

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

In previous comments, I asked that you consider the 2006 recommendations of the Rice- Stanton Commission to migrate transportation funding in this region to user fees (tolls, fares, parking charges) - to manage and reduce demand for transportation with user fees and thus the amount of construction that must be funded. I also suggested that you accept their recommendation to create a new Puget Sound Regional Transportation Commission which would be directly accountable to the people. This Commission would have taxing, tolling and borrowing authority and responsibility for planning, prioritizing and funding all modes of regional transportation for the four-county area.

Today, I ask you to consider the increased use of tolling and road usage charges for funding roads and bridges and the use of increased fares and a per employee tax on employers for funding transit.

Using more system-wide tolling and transitioning to a road usage charge would enable us to temper the projected decline in gas taxes for 18th Amendment purposes, while preserving these funding sources for roads. We must always keep in mind that most transit in the region will still travel on roads. Getting a road usage charge accepted by the public state-wide will be challenging enough; diverting road usage charges to transit may make the task impossible.

Increasing transit fares to cover at least 50% to 65% of operating costs, as is the case in major cities in Canada, would more directly tie responsibility for transit funding to the users of transit. The average King County metro rider has an annual household income of more than \$70,000 a year. This suggests that middle and upper income riders have the capacity to pay more of their share of transit operating costs than they do now. The costs of low income and transit-dependent users could be directly subsidized, as is now happening with the ORCA LIFT reduced fare program just initiated by King County Metro and also used by Kitsap Transit and Sound Transit riders.

As most transit in the region is used to get people to work during peak commute hours, a per employee charge on employers, as is used in the Portland, Oregon metropolitan area, more directly ties transit service to the generators of the transit need. Using these funding sources for transit in the future could reduce the regressive burden that current transit sales taxes impose on the least able to pay and could preserve the property tax for education and other local needs.

Thank you.

Sonny Putter