

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

December 11, 2008

The Honorable Christine Gregoire
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Re: **Stimulus Package Criteria to evaluate and prioritize projects**

Dear Governor Gregoire:

As the federal government considers providing a multi-billion dollar economic stimulus package with substantial direct funding for states to invest in ready-to-go transportation infrastructure projects, the State of Washington would be well served to have a list of criteria to evaluate and prioritize the many projects for which municipalities and agencies will seek funding. Accordingly the **Eastside Transportation Association** makes the following recommendations on how these projects should be selected for funding and we invite all local, regional and statewide elected officials to join us in supporting the need for thoughtful, focused selection criteria.

1. Projects must be “*shovel ready*”

In order to create jobs and provide immediate relief to our ailing economy ready-to-go or “*shovel ready*” projects will almost certainly be the first qualifying criteria by any standard. Committing funds to a future project that hasn’t been designed or through the rigorous environmental review process simply won’t accomplish the immediately desired results for the economy.

2. Level of congestion relief provided to all users

In addition to the *shovel ready* status transportation projects should be prioritized based the level of congestion relief provided to all users of the system including freight, transit and general purpose traffic. The economic cost of congestion is well documented and any truly *shovel ready* project should have this economic impact data readily available for evaluation as part of the completed approval process or Record of Decision.

3. Quantifiable environmental benefits achieved

Prioritization of projects should also give considerable weight to quantifiable environmental benefits that can be achieved through completion of the proposed project. Examples of these benefits include reduction of emissions by reducing congestion, improvements to aquatic

systems and watersheds with wetland restoration, stream and habitat enhancements, and removal of fish passage barriers. Added weight should also be given to projects that include HOV lanes, HOV direct access ramps and other improvements that encourage and benefit the use of transit, vanpooling and carpooling. Again, a ROD or other readily available environmental review document will provide the needed information to quantify these benefits.

4. Priority given to highways of statewide significance

Corridors designated as highways of statewide significance, by definition, should also be given priority. Pursuant to RCW 47.06.140 the HSS designation considers the necessary balance between providing for the free inter-jurisdictional movement of people and goods and the needs of local communities using these facilities. Again, the HSS designation is one additional way of screening projects for potential federal funding to be certain the funds are invested in the most important areas to gain immediate economic benefit for our state.

5. Job creation and immediate benefit to our state's economy (e.g. return on taxpayer's investment)

Lastly, not all potential infrastructure projects are equal in terms of job creation and immediate benefit to our state's economy. After projects are ranked based on the above criteria they should then be ranked based on return on investment to the taxpayer in terms of the jobs created and the multiplier effect on our economy. Wherever possible, selected projects should utilize our in-state workforce, design professionals, construction companies, raw materials and finished products.

We offer the **I-405 Master Plan** as an example of a set of projects that meets the above criteria and deserves a substantial portion of any federal funding made available to our state through the stimulus package being considered. WSDOT worked with cities, counties, federal agencies, transit agencies and community groups to develop consensus for a long-term vision for the multi-modal redevelopment of I-405. This development process culminated in a three-year environmental impact statement (EIS) that outlines roadway, transit, and environmental investments including more than 300 improvements. The EIS received approval with the Record of Decision in October 2002 and now serves as a corridor master plan.

Today, I-405 carries 800,000 people each day. As each constructed project builds toward the master plan, more people are accommodated. With a completed master plan, I-405 will carry approximately 1,540,000 people each day (an additional 640,000 people).

The master plan creates 1,700 new vanpools, increases transit service by 50 percent, builds 5,000 new park-and-ride spaces and accommodates a new bus rapid transit system with stations and stops. Storm water runoff and salmon habitat will be significantly improved. The result: Every trip on the I-405 corridor will be faster and safer.

In conclusion, with an unprecedented state budget deficit our needs have never been greater when it comes to finding the most immediate, efficient way to stimulate our economy and create jobs. Infrastructure funding alone won't provide for all our needs. Whatever funding the

state receives should be invested following an established set of objective criteria to be certain we spend the money on projects providing the taxpayers with the most benefits.

Sincerely,



Jim Horn
Chairman of the Board
Eastside Transportation Association

cc: Senator Mary Margaret Haugen
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