



## MEMO

TO: Sound Transit Board

FROM: Ric Ilgenfritz, Executive Director of Policy, Planning and Public Affairs

DATE: June 25, 2008

SUBJECT: Second quarter public input on system expansion

On April 24, 2008, the Sound Transit Board directed staff to engage in a public conversation related to three regional system expansion options. This work continued the Board's efforts over the last four years to work closely with the region's residents in evaluating options for expanding mass transit. This memorandum and its attachments summarize the results of that input spanning April 24 through June 19. The 6,077 questionnaire responses and 4,105 written responses received during this period bring the total number of comments received since 2005 to more than 26,000.

### Methods

Sound Transit sought input at open houses around the region; via online and telephone questionnaires; and via mail and e-mail. The call for input was advertised through postcards sent to households throughout Sound Transit's district in May; print, online and television advertising; media coverage; and stakeholder outreach. The seven public open houses Sound Transit held took place in Lynnwood, Des Moines, Sumner, Seattle/Northgate, Bellevue, Tacoma and Everett. They attracted a total of 555 people.

Other recent efforts included booths at several public events that attracted more than 540 visitors. So far in 2008, Sound Transit has carried out 58 Speakers Bureau presentations on the system expansion options at regional chambers, city councils and other organizations. Street team volunteers and station agents distributed flyers with open house and public comment options at transit centers, stations and park-and-rides. Staff also used posters onboard buses and trains, A-board signs at stations and electronic message boards to promote public input.

### Overview of public input

Staff's efforts generated a substantial amount of both quantitative and qualitative public input:

#### 1. Quantitative Input

EMC Research implemented a questionnaire on system expansion options that people could take via the internet, and for the first time we introduced the ability to take the survey using touch-tone phones. The 6,077 responses to the questionnaires' multiple choice questions are outlined in the attached topline report and analyzed below. The results are not scientific since the participants were self-selecting people acting on their desire to participate in the public process. Unlike first quarter, Sound Transit did not do a scientific telephone survey in conjunction with the second quarter public involvement. Highlights include:

**Responses reflect a high level of public support for expanding mass transit:**

- 91% of respondents said it's extremely or somewhat urgent to expand mass transit
- 81% of respondents said it's extremely or somewhat urgent to add more light rail
- 81% say it's extremely or somewhat urgent to add more commuter rail
- 81% say it's extremely or somewhat urgent to add more express bus

**Responses reflect a high level of support for moving forward with a ballot measure in 2008:**

- 76% favor 2008 vote
- 10% favor 2010 vote
- 3% favor post-2010 vote

**Respondents were asked to express their preferences between the two new 12-year options the Board identified:**

- 24% favor the 0.4% option
- 46% favor 0.5% option
- 24% don't like either

**Respondents were asked to express their preferences out of all the options, including the 20-year plan adopted in 2007 as well as the new 12-year options:**

- 43% favor 20-year
- 31% favor 12-year
- 14% don't support either

## **2. Qualitative Input**

Sound Transit sought open-ended written comments at open houses and via mail and e-mail. The Web-based questionnaire also concluded with an open-ended question for general input. These narrative comments, some of which originated from the same respondents as questionnaire takers, totaled 4,105. All of the narrative comments from both the second quarter and first quarter are available for your review via the enclosed CD-ROM discs, organized by subarea for your convenience.

These responses underwent qualitative analysis to highlight major themes which are summarized in the attached document. Major themes include:

- “Expedite” and “urgency” were observed key themes. A majority of all narrative comments express frustration at perceived lack of forward progress, want to see results and additional services implemented in real time, and/or say that implementing transit expansion is a personal priority.
- Expanding light rail around the region remains a priority for respondents.
- Fuel costs have spurred recognition that buses and commuter trains are more crowded, and perhaps additional options for transit are needed.
- Many regional commenters express their opinions about their commutes today and rising congestion. They provided input on the needs and gaps they perceive.
- Support for expanded commuter rail is strong. Many people express a fondness for Sounder service, and would like to see service increases. Some reflect upon parking premiums in the south corridor to accommodate these additional trains, but in general support expanded service.

**Sources of public comments**

Web questionnaire answers, comments from public meetings and email submissions were received from throughout the Puget Sound region. Comments originated in the following areas:

- 29% North King County (1,831)
- 20% East King County (1,277)
- 16% Pierce County (1,029)
- 10% South King County (635)
- 8% Snohomish County (516)
- 17% Other/Unknown (1,115), either because zip code provided is outside Sound Transit district, or no information was given.

Staff looks forward to presenting this public input to you at your June 26 meeting. If you have any questions either before or after that presentation, please feel free to contact me or Geoff Patrick.