



King County

Ron Sims

King County Executive

701 Fifth Avenue, Suite 3210
Seattle, WA 98104

206-296-4040 Fax 206-296-0194

TTY Relay: 711

www.kingcounty.gov

RECEIVED
2009 MAR -6 AM 10:10
CLERK
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

March 5, 2009

The Honorable Dow Constantine
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
COURTHOUSE

Dear Councilmember Constantine:

In response to the extreme weather conditions King County experienced between December 13 and December 20, 2008, I asked for a formal evaluation from the Department of Transportation (DOT) of how our agencies performed and to determine where we can improve. I was particularly concerned about whether we have enough equipment, staff and planning in place to prepare our Metro fleet for a similar event in the future. I also wanted to understand how effective our snowplowing efforts of roads in unincorporated King County have been, and if more investments are needed. I was concerned with how we were coordinating with our city partners to match snowplow priority routes to key transit corridors and to improve the certainty of bus service to as many riders as possible. Lastly, I was very concerned about our ability to adequately communicate with the public about what was happening and whether or not they could expect bus service in their neighborhood. To this end, I directed my communications director to explore a number of near-term improvements that are outlined in greater detail later in this letter.

In early January, the DOT briefed the County Council's Committee of the Whole on the response to the extreme weather conditions and indicated several next steps to be taken, including the development of an after action report. This report, which includes two components; one for the Road Services Division, and one for the Transit Division, was recently completed and is attached to this letter.

The after action report includes an analysis of DOT's experiences during the extreme weather conditions and identifies a number of actions to be taken that can improve our delivery of services and information to the public. Some of these actions are underway while other actions will take place over the long term and will require additional resources. As a result, I intend to follow up with some appropriation requests later this year that will be needed to implement some of these recommendations.

In addition to the preparation of the after action reports, my office and the DOT have been working with Councilmember Hague as the Chair of the Physical Environment Committee to determine if it would be useful to our city partners to meet and discuss a solutions-oriented approach to the extreme weather conditions that would result in improved coordination and communication. They are still in the process of canvassing these partners to see if there is sufficient interest to do this. A status report on this effort should be available at the upcoming briefing on the after action reports scheduled for March 10 at the County Council's Physical Environment Committee.

The recent snow event on February 26, 2009, although short-lived, was yet another reminder of our need to be fully prepared to deliver services and improve our messaging efforts to the public. Therefore, I have also directed my communications director, Carolyn Duncan, to lead a number of near-term efforts to improve communication with our customers, especially improvements to Transit web pages and the use of new media. On February 27, Ms. Duncan convened a work session with public information officers from cities throughout the county. She has also scheduled training for key transit staff and managers on the use of new media; created a new county blog site for use during emergencies such as transit service disruptions; and provided direction to transit staff to begin use of King County's KCNews Twitter account. Most importantly, Ms. Duncan has created a plan to use communication staff from other county departments to create a virtual Joint-Information Center (JIC) during major service disruptions. This JIC will be in affect throughout the year any time that the region is expected to get snowfall, extreme storms or any other disruption.

Ms. Duncan is also working closely with the county web master and an internal transit web committee appointed by Transit Division General Manager Kevin Desmond to make immediate improvements to Transit web pages while a long-term redesign effort is underway. Changes already made include a more prominent display of Metro Bus Tracker on the Website and a re-write of some text on the site to make it easier for customers to understand. More short-term changes will be made shortly. All of these actions will be subject to constant review and updates as we hear from users what works and what can be improved.

Additionally, Ms. Duncan's team is working with KCTV and the Emergency Coordination Center to begin use of new equipment that will add a 'crawl' of pertinent route information across the King County television channel such as is done on commercial stations with school closures and breaking news; creating protocols for breaking into regular programming on KCTV with regularly scheduled updates on service disruptions; exploring a partnership with the State Department of Transportation to add transit route information to its AM radio stations that announce traffic and construction delays; exploring a customer outreach campaign to help riders understand how to find their bus snow route and other riding tips; exploring the creation of neighborhood, bus route or service area rider groups that would share information specific to their area via phone or new media; and reinstating use of Rider Alert subscriptions service that automatically notifies riders of known service disruptions.

In addition to Ms. Duncan's efforts, the DOT recently convened a meeting of public works directors and emergency managers from around the county to share lessons learned during the extreme weather and to clarify expectations. DOT will also be having additional meetings with local jurisdictions over the coming months to establish protocols that will further strengthen our working relationships with these jurisdictions.

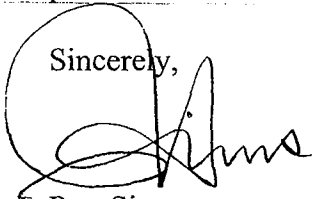
The Honorable Dow Constantine

March 5, 2009

Page 3

This after action report is simply the beginning of our efforts, I look forward to a continued dialogue with the County Council on how best to build upon our lessons learned from the extreme weather experience and to deliver on the implementation of both the short and long-term recommendations identified in the report as well as ideas from the public and our partners.

Sincerely,



Ron Sims

King County Executive

Attachments: December 2008 Snow and Ice Event After –Action Reports

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Tom Bristow, Interim Chief of Staff

Saroja Reddy, Policy Staff Director

Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

Frank Abe, Communications Director

Kurt Triplett, Chief of Staff, Office of the King County Executive

Bob Cowan, Director, Office of Management and Budget

Harold Taniguchi, Director, Department of Transportation (DOT)

Laurie Brown, Deputy Director, DOT

Linda Dougherty, Director, Road Services Division, DOT

Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Transit Division, DOT

