

Eastside Transportation Association

“Dedicated to improving our quality of life and environment by reducing congestion through increased mobility”

P.O. Box 50621
Bellevue, WA 98015

February 11, 2013

Representative. Judy Clibborn. Chair
Washington State House Transportation Committee

RE: Transportation Funding

Dear Representative Clibborn,

Like the Washington Roundtable, we strongly support added funding for transportation. Our highway system has not kept up the personal travel demands of a growing population nor with freight demands of an expanding economy. Existing roads and bridges have been shortchanged on maintenance and preservation. Transportation Secretary Paula Hammond said, in a November 17th op-ed in the Seattle Times, “The bottom line is that we are about \$375 million a year short of the revenues needed just to maintain, operate and preserve our highway, ferry and rail systems at current levels of services. Without new investments in the care for our existing system, we will fall far enough behind on our preservation work that some facilities will be beyond basic repair. Freight movement will be restricted on some of our state bridges and structures. The ferry system’s aging assets will be stretched beyond their useful lives, increasing the risk of failure and interrupting service.”

But that’s not all. We have unfinished and needed capacity improvement projects including I-405, SR-167, SR 520 and projects in SW and NE Washington. Over the past 20 years our vehicle miles of travel have increased by almost 30%, but our lane-miles of highways have only increased by less than 5%. Depending on the year and the particular measure, Seattle bounces around being the 5th to 15th most congested urbanized area in the U.S. Seattle ranks 13th in truck congestion cost. Spokane is the 7th most congested of 21 small urbanized areas. Vancouver is a part of the Portland Urbanized area with the 6th worst travel time of U.S. urbanized areas in 2011. This is in spite of being the poster-child for light rail and “enlightened” planning.

ETA is in favor of increased funding for transportation, but with some conditions:

- Funding for individual modes of travel should be in approximate proportion to use of the mode. A mode carrying 5% of travel should get roughly 5% of funding.
- Revenue plans should be based on user payments.
- New and existing revenue sources should be protected by the 18th Amendment.
- Tolls can be a user pay source for specific highway projects, if used in the same corridor.

Our support for increased revenues does not include HOT lanes. These lanes do provide a better trip for a few favored users and provide a new, but small source of revenue. However, we oppose HOT lanes because:

- HOT lane revenue depends on increasing congestion in the general-purpose lanes.
- Travelers in the GP lanes will pay most of the cost of the HOT lanes. For this, they are rewarded with increased congestion.
- HOT lane revenues may cover HOT lane operating and maintenance costs and may make only a small contribution to capital costs.
- HOT lanes complicate operations because of the extra weaving to and from entry/exit locations.
- Costs of collecting the toll revenues are high.

WSDOT will offer counter viewpoints supporting HOT lanes. But we urge you to review real evidence, including the Cambridge Systematics report on I-405 HOT lanes.

We recognize the first phase of I-405 HOT lanes from Bellevue to Bothell is under construction. However, we strongly urge the legislature not to provide HOT operation authority for any expansion of this program until we have at least 1-2 years of operating data from the initial phase. We support the expansion of the Bellevue to Renton section of I-405 if funding is provided, but it should be opened as general-purpose capacity as approved in the adopted I-405 Master Plan. This would also provide an excellent comparison of the throughput and speed performance between the additions of general-purpose capacity versus the alternative HOT lane operation.

Respectfully submitted,



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