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Honorable Kurt Triplett
King County Executive
King County Chinook Building
401 5th Ave. Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

September 15, 2009

Re: 2009 Update to Traffic Concurrency Program

Dear Mr. Triplett:

This letter is submitted on behalf of the King County Transportation Concurrency Expert Review Panel, which was appointed pursuant to K.C.C. 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 2009 Annual Report of the Department of Transportation 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 testing system, including recently implemented changes to the system, and KCDOT's recommendations regarding a revised concurrency map, which is being transmitted with the Annual Report. Based on its review, the Expert Review Panel has the following comments:

New Travel Time Testing System: As described in the Annual Report, KCDOT has implemented a new GPS/GIS based system for collecting travel time data, the key component of the concurrency testing system.

- The implementation of a GPS/GIS based system is a significant improvement in the accuracy of the data used to measure travel time, the key component of the concurrency testing system.
- The increase in the reliability of the data should produce a corresponding increase in public confidence in the stability and reliability of the concurrency system.
- The new GPS/GIS based system will have a long term cost benefit because it is less expensive to operate than the prior manual data collection system.

The Panel notes that there were no other significant changes in the concurrency analysis system since 2008. Travel shed boundaries are unchanged and Level of Service

Standards were not modified. This allowed a more meaningful comparison between the currently adopted concurrency map and the proposed new map. Again, this should increase public confidence in the system. (The Panel does not conclude, however, that further refinements and changes should not be considered. This is discussed further in the Panel's Recommendations, below.)

Concurrency Test Results and Proposed New Concurrency Map: Based on the most recent travel time data and analysis, the concurrency system finds that four of the twenty-five travel sheds in the County are currently failing to meet Level of Service Standards. The new data collection system has also allowed KCDOT, for the first time, to identify road system improvements that would be required to bring those travel sheds which do fail concurrency standards into compliance with LOS standards. The Panel has the following comments on this aspect of KCDOT's Annual Report.

- The ability to identify improvements needed to bring failing travel sheds into compliance with LOS standards is a significant new tool for the County to use in the decision-making process for future capital improvement projects. While compliance with concurrency standards is not the sole basis for planning and funding capital improvement projects, it should be given serious consideration.
- The Panel notes, as does the Annual Report, that in several cases, failure of certain travel sheds to meet concurrency standards is the result of the need for improvements on City and WSDOT facilities which are not within the County's control. While it is important to realize that the County cannot solve these problems alone, that should not be the end of the analysis. The transportation system is an integrated system and the organizations that build and maintain the system - cities, counties, the state, and the federal government - need to work together to maintain and manage the system. King County and its residents and property owners should not do more than their share, but they need to do their share of resolving road capacity issues in the region. In fact, RCW 36.70A.070(6)(A)(3)(b) requires regional coordination of level of service standards for traffic concurrency.
- The Panel wishes to draw the County's attention to the fact that two of the failing travel sheds fail concurrency standards because they contain rural roads which connect two urban areas. These road sections are tested against the Rural LOS of B under the current concurrency system even though the vast majority of traffic on these roads is generated by the urban areas they connect. KCDOT and the County Council may wish to re-examine the policy of applying an LOS of B to

these specific road sections. This situation becomes even more complicated when the road section in question is a WSDOT facility because WSDOT's LOS standards are less stringent than King County's Rural LOS standard. For example, the WSDOT LOS standard for the portions of SR 202 in the Rural Area is C, while King County's standard is B. This inconsistency could lead to situations in which a travel shed fails King County concurrency standard but WSDOT sees no need to construct improvements because the road meets WSDOT's LOS standard. Regional coordination to address such issues is essential.

- The Panel notes also that two travel sheds which failed in 2008 now pass the concurrency test for travel time. This is undoubtedly due to a combination of improvements to the road system which occurred within the last year and decreases in traffic volumes due to rising fuel prices and the recession. While the increase in fuel prices may be permanent, it is hoped that the recession is temporary which means travel sheds which are compliant now may fail in the future.
- The current concurrency testing system does not consider either future growth or future CIP projects. This was a change to the County's concurrency process adopted in 2007 in response to criticism about the unreliability of concurrency tests which were based on predictions about the future, which often proved to be inaccurate in light of shifting market conditions, changes in CIP budgets and changes in funding priorities. The Panel continues to deem this a significant improvement. However, the reliance on existing conditions without consideration of pending changes in traffic volumes and CIP projects makes it more important that the concurrency tests and maps be updated annually.

Recommendations:

The Expert Review Panel finds the proposed new concurrency map to be reliable and based on accurate data and analytical assumptions. Adoption of the new map is strongly recommended.

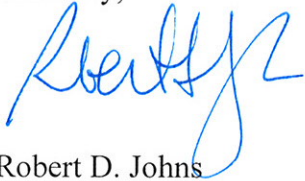
The Panel further recommends that KCDOT continue to refine its data collection and analysis systems, and in particular, continue the effort to integrate multi-modal analysis into the system.

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Finally, the Panel notes that a number of pending annexation and incorporation proposals may significantly alter the areas subject to County concurrency standards in the next year. KCDOT should be prepared to re-examine travel shed boundaries in light of these changes.

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the KCDOT Annual Report on Traffic Concurrency and the proposed concurrency map.

Sincerely,



Robert D. Johns
Chair, King County Traffic Concurrency Expert Review Panel

cc: King County Traffic Concurrency Expert Review Panel members
Linda Dougherty, Director of Road Services Division, KCDOT
John Shively, Road Services Staff Liaison to the Expert Review Panel
Karen Wolf, King County Executive's Office