization and funding. The new entity must have taxing authority for regional capital improvements for all modes.
- The new RTC should not re-invent capabilities that are well-developed and well-established in existing entities. For example, we do not believe that construction, preservation and operations that are currently performed by WSDOT, Sound Transit, cities, counties or local transit agencies should be taken over.

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- Good regional governance should focus on regional matters and should not usurp areas of authority that properly belong to local or state government. Further analysis is needed to distinguish between matters of local, regional or state responsibility.
- The authority granted to the new RTC should be commensurate with what it needs to carry out a regional role: enough authority to override local jurisdictions on regional matters, but not so much as to take over the State's responsibilities.
- The new RTC's key role will be to represent the REGION in negotiating transportation matters with WSDOT, the Governor and the Legislature.
- We believe the PSRC should be preserved as the planning arm of the new RTC. The PSRC's staff and leadership are excellent and its policy boards should continue as convenient places to secure local government points of view.
- In the matter of representation, we believe that the governor should appoint at least a majority of the members of the new RTC. Appointed committee members are more likely to possess transportation expertise, to be committed to regionalism and to maintain independence from special interests. While making this recommendation, we are aware of legal issues regarding representation and taxing authority (including the matters raised in the Cunningham decision), which we trust the RTC will address more fully in its final report.
- To ensure that a high degree of accountability is nevertheless maintained, we recommend that performance benchmarks and independent oversight be required.

We offer these comments and recommendations in the spirit of advocating for good government in Washington.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Steve Marshall  
Chair of the Municipal League of King County



Robert S. Klein  
Chair of the Municipal League Transportation Committee