## STAFF REPORT

(revised March 10, 2010)

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| **Agenda Item:** | 11 | **Name:** | Arthur Thornbury |
| **Proposed No**.: | 2010-0148 | **Date:** | March 9, 2010 |
| **Invited:** | Kevin Desmond, General Manager, Transit Division | | |

**SUBJECT**

Approval of a work plan for the Transit Stakeholder Task Force.

**SUMMARY**

Proposed Motion 2010-0148 would approve the Executive-proposed work plan for a task force created to recommend a policy framework for the growth, or possible contraction, of King County’s transit system. The Council recently approved the Executive’s appointment of the 28 members of the task force, which will have its first meeting later this month and is expected to submit its recommendations to the Council and Executive by September.

**BACKGROUND**

**November 2009 Budget Action –** In initiating the regional stakeholder task force with the adoption of the 2010/2011 Transit Budget, the Council required the Executive to transmit a detailed task force work plan for its review and approval. The budget action called for the work plan to include “a scope of work, tasks, schedule, milestones and the budget and appointment criteria/process for municipal and community stakeholders, and a coordinated staff working group.”

**Motion 13138 -** The Council approved this motion on February 1, 2010 to provide guidance to the Executive in developing a task force work plan. The Executive-proposed work plan addresses each element of Motion 13138 as described below.

1. **Charge to the Task Force -** The task force is to recommend a policy framework that includes:

* Concurrence with, or proposed changes to, the vision and mission of King County Metro;
* Criteria for systematically growing the transit system to achieve the vision;
* State and federal legislative agenda issues to achieve the vision;
* Strategies for increasing the efficiency of King County Metro; and
* Criteria for systematically reducing the transit system should revenues not be available to sustain it.

The work plan calls for the recommended policy framework to reflect a prioritization of six key transit system design factors:

* Land Use;
* Social Equity and Environmental Justice;
* Financial Sustainability;
* Geographic Equity;
* Economic Development; and
* Productivity and Efficiency

1. **Membership -** The work program section addressing task force member selection and membership categories is consistent with the guidance provided in Motion 13138. The Council approved the appointment of 28 task force members in the following categories on March 1, 2010:

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| Currently Elected Officials  Business/Economic Development |
| Organized Labor |
| Countywide Rider Interests |
| Educational Interests |
| Social Service Interests |
| Large Employers |
| Persons with Disabilities |
| Good Government |
| Environmental Concerns |
| Transportation Experts |
| Riders or Citizen Representatives |
| Transit Advisory Committee Representative |
| Puget Sound Regional Council Representative |
| Metro General Manager,  Sound Transit Senior Staff Member  Washington State Legislature Joint Transportation Committee Staff |

1. **Executive Committee -** The work plan establishes an Executive Committee made up of the King County Executive and three King County Council members (representing the three transit subareas) with the Chair of the Regional Transit Committee serving as an alternate. The Executive Committee is charged with overseeing the task force schedule and process consistent with the adopted work plan “without influencing the substance or content of the task force deliberations.”
2. **Interbranch Working Group -** A support group of Executive, Council and Transit Division staff is established to assist in the preparation and review of task force materials.
3. **Facilitator -** The process of hiring a third-party professional facilitator is nearly complete. The work plan calls for the facilitator be responsible for the following tasks, with guidance from the Executive Committee and support from the Interbranch Working Group:

* lay the process foundation
* build the framework of consensus
* finalize the recommendations

1. **Task Force Milestones -** The proposed work plan includes a timeline and milestones with task force meetings beginning in March, a draft report completed by July, the final version approved in August and the presentation of recommendations in September. The milestones include three Executive Committee meetings: at the beginning, midway and at the end of the process.
2. **Project Management -** The work plan assigns project management to the Transit Division’s Manager of Service Development.
3. **Consensus -** While Motion 13138 calls for the task force to submit policy recommendations at the end of its deliberations, it does not address the process by which task force members would come to agreement. The proposed work plan addresses this in its description of the task force process:

*Consensus-based Decision-making.*

*The task force will use a consensus-based decision making approach. Consensus-based decision-making seeks the agreement of participants on all major issues. If the group cannot reach consensus among all members, then a resolution or mitigation of minority objections is needed. Consensus does not mean everyone agrees with all aspects of the decision, but rather can “live with and support” the outcomes of the task force. Often the process undertaken in consensus decision-making is as important as the decision or recommendation itself.*

1. **Budget** The work plan establishes a project budget of $100,000, the amount set aside by the council in the 2010/2011 Transit Division Budget.
2. **Further Efforts** The work plan anticipates the possibility of follow-up work for the task force:

*Following efforts in 2010, the Task Force may be called for a second phase of work in 2011 related to the implementation of their recommendations, and the resulting policy. This second phase may be focused on identification of other policies or potential major investments such as the Eastside Rail Corridor that should be considered in future King County Metro Comprehensive or Strategic plans.*

**ISSUES**

**Consensus-based Decision-Making -** The work program sets a goal of *“agreement of all participants on all major issues”* which is explained as not meaning that “*everyone agrees with all aspects of the decision, but rather can live with and support the outcomes of the task force.”* In response to a request that he review and comment on the draft work plan, the task force facilitator has suggested that this may impede the work of the task force by setting an unachievable goal. Alternatively, the definition of consensus-based decision-making could be left to the task force members guided by the experience of the facilitator.

*Note: The committee approved an amendment to the work plan that retained the concept of consensus-based decision-making but removed the proposed description and replaced it with a provision allowing the task force to define consensus for the purposes of its deliberations.*

**Agenda Approval -** Among the tasks assigned the facilitator in the work plan is to *“develop and submit draft agendas,*” though it is not made explicit to whom the agendas would be submitted for approval. The Executive Committee’s charge of *“overseeing the task force schedule and process”* could imply agenda approval but that is less explicit than the provisions of Motion 13138: “*the agendas for the task force meetings shall be developed by the facilitator with guidance from the executive committee….”*

*Note: The committee approved an amendment to the work plan that added task force meeting agendas to the oversight tasks assigned to the Executive Committee.*