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TO: Mayor Stokes and Bellevue City Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: Upcoming Regional Mobility Projects and Initiatives

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King County will see an unprecedented regional transportation and infrastructure construction boom between 2017 and 2024. In particular, both the Eastside and the downtown Seattle area will see construction and completion of several critical regional interstate and state route expansions, light rail lines, regional trails and supporting infrastructure. When complete, these projects will greatly improve mobility in the region, however there is a need for careful planning and regional coordination to ensure people are able to get to where they need and want to go in a timely manner through the construction period.

The following update outlines some of these key coordination efforts and upcoming coordination opportunities. This memorandum is provided for Council information and awareness—staff will return with a detailed presentation on this topic later this spring.

**One Center City Initiative** The City of Seattle, King County Metro Transit, Sound Transit and the Downtown Seattle Association have launched a new effort—known as “One Center City”—to strategize how to effectively maximize the transportation system in Seattle’s downtown core in the face of ongoing growth and construction activity.

One Center City is guided by a nearly 40-member community advisory council and will create a 20-year plan for moving people and goods through, and connecting to, Seattle’s urban core. One Center City will also include strategies to address future mobility issues facing the downtown Seattle core due to temporary construction challenges occurring from 2018 – 2023. These projects include:

- Demolition of the Alaskan Way Viaduct and construction of a new Seattle waterfront;
- Construction of a new downtown streetcar (connecting First Hill and South Lake Union streetcar lines via 1st Avenue and Stewart Street);
- Continuing public and private construction, including expansion of the Washington State Convention Center set to begin in late 2018; and
- Conversion of the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel to a rail-only facility.

Without action, studies show the resulting congestion on downtown Seattle streets will slow cars and buses on major thoroughfares to a walking pace during the afternoon rush hour. The potential strategies currently under consideration by One Center City include:

- Street and traffic improvements such as priority transit treatment, transit signal priority and transit only lanes for example, through downtown Seattle, channelization, changes to curb uses, improvements to pedestrian walkways, and new protected bike lanes.
- Restructuring transit service options that anticipate the shift of all bus service out of the downtown Seattle transit tunnel and integration with light rail stations at the north and south ends of downtown Seattle.

One Center City collected initial public input on the potential strategies under consideration in early February. The four partner agencies will use the initial input to develop a package of recommended strategies for further outreach and evaluation. Metro Transit and Sound Transit will conduct outreach over the coming year on potential changes to transit service. No changes to transit service can be made without the approval of the King County Council and the Sound Transit Board of Directors.

The circumstances and mobility issues in downtown Seattle and surrounding neighborhoods often affect the entire region, in part, due to the many people who commute to Seattle from all over King County—including the Eastside. The two One Center City proposals that will most impact Bellevue and the Eastside are bus service restructuring on SR 520 and I-90, which could happen as soon as September 2018.

- The One Center City proposal for I-90 includes truncating bus service at the International District Station. This would require ST 550 riders (and all other bus riders who currently use the tunnel) to transfer to Link at the International District Station to get into downtown Seattle.

The Eastside concern with this service change is mostly about timing—the truncation is expected to occur within approximately a year of the closure of the South Bellevue Park & Ride for East Link construction. This could mean that riders who formerly commuted in a one seat ride from South Bellevue to downtown Seattle could now need to make several transfers to get to their downtown Seattle destination (from a satellite parking lot to the ST 550, then from the ST 550 to Link light rail). Once East Link opens, this issue will be resolved because Link will carry passengers into downtown Seattle. Sound Transit has not begun public outreach for this potential service change.

- The One Center City proposal for SR 520 includes reorienting some all-day bus service from directly serving downtown Seattle to serving Montlake and the University of Washington. Metro routes 252, 255, 257, 268 and 311 and Sound Transit route 545 are under consideration for this change. Under this proposal, riders would need to transfer to Link at the University of Washington Station to access downtown Seattle. The proposal includes a \$2-\$3 million investment into improving the transfer environment at the Montlake Hub.

Some Eastside concerns have been expressed that the necessary Montlake Hub improvements would not be constructed prior to the bus service restructure, resulting in slow transfers and longer travel times for Eastside commuters. King County Metro Transit has commenced public outreach on the SR 520 routes under consideration for One Center City.

### **Additional upcoming regional transportation coordination efforts and opportunities**

In addition to the regional coordination efforts occurring in the One Center City plan, there are several other upcoming regional transportation coordination efforts and opportunities, including:

#### **Upcoming Initiatives and Meetings**

- King County Councilmember Claudia Balducci will convene a regional construction coordination meeting to help jurisdictions and agencies better plan for the upcoming construction boom on the Eastside. The meeting is scheduled for May 5.
- King County and the Sound Cities Association have launched a regional initiative to help coordinate and fund improvements to ailing King County road and bridge infrastructure. The staff-level group includes representatives from cities throughout King County. Elected officials are expected to weigh in on the group's work periodically.

This effort is a follow up to a Transportation Summit convened by the City of Issaquah in November 2016, and the King County Bridges and Roads Task Force that was convened in mid-2015. These efforts sought to examine funding shortfalls, and potential solutions to those shortfalls, for the County roads systems in the face of ailing infrastructure and traffic congestion. Transportation funding will be an ongoing topic of regional discussion in the coming years, as revenue from the gas tax continues to decline due to more fuel efficient vehicles, electric and hybrid vehicles and changing travel patterns.

- The Puget Sound Regional Council is updating its Transportation 2040 plan, which is the region's plan for significant regional transportation planning and investment. The update is underway, with PSRC adoption of the revised plan slated for spring 2018.

#### **Regional Transportation and Related Infrastructure Projects (2017-2024)**

Eastside Projects:

- **East Link Light Rail and Operations and Maintenance Facility East Projects:** The 14-mile East Link light rail extension, and the related Operations and Maintenance Facility, will expand and support light rail service across I-90, into Bellevue and connecting on to Downtown Redmond.
- **SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project:** Following years of public discussion, planning, design and engineering work, SR 520 construction began in 2011. Construction is occurring in separate, phased projects based on funding and other factors. The 12.8-mile highway extends from I-5 in Seattle to SR 202 in Redmond. Remaining work on this route includes finishing the "rest of the west" projects from the new floating bridge west into Seattle and connecting to I-5.

- I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes Project: The Renton to Bellevue project was funded in the 2015 Connecting Washington transportation package. The project will add new capacity to create a two-lane express toll lane system between SR 167 in Renton and Northeast 6th Street in Bellevue.
- Eastside Rail Corridor Project: The Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) is part of a 42-mile rail line that was previously owned by Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway Company. The ERC extends from Renton north to Snohomish County, passing through Bellevue, Kirkland, Woodinville and portions of unincorporated King County. It also includes a spur (called the Redmond Spur) that extends 7-plus miles from Woodinville south to Redmond.
- I-405 Bus Rapid Transit Project: As part of the Sound Transit 3 package, Sound Transit will establish Bus Rapid Transit in the I-405 corridor from the Lynnwood Transit Center to the Burien Transit Center, via Bellevue.
- North Sammamish Park and Ride Project: As part of the Sound Transit 3 package, Sound transit will build a surface park-and-ride in north Sammamish. The site for the park-and-ride will be determined in coordination with the City of Sammamish.

#### Seattle Projects:

- Washington State Convention Center Project: The Washington State Convention Center, located in downtown Seattle, will expand adding 250,000 square feet of exhibit space and 120,000 square feet of additional meeting space. This expansion requires the existing King County transit station to be acquired and shut down.
- Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel Reconfiguration: The downtown Seattle transit tunnel currently serves bus and light rail transit. Buses will not be able to use the tunnel once construction of the Washington State Convention Center gets underway, and when additional light rail cars will be using the tunnel as Northgate Link comes online.
- SR 99 Tunnel Construction, Alaskan Way Viaduct Demolition, and New Roadway Construction: The Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program includes projects led by the Washington State Department of Transportation, King County, the City of Seattle and the Port of Seattle. The program includes construction of a two-mile tunnel beneath downtown Seattle, demolition of the viaduct's downtown waterfront section, and a new Alaskan Way surface street along the waterfront that connects SR 99 to downtown.
- Northgate Link Project: The 4.3-mile Northgate Link extension will connect the Northgate, Roosevelt and U District neighborhoods to downtown Seattle, SeaTac airport and further south.
- Lynnwood Link Project: The 8.5-mile Lynnwood Link extension will connect Northgate north to Lynnwood via four light rail stations.

A graphic depiction of the key construction timing for each of these projects is included in Attachment A. Bellevue staff are tracking and participating in each of these endeavors and anticipate bringing a comprehensive presentation to Council for information later this spring.

**ATTACHMENTS**

A. Key Construction Timing Graph