



King County

Metropolitan King County Council

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March 16, 2009

The Honorable Ron Sims
King County Executive
Chinook Building
401 – 5th Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Executive Sims:

The Council understands, as do you, that because of the sharp reduction in sales tax revenues, the Transit Division is facing unprecedented funding gaps in the current biennium and for the foreseeable future. In order to address this new reality, a complete review of the Division's policies, services, and programs is necessary to make the tough but necessary decisions regarding how the Metro transit system should function. Council is aware that the Transit Division has already begun to identify the building blocks of the Metro transit service system. We believe a collaborative, interbranch effort, to assist in this identification process and to develop tools that will allow policymakers to understand the range of options for dealing with this new reality, is essential.

At the March 10, 2009 Physical Environment Committee meeting, Metro's General Manager, Kevin Desmond, stated his support for an interbranch approach to develop policy priorities for the Transit Division this Spring. He indicated that the exercise of reviewing the policy drivers of Metro service delivery would serve as a good basis for understanding the fiscal challenges Metro faces now and in the foreseeable future. Therefore, we ask you to support the establishment of a working group comprised of Transit Division staff, Council central and personal staff, together with representatives from your office and the Office of Management and Budget. This group would be tasked to perform, over the next three months, a review of the Transit Division's choices. The group would also identify and seek policy advice from the Council, via the Physical Environment Committee, regarding the priorities of the Metro transit system. By mid June, at the end of this process, this group would report their results, but issue no formal recommendations, since the purpose of this collaborative effort would be to support the development of a 2010/2011 Executive Budget proposal.

We know that the timeline is tight and we recognize that the working group will be engaged in an intense effort with very fluid information. We also understand that the needs of our citizens are great, and it is our responsibility to work together to address this difficult challenge.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Dow Constantine, Chair
King County Council

Jane Hague, Chair
Physical Environment Committee



King County

Ron Sims

King County Executive

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March 18, 2009

The Honorable Dow Constantine, Chair
King County Council

The Honorable Jane Hague, Chair
Physical Environment Committee
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Dear Councilmember Constantine and Councilmember Hague;

Today I received your letter dated March 16, 2009, proposing a potential joint County Council and County Executive process to review Metro Transit's funding challenges and provide input to the development of the 2010/2011 Executive Budget proposal.

I appreciate the spirit of collaboration behind the letter. I do believe that the County Council and the County Executive must work together to solve the challenges facing Metro Transit in 2009, 2010 and beyond. However, I cannot agree to the process you have outlined since it includes budget matters but does not appear to include the appropriate participation of the Chair of the Budget and Fiscal Management Committee, Councilmember Larry Gossett.

As you know, throughout my entire tenure as King County Executive I have always honored both the budget process and the Budget Committee Chair selected by the council. I have maintained this commitment regardless of who has been selected by the council and have done so with both Democrats and Republicans as the Budget Chair.

Councilmember Gossett has expressed concern to me and my staff about this process and its implications for the budget. As Executive, I will not participate in, nor will I allow either my Budget Office or department staff to participate in, budget discussions with the council that do not have the support of the Budget Chair.

When Councilmember Gossett's concerns are addressed, I will be happy to work with the council on these matters.

Sincerely,

Ron Sims

King County Executive

cc: The Honorable Larry Gossett, King County Council