

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES
*May 2021***

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. Staff will also include updates on other regional issues as appropriate (e.g., King County Flood Control District, King Conservation District, Affordable Housing Committee, King County Board of Health, King County Regional Homelessness Authority). Summaries also include the work of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). 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. These updates are intended to be summary briefings; staff can provide more details on any of the items below.

REGIONAL POLICY COMMITTEE (RPC)

March 26 meeting summary:

- **Approved legislation for a six-year Best Starts for Kids property tax levy.** Best Starts for Kids is a Countywide program that funds human services for children, youth, families, and communities. If approved by voters in August, the legislation would renew and expand the expiring 2016-2021 Best Starts for Kids property tax levy. The 2021 levy rate is \$0.115 per \$1,000 assessed value (AV). The owner of a \$960,000 home in Bellevue, the City's median home value, will pay approximately \$112 in 2021 property taxes.

The new six-year levy would have an initial rate of \$0.19 per \$1,000 AV in 2022. If the levy is renewed, the owner of a \$960,000 home would pay approximately \$183 in 2022 property taxes, an increase of \$71 compared to 2021.

The proposed levy renewal is expected to generate about \$872 million over six years. The revenue would be used to fund human services such as homelessness prevention programs, childcare subsidy programs, and workforce development. Up to \$50 million in levy revenue can be used for capital investments in facilities for recreation, housing, childcare, and early learning.

Following the RPC action, the King County Council approved the Best Starts for Kids levy renewal without amendment. The levy will be included on the August 3 general election ballot.

The next meeting of the RPC is scheduled for May 12. Councilmember John Stokes serves on the RPC.

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)

March 17 meeting summary:

- **Discussed service restoration following the COVID-19 pandemic.** The King County Council's 2021-2022 budget includes a proviso requiring Metro to transmit a letter describing how the agency will restore transit service that was suspended or reduced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Metro is operating at approximately 85 percent of pre-COVID-19 service levels. The County's adopted 2021-2022 budget funds a full return to pre-COVID-19 service levels by the end of 2022, not including any changes to service funded by the City of Seattle. Metro plans to restore half of the suspended service in the September 2021 service change. Information from discussions with employers and schools, rider/non-rider survey data, ORCA data, and vaccination plans will inform Metro's service restoration.

In addition, Metro will prioritize routes based on the following metrics:

- Ridership. Metro will restore service first on routes with higher pre-COVID-19 ridership.
 - Crowding. Metro is limiting occupancy to comply with health guidelines. Metro will prioritize routes that are consistently meeting or exceeding COVID-19 limits. In general, these routes serve areas with a high proportion of priority populations, which Metro defines as low-income households, people of color, people with disabilities, and members of limited-English speaking communities.
 - Equity. Metro will prioritize routes near high proportions of priority populations.
- **Discussed Updates to METRO CONNECTS**, Metro's financially unconstrained long-range plan. Adopted in 2017, METRO CONNECTS envisions expanding transit service by 70 percent by 2040.

Metro is updating METRO CONNECTS. Proposed changes include:

- Extending service expansion timelines. Metro's long-range service network will be adjusted from 2040 to 2050, to match Vision 2050, the region's long-range growth plan.
- Improving equity. Metro assessed the service network to identify gaps in access for priority populations. Metro will adjust the 2050 service network to increase service in those areas.
- Reducing the number of new RapidRide lines. METRO CONNECTS envisioned adding 20 new lines, for a total of 26 by 2040. However, RapidRide expansion exceeded Metro's cost and schedule estimates. Metro proposes to reduce the number of new RapidRide lines to 10-17.

April 21 meeting summary:

- **Discussed updates to the Service Guidelines**, Metro's policies for adding and reducing transit service. The RTC reviewed Metro's proposed updates, including:
 - Service reductions are considered for routes with lower ridership. Metro proposes to make equity the second most important factor in making service reductions. Routes that do not serve areas with high proportions of priority populations would be considered for reduction before routes that do serve those areas. As defined above, priority populations are low-income households, people of color, people with disabilities, and members of limited English-speaking communities. Metro proposes to add a sustainability threshold to the service guidelines. Some routes with lower ridership emit more greenhouse gases than single-occupancy vehicles would produce. Those routes would be high priorities for reduction.
 - Service restructures occur when groups of routes are changed simultaneously, often in response to new Sound Transit services. Metro staff proposed new policy language to reduce Metro service in areas that receive new Sound Transit service.
 - Flexible services include Vanpool, Dial-A-Ride Transit, and Community Access Transit. Metro often partners with jurisdictions, including Bellevue, to provide flexible services. Metro proposes to add policy language to prioritize flexible services partnerships based on equity.

Metro staff presented information showing how the proposed policy changes would impact service using pre-COVID-19 pandemic data. However, the COVID-19 pandemic's long-term impacts to transit ridership are unknown. Metro staff is unable to project how the policy updates would change transit service.

The next meeting of the RTC is scheduled for May 19. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the RTC.

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)

April 7 meeting summary:

Discussed 2022 preliminary sewer rate and capacity charge. King County Wastewater Treatment Division (WTD) staff presented proposed 2022 Sewer Rates and 2022-2031 Sewer Rate Plan. The key drivers behind the rate increase are WTD's long range plans and new external regulations, including compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Consent Decree, Clean Water Plan, Department of Ecology's

(DOE) proposed nutrient permit, Asset Management, Clean Water Healthy Habitat initiative, and proposed measures to improve treatment plant reliability. These drivers will have a significant impact on sewer rates that could result in double-digit increases for many years.

WTD staff anticipates doubling the capital program by 2027 as well as accelerating several near-term projects. The expanded program will require adding 13 new full-time staff positions through 2023.

The adopted 2021-2030 Sewer Rate Plan includes a zero-rate increase in 2022 and every subsequent even-numbered year, and double-digit rate increases in odd-numbered years beginning in 2023. The adopted 2021 rate is \$47.37 per month and the estimated 2030 rate is \$74.83.

The RQWC discussed two rate plan scenarios for 2022-2031. Both scenarios assume that WTD will be allowed to delay compliance with the EPA CSO Consent Decree until 2040 instead of 2030. The first scenario is a zero-rate increase in 2022 and every subsequent even year, and double-digit rate increases on the odd years starting in 2023. The second scenario is single digit rate increases every year starting in 2022. By 2031, the projected monthly rate for both scenarios is approximately \$79.

The RWQC and Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC) requested that WTD provide more transparency, information, and rationale for key assumptions about rate drivers and related financial policies in future sewer rate development processes. They also asked that WTD allow more time for member agencies to review and provide input on the proposed rates.

In addition to changing the monthly sewer rate, the County Council is also considering changes to the sewer capacity charge. This charge is imposed on new and redeveloped buildings with sewer connections, to ensure that development pays for its impacts on public infrastructure. The capacity charge is calculated based on the size of the development and usually increases 3 percent each year. The proposed 2021 capacity charge is \$70.39 for a 1,500-2,999 square foot dwelling, a 3 percent increase from last year's charge of \$68.34. The program includes low income customer assistance in the form of payment deferrals and flexible payment plan options and discounting the charge for eligible low-income housing.

The King County Council is expected to take action on the sewer rate and capacity charge in June.

The RWQC will meet May 5. A summary will be included in the June Regional Issues packet. Councilmember Conrad Lee serves on the RWQC.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL (GMPC)

March 31 meeting summary:

- **Received a briefing on the 2021 Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs).** The CPPs are being updated with amendments to existing 2012 policies . New policies will be added to align with VISION 2050 Multicounty Planning Policies. Proposed changes to the policies include the following:
 - equity analysis regarding the context and rationale for centering equity within the CPPs,
 - changes to the development patterns chapter that include growth targets out to 2044, and
 - changes to the housing chapter.
- **Action on the 2021 CPPs and growth targets.** King County staff updated the Committee on changes. The Committee released the Draft for public review and comment.

The next meeting of the GMPC is scheduled for May 26. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the GMPC.

EASTRAIL REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL (ERAC)

April 19 meeting summary:

- **Discussed major capital projects.** Planning, design, and early implementation efforts underway along the trail and within Bellevue include:
 - NE 8th Street Overcrossing. The County is in the permitting phase for the Eastrail overcrossing at NE 8th Street. The overcrossing will provide a safe and comfortable connection over a major arterial and allow pedestrians and bicyclists access to Sound Transit's Wilburton Station. The bridge design team is collaborating with the Japanese American Commemoration Project to memorialize the contributions of the Japanese American community in Bellevue. This project is fully funded. Construction is expected to begin this fall and must be completed in 2022, before the East Link light rail is electrified.
 - I-405 Renton to Bellevue Widening and Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) Project. This Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) project will add new I-405 capacity and create a dual ETL system between SR 167 in Renton and NE 6th Street in Bellevue. This project will pave the Eastrail from Coal Creek Parkway to Renton. This segment is expected to be completed and open to the public in May. WSDOT's project will also construct a crossing between SE 8th Street and I-90 to carry the trail over the southbound lanes of I-405. The bridge will be open to the public when the Wilburton Trestle project is completed.

- Wilburton Trestle. This project will rehabilitate the historic structure and connect the trail to SE 5th Street. This project is fully funded. The 2020-2025 King County parks, trails, and open space replacement levy provides about \$25 million for the trestle, which is owned by King County. The Bellevue Capital Improvement Program includes \$2.5 million to support Eastrail projects, such as the Wilburton Trestle. Kaiser Permanente is contributing \$500,000 and the State Legislature provided \$3 million for the trestle project in the 2019-2021 biennium. King County plans to advertise for construction this fall and open the structure to the public in 2023.
- Central Wilburton Trail Segment. This project will complete the trail between King County's NE 8th Street Overcrossing Project and the Wilburton Trestle. An estimated \$2.5 million is needed for design and construction. This funding is included in the State House and Senate transportation bills.
- Spring Boulevard Connector. Last year, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) awarded Bellevue \$1.3 million in Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funds for final project design of a connection between the Eastrail and Spring Boulevard. This new connection will link the Eastrail with the new Spring Boulevard bicycle and pedestrian path, which runs between downtown and the Spring District. The final design work is scheduled for 2022. An estimated \$4.7 million is needed for construction.
- Northup Way Connector. REI and Facebook are each contributing \$1 million for the Northup Way Connector in Bellevue, and King County is contributing \$500,000. This King County project will link the Eastrail and the SR 520 Trail, serving as a gateway into Bellevue and the Spring District neighborhood. This project is anticipated to open by 2023.
- I-90 Steel Bridge Rehabilitation. The Bridge will connect the Eastrail to south King County. An estimated \$10 million is needed for design and construction. Bellevue and the Eastrail Partners are advocating for state investment. The House and Senate transportation budget bills include \$10 million for this project.
- **Reviewed an Eastrail Partners memorandum of understanding (MOU).** In 2019, the ERAC adopted a consensus resolution on a cost-share agreement to provide \$100,000 to the Eastrail Partners. The Eastrail Partners is a non-profit coalition of business and community representatives that advocate for investment in the trail. Bellevue contributed about \$11,000 to the Eastrail Partners for stakeholder engagement he. The ERAC members' agreement with Eastrail Partners ended in December. ERAC staff drafted an MOU for continued partnership. The ERAC will consider adopting the MOU in July.

- **Discussed the co-creation proposal for Eastrail outreach.** The ERAC's 2020-2022 workplan includes outreach to underrepresented communities. Debbie Lacy, the founder and Executive Director of Eastside for All, presented a proposal for a "Welcoming Week" effort with virtual events co-hosted by community-based organizations. Event organizers would work with diverse communities to identify potential areas of community involvement based on the communities' needs and interests. The events would require staff support from ERAC members, including Bellevue.

Eastside for All is a racial equity advocacy organization based in east King County. Eastside for All recommends the "co-creation framework," which supports:

- Building relationships with underrepresented communities rather than the more limited engagement that is characteristic of traditional public outreach efforts.
- Meeting regularly with community liaisons and leaders.
- Participating in cultural events and open meetings hosted by community-based organizations.

The ERAC supported the Welcoming Week concept.

The next meeting of the ERAC is scheduled for July 19. Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes serves on the ERAC.