

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

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At its February 25 meeting, the Executive Board:

- **Approved a routine amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP.** Sound Transit submitted the NE 130th Street Infill Station Project in Seattle for routine amendment into the Regional TIP. PSRC staff reviewed this project and determined it is consistent with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. The NE 130th Street Infill Station Project will build an elevated light rail station at NE 130th Street and I-5. The total estimated cost for this project is \$65 million. It was funded through Sound Transit 3. This station will serve the area between Northgate Station, which will begin service later this year, and the Shoreline South/145th Station, which will be completed in 2024 as part of the Lynnwood Link Extension.
- **Approved the Consolidated Grant competition regional rankings.** PSRC is conducting its biennial Consolidated Grant competition. This program allocates funding from federal and state sources for special needs transportation projects statewide. Special needs transportation provides mobility services for seniors, people with disabilities, and other populations with mobility challenges due to age, income, or disability. The grant funds can be used to purchase vehicles, to pay for transportation agency staff, or to cover other operational costs.

Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, including PSRC, provide regional priority rankings to the WSDOT as part of the competitive process. Regional priority rankings add points to the overall score in the statewide competition. PSRC can allocate 10 regional priority rankings as part of this competition. PSRC staff, the Special Needs Transportation Committee, and the Transportation Operators Committee developed a ranking recommendation. It was unanimously approved by both committees and the TPB.

Several of the projects recommended for regional priority ranking would expand or support existing special needs transportation in Bellevue, including:

- Catholic Community Services of King County applied for about \$110,000 for 2021-2023 to provide transportation free of charge to low-income older adults and persons with disabilities. Bellevue supports this program from its Human Services Fund. In 2021 Bellevue is contributing about \$17,000.
- Hopelink applied for about \$150,000 to create a One-Call One-Click (OCOC) system to provide multimodal trip planning and transportation request services for special needs populations within King County. Bellevue Human Services staff provided a letter of support for this application.

- **Discussed the 2022-2023 biennial budget and work program.** PSRC is developing its 2022-2023 biennial budget and work program. The total proposed 2022-2023 \$30.2 million budget is \$3.6 million less than the 2020-2021 budget. Overall total revenues have declined, with state and federal funding coming in about \$1 million lower. The remainder of the decline is in the amount of carryover funds available to be spent from one budget period to the next. Salaries, benefits and overhead continue to rise and is creating a growing gap between revenues and expenditures.

PSRC proposed increasing local member dues by 2 percent in 2022 and 4 percent in 2023. The additional funds would be used to increase PSRC's contingency fund balance. PSRC's financial policies set a fund balance target of two months operating expenditures. PSRC's current fund balance is 78 percent of the target. Local dues make up approximately 15 percent of PSRC funding. Executive Board members objected to raising member dues while many cities are experiencing COVID-19-related revenue constraints. PSRC's Operating Committee will review these comments and follow up with the Executive Board.

- **Discussed the Regional Transportation Plan and financial strategy.** Under federal and state law, the PSRC is required to develop a financially constrained Regional Transportation Plan every four years and the 2022 plan is being developed. The Plan describes how the region will implement the transportation policies and goals established in VISION 2050, the region's long-range plan. The Transportation Policy Board (TPB) identified key policy areas for the 2022 Plan, including access to transit, local agency needs, safety, equity, and climate. Later this year, PSRC will draft the plan and begin the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) process. The Executive Board will consider adopting the plan in early 2022.
- **Received a briefing on the regional equity strategy.** Equity is a key policy area in VISION 2050, the region's long-range plan for growth. A new action in the VISION 2050 plan 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. Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson supported the regional equity strategy during development of VISION 2050.

Based on feedback from PSRC boards and committees, PSRC staff is developing a work plan to develop the regional equity strategy. It will include components such as:

- Creating and maintaining tools and resources, including data and outreach, to better understand how regional and local policies and actions affect the region's residents, specifically to target populations who are traditionally underserved such as the Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) community, people with low incomes, and people with disabilities.
- Developing strategies and best practices for centering communities most impacted by social and systemic inequities in regional and local planning work, including inclusive community engagement, monitoring, and actions to achieve equitable development outcomes and mitigate displacement of vulnerable communities.

- Identifying implementation steps, including how to measure outcomes using an equity and racial equity lens.
- Developing and adopting an equity impact tool for evaluating PSRC decisions and community engagement.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is scheduled for March 25. Mayor Lynne Robinson serves on the Executive Board.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICY BOARD (GMPB)

At its March 4 meeting, the GMPB:

- Discussed the Regional Housing Strategy and the Needs Assessment key findings. The needs assessment analyzes conditions, trends and gaps in the region's housing stock and demonstrates how local and subregional housing need and supply fit into the regional picture. The findings of the assessment will inform the regional housing strategy. The Board worked in small groups to discuss three key questions:
 - What findings in the needs assessment could most benefit from regional action?
 - Whether a community or jurisdiction-scale typology the right approach for identifying appropriate tools and actions to support housing access and affordability?
 - Challenges and barriers to making housing more affordable and accessible in local communities and how can the Regional Housing Strategy help to address these challenges.

The next meeting of GMPB is scheduled for April 1. Mayor Lynne Robinson serves on the GMPB.

TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD (TPB)

At its March 11 meeting the TPB:

- **Recommended approval of a routine amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP.** Four agencies submitted seven projects. They were reviewed by PSRC staff and were determined to be consistent with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. The projects are:
 - King County Metro: Vehicle, Equipment, and Facilities Maintenance 2018-2020. This project includes the maintenance of Metro's approximately 1,500 buses, vanpool fleet, electric trolley infrastructure, and seven operating bases.
 - Metro: Atlantic Base Vehicle Maintenance Bus Lifts. Nine electric bus lifts at the Atlantic Base in Seattle have reached the end of their useful life and need to be replaced.
 - Kitsap Transit: Silverdale Transit Center
 - Shoreline: 148th Street Non-Motorized Bridge
 - Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT): SR 169/Ravensdale Creek Fish Passage near Black Diamond

- WSDOT: SR 3/SR 16/SR 166/Gorst Vicinity – Remove Fish Barriers in Kitsap County
- WSDOT: I-5/Bridgeport Way Seismic Retrofit south of Tacoma
- **Discussed road usage charges (RUC).** The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan assumes a transition from the state gas tax to a road usage charge. The state's gas tax of 49.4 cents per gallon funds roads and other infrastructure. As cars become increasingly more fuel efficient and the number of electric vehicles continues to increase, the revenue from the gas tax is not keeping pace with transportation needs. The state's gas tax is the fourth highest in the nation. Washington State Senator Jake Fey (D-Tacoma) proposed raising the gas tax by 18 cents in 2022, which would make it the highest in the nation.

The Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) conducted an RUC pilot program in 2018-2019 with approximately 2,000 volunteer drivers. The RUC pilot project tested a 2.4-cent per mile charge for lightweight, non-commercial vehicles including gasoline-fueled, hybrid, and electric vehicles. Under this system, drivers would pay a per-mile tax based on miles driven, rather than gallons of fuel consumed. The pilot was funded through a federal grant.

The TPB discussed the recommendations that the WSTC presented to the State Legislature last year:

- Implement an RUC gradually, beginning with plug-in and hybrid electric vehicles and state-owned vehicles. Using these vehicles, the state could test:
 - RUC compliance and enforcement
 - Tracking out-of-state travel
 - Opportunities to reduce operational costs
- Implement privacy protection measures in state law specific to an RUC system.
- Restrict RUC revenues to highway-related expenditures.

The TPB discussed the WSTC's recommendations

- **Discussed Transportation Demand Management (TDM),** which promotes alternatives to driving alone, such as transit, carpooling, vanpooling, walking, biking, and teleworking. The PSRC's TDM Advisory Committee is conducting a regional inventory of programs and activities for the RTP update. The TPB received a briefing on the TDM work program, including a summary of key findings from the TDM inventory and recommendations from the TDM Advisory Committee.
- **Received a briefing on PSRC's bicycle and pedestrian planning work program.** The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan contains policies and investments to support a sustainable, multimodal transportation system for people and goods. As an appendix to the Regional Transportation Plan, the Active Transportation Plan provides guidance and information to advance the RTP's bicycle and pedestrian policies.

The work program includes updating the PSRC's existing bicycle facilities inventory. The work program also includes discrete projects, such as:

- Policy inventory – the PSRC is creating an inventory of counties' and jurisdictions' adopted bicycle and pedestrian policies. The inventory will provide a comprehensive overview of policies within the region and serve as a resource for governments considering active transportation policies.
- Bicycle and pedestrian survey – the PSRC conducted a survey of counties and jurisdictions to determine how much data is available regarding bicycle and transportation infrastructure. The PSRC also asked whether the member governments have counted the bicyclists and pedestrians using that infrastructure.
- **Discussed access to transit.** As described above, the TPB identified six key focus areas for the 2022 RTP update. These policy focus areas include access to transit, safety, equity, climate, local agency needs and investments to accommodate future growth. Throughout 2021, the Board will hold in-depth discussions on each of the six focus areas, with staff providing short briefings on the issues, a summary of key data findings, and committee input when applicable. TPB members broke into small groups to discuss access to transit.

The 2018 RTP includes a regional transit access and parking strategy. It calls for the region to maximize non-single occupant vehicle (SOV) access to transit, considering:

- Land use and transit-oriented development (TOD).
- Pedestrian and bicycle investments, and accessibility improvements for people with limited mobility.
- Connections with local transit and bus/rail integration.
- Emerging technologies and shared mobility.
- Transit user experience – considering and addressing user experience barriers such as perceptions of safety and security, wayfinding, and clear fare structures that make it easier for people to use transit.

TPB members discussed the importance of using transit to connect people to the light rail system.

The next meeting of the TPB is scheduled for April 11. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the TPB.