

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES
*May 2018***

This briefing summarizes recent actions taken by the three regional committees formed as a result of the merger of King County and Metro. The three regional committees are the Regional Policy Committee, the Regional Water Quality Committee, and the Regional Transit Committee. We will also include updates on other regional issues (e.g., King County Flood Control District, King Conservation District) as appropriate. In addition, the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC), was formed in the early 1990s to comply with the Growth Management Act requirements for collaboration of counties and their cities on countywide planning policies. The GMPC meets three to four times per year to consider amendments to the countywide planning policies and to monitor progress on implementation. This is intended as a summary briefing; staff can provide more details on any of the items below.

REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)

April 18 meeting summary:

- **Ordinance regarding the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy Governance Plan.** The RPC approved an ordinance adopting the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL) Governance Plan, including a provision that creates one VSHSL Advisory Board to oversee the full levy. The original plan as proposed by the King County Executive would have created three boards to oversee the levy investments, one for each of the three priority populations: veterans, seniors and vulnerable populations. In December, the RPC amended the original proposal to add a Housing Stability Board. Following that action by RPC, the King County Council Health, Housing and Human Services Committee approved a different version of the Governance Plan that consolidated all oversight into one board. This structure was supported by the RPC members appointed by the Sound Cities Association (SCA) and was included in the approved version of the ordinance as passed by the RPC.

Background

King County voters approved the VSHSL in November 2017 to replace the expiring Veterans and Human Services Levy. The new VSHSL expands investment in services for veterans and human services and will also fund new services for seniors and their caregivers. The new VSHSL is levied at \$0.10 per \$1,000 in assessed value and is anticipated to collect \$53.3 million in 2018.

The VSHSL ballot measure ordinance required the Executive to prepare three plans for the RPC and the King County Council:

- A Transition Plan to guide levy investments in 2018;
 - A Governance Plan, outlining the oversight structure for the new levy; and
 - An Implementation Plan to guide levy investments through the levy's expiration in 2023.
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- **Proposed ordinance regarding the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy Implementation Plan.** The RPC received its first presentation regarding the proposed Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL) Implementation Plan that was transmitted by the

King County Executive on March 16. Once adopted by the King County Council, the Implementation Plan will supersede the previously approved Transition Plan to guide investments until the levy expires in 2023.

Levy investments in the Implementation Plan are structured around five results areas for the three target populations:

1. Housing Stability
2. Financial Stability
3. Social Engagement
4. Healthy Living
5. Service System Access and Improvement

For each results area, there are four to eight strategies (some encompassing multiple programs), collectively serving the three priority populations. In total, the plan sets out 67 strategies and programs across the five results areas.

The VSHSL is also shifting to a results-based accountability framework (RBA), consistent with the Best Starts for Kids levy and the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency sales tax, to improve evaluation and reporting capabilities across the county's investments in human services.

No action was taken at this meeting.

- **One Table Approach to Homelessness.** The RPC received a briefing on One Table, a regional effort launched in January by the King County Executive and the Mayors of Seattle and Auburn to bring together leaders from the business, nonprofit, philanthropic, faith, government and community sectors to address homelessness. The group includes about 75 stakeholders.

Bellevue Mayor John Chelminiak is participating on the group representing Bellevue and the Sound Cities Association. The One Table effort is described as a regional discussion of homelessness with a focus on root causes and reducing the number of people coming into homelessness. Related organizations are All Home, which is working primarily on responding to the homeless crisis, and the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force, which is focused on addressing affordable housing at all income levels.

One Table is made up of two leadership groups: The Civic Leadership Group and the Elected Leadership Group. Participants represent expertise across the community including elected officials, business leaders, local philanthropists, and service providers. Five subgroups addressing particular topics have also been established called Community Action Workgroups including:

- Affordable Housing
- Behavioral Health
- Child Welfare System
- Criminal Justice
- Employment

Mayor Chelminiak is a member of the Elected Leadership Group and the Affordable Housing Workgroup. Bellevue staff attend the Affordable Housing Workgroup as well.

At the April meeting, One Table members discussed six recommended priority actions:

1. Provide affordable homes for 5,000 households over three years through a mix of affordable housing approaches, maximizing the use of public land, and increasing access to existing housing choices.
2. Create a housing stabilization fund to achieve zero exits into homelessness (including zero inappropriate evictions), with a focus on those with the most acute need.
3. Provide on-demand behavioral health treatment that is racially, ethnically and culturally appropriate, flexible, person-centered, mobile, peer-focused, and trauma-informed.
4. Offer a comprehensive service package for all youth aging out of foster care to increase stability throughout their transition.
5. Strive to achieve zero bookings for charges that are a direct result of homelessness and behavioral health crises, through diversion and compliance requirement reform done through a racial justice lens. Study cost offsets from reduced jail use and redistribute savings to fund diversion programs.
6. Double King County employment programs to train and employ 1,300 individuals over two years who are disproportionately at-risk of homelessness, and secure private and public-sector commitments to hire program graduates.

As of this writing, the next One Table meeting had not been scheduled.

May 9 RPC meeting summary:

- **PSERN Quarterly Briefing.** The RPC received a briefing on the status of the Puget Sound Emergency Radio Network (PSERN) project to replace and upgrade the County's current emergency radio network. In 2015 voters in King County approved a nine-year, \$273 million property tax levy at a rate of 6 cents per \$1,000 in assessed value that is expected to raise about \$32 million a year. Bellevue property owners are expected to contribute approximately \$3.3 million of the total amount raised in 2018.

The update included information regarding the results of an in-building task force that examined the ability of first responders to communicate with each other inside and outside of buildings during an emergency. The task force identified areas of concern for radio coverage and concluded that urban areas with taller buildings and higher density had a greater risk of a failure of in-building coverage during an incident. Downtown Bellevue and downtown Seattle were highlighted as the highest risk areas. To address these concerns, the task force is recommending a three-part approach to add: (1) up to 13 new radio tower sites in high and medium density areas, (2) at least two distributed antenna systems (DAS) to bring the exterior PSERN system inside buildings, and (3) at least 16 vehicular repeaters for sustained incidents. At least one of the additional radio tower sites would be in Bellevue, although no specific location has been identified to date.

The estimated cost of the additional infrastructure is approximately \$24 million in one-time capital costs and \$1.2 million in annual operating costs. PSERN staff noted that there is contingency and unassigned funding available in the project budget to cover these potential additional costs, and the PSERN Joint Board discussion of this item is ongoing, including the implications of the options on overall project scope, design, budget and schedule. The Joint Board is the governing body established by interlocal agreement to implement the PSERN project. Its members include King County, Seattle, Valley Communications Center, and the Eastside Public Safety Communications Agency (EPSCA). Bellevue is a member of EPSCA.

Additional Background

The emergency radio communications system is used to dispatch responders to incidents and allow responders to communicate with each other at incidents. The current system consists of more than two dozen transmitter sites and multiple microwave and fiber systems, supporting over 100 agencies and 17,000 radios. The current system is owned by King County, the City of Seattle, Valley Communications Center, and EPSCA. Once completed, the PSERN project should increase system reliability, increase coverage, provide better security and double the number of radio transmitter sites.

King County is the lead agency for the project, and Motorola is under contract for \$114 million to provide design, development, implementation, testing and ongoing support and maintenance. Final design is now complete, and as reported in February to the RPC, PSERN project staff reevaluated the original baseline budget and schedule due to some key changes in project assumptions. Specifically, Motorola indicated that it needed more time for system testing, additional radio tower sites are required, other tower sites were no longer viable and there were longer than anticipated lease negotiation processes. The final closeout date was pushed to December 2022, one year later than originally expected. In addition, schedule delays, site and system design changes, increased site development costs, and additional staffing increased total project costs. However, the cost increases were offset by expenditure reductions in debt financing, increases in projected levy revenues and other cost reductions.

- **Ordinance Adopting the Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy Implementation Plan.** The King County Executive transmitted a proposed Veterans, Seniors and Human Services Levy Implementation Plan to the King County Council and the RPC on March 16. Once it is considered by the RPC and adopted by the King County Council, the Implementation Plan will supersede the previously approved Transition Plan to guide investments until the levy expires in 2023. The RPC had its first briefing regarding the Implementation Plan on April 18. At the May 9 meeting, the RPC members emphasized the importance of geographic equity, including tracking services by zip code. After approving a few small and technical amendments, the RPC approved the ordinance. The next step is for the County Council to consider the revised ordinance as amended by the RPC. If the County Council makes any changes to the ordinance, the RPC will have another opportunity to consider and vote on the ordinance and Implementation Plan. Details on the levy investments included in the Implementation Plan are described in the summary of the April meeting above.

The next meeting of the RPC is scheduled for June 27.

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)

April 18 meeting summary:

- **Briefing on One Center City.** One Center City is a multi-agency, regional initiative designed to mitigate the impacts of an array of near-term, large capital projects in and near downtown Seattle that will affect transit access and transportation capacity. For example, the Downtown Seattle Transit Center will close to buses, Convention Center construction will begin, and the Alaskan Way Viaduct demolition will take place in 2019. A summary of the proposed Near-Term Action Plan was presented to the RTC on March 21 and formally announced on April 3. The capital costs are projected at \$30 million and would be evenly split among King County Metro, the Seattle Department of Transportation, and Sound Transit. Projects in the Near-Term Action Plan include:
 - Signal improvements on Second and Fourth Avenues
 - All-door bus boarding on Third Avenue
 - A new transit pathway on Fifth and Sixth Avenues for northbound buses
 - Improvements such as safety enhancements at street crossings, new and improved bus stops and pedestrian wayfinding signs

The plan is not considered final until the Sound Transit Board and the City of Seattle authorize spending of their share of funding commitments.

Metro staff explained that a “no action” scenario was not recommended, given that bus speeds on Second and Fourth Avenues are already slow and will decrease further when the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel closes to buses.

King County Metro makes transit service changes in March and September of each year. In addition to the capital improvements called for in the Near-Term Action Plan, the next six Metro service changes will incrementally adjust transit to complement changing traffic patterns and to implement Metro’s long-range vision for increased transit service.

RTC members called for a better public information plan to educate transit riders on upcoming changes and increased travel times.

May 16 RTC meeting summary:

- **Briefing on the Transit Capital Program.** King County Metro’s 2017-2022 Transit Capital Improvement Program (CIP) includes \$1.4 billion for capital infrastructure and \$780 million for fleet investments. This investment will approximately double Metro’s annual spending on infrastructure and fleet in comparison to the past five years. METRO CONNECTS, Metro’s long-range vision, calls for a substantial expansion of capital investments to keep buses moving and on time.

RTC members noted that Metro’s ambitious capital plans rely on partnerships with jurisdictions, including the Washington State Department of Transportation and Sound Transit. Bellevue is already participating in several partnerships with Metro in accordance with Bellevue’s Transit

Master Plan. For example, Bellevue and Metro are collaborating on the Bellevue College Connector project, which will improve mobility on the north-south corridor between Eastgate and Crossroads.

- **Briefing on the Transit Audit Program Impact Report.** Since 2014, the King County Auditor's Office (KCAO) has provided independent oversight of Metro. The KCAO conducts multiple programmatic audits each year. In even numbered years, the KCAO submits a summary report to the King County Council to document new audit findings and follow up on past recommendations. The 2018 report includes recent audit findings on RapidRide fare enforcement, transit information technology (IT), and paratransit. In general, the KCAO recommends incremental changes to Metro's internal processes such as purchasing, data collection and cost estimation. The KCAO has made 87 transit recommendations since 2014. Since then, 28 recommendations have been completed or closed. Pending recommendations include the creation of a lessons learned database to track and record delays in transit IT projects. Metro would then use that data to inform schedule estimates for future projects.
- **Briefing on Innovative Mobility.** In accordance with the METRO CONNECTS long-range vision, Metro is pursuing the concept of Innovative Mobility. Metro's goal is to address unmet needs and respond to opportunities resulting from technological developments and new transportation provider models. Metro's framework for Innovation Mobility consists of studies and pilot projects to develop new policies and services. Metro intends that Innovative Mobility will complement transit, advance and support equity and manage a broad range of mobility services.

Four examples of Metro's key Innovative Mobility pilot projects are:

- On-demand first/last mile solutions to increase access to transit. Customers may request rides to transit hubs using a mobile application or call center. This solution will be implemented with three miles of select transit hubs including the Eastgate Park and Ride.
- Shared employer shuttles. Metro will authorize groups of two to five employers to offer a shared shuttle service for their workforce. This service would be privately funded and operated.
- Carpool app incentives. In order to encourage carpooling and increase mobility for areas with poor transit service, Metro would work with transportation network companies to provide a discount to carpool customers. Metro would also provide a bonus for drivers of those trips. Average incentives would be about \$2 per person.
- Strategies to support car-share parking. Metro began a pilot project in January with the goal of increasing access to transit and increasing parking space turnover. The pilot is being conducted at the Northgate Transit Center. Four parking spaces have been reserved for private car-share providers. Preliminary findings indicate that vehicle turnover doubled in these spaces. More people are using these stalls throughout the day to access the transit system.

The next meeting of the RTC is scheduled for June 20.

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)

May 2 meeting summary:

- **Briefing on Puget Sound Nutrient Source Reduction Project.** The Committee received a briefing from the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) regarding nutrients in Puget Sound, including water quality concerns and the potential for increased state regulation.

Background

Nutrients are chemicals such as nitrogen and phosphorous that stimulate the growth of plant life - either on land or in the water. Substantial increases in plant growth in marine waters can lead to low dissolved oxygen in the waters, creating negative environmental conditions for marine species.

There are numerous sources of nitrogen and phosphorous that are present in the human environment including: human and animal waste, agricultural wastes, atmospheric deposition, urban runoff and wastewater treatment plant effluent.

While there are many major sources of nutrient discharge to Puget Sound, wastewater treatment plants appear to be a significant human source, and the King County wastewater treatment plants appear to be among the larger generators of nutrient discharge among Puget Sound wastewater treatment plants. In most cases, wastewater treatment plants across the country have not been upgraded to stringent nutrient removal standards due to the substantial cost of constructing and operating the additional treatment.

Upland sources also generate significant nutrient volumes to Puget Sound through river discharge to the Puget Sound. Ecology reported that the Pacific Ocean is the largest source of nitrogen loadings to Puget Sound. While local waters flow through Puget Sound and out to the ocean, oceanic waters also enter Puget Sound through the ebb and flow of daily tides. As this tidal exchange occurs, the oceanic waters bring high levels of nitrogen into the Puget Sound basin.

A 2011 study performed by consultants for King County concluded that the best methodology for meeting potential stringent nutrient removal standards at the West Point Treatment plant would be the construction of replacement treatment with membrane bioreactor (MBR) technology to manage approximately 1/3 of the flows and construction of a new treatment plant at another location to manage the remaining 2/3 of the flow. Meeting this higher level of treatment would result in approximately three times more greenhouse gas emissions compared to current treatment methods in place at West Point. Perhaps the greatest challenge to constructing nutrient removal technology at West Point is the limited physical footprint of the West Point site. West Point is bound by marine waters on one side and City of Seattle parkland on the other and is subject to a no-expansion legal agreement. Given these site constraints, there is no known plausible design that would allow West Point to treat all its current flows to projected future nutrient removal standards within the site boundaries.

Both the federal Environmental Protection Agency and Ecology have encountered pressure to move forward with measures to reduce the discharge of nutrients to national and state waters. In 2017, Northwest Environmental Advocates, an environmental advocacy non-profit group, petitioned Ecology to take action to limit releases of nitrogen from sewage treatment plants that discharge into the Puget Sound. This petition is one of the factors driving Ecology to develop appropriate measures

to address nutrient releases through regulation or other means. As noted, adding additional nutrient removal technologies at wastewater treatment plants can be very expensive and technically challenging; consequently, depending on the approach Ecology takes, there could be substantial costs for wastewater utilities and ratepayers. Until more is known about how Ecology will approach this issue, cost and compliance impacts to Bellevue and other cities remain unknown.

Ecology is convening a Nutrient Forum with a broad representation of stakeholders to examine possible solutions to reduce nutrient loadings from both point and non-point sources. The group is expected to consider regulatory tradeoffs and possible land use implications. The Nutrient Forum will meet routinely during the next year to help inform Ecology in its development of a nutrient reduction plan for Puget Sound. The King County Wastewater Treatment Division will participate in the Forum. The meetings are open to interested parties.

- **Briefing on King County's Proposed 2019 Wastewater Rate and Capacity Charge.** The Committee received a briefing from the King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) finance staff regarding the Executive's proposal for a King County wholesale 2019 sewer rate and capacity charge. The proposed rate ordinance would:
 - Set the monthly wholesale sewer rate in 2019 and 2020 at \$45.33, which is a 2.5% increase over the 2018 rate of \$44.22; and
 - Set the 2019 monthly capacity charge for new connections to the regional system at \$64.50, which is a 3% increase over the 2018 rate of \$62.60.

The 2019-2020 operating expenses for the WTD are projected at \$165.5 million in 2019 and \$170 million in 2020. The 2019 expense level represents a 7.9% increase over the 2018 adopted budget. The capital expenditures are projected for six years with an annual average capital expenditure of \$252.8 million. The largest drivers for the wholesale rate increase are increased staffing levels due to new construction, capacity improvements including enhanced operations at West Point, wet weather response crews, system planning, upgrading asset management capabilities and earthquake resiliency.

King County was able to keep the rate increase lower than the anticipated 3.7% increase that was projected last year, in part due to an influx of funds from the Brightwater settlement. This litigation recovered \$144.9 million dollars previously paid by King County for a defaulted contract associated with the Brightwater Wastewater Treatment Plan project. These one-time dollars will be used to support capital projects in 2019 and 2020.

Looking out, the WTD is not projecting an increase in the wholesale rate for 2020, but is projecting a 4.5% increase in 2021. Cities and districts that contract with King County for wastewater services have expressed concerns with rates spikes and the impact on ratepayers, and prefer more consistent, lower rate increases that smooth the highs and lows. The Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC), which advises the WTD, has consistently recommended that the WTD choose steady small rate increases over more volatile rate fluctuations. MWPAAC addressed this issue in its letter to the King County Council regarding the rate proposal along with its continued interest in the WTD reducing outstanding debt.

Capacity Charge Proposal

The capacity charge is levied on all new meters installed within the King County regional

wastewater system. The capacity charge for 2019 is proposed to increase from the current \$62.60 per month to \$64.60 per month, a 3% adjustment to cover inflation. The philosophy behind the capacity charge is that “growth should pay for growth” and the capacity charge is reviewed every three years to ensure that updated costs, interest rate assumptions and growth projections are factored into the charge. In the intervening years, like 2019, the charge is updated to cover inflation. The WTD is conducting two studies that will inform the proposal beyond 2019.

The King County Council is expected to take action on the proposed rate and capacity charge prior to June 30.

The next meeting of the RWQC is scheduled for June 6.

KING COUNTY REGIONAL AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE

April 19 meeting summary:

The King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force (Task Force) adopted a Statement of Intent as required by King County ordinance. The Statement of Intent recognizes the affordable housing challenge faced by the region and states that it will prioritize and implement regional strategies by 2024 which:

- Support affordable homes in close proximity to jobs, transit and key services;
- Reduce the disproportional impacts of housing affordability challenges, including displacement, on communities of color, older adults and others with fixed or limited incomes; and
- Address affordability and accessibility needs of large households, individuals with mobility or behavioral health challenges, and to allow people to age in place if they desire.

The Task Force then worked in small groups to discuss the following topics in more detail: preservation and displacement, accountability and measuring success, public funding, housing supply, renter protections and incentives.

The next meeting of the Task Force is scheduled for June 1.

METROPOLITAN SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MSWMAC)

May 11 meeting summary:

The King County Solid Waste Division (KCSWD) presented a preliminary recommendation for a rate increase during the 2019-2020 biennium. The final recommendation from the KCSWD will be submitted to the King County Executive for consideration in early June, and the final rate recommendation is scheduled to be transmitted by the Executive to the King County Council in late June. The current timeline calls for the County Council to act by September 2018, with new rates effective in January 2019.

The KCSWD is proposing a 4.63% fee increase from the current rate of \$134.59 to \$140.82 per ton of garbage for 2019-2020. This fee is commonly known as the “tipping fee,” which is paid at the transfer station or landfill for the transfer and disposal of garbage. Any increase in the tipping fee is passed through to City garbage customers pursuant to the terms of Bellevue’s current collection contract with Republic Services. The last rate increase by the KCSWD was in the 2017-2018 budget when the rate

increased from \$120.17 to the current \$134.59.

The fee paid by the typical City garbage customer is comprised of two parts – a service fee, which covers the collection of the materials, and a disposal fee, which represents the portion of the tipping fee allocated to the homeowner's (or business's) container. The disposal fee is the portion that would be impacted by any increase in the KCSWD's tipping fee. The County estimates that the fee increase could result in an increase of \$0.34 per month for the typical single-family curbside customer within King County. The actual increase will vary depending on each customer's service level and rates. Bellevue has requested that Republic Services provide an estimate of how this KCSWD tipping fee increase would affect Bellevue customers.

The KCSWD has stated that this new rate is in the mid-range when compared to peer jurisdictions in the region. The proposed rate of \$140.82 is below rates for Pierce County (\$157.38) and Seattle (\$145) and above rates for Thurston County (\$119) and Snohomish County (\$105).

The primary drivers (and proportionate share) for the \$6.23 increase identified by the KCSWD include:

- Increased cost of service driven by inflation and King County central costs (\$2.95).
- Solid Waste Comprehensive Plan-driven projects, including beginning work to site and build a new Northeast Transfer Station and to further develop the Cedar Hills Landfill (\$1.73).
- Investment in infrastructure including building a new South County Recycling and Transfer Station (\$1.41).
- Lastly, a small portion of the increase (\$0.14) is driven by two other independent factors: increased demand and County Equity and Social Justice Goals.

In 2017, the City signed a new Interlocal Agreement with King County that extends the City's solid waste service relationship with King County through 2040.