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Honorable Dow Constantine
King County Executive
King County Chinook Building
401 – 5th Ave., Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

August 23, 2012

Re: 2012 Update to Traffic Concurrency Program

Dear County Executive Constantine:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the King County Transportation Concurrency Expert Review Panel, which was appointed pursuant to KCC 14.70.270 for the purpose of reviewing King County's traffic concurrency system and making annual recommendations to the Executive and Council regarding that system.

The Expert Review Panel has examined the 2012 Update Report of the Department of Transportation (DOT) relating to the traffic concurrency system, and has met with KCDOT staff. In accordance with its mandate under KCC 14.70.270, the Expert Review Panel has examined the underlying concurrency system and KCDOT's recommendations regarding revisions to the concurrency system, which are being transmitted with the 2012 Update Report. Based on its review, the Expert Review Panel has the following comments:

Concurrency Map Updates: The Department's proposed new concurrency map has been updated to reflect revised travel shed boundaries and new traffic speed studies.

The Expert Review Panel finds that the proposed new concurrency map has been accurately revised to reflect adjustments in travel shed boundaries due to recent annexations. Since additional annexations may occur in the near future, it may be necessary to plan for and adopt a revised map reflecting additional annexations before the next update of the concurrency map scheduled for the end of 2013.

In 2011, the concurrency map was updated without new travel speed data. Gathering this data was a low priority based on limited new land development during the preceding year, the lack of traffic growth due to the recession and KCDOT budget constraints. In 2012, KCDOT collected updated travel speed data and analysis, focusing primarily on roads and travel sheds that failed concurrency standards in 2011, or which were close to failure. More limited data were collected on other roads, but data were collected on all corridors included in the adopted concurrency program. The Expert Review Panel supports this value engineering approach to focused data

collection, recognizing that KCDOT needs to conserve limited financial resources and believing this focused approach to be adequate to achieve the data needs of the program. The County will need to reassess its data collection options in 2013 and beyond based on available resources.

Finally, the Expert Review Panel finds that KCDOT has accurately calculated the results of the concurrency analysis for the travel sheds being tested. The result of that analysis is that one additional travel shed – the Newcastle/East Renton travel shed - will be out of compliance for 2013, compared to the prior map.

Based on these findings, the Expert Review Panel recommends adoption of the proposed concurrency map.

Additional comments:

The Expert Review Panel is aware of the fact that during 2013, KCDOT intends to consider significant changes to the concurrency program and related transportation programs and policies. The Expert Review Panel would like to take this opportunity to highlight several concerns that should be addressed during this review:

- As noted in the KCDOT 2012 Annual Update report, cities or the state DOT are responsible for transportation improvements needed to bring a number of the road corridors currently failing to meet King County concurrency standards into compliance. In most cases, those agencies have different level of service standards than King County. In addition, some of these agencies lack funds for necessary improvements. As a result, those agencies may not have any plans to construct the improvements that would achieve compliance with County level of service standards. This means the affected transportation facilities will likely fail current concurrency standards into the foreseeable future.
- A significant number of failing road corridors are located in the Rural Area and, as a result, are subject to a level of service standard of B. On high volume roads this results in some travel sheds falling below the adopted standard. The principal reason that some of these corridors are failing is that they effectively function as “urban connectors” between Urban Areas. A number of factors make it hard for the County to achieve its LOS standard: 1) current County policy, which effectively prohibits the construction of capacity improvements in the Rural Area; 2) KCDOT’s limited budget; and 3) the lack of County control over growth in the incorporated areas that generate much of the traffic on these corridors. Given these conditions and while concurrency reviews are not generally required for typical rural developments, there is no prospect that the rural property owners in these travel sheds will be able to develop their properties in the foreseeable future if concurrency approval is required.

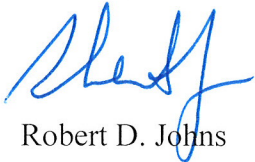
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Alternatively, adding capacity to these corridors to meet the level of service standard could bring additional pressure for urban levels of growth in the Rural Area. The Panel suggests that the County evaluate the development potential of the affected Rural Areas and related information to determine whether a modification of concurrency standards on these corridors will have any appreciable impact on the County's goal of preserving rural character in these areas or whether some other measure should be pursued.

- In at least one case (the Novelty Hill corridor east of the Redmond UPD) the road improvements that would be required to achieve compliance with level of service standards are not possible at anything approaching a reasonable cost due to topography issues. A more focused review of this situation should be conducted to determine if there are alternatives that will address this problem.

The Expert Review Panel is aware that KCDOT intends to examine these issues, as well as related issues involving the Mitigation Payment System in the coming months. The Panel looks forward to continuing to work with KCDOT staff, the County Executive and the County Council on these issues.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Johns

Chair, King County Traffic Concurrency
Expert Review Panel

cc: King County Traffic Concurrency Expert Review Panel members
John Shively, Road Services Staff Liaison to the Expert Review Panel

TCERP Report – 2012 Concurrency Update