

Good evening, Task Force members.

My name is Sonny Putter and I am a former Mayor and Councilmember of the City of Newcastle.

I have two issues to bring to your attention.

Last month I spoke to you on the importance of looking at regional transportation governance. I also quoted extensively from the Conclusions in the Report of the Regional Transportation Commission in 2006, the so-called Rice-Stanton Commission.

In view of the comments Seattle Mayor Murray just made, I'd like to read to you the rest of the Conclusions of the Regional Transportation Commission:

"We have recommended that the Legislature create a new 15-member Puget Sound Regional Transportation Commission (PSRTC) that has authority and responsibility for planning, prioritizing and funding all modes of regional transportation for the four-county area. We believe that that agency can make decisions and establish public confidence by being directly accountable to the people. Our recommendations suggest that the agency should have responsibility for land use, roads and transit, including the three current regional entities. We believe the agency should have taxing, tolling and borrowing authority and should consist of nine elected and six appointed members."

The second issue is a caution concerning the Cocker Fennessy public opinion survey results.

One slide indicates that 3 in 10 support raising the gas tax.

Another slide indicates that a majority support a tax on polluters and most also support using the funds for transportation.

A third slide concludes that taxing the biggest polluters was, by far, the most popular proposal tested, with 80% supporting that option compared to only 42% supporting an increase in the gas tax or in car tab fees.

My caution here is to be careful in interpreting these survey results. Most respondents to the survey know very well that they pay the gas tax, even though it is really assessed at the wholesale level and they never see the tax listed at the gas pump. I doubt that many respondents see the tax on major polluters as a tax on themselves and that may be why they preferred this option in the survey. I remind you of the old political axiom "Don't tax me, don't tax thee, tax the fellow behind the tree".

Now, whether a tax on polluters will be rolled into gas costs that people pay at the pump or not is currently being debated in Olympia. I don't propose to explore that issue today.

But we clearly need to be cautious in using these survey results as definitive.

Thank you.

Sonny Putter