

**COUNCIL SUMMARY BACKGROUND BRIEFING:
KING COUNTY REGIONAL COMMITTEES AND OTHER ISSUES
*June 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)

At its May 12 meeting, the RPC:

- **Received a briefing on the King County budget.** The COVID-19 pandemic has caused revenue instability for King County and other public agencies. Since March 2020, the County Council has adopted seven supplemental appropriations ordinances in response to the pandemic totaling more than \$418 million. The RPC received a briefing on COVID-19-related impacts to the County's budget, including:
 - The County's seventh COVID-19-related appropriations ordinance. In May, the County Council appropriated approximately \$630 million to public health, vaccinations, rental assistance, homelessness, and economic recovery.
 - King County Metro Transit's sales tax revenue is Metro's sales tax revenue is projected at \$73 million below the pre-COVID forecast for 2021 and \$69 million below the forecast for 2022. The County Council's 2021-2022 biennial budget included sufficient funding to return Metro transit service to pre-COVID-19 levels. However, Metro staff anticipates a "fiscal cliff" in 2025-2026, necessitating long-term Countywide transit service reductions up to 13 percent of pre-COVID-19 levels.
 - King County Executive Dow Constantine transmitted the 2022 wastewater rate proposal to the County Council in May. The proposal includes a 4 percent rate increase, from \$47.27 per month to \$49.27 per month. The County expects rates to continue increasing over the next decade and to reach to approximately \$79 per month in 2031. The rate increases are due to the County Wastewater Treatment Division's (WTD's) long-range plans and new environmental regulations imposed by the State Department of Ecology.
- **Discussed Harborview Medical Center**, the only Level 1 trauma center in the four-state region

that includes Washington, Alaska, Idaho, and Montana. Level 1 is the highest level of comprehensive care for people with major injuries. Harborview is owned by King County and operated by the University of Washington. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Harborview is offering testing at homeless shelters and in vulnerable communities. HMC is delivering vaccinations through mobile care teams, community clinics, and hospital-based specialized clinics.

- **Approved a motion related to the Best Starts for Kids (BSK) implementation plan.** In April, the County Council approved a BSK levy proposal and will place the measure on the Aust 3 countywide ballot. BSK is a Countywide program that funds human services for children, youth, families, and communities. The levy proposal would renew and expand the expiring 2016-2021 property tax levy. 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 home in Bellevue assessed at \$960,000 would pay approximately \$183 in 2022 property taxes, an increase of \$71 compared to 2021.

Section 7 of the legislation requires the Executive to transmit a proposed levy implementation plan by July 31. The plan will identify the strategies to be funded and outcomes to be achieved with the levy proceeds and must also include a framework to measure the performance of levy strategies in achieving identified outcomes.

The RPC approved a motion requiring the implementation plan to:

- Identify strategies relating to prevention, outreach and early intervention to address mental health and substance use impacts, in children and youth five through 24 years old, that have been exacerbated due to the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic; and
- Consider programs and services that provide, expand access to or provide and expand access to substance use disorder supports for children and youth, including, but not limited to, awareness campaigns on substance use.

At its June 9 meeting, the RPC:

- **Received a briefing on recreation investments in equity.** King County partners with community-based organizations to design and operate enhanced recreation facilities. For example, the County is partnering with Eastside for All to engage underrepresented communities in planning for the Eastrail.
- **Received a briefing on the King County Clean Water Plan.** WTD is developing a Clean Water Plan, which will provide long term policy guidance, strategies, and actions through 2060 to manage and operate the regional sewer system. The draft Plan addresses aging and inadequate infrastructure, increasing regulatory requirements, growth-related capacity concerns, and increasing costs. The draft Plan is scheduled for transmittal to the King County Council for review later this year.

The next meeting of the RPC is scheduled for July 14. Councilmember John Stokes serves on the RPC.

REGIONAL TRANSIT COMMITTEE (RTC)

At its May 19 meeting, the RTC:

- **Discussed updates to the Strategic Plan for Public Transportation**, which documents Metro's goals, strategies, and performance measures. Metro staff proposes to align the Strategic Plan with the Mobility Framework, a set of equity and sustainability recommendations developed in 2019.
- **Received a briefing on draft 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. 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 partners with Bellevue and other jurisdictions to provide flexible services. Metro proposes to add policy language to prioritize flexible services partnerships based on equity.
- **Discussed METRO CONNECTS**, Metro's adopted long-range plan. METRO CONNECTS envisions expanding Metro's transit service by 70 percent by 2040. The RTC reviewed Metro's proposed updates to METRO CONNECTS, including:
 - 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.

The RTC plans to take action on the updates to the Strategic Plan, Service Guidelines, and METRO CONNECTS later this year.

At its June 16 meeting, the RTC:

- **Discussed transit service restoration plans.** Metro is currently operating at approximately 85 percent of its pre-COVID-19 service levels. Systemwide, approximately 400,000 Metro service hours are suspended. Metro plans to restore approximately half of the suspended service during the fall 2021 service change, which is scheduled for October 2. Metro is using the adopted Service Guidelines to plan the service change, with routes prioritized for restoration or suspension based on equity and productivity during the pandemic. Seven routes were added to the restoration plan based on equity considerations. Following the fall 2021 service change, 19 routes will remain fully suspended and 49 routes will operate with reduced service levels.

Metro staff is in the planning process to restore the remaining 200,000 suspended services hours in 2022. The RTC will receive a briefing on this topic in July. Metro staff plans to use the Service Guidelines, which may be updated later this year. Metro staff will also use route productivity measures, input from employers and schools, and equity measures.

- **Discussed Countywide Planning Policies and Growth Targets.** In October, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) General Assembly adopted VISION 2050, the region's plan for growth. By 2050, the region's population will reach 5.8 million people. VISION 2050's policies, actions, and regional growth strategy guide how and where the region grows through 2050. The King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) is updating the Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) and growth targets for housing and jobs. Robust transit service is needed to support the region's growth.

The next meeting of the RTC is scheduled for July 21. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the RTC.

REGIONAL WATER QUALITY COMMITTEE (RWQC)

At its May 5 meeting, the RWQC:

- **Discussed Executive Constantine's recommended 2022 sewer rate and capacity charge.** As described above, Executive Constantine proposed increasing the wholesale 2022 sewer rate by 4 percent, resulting in a monthly sewer charge of \$49.27, up from \$47.37. The 2022 sewer capacity charge would be 3 percent resulting in a charge of \$70.39, up from \$68.34. Executive Constantine's recommended 2022-2031 Sewer Rate Plan includes annualized sewer rate increases of 4 percent annually through 2025, 5 percent in 2026, 6 percent through 2030, and 7.5 percent in 2031.

The sewer capacity charge is imposed on new and redeveloped buildings needing a sewer services 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 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 County Council plans to act on the sewer rate and capacity charge in June.

- **Discussed King County's draft Clean Water Plan.** As described above, the Plan will provide broad-scale strategies, actions, and policy guidance addressing key challenges to successfully managing and operating the regional sewer system through 2060. Such pressures include an aging infrastructure, increased environmental and treatment regulations, increasing growth and related capacity concerns, climate change and other critical issues.

The Plan will address strategies, actions, cost estimates, and policies for the following decision areas.

- Wastewater treatment plants
- Pollution source control/product stewardship
- Stormwater and combined sewer overflows
- Wastewater conveyance system
- Asset management, resiliency, and redundancy
- Legacy pollution
- Resource recovery

WTD staff described options related to resource recovery and the regional wastewater conveyance system. WTD's existing wastewater resource recovery program addresses challenges and opportunities related to water reuse, as well as biosolids and energy recovery programs. The RWQC reviewed a "no change" option as well as an option to expand the biosolids recovery program by providing additional treatment so biosolids could be used by the general public. An expanded program would require construction of a new composting and soil blending facility. Building and operating the new facility might create a net addition of carbon emissions. Capital and ongoing costs are estimated to be as high as \$2.5 billion and \$4.8 billion, respectively. WTD estimates this level of service could produce \$1.7 billion in revenue.

In regard to the County's wastewater conveyance system, WTD is considering changing its engineering design standards that determine the size of future pipes and pump stations. WTD staff proposed options to prevent groundwater and stormwater from entering the sanitary sewer system, optimization of wastewater system operations and encouraging conversion of failing septic systems onto the public sewer system. Depending on the package of policies and options selected, WTD's costs may be as much as \$9.5 billion, \$1.3 billion by component agencies, and \$11 billion paid for by others.

WTD's schedule anticipates transmitting the Plan to the County Council later this year.

At its June 2 meeting, the RWQC:

- **Continued discussion of the draft Clean Water Plan.** WTD staff presented options for addressing wet weather management (combined sewer overflows), legacy pollution, pollution source control and product stewardship.

WTD staff affirmed the Environmental Protection Agency's Consent Decree requirements which limits the number of overflows from its combined sewer system by 2030, proposes cleaning up contaminated sediment from historical sources, and reduces stormwater pollution by preventing pollution at the source and increasing stormwater treatment.

Depending on the package of policies and options selected, WTD costs may be as much as \$26.4 billion through 2060.

- **Discussed King County's Clean Water/Healthy Habitat Initiative (CWHH).** The Clean CWHH describes how the County will leverage and coordinate its work programs and resources to improve environmental, natural resources and clean water services outcomes within 30 years.

This would be accomplished by:

- Implementing strategies to achieve better, faster results, that incorporate equity practices, and that yield higher returns on public investments.
- Focus on the following six areas to benefit all people, especially marginalized communities, the environment, and survival of aquatic species:
 - Healthy forests and more green spaces
 - Cleaner, controlled stormwater runoff
 - Reduced toxics and fecal pathogens
 - Functional river floodplains
 - Better fish habitat
 - Resilient marine shorelines

County staff reported that no new resources will be required to implement the CWHH beyond funding a full-time Program Coordinator position.

The next meeting of the RWQC is scheduled for July 7. Councilmember Conrad Lee serves on the RWQC.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL (GMPC)

At its May 26 meeting, the GMPC:

- **Received a briefing on the CPP updates schedule and changes proposed to each of the chapters.** King County and Interjurisdictional Team (IJT) staff provided an overview of the changes since the last draft of the CPPs was presented to the GMPC on March 31. The GMPC was also briefed on public input received during the comment period of April 5 to May 5. The County received 29 sets of comments from jurisdictions, non-profit organizations, community groups, and individuals.. Comments included requests for clarification, consistency with the Multicounty Planning Policies, and stronger ties to equity. The IJT reviewed each comment and recommended changes consistent with the CPP goals and guiding principles. Following the May 26 meeting, the GMPC was invited to provide written comments and amendments within two weeks. Based on these, an updated Proposed 2021 CPP draft will be brought to the June 23 meeting for GMPC action.
- **Received a briefing on the Urban Growth Capacity Report.** The Urban Growth Capacity Report is a required component of Growth Management Act (GMA). The report is due three years before the Periodic Comprehensive Plan Update and will be presented for GMPC approval on June 23.

More than half of the comments received on the 2021 draft CPPs addressed growth targets. King County staff and the IJT will present options for GMPC consideration to address each growth target-related theme.

The GMPC met June 23 and a summary will be included in the July Regional Issues packet. The next meeting of the GMPC is scheduled for December 1. Councilmember Jennifer Robertson serves on the GMPC.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING COMMITTEE (AHC)

At its May 19 meeting, the AHC:

- **Received a briefing on Revenue and Expenditure monitoring.** King County staff provided the AHC with an overview of implementation of two recently authorized revenue tools for affordable housing under Washington State House Bills (HB) 1406 and 1590. The findings are based on a Housing Interjurisdictional Team (HIJT) survey of the King County jurisdictions that enacted at least one of these tools. An estimated \$22.5 million has been collected countywide through the two revenue sources, almost \$13 million from the state sales and use tax credit and almost \$9.6 million from the local 0.1 percent sales and use tax option and about \$14.1 million has been committed to build or preserve affordable housing.
- **Adopted 2021 federal funding priorities.** Congress and the new administration have signaled a desire to pass a substantial infrastructure package to address the backlog of capital needs and accelerate the economic recovery including funding for affordable housing development,

preservation, and recapitalization programs. The AHC took action to adopt the statement of legislative priorities.

- **Received a briefing on the 2021 State legislative priorities.** The adopted 2021 State Legislative Priorities in January and received a briefing on the final status of bills of interest to the AHC.
- **Received a briefing on the data dashboard for regional indicators on countywide housing need.** The AHC is chartered to track countywide and jurisdictional progress to implement the Regional Affordable Housing Task Force's Five Year Action Plan. The Plan includes regional indicators to understand countywide housing need and progress to meet the goal to build or preserve 44,000 units affordable to households earning 50 percent or less of AMI between 2019 and 2024. To assist with this task, the charter directs staff to develop a data dashboard. King County staff released and demonstrated the King County Regional Affordable Housing dashboard at the meeting. The first dashboard presents both regional and jurisdictional housing data, as well as progress on the action plan with the goal of providing an accountability tool that supports regional collaboration.