

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEF:
PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL (PSRC)
*January 2021***

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At its December 3 meeting, the Executive Board:

- **Approved contract authority for an engagement platform.** Authorization by the Executive Board is required for the Executive Director to enter into a contract in excess of \$10,000. PSRC staff requested a service contract for an annual subscription of a web-based engagement platform in the amount of \$23,000. This software will support outreach efforts for PSRC's adopted work program.
- **Approved contract authority for consultant services for the third, two-year cycle of the Regional Household Travel Survey Program.** PSRC collects transportation data through this program. PSRC published data from the 2017 household travel survey in March 2018 and the 2019 household travel survey in March 2020. PSRC staff is preparing to conduct another survey in the spring of 2021. PSRC staff is requesting contract authorization for consultant work for the upcoming survey. COVID-19 has changed the way people travel and the changes will likely continue next year. The spring 2021 survey will allow the PSRC to gather data to analyze these changes. The contract amount is not to exceed \$350,000.
- **Approved contract authorization for purchasing commercial vehicle data.** The commercial vehicle data will support the PSRC's update of the Regional Transportation Plan, which was adopted in 2018. The Plan describes how the region will implement the transportation policies and goals established in VISION 2050, the region's long-range plan. Under federal and state law, the PSRC is required to develop a Regional Transportation Plan every four years. The 2022 Regional Transportation Plan is under development. As part of the update, PSRC staff will purchase data on medium- and heavy-duty trucks such as origins and destinations, routes and volumes. This information will support the freight section of the plan. The contract amount is not to exceed \$50,000.
- **Approved contract authority for consultant services for the Regional Transportation Plan.** As described above, PSRC is updating the Regional Transportation Plan. PSRC staff will hire a consultant to support the update. The contract amount is not to exceed \$250,000.
- **Discussed COVID-19 impacts to aviation.** In consultation with regional airport operators, PSRC is leading a baseline study to gather information about existing aviation activities and assess the future regional needs. This study will set the stage for future planning efforts. PSRC received a \$1.64 million grant from the Federal Aviation Administration to conduct the study.

The Executive Board reviewed the Study's growth scenarios in October. The scenarios assessed the additional airports and runways needed to accommodate increased activity levels and examined the impacts of these different levels of activity. Executive Board members requested additional information on COVID-19-related aviation trends.

Industry representatives briefed the Executive Board on COVID-19's impacts on the region's aviation section and local businesses. The speakers were Diana Birkett Rakow, Vice President of External Relations at Alaska Airlines, and Bill McSherry, Vice President for Government Operations at Boeing. The speakers opined that the aviation sector would likely resume its previous growth trajectory in the long term. They recommended that the region continue researching and planning for expanded airport capacity.

- **Awarded Executive Director Josh Brown a merit increase and increased his retirement compensation plan.** PSRC President and Pierce County Executive Director Bruce Dammeier commended Josh Brown on his accomplishments in 2020, including adopting of Vision 2050 in October.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is scheduled for January 28. Mayor Lynne Robinson represents Bellevue on the Executive Board.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICY BOARD (GMPB)

At its January 7 meeting, the GMPB:

- **Recommended Certification of Regional Center Subarea Plans for Tukwila's Southcenter Regional Growth Center and North Tukwila Military Industrial Center.** PSRC staff reviewed the subarea plans and found that they addressed the planning expectations for regional centers established in Vision 2040, the region's long-range plan. The newly adopted Regional Centers Framework calls for review of centers and center planning again in 2025. PSRC may provide additional comments or guidance for center planning as part of that work.
- **Recommended an extension for the City of Black Diamond's Conditional Certification of their Comprehensive Plan.** PSRC staff reviewed Black Diamond's 2019 plan and found that it is consistent with the majority of the certification requirements. The conditional status is in place until the city amends the comprehensive plan to ensure consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan.
- **Discussed Vision 2050 Growth Target Guidance.** VISION 2050's Regional Growth Strategy provides regional guidance for the distribution of population and employment growth within the four-county central Puget Sound region. PSRC doesn't set growth targets for jurisdictions. This process happens at the county and city levels. PSRC staff has been working with the Land Use Technical Advisory Committee (LUTAC) to develop the draft guidance for the current and upcoming growth targets work. The guidance will address both common data/methodology

issues across the counties and policy items related to VISION 2050 implementation.

- **Discussed Puget Sound Recovery and the State of the Sound report by the Puget Sound Partnership.** PSRC staff and representatives from the Puget Sound Partnership provided an overview of the health of Puget Sound and PSRC's Stormwater Parks project. PSRC was awarded a Puget Sound National Estuary Program grant of almost \$200,000 by Puget Sound Partnership and the Environmental Protection Agency to help catalyze the development of new stormwater parks. Initiated in fall 2020, this project will occur over the next two years. The project will share lessons learned from already-built stormwater parks, identify opportunities for stormwater park retrofits regionwide, and provide technical assistance for the planning of up to four new stormwater parks. The findings from this work will be summarized in a guidance document on planning for stormwater parks.

The next meeting of GMPB is scheduled for February 4. Mayor Lynne Robinson represents Bellevue on the PSRC Executive Board.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD (TPB)

At its December 10 meeting the TPB:

- **Recommended approval of the Regional Center Subarea Plans for Kirkland-Totem Lake Regional Growth Center, Kent-Downtown Regional Growth Center, and Kent Manufacturing Industrial Center.** PSRC staff reviewed these subarea plans and found that they addressed the planning expectations for regional centers established in Vision 2040, the region's long-range plan. The newly adopted Regional Centers Framework calls for review of centers and center planning again in 2025. PSRC may provide additional comments or guidance for center planning as part of that work.
- **Discussed the passenger-only ferry study.** The study will include a review of potential routes and terminals, ridership demand, costs, and use of alternative fuels. The Washington State Legislature appropriated \$350,000 in the 2019-2021 budget for this study. The PSRC last studied passenger-only ferry service in 2008.

In May and June, the PSRC conducted an online survey regarding the initial scope for the ferry study. Over 10,000 people responded. This feedback will be used with other information to identify routes with potential for near-term opportunities, and those with more substantial hurdles to overcome to implementation. Based on this work, a small number of routes will be advanced for more detailed route profile development and analysis in the study. PSRC staff completed the feasibility analysis of potential routes. This analysis included potential operational costs, site-specific conditions, and other elements. The routes studied were:

- Kirkland/University of Washington (UW)
- Kenmore/UW

- Renton/UW
 - Renton/South Lake Union
 - Bellingham/Friday Harbor
 - Tacoma/Seattle
 - South Whidbey/Everett
- **Discussed Regional Transportation Plan data visualization.** As described above, the 2022 Regional Transportation Plan is under development. Over the past year, the TPB received a series of briefings on the schedule and workplan for this effort, including key focus areas determined by the TPB last year, such as safety and equity. PSRC staff briefed the TPB on an interactive web map that illustrates transportation data collected for the plan. Work to date has focused on current conditions of the existing transportation system, but future work will include the incorporation of planned investments and growth patterns per the adopted VISION 2050 regional growth strategy.
 - **Discussed federal project tracking.** PSRC has project selection authority for several sources of federal transportation funding. Every two years, PSRC conducts a competitive project selection process to distribute Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Agency (FTA) funds. The next process will be conducted in 2022 to allocate the PSRC's 2025-2026 funds. The PSRC's project tracking program monitors the region's compliance with federal grant delivery targets. PSRC staff briefed the TPB on the region's progress.
 - **Discussed upcoming funding opportunities.** As described above, PSRC conducts a competitive project selection process to distribute FHWA and FTA funds every two years. The next process will be conducted in 2022. Additional FHWA funding is available outside of the PSRC's regular distribution schedule. The TPB received a briefing on this funding, to prepare for a potential action in January to allocate the funds.

The available funding includes:

- \$50 million in Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. Per adopted PSRC policy, projects scheduled for later years will be allowed to advance, if the project is ready and the sponsor wishes. This helps PSRC meet its grant delivery targets. The additional funding would then be distributed to projects on the current adopted contingency lists.
- \$18 million in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds. PSRC typically conducts a new competitive process when TAP funds are available.
- \$15 million in Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) Funds. Per adopted PSRC policy, these funds would be awarded to eligible projects on the adopted regional and county-wide contingency lists. The City of Seattle, however, requested that the full \$15 million be allocated to the West Seattle Bridge repair project. Bellevue Councilmember Jennifer Robertson represents the City on the Transportation Policy Board. She and other TPB members requested additional information before taking action in January.

At its January 15 meeting the TPB:

- **Recommended approval of a routine amendment to the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Three agencies submitted eleven projects. They were reviewed by PSRC staff and have been determined to be consistent with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. The projects are:
 - King County Metro: Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning Systems Replacement – this project will replace HVAC equipment within three buildings on Metro’s Central/Atlantic Base complex;
 - Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT): I-5/Southbound and Northbound Snohomish River Bridge Painting Projects in Everett;
 - WSDOT: State Route (SR) 305/Agate Pass Bridge Repair in Kitsap County. This bridge connects Bainbridge Island to the Kitsap Peninsula;
 - WSDOT: SR 16/Burley Creeks Fish Barrier Removal in south Kitsap County; and,
 - WSDOT: SR 166/Port Orchard Vicinity Fish Barrier Removal in central Kitsap County.

The Executive Board will consider final action on January 28.

- **Recommended approval of the Regional Center Subarea Plans for Tukwila’s Southcenter Regional Growth Center and the North Tukwila Manufacturing Industrial Center.** PSRC staff reviewed these subarea plans and found that they addressed the planning expectations for regional centers established in Vision 2040, the region’s long-range plan. The Executive Board will consider final action on January 28.
- **Recommended extending Black Diamond’s conditional certification.** The PSRC Executive Board conditionally certified the City of Black Diamond’s 2019 comprehensive plan update last year. Conditional certification allowed the City of Black Diamond to qualify for PSRC-managed federal funding while working to address the conditions with a deadline of December 31, 2020. In December, PSRC received a letter requesting a six-month extension on the conditional certification deadline as a result of restrictions on public meetings and staffing changes. The extended deadline would be June 30. The Executive Board will consider final action on January 28.
- **Recommended authorizing a change in the Regional Transportation Plan project status for Pierce County’s Canyon Road Freight Corridor Improvements, 84th Street East to 72nd Street East Project.** Pierce County requested to change the status of the Canyon Road Freight Corridor Improvements Project from “conditionally approved” to “approved” status. This project will reconstruct Canyon Road East to accommodate five lanes with sidewalks. The project will construct a traffic signal at 80th Street East. The project is estimated to cost \$15.5 million and will be funded with Pierce County Road Funds, traffic impact fees, Transportation Improvement Board funding and FHWA funds. The Executive Board will consider final action on January 28.

- **Recommended distribution of new funding.** As described above, the PSRC received new FHWA funding out of sync with the region's regular competitive grant process. The TPB recommended distributing the funding through the following processes:
 - \$50 million in Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. Per adopted PSRC policy, projects scheduled for later years will be allowed to advance, if the project is ready and the sponsor wishes. The additional funding would then be distributed to projects on the current adopted contingency lists.
 - \$18 million in Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) funds. PSRC typically conducts a new competitive process when TAP funds are available. The Regional Project Evaluation Committee (RPEC) recommended distributing this funding to the adopted 2020 contingency lists. Councilmember Robertson suggested distributing the \$4.5 million in 2021 funding to the contingency lists and holding a new competition for the remaining funds. The TPB unanimously supported this recommendation.
 - \$15 million in Highway Infrastructure Program (HIP) Funds. As described above, PSRC policy requires awarding these funds to eligible projects on the adopted regional and county-wide contingency lists. The City of Seattle, however, requested that the full \$15 million be allocated to the West Seattle Bridge repair project. The TPB recommended awarding \$7.5 million to the West Seattle Bridge project. Seattle will repurpose two previous awards, totaling \$6.9 million, toward the bridge project. Seattle committed to submitting only one project in the 2022 Regional projects competition. The remaining HIP funds would be distributed to the 2020 County-wide contingency lists.

The Executive Board will consider final action on January 28.

- **Approved the Project Selection Task Force scope of work.** The PSRC convenes a Projection Selection Task Force prior to each federal funding allocation process. The Task Force reviews the PSRC's policies for allocating federal funds and considers recommending updates. The Task Force is comprised of volunteers from the PSRC boards. PSRC staff briefed the TPB on a draft scope of work for the 2021 Task Force. Based on feedback from the TPB, PSRC staff plans to convene the Task Force in March and host extra meetings so members have more time to consider proposed changes.
- **Discussed Vision 2050.** The PSRC adopted VISION 2050 in October. It is the region's plan for managing growth through 2050, when the central Puget Sound is expected to grow to nearly 6 million people. PSRC staff regularly updated the TPB during the three-year planning process. VISION 2050 includes a Regional Growth Strategy that supports continued growth in central places, preservation of rural areas and open space, and supports a significant share of job and population growth in proximity to the region's investments in transit, including ferries, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, and light rail. PSRC staff briefed the TPB on the adopted plan, focusing on transportation-related elements.

- **Discussed the Regional Transportation Plan financial strategy.** As described above, the Regional Transportation Plan was adopted by the PSRC General Assembly in 2018. The Plan describes how the region will implement the transportation policies and goals established in VISION 2050, the region's long-range plan. Under federal and state law, the PSRC is required to develop a financially constrained Regional Transportation Plan every four years. The 2022 Plan is under development. The Regional Transportation Plan must include a financial plan demonstrating how the investments, including maintenance, preservation, and operations, can be funded over the life of the plan. The financial plan must include system-wide estimates of costs and revenue sources that are reasonably expected to be available. The financial plan should also include recommendations on additional financing strategies and an assessment of their viability.

PSRC staff will brief the TPB on the data and methodology for the Regional Transportation Plan financial strategy. Over the next several months, the TPB will discuss new revenue sources. The Board will also consider how to address the financial uncertainty caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The next meeting of the TPB is scheduled for February 11. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson represents Bellevue on the TPB.

REGIONAL TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RTODAC)

At its December 4, 2020 meeting the RTODAC:

- **Discussed Regional Centers in Vision 2050 and the implementation of the Regional Centers Framework.** In March 2018, PSRC adopted an updated Regional Centers Framework. VISION 2050 calls for the continued implementation of the Framework and reinforces the role of centers and high-capacity transit station areas in accommodating growth over the next 30 years. PSRC staff will update the committee on centers work and seek feedback on upcoming implementation tasks.
- **Discussed next steps on Regional Equity Strategy.** Equity is a key policy area in VISION 2050, the region's long-range plan for growth. An action in the VISION 2050 plan (RC-Action-3) directs PSRC to develop a regional equity strategy, which is intended to make equity central to PSRC's work and to support the 2024 local comprehensive plan updates. PSRC staff provided a progress update and an opportunity to provide comment on the upcoming equity work. Staff also shared updates on the Equity Advisory Committee (EAC), the development of an equity performance tracking dashboard, as well as applications and extension of the Opportunity and Displacement Risk mapping tools.
- **Discussed impacts of COVID-19 on RapidRide BRT Implementation.** King County Metro staff briefed the committee on how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted projected delivery of planned RapidRide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines. The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant

impacts in the central Puget Sound region. Since March, transit agencies have been continually adjusting service levels and health and safety protocols to serve essential workers and essential trips efficiently and safely. However, the pandemic's impact on fare and tax revenues has also prompted agencies in the region to re-evaluate longer term project delivery schedules and the feasibility of planned high-capacity transit projects.

Sound Transit has been engaging in a realignment process with its Board of Directors to evaluate scenarios for adjusting project schedules around lower anticipated revenues. King County Metro, Community Transit, Pierce Transit, and Kitsap Transit are engaging in similar exercises. King County Metro staff will share updates to the RapidRide BRT project delivery schedule.

Additionally, several transit agencies are beginning the next round of updates to their long-range transportation plans called METRO CONNECTS. King County Metro has started work on updating METRO CONNECTS, including updates to service guidelines. These documents will continue guiding the service planning process for the agency, including leveraging transit-supportive densities and identifying corridor candidates for future high-capacity transit. King County Metro will continue adapting the RapidRide implementation schedule, as appropriate, and moving forward with the METRO CONNECTS update

- **Discussed work on allowing Housing Benefit Districts.** Sound Communities has been working on legislation that would advance Growing Transit Communities goals of accommodating more growth near transit investments, providing more housing choices near transit, and increasing access to opportunity for current and future members of transit communities. The Sound Communities bill would establish Housing Benefit Districts as a tool for local governments to fund the acquisition of land around transit centers for low- and middle-income housing and community development projects.

Sound Communities is preparing the bill, which will be sponsored by Representative Cindy Ryu and Senator Patty Kuderer, for the 2021 legislative session and will share the draft legislation as soon as it is available. Housing benefit Districts would be a tool that cities and counties can use to plan for and fund land assembly and district-wide predevelopment infrastructure work for affordable housing within a half-mile radius of a transit center.

The next meeting of RTODAC is scheduled for March 19. Councilmember Janice Zahn represents Bellevue on the RTODAC.