

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Washington State Department of Transportation Update (WSDOT) on I-405 Express Toll Lanes Operation

STAFF CONTACTS

David Berg, Director, 452-6468
Transportation Department

Joyce Nichols, Intergovernmental Relations Director, 452-4225
City Manager's Office

POLICY ISSUES

In Council's 2016 State Legislative Statement of Policy, tolling is specifically addressed to include:

- Tolling should be used as both a tool for managing and improving highway operations for all users and as a revenue tool to augment project funding;
- Revenue raised in the corridor should be spent in the corridor;
- Traffic diversion and its associated effects on local roads should be minimized and the state should mitigate negative impacts; and,
- The state should continually monitor and evaluate the impacts and performance of all tolled lanes and assess the impact on general purpose, transit and HOV travel lanes, including occupancy parameters for 2+ and 3+ HOV users and ensure that 2-person carpools either improves or holds harmless general purpose lane performance as compared with any No-Build scenario.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

☐ Action
☐ Discussion
☒ Information

Tonight's update is informational only and no action is required of Council. The update is an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback to WSDOT staff.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The City of Bellevue has been actively involved in efforts to optimize traffic conditions of the 40-mile I-405/SR 167 corridor since the corridor's environmental work began in 1999. The Record of Decision, completed in 2002, calls for a "mixed-mode" I-405 Master Plan of improvements intended to reduce traffic congestion, expand travel options and improve trip reliability within the corridor even as the region and travel demands grow over time.

Two state transportation funding packages passed by the legislature in 2003 and 2005 resulted in \$1.7 billion in funded--and now nearly completed--improvements along the corridor, including the Electronic Toll Lanes from Bellevue to Lynnwood. In the 2015 legislative session, \$1.2 billion in additional funds was authorized to complete another major component of the I-405 Master Plan program that has been a Council legislative priority for many years, including: a new express toll lane system from Bellevue to

Renton intended to better manage traffic flow and reduce congestion. These new lanes, coupled with the construction of a new direct connector ramp at the I-405/SR 167 interchange, will provide a reliable system of managed lanes along the I-405/SR 167 corridor.

Earlier this year, WSDOT reconvened the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group (EAG). The EAG is a group of elected officials and transportation agency representatives from communities along the corridor Councilmember Kevin Wallace represented Bellevue on the EAG). The EAG was formed to help inform future funding and implementation decisions, including express toll lane carpool policies. The work done by the EAG ultimately helped both the Washington State Transportation Commission and the state Legislature determine how the express toll lanes projects would be implemented, including the carpool definition (which was 3+ in the carpool lanes), and was a significant policy issue.

Representatives from the WSDOT last briefed Council on the opening of the north segment of the new I-405 express toll lanes, from Bellevue to Lynnwood, just prior to the start of operations last fall. Since the opening, the WSDOT has been monitoring congestion in both the express toll lanes and in the general purpose lanes to better understand the impacts of the new system.

WSDOT reports that in the first eight weeks of operation, transit riders, vanpoolers and 3+ carpools who were previously delayed in congested HOV lanes are experiencing improved reliability and reduced travel times, and southbound toll lane travelers saved about 14 minutes at an average cost of \$2.35 and northbound travelers saved about 15 minutes at an average cost of \$2.20. Results in the general-purpose lanes are mixed, with some locations showing improved travel times, and some locations showing worse travel times.

Tonight, representatives from the WSDOT will brief Council on the on the latest ETL data, and the agency's plan for improving the system.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ATTACHMENT

N/A