

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Update on I-405 Express Toll Lanes Operation

STAFF CONTACTS

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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 two-person carpools either improves or holds harmless general purpose lane performance as compared with any No-Build scenario.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

ACTION

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DIRECTION

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INFORMATION ONLY

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Tonight's update is informational only and no action is required of Council. Staff from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) will provide an update on the operations and performance of the I-405 Express Toll Lanes. The update is an opportunity for Council 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 on 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 express toll lanes from Bellevue to Lynnwood. In the 2015 legislative session, \$1.2 billion in additional funds were 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 more reliable system of managed lanes along the I-405/SR 167 corridor.

Representatives from the WSDOT briefed Council last January on the opening of the north segment of the I-405 express toll lanes, from Bellevue to Lynnwood. Since the opening, the WSDOT has been monitoring traffic in both the express toll lanes and the general purpose lanes to better understand the effects of the new system on traffic performance. Tonight, WSDOT staff will brief Council on the latest express toll lane data after one year of operations, conceptual plans for further improvements to the far north end of I-405, between SR 522 and I-5 in Lynnwood, and the next steps for projects in design and construction on the south end of I-405, between Bellevue and Renton.

The WSDOT reports that in the first year of operations, transit riders, vanpoolers and carpoolers, who often experienced congestion in the HOV lanes prior to the addition of the express toll lanes, now experience improved reliability and reduced travel times using the express toll lanes. In addition to improving the reliability of the previous HOV lane, I-405 is moving more vehicles at peak periods, and travel times have improved in the general purpose lanes in most areas.

During the first year of operations, the WSDOT has made a number of modifications to the express toll lanes system, such as extending access points and adjusting the toll rate algorithm, to address various performance challenges, including improving messaging and signage that was confusing to some drivers. With funding from the express toll lane revenue, the WSDOT is also moving forward with construction of a new northbound peak-use shoulder lane between SR 527 and I-5. The new lane will be open to general purpose traffic during the congested afternoon commute and is expected to be operational ahead of schedule in spring 2017. As directed by the Legislature in 2016, the WSDOT has been evaluating additional capacity projects for the far north end of I-405 and coordinating with partner agencies to identify common priorities.

At the South end of the corridor, the WSDOT is moving forward with construction of the I-405/SR 167 Direct Connector. The project will build a new flyover ramp connecting the I-405 carpool lanes to the SR 167 HOT lanes and is scheduled to open to traffic in 2019. The I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes project is currently in the design and environmental review phase. The project is scheduled to start construction in 2019 and open to traffic in 2024.

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL OFFICE

N/A