

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

**EXECUTIVE BOARD**

At its March 25 meeting, the Executive Board:

- **Approved contract authorization for legal representation services.** Board authorization is required for the Executive Director to enter into a contract in excess of \$10,000. PSRC staff is requesting authorization for a professional services contract for legal representation services in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

PSRC is being sued in King County Superior Court. The plaintiff, Mr. Worthington, is alleging that the VISION long-range plans for 2020-2050 are unlawful for a variety of reasons. Mr. Worthington asserts that these plans violate the Washington State Growth Management Act, the State Environmental Policy Act, and the Regional Transportation Planning Organization planning statute. PSRC's 2020-2021 budget includes \$157,000 for legal services. To date, PSRC has spent approximately \$84,000 in general legal services on various issues. PSRC staff anticipates spending an additional \$80,000-\$100,000 to defend the agency in this matter.

- **Approved a routine amendment to the 2021-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Four agencies submitted seven projects. The amendments were reviewed by PSRC staff and were determined to be consistent with VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). 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
- **Approved Creation of an Equity Advisory Committee.** 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.

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.
- **Recommended approval of the 2022-2023 biennial budget and work program.** The total proposed budget for 2022-2023 is \$30.2 million, \$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 these costs are creating a growing gap between revenues and expenditures.

The biennial budget increases local member dues by 2 percent in 2022 and 4 percent in 2023. The additional funds will 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.

At its April 22 meeting, the Executive Board:

- **Approved a routine amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP.** WSDOT submitted two projects for amendment into the TIP. The projects were reviewed by PSRC staff and were determined to be consistent with VISION 2050 and the RTP. The projects are:
  - I-90/Westbound Mercer Slough Bridge – Bridge Scour. This maintenance project will protect the bridge from erosion.
  - SR 522/Paradise Lake Road to Snohomish River Bridge Interchange and Widening in Snohomish County.

Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson asked about specific environmental protections that would be followed for the Mercer Slough Bridge Scour project. WSDOT Secretary Roger Millar responded

that the project will not scour the bridge deck, causing runoff. Instead, WSDOT will examine the foundation under the bridge and ensure that erosion does not weaken the connection between the pillars and the ground. He acknowledged that WSDOT needs additional funding to retrofit highways and bridges to reduce water quality impacts. Mayor Robinson supported approval of the amendment.

- **Approved project extensions.** PSRC has project selection authority for Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) funding. PSRC's adopted tracking policies allow project sponsors to request a one-time extension for one year beyond the original deadline with Transportation Policy Board (TPB) approval. Last year, Bellevue was granted a six-month extension that allowed the City to complete property acquisition for the BelRed Preservation Project, which is under construction.

Seven project sponsors requested one-year extensions. Most delays are due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chairs of the Regional Countywide staff committees recommended approval of the requests.

The following project sponsors requested one-year extensions:

- City of Des Moines – Barnes Creek Trail
- City of Lakewood – Steilacoom Boulevard
- City of Marysville – 88th Street NE Corridor Improvements
- City of Redmond – 152nd Avenue Main Street
- City of Renton – Rainier Avenue S Corridor Improvements
- City of Seattle – E Marginal Way Heavy Haul Corridor Improvements Phase 1
- Town of Steilacoom – Rigney Road Non-Motorized Improvements Project

The following project sponsors requested 45-day extensions:

- City of Bothell – North Creek Trail
- City of Fife – 20th Street Preservation
- City of Mukilteo – Harbor Reach Drive Improvements
- **Approved 2021 delivery and contingency funding.** As described above, PSRC has project selection authority for FHWA funds. PSRC must meet its annual funding delivery target or risk losing the unused portion of funds to other regions in the state. This funding recommendation includes:
  - \$20 million for regional projects
  - \$26 million for projects in King County
  - \$2 million for projects in Kitsap County
  - \$8 million for projects in Pierce County
  - \$7 million for projects in Snohomish County
  - \$5 million for “ready-to-go” projects to help meet the 2021 delivery target

No Bellevue projects were eligible for contingency funding. Bellevue submitted five projects as part of this funding competition. PSRC awarded Bellevue \$4.8 million for three projects. Two Bellevue preservation projects are on the contingency list. However, preservation projects were not eligible under this funding action.

- **Approved Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) funding distribution.** PSRC has project selection authority for Federal Transit Agency (FTA) funding. PSRC is required to coordinate with the region's transit agencies for distribution of the funds.

CRRSAA was signed into law on December 22 and allocates \$14 billion nationwide to support transit agencies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Approximately \$580 million is available to transit agencies serving King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. When the Board approved FTA grant funding last year, Pierce County representatives objected to PSRC's adopted distribution policies, saying that the policies disadvantage transit agencies with fewer resources. The Board directed PSRC staff to review the earned share methodology in the upcoming Project Selection Task Force process, which will conclude early next year.

The regional transit agencies did not want to delay allocation of CRRSSA funding until the Task Force process is complete, so the General Managers and Chief Operating Officers of each agency in the region developed a recommendation that deviates from the standard methodology to provide additional funding to Everett Transit, Pierce Transit, and Washington State Ferries.

Pierce County representatives objected to the funding recommendation, saying that the compromise did not provide sufficient funding to Pierce County Transit. The funding recommendation passed with 84 percent of the vote. Bellevue Mayor Lynne Robinson supported the funding recommendation.

The next meeting of the Executive Board is scheduled for May 27. Mayor Lynne Robinson represents Bellevue on the Executive Board.

### **GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICY BOARD (GMPB)**

At its April 1 meeting, the GMPB:

- **Received a briefing on the Plan Review Manual update.** Local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, and transit agency policies and plans. A Plan Review Manual, provides details on the review and certification process and requirements. The manual was last updated in 2014, prior to the 2015-2016 local plan updates, and supported the implementation of VISION 2040. In October, the GMPB reviewed the scope of work for updating the Plan Review Manual. PSRC formed a Plan Review Staff Working Group that includes Bellevue staff. The final draft of the Plan Review Manual is under review by the Regional Staff Committee and Working Group. PSRC staff plans

to finalize the Plan Review Manual later this spring. Outreach activities to share the updated guidance in support of local planning efforts will begin this summer.

- **Received a briefing on Open Space Conservation Tools and Regional Transfer of Development Rights.** VISION 2050 includes an action on rural growth and conservation tools. In response to VISION 2050 and Executive Board direction, PSRC staff is developing open space conservation tools, including regional transfer of development rights. The PSRC staff and staff from King County and Forterra briefed the GMPB on feasible, opportunities for local, regional and state-wide conservation programs to reduce development pressure in rural and resource areas to conserve valuable open space areas, including:
  - Establishing a regional structure for Transfer and Purchase of Development Rights and open space markets.
  - Publishing a tool kit of open space conservation and other rural protection strategies.
  - Working to facilitate city and urban development consistent with VISION 2050 that reduces rural development pressure.

The GMPB met May 6. A summary will be included in the June Regional Issues Packet. The next meeting of GMPB is scheduled for June 3. Mayor Lynne Robinson represents Bellevue on the PSRC Executive Board.

### **TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD (TPB)**

At its April 8 meeting, the TPB:

- **Recommended approval of a routine amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP.** The Executive Board approved the amendment on April 22, as described above.
- **Recommended approval of project extensions.** The Executive Board approved the extensions on April 22, as described above.
- **Recommended approval of 2021 delivery and contingency funding.** The Executive Board approved the funding recommendation on April 22, as described above.
- **Discussed RTP outreach.** The RTP 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 an RTP every four years. The TPB received a series of briefings on the schedule and workplan for the 2022 RTP and identified key focus areas, such as safety and equity.

The TPB received a briefing on the types of public outreach planned and ideas for effectively engaging stakeholders and the public. PSRC staff conducted a statistically valid public survey,

reached out to key stakeholder groups, and gave presentations to regional boards, committees, and other forums.

- **Discussed regional freight needs.** Over the last two years, the Transportation Policy Board has received briefings on the work to collect additional data and update the state of the practice on every aspect of the transportation system, culminating in the development of a visualization tool. One element of the data collection and research effort is movement of freight and goods. PSRC staff conducted an inventory of regional freight assets. Data on truck movements throughout the region is being evaluated.

The TPB received a briefing on the freight work program, including a summary of the regional inventory of freight assets and an overview of the key issues identified by the Freight Advisory Committee. This information will be included in the RTP.

- **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 safety.

Bellevue Councilmember Jennifer Robertson advocated for including a Vision Zero strategy in the TMP. VISION 2050 includes a multicounty planning policy to “improve the safety of the transportation system and, in the long term, achieve the state’s goal of zero deaths and serious injuries.”

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

### **REGIONAL TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RTODAC)**

At its March 19 meeting, the RTODAC:

- **Took action on restructuring Committee membership from an elected official body to a staff-level forum.** The RTODAC was formed in 2014 to advance the Growing Transit Communities (GTC) Strategy, the region’s equitable TOD strategy at the time. The Committee serves in an advisory capacity to the GMPB and is comprised of GTC Compact signatories ranging from local elected officials to non-profit housing developers to transit agency staff. Kirkland Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold Chairs the RTODAC and Housing Development Consortium Executive Director Mary Kooistra is Vice Chair.

Following the adoption of VISION 2050, the RTODAC Chair and Vice Chair recommended restructuring the Committee to a staff-level advisory group to the GMPB. Subject matter experts

on the RTODAC will review technical information and develop staff recommendations. The GMPB will review the RTODAC's recommendations and make policy decisions. The RTODAC was briefed on the restructure proposal in December before taking action in March. Bellevue Councilmember Janice Zahn supported the recommendation.

GMPB Chair Scott Bader and Vice Chair Ed Prince supported the restructure proposal. The GMPB took action on the recommendation on May 6, updating the RTODAP charter to reflect the new committee structure. A summary will be included in the June Regional Issues packet.

The next meeting of the RTODAC is scheduled for June 18.