



July 21, 2020

Alex Pedersen, Chair
Select Committee on Seattle Transportation Benefit District Funding
Seattle City Council
600 Fourth Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Councilmember Pedersen,

We are writing to express support for Seattle's proposed Transportation Benefit District funding measure for November 2020 and to express our intention to continue to work toward a countywide transit funding measure at an appropriate time. Our intentions for such a countywide measure would be to meet the mobility needs of people in Seattle and throughout the county, build toward the promise of our countywide plan for transit expansion (Metro Connects), and incorporate the principles of equity and sustainability embodied in Metro's Mobility Framework. We have appreciated our partnership with Seattle on transit service, and look forward to continuing and building upon that partnership.

As we have all learned during the last few months, our region's public transportation network has been crucial during the pandemic emergency. Transit has provided much-needed mobility options for essential workers and first responders and has helped to ensure that people throughout King County have had a way to get to essential services, including groceries and medical treatment. Even with transit services significantly reduced in response to COVID-19, the network has continued to function, currently providing more than 125,000 trips a day.

Moving forward, we have a significant challenge: transit will continue to be essential and must be able to meet the needs of businesses and passengers as we recover from the pandemic, even while transit revenues have been severely diminished. During the last few months of pandemic closures, for instance, we have seen that the routes with least reduction in ridership have primarily been those in South Seattle and South King County used by residents, often people of color and with lower incomes, who cannot work from home and who rely on transit to make essential trips to work, shopping, and other needs. We must continue the work we have begun to build a fast, frequent, and reliable transit network that gives people throughout the county, and, in particular, residents of communities that have historically been underserved, convenient and affordable access to transit.

On that note, we want to express our appreciation for the City of Seattle's ongoing partnership with King County in allocating Seattle Transportation Benefit District funding to build and enhance the fast, frequent, and reliable transit network within Seattle and to invest in equity and access initiatives. The

2014 voter-approved Seattle Transportation Benefit District funding measure has made significant improvements to transit service in neighborhoods throughout Seattle.

That said, our transit system must serve the entire county. To provide the greatest mobility, equity, economic, and sustainability benefits, transit must serve people in all communities. To achieve those countywide benefits, the King County Transportation District began deliberations earlier this year on a countywide transit funding measure that would incorporate the services and programs Seattle had been funding on its own, as well as expanded services and programs countywide. Unfortunately, due to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, the King County Transportation District was not able to proceed with a countywide measure, focusing instead on supporting the existing transit system during the pandemic and managing the region's recovery.

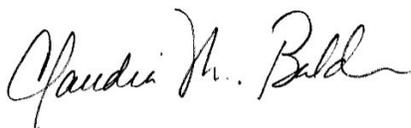
Although we are disappointed that our plans to move forward with a countywide transit funding measure stalled in this year of COVID-19, we support the City of Seattle's efforts to propose a Seattle Transportation Benefit District funding measure this November. The proposed measure, even if reduced in scope, will help to sustain critical services and programs Seattle has supported over the last six years.

At the same time, we remain committed to working toward a future countywide transit funding measure to be developed in collaboration with jurisdictional partners, stakeholders, and community members, and in the context of the regional recovery from the pandemic, the mobility needs of the region following the pandemic, and adopted transportation policies and plans, including the equity and sustainability goals included in King County Metro's Mobility Framework.

We are available to engage in discussion now, as you develop the measure to be sent to the voters, and after November, to ensure that options remain open for a countywide measure before the next Seattle Transportation Benefit District expires. When that time comes, we understand that plans for a countywide measures would need to maintain, and preferably enhance, the transit services and equity and access initiatives provided by the Seattle Transportation Benefit District, while merging them into funding for the wider regional system.

Thank you for the work you and your colleagues are doing to ensure that we can continue to keep people throughout Seattle moving during this difficult time. We look forward to the opportunity to work with you to broaden this effort by developing a countywide funding measure in the coming years that will help our region recover from the pandemic and ensure that people throughout the county have equitable and affordable access to transit.

Sincerely,



Claudia Balducci
Chair, King County Council
Chair, King County Transportation District



Dow Constantine
King County Executive



Rod Dembowski
King County Council
Chair, Mobility and Environment Committee



Jeanne Kohl-Welles
King County Council
Chair, Budget and Fiscal Management Committee



Dave Upthegrove
King County Council
Chair, Regional Transit Committee

cc: Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan
Seattle City Councilmember M. Lorena Gonzalez
Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold
Seattle City Councilmember Debora Juarez
Seattle City Councilmember Andrew J. Lewis
Seattle City Councilmember Tammy J. Morales
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