

December 11, 2017

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Update on I-405 Express Toll Lanes Operation

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POLICY ISSUES

Improving mobility and reducing congestion on Interstate 405 (I-405) has long been a top priority of the City of Bellevue. Council has voiced strong support for the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) I-405 Master Plan which has and will continue to invest in projects that improve the operation of this critical transportation corridor. One of the major recent milestones in the corridor was the opening of the I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETL) from Bellevue to Lynnwood in September 2015. As directed by legislation, WSDOT has been monitoring the performance of the I-405 ETLs and the general-purpose lanes. Council has been briefed several times over the last two years regarding the I-405 Master Plan and the ETLs including a briefing in January. Tonight, staff from WSDOT will provide an update on the most recent data on the operation of the ETLs.

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 Council action is required. The update provided by WSDOT staff is an opportunity for Council to review the most recent operations and performance data on the ETLs, ask questions and provide feedback to WSDOT staff.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Bellevue has been actively involved in efforts to improve mobility and reduce congestion on the 40-mile I-405/SR 167 corridor since the late 1990's. The plan for the corridor, 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. Since 2002, WSDOT and independent experts have conducted numerous additional studies on express toll lanes, culminating in the I-405/SR 167 Executive Advisory Group endorsing a 40-mile system of express toll lanes on I-405 and SR 167 in 2010.

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 north half of the I-405 corridor, including the ETLs from Bellevue to Lynnwood. In the 2015 legislative session, \$1.2 billion in

additional funding was authorized from the “Connecting Washington” statewide transportation package to complete other major components of the I-405 Master Plan program that has been a Council legislative priority for many years. New investments include ETLs from Bellevue to Renton, coupled with the construction of a new direct connector ramp at the I-405/SR 167 interchange, which will provide a more reliable system of managed lanes along the I-405/SR 167 corridor.

The build out of the Bellevue to Renton part of the I-405 Master Plan will add capacity and help address congestion, and will allow full implementation of Bus Rapid Transit along the entire corridor as envisioned in the Sound Transit 3 Plan (ST3) which was supported by Council policy. Council policy recognizes that tolling can be a tool for improving roadway operations and for raising revenue to invest in the I-405 corridor improvements that will lead to completion of the Master Plan. Additionally, current policy states that WSDOT should: continue to monitor the impacts of the ETLs; ensure that the lanes are operated and managed consistent with the I-405 Master Plan; minimize and mitigate traffic diversion; and leverage toll revenue from the corridor to obtain funding from other sources.

I-405 Express Toll Lanes Performance

Representatives from WSDOT briefed Council in January on the I-405 ETLs from Bellevue to Lynnwood. Since the lanes were opened in 2015, WSDOT has been monitoring traffic in both the ETLs and the general-purpose lanes to better understand the effects of the new system on traffic performance. Tonight, WSDOT staff will update Council on the latest data after two years of operations, conceptual plans for additional improvements at the 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 portion of I-405, between Bellevue and Renton.

WSDOT reports that in the first two years of operations, transit riders, vanpoolers and carpoolers, who often experienced congestion in the High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes prior to the addition of the ETLs, now experience improved reliability and reduced travel times using the ETLs. In addition to improving the reliability of the previous single HOV lane, I-405 is moving more vehicles at peak periods, and travel times have improved in the general-purpose lanes in most areas, according to the WSDOT data.

In the first two years of operations, WSDOT has made a number of modifications to the ETL system, including extending access points and adjusting the toll rate algorithm to address performance challenges, and improving messaging and signage that was confusing to some drivers. With funding from the ETL revenue, WSDOT constructed a new northbound peak-use shoulder lane between SR 527 and I-5. The new lane, which opened in June, significantly improved the afternoon commute for all users of northbound I-405, as reported by WSDOT. As directed by the Legislature in 2016, WSDOT has been evaluating additional capacity projects for the north end of I-405 and coordinating with partner agencies to identify common priorities.

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

OPTIONS

N/A

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY

N/A