# King County Bridges and Roads Task Force

# Meeting Summary

Meeting #1

August 12, 2015, 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Mercer Island Community and Event Center

## **Welcome**

Bob Wheeler (facilitator) called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m., and the King County Bridges and Roads Task Force (Task Force) did a round of introductions. The facilitator also briefly reviewed the agenda. The Task Force then heard opening remarks from Harold Taniguchi, Director of King County Department of Transportation, and Kathy Lambert, King County Councilmember.

Mr. Taniguchi gave brief remarks on the state of bridges and roads in King County noting that County bridges and roads needs are not being met and that the Task Force has been convened to address this. He thanked Task Force members for contributing their time to this effort. He also thanked King County Executive Dow Constantine for convening the Task Force and Councilmember Kathy Lambert for her commitment to this issue. He looks forward to hearing all Task Force members’ perspectives.

Councilmember Kathy Lambert spoke about her passion for County residents and the bridges and roads that serve them. King County has a smaller percentage of residents living in unincorporated areas than most counties. This small percentage of County residents forms the tax base for funding unincorporated bridges and roads even though a high percentage of people in incorporated areas use them. Annexations have had a large role in this. Kathy also wanted the Task Force to be aware of a 1994 King County roads financing report which predicted that an increasingly small share of County residents would be responsible for funding unincorporated County roads and it outlined solutions for addressing this situation.

## **Task Force Introductions**

Task Force members shared individual experiences they bring to this Task Force, their hopes and concerns for this process, and other ideas they wished to share. The list below reflects individual concerns and ideas shared by Task Force members:

* The Task Force charge is quite broad.
* Most people do not realize how much important infrastructure is in unincorporated areas and incorporations have led to fewer people supporting this infrastructure. Also, the motor vehicle excise tax rollback had a large impact on roads funding. All cities in King County used to contribute a portion of their excise tax to the County roads fund. King County needs a taxpayer-accepted plan and strategy for finding stable funding sources, to which all County residents contribute, to maintain existing infrastructure. Otherwise, bridges and roads will be shut down.
* There are limited local options for financing the King County road system. This local concern should be elevated to finding a state-level solution. That should be the focus of the Task Force.
* Since the State transportation package was passed, it is incumbent on all Task Force members, regardless of party interest, to keep the ball rolling and to determine what is fair and necessary to meet roads funding needs.
* The Task Force could consider the unique bridges and roads needs of emergency responders. It should also come up with data-based, long-term recommendations to help King County dig out of its bridges and roads funding hole.
* From a suburban cities perspective it is important to address problems in rural areas and to also address the long-term financial sustainability of bridges and roads. The Task Force should look at how King County ended up with this funding gap and how to learn from and grow past it.
* The State transportation package could have better supported roads preservation and maintenance for local governments. The Task Force could build a common level of understanding about why maintenance investments are important and identify new revenue streams for maintenance.
* Annexations have led to decreased King County funding. The State transportation package did not sufficiently support county-level bridges and roads. The Task Force could consider sustainable funding structures and a have a willingness to move forward on state-level solutions.
* King County should have the most functional transportation system possible. Residents care little about political boundaries so the Task Force could consider this effort from a regional perspective and find solutions with regional benefits.
* The Task Force could consider a paradigm shift in thinking about bridges and roads funding, and it might consider some offbeat ideas. It could also consider the real needs of unincorporated areas – particularly areas where tourists and visitors to the County might form first impressions.
* Rural areas have a lack of infrastructure and also suffer from apps that send drivers through rural residential neighborhoods rather than main arterials. Many rural problems are due to a lack of roads maintenance funding. This is a regional problem and will take a regional solution.
* Find practical solutions, consider what is necessary for building roads, and create new inter-jurisdictional partnerships. The Task Force should look at technical County standards around new road construction and potentially tap into private resources.
* The Task Force should hear from and consider the concerns of bridges and roads construction workers and understand that such workers could be mobilized around solutions for more revenue.
* The Task Force should come up with robust solutions to fix roads maintenance issues now because roads are falling apart. It should consider the needs of businesses that rely on rural roads.
* Consider how to move forward from the State transportation package and consider roads maintenance as an investment.
* Poorly maintained lower-tier roads and access following storms are a concern to emergency services providers. The Task Force should lobby for robust solutions.
* The Task Force should come up with both a local and legislative strategy. It should also consider the impact of the Growth Management Act and identify creative solutions from other areas.
* King County has an unincorporated roads crisis. For comparison, Kitsap County has as many residents as those residing in King County’s unincorporated area, however Kitsap County benefits from having an unincorporated urban center that helps fund roads County-wide. The Task Force should look at the burden of services and the tax base – the latter of which is limited in unincorporated King County. Washington State’s model for County roads funding is a challenge. For comparison, Arizona requires city residents pay for County services. King County is the canary in the coal mine and hopefully the Task Force can come up with creative solutions.
* The Task Force should consider the needs of service delivery as well as snow, ice, and storm debris removal. People in unincorporated areas are often isolated after storms. Service delivery matters to rural residents and urban residents alike, but city residents do not always understand how commerce moves in rural roads.
* Large state transportation projects have left people distrustful of transit projects overall. If King County wants to address its funding problem it must differentiate itself from difficult or mismanaged transportation projects in the County that are not County projects. Public outreach and messaging will be essential to the Task Force.

The following additional comments were added by Task Force members:

* It seems King County Road Services Division (RSD) can only do the bare minimum maintenance and has with very limited resources. Will the Task Force actually develop a plan for addressing this?
  + The facilitator noted the first step of this process is to bring Task Force members up to a common level of understanding on the issues. All options are on the table and the Task Force can discuss the advantages or disadvantages of each.
* What is Triangle Associates’ role in this process?
  + The facilitator conveyed that Triangle’s role is to be a neutral third-party and to ensure that all ideas are heard on the Task Force. The facilitator will also ask for Task Force members to elaborate on their ideas. Triangle may also talk to some Task Force members between meetings for additional input. Triangle’s charge is to ensure the Task Force comes up with recommendations in the first five meetings.

Note: A number of questions were asked by Task Force members during this meeting. These questions will be answered in writing separately.

## **Presentation of Pre-Meeting Task Force Interviews**

The facilitator presented a summary of the 18 Task Force member interviews conducted by Triangle. Common themes among the interviewees included:

* An emphasis and focus on revenue sources
* Reducing infrastructure responsibilities
* Additional efficiencies
* Fairness and equity of impacts
* Collaboration and involvement from other jurisdictions
* Education and information-sharing for the public

Task Force members also shared desired information, specific issues to explore, potential concerns, and desired Task Force outcomes.

There were no questions from Task Force members about the interview summary.

## **Review of Task Force Operating Protocols**

The Task Force reviewed the group operating protocols, which included a group charge and charter, as well as definitions of roles and the consensus decision making process. The Task Force accepted them with one word change to the Task Force charge.

The Task Force Charge now reads, *“Recommend financially sustainable and equitable strategies to deliver an unincorporated road system that supports people’s transportation needs, regional and local economic development, and quality of life.”*

## **Break**

During the break a Task Force group photo was taken.

## **Presentation – Bridges and Roads 101**

Brenda Bauer, King County Road Services Division (RSD) Director, presented the responsibilities, assets, and challenges of King County Roads. RSD manages 1,486 miles of the approximately 7,000 miles of road in King County. For scale, it is 1,200 miles from the Mexican border to the Canadian border. King County RSD assets include roads, bridges, and related infrastructure (drainage ditches and pipe, guardrail, traffic signs, traffic signals, and cameras). Roads also function as right of ways for cost-effectively delivering utilities to customers. Roads are used by the 250,000 residents of unincorporated King County, the 1.75 million residents of incorporated King County, as well as residents of other counties who commute into King County. In addition to operating, maintaining, and replacing roads and bridges, King County also provides specialized staff and services to small cities, such as engineers and a materials lab.

The King County Strategic Plan for Road Services estimates the costs to manage risk, to moderate the decline of the system, to fully maintain the system using best life cycle cost principles, and for improved mobility and capacity. The County has hired an outside consultant, BERK, Inc., to validate the methodologies used to develop the estimates. BERK is updating estimates for 2015 costs and comparing King County’s approach and costs to other regional agencies. BERK will be presenting its findings in an upcoming meeting, but its preliminary conclusions are that the assumptions used to determine need versus revenue are valid.

The latest revenue projections show a modest increase, which may be in the $10-$20 million range. However, when the gap is in the hundreds of millions of dollars, depending on the choice of service levels, there are real consequences to the condition and operation of the road system. Consequences of this include significant staff reductions, snow plowing reductions, higher long-term road costs due to deferred maintenance, closed roads and bridges, road collapse, and landslides.

## **Task Force Discussion on Issues Identified in the Presentation**

The Task Force was asked to consider the following questions as it listened to the presentation:

* What did you hear that you believe is critical for the Task Force to consider in its deliberations?
* What initial approaches do you think merit consideration by the Task Force?

Task Force members asked a number of questions based on King County’s presentation. Some questions were answered in the meeting, some are the topic of upcoming presentations, and the remaining questions are answered in the Q & A materials attached.

Other ideas mentioned for Task Force consideration:

1. Citizen outreach and information sharing.
2. Stormwater utility taking over more work from RSD.
3. Road jurisdiction transfers.
4. Plan for addressing orphaned roads.
5. Rethink the statewide bonding formula around annexed roads.
6. Changes to the road tier system.

## **Work Plan: Approach and Schedule**

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, September 16, at the King Street Center 8th Floor Conference Center, 201 S. Jackson St., in Downtown Seattle. The Task Force will continue receiving information, with a presentation from Dwight Dively with King County who will present on bridges and roads funding and expenditures and with further discussion and review of bridges and roads funding issues. RSD will present information on actions they have already taken in an effort to decrease their costs.

Subsequent Task Force meetings will take place on October 14, October 28, November 12, and January 20. All of these meetings will be from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m. It is the intention at this time for meetings to take place at the Mercer Island Community and Event Center, with the exception of the September 16th meeting.

## **Public Comments**

The following public comment was given by a resident from Skyway in unincorporated King County:

*Skyway is at the nexus of three council districts. If the last task force was 20 years ago, for those twenty years, the funding has not worked for local roads. Skyway has contributed in excess of $30 million in the last ten years to the County and very little has been reinvested within the Skyway area. He lives in the future annexation area of the City of Renton. The fact that Skyway is going to be annexed eventually has been used as an excuse to not invest more. He hopes the Task Force will examine the needs of local communities during its work.*

## **Assignments and Next Steps**

Questions about assignments and next steps:

* *Who is the Task Force report author?*  Triangle will have an ongoing report that Triangle will put together throughout the coming months.
* *Will Task Force member contact information be made available?* Yes, and Triangle will share a phone directory with all Task Force members.
* *Where will meeting materials be stored?* Meeting materials are online at the Task Force website, <http://kingcounty.gov/depts/transportation/roads/roads-task-force.aspx>. Relevant meeting materials will also be emailed to Task Force members in advance of meetings.

## **August 12 Task Force Meeting Action Items**

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| Group | Action | Due Date |
| King County | Post the “Keeping Communities Connected” PowerPoint to the Task Force web page. | ASAP |
| Triangle | Send the phone directory to the Task Force and let the Task Force know about any email communication restrictions. | ASAP |
| King County | Answer questions posed in today’s Task Force Discussion. | September 16  Task Force Meeting |

## **Attachment 1: Task Force Meeting Attendees**

**Task Force Members**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Affiliation** | **Attended?** |
| Van Anderson | King County Boundary Review Board | Yes |
| John Bloomer | Enumclaw Fire Department/King County Fire District #28 | Yes |
| Josh Brown | Puget Sound Regional Council | Yes |
| Peter Eberle | Four Creeks Unincorporated Area Council | Yes |
| Joe Fain | Washington State Legislature—47th District | No (proxy) |
| Ashley Glennon | Fall City Community Association | Yes |
| Michael Gonzales | Teamsters Local 174 | Yes |
| Bob Harrison | City of Issaquah | Yes |
| George Irwin | King County Agricultural Commission | Yes |
| Janet Keller | Keller Dairy | Yes |
| Duana Kolou**š**ková | Transportation Concurrency Expert Review Panel | Yes |
| Andra Kranzler | Skyway Solutions | Yes |
| Matt Larson | City of Snoqualmie | No |
| Hank Lipe | Vashon Island Fire & Rescue | Yes |
| Cecilia Mena | Professional & Technical Employees Local 117 | Yes |
| Louise Miller | Former King County Councilmember and State Representative | Yes |
| Louis Moscoso | Washington State Legislative—1st Legislative District | Yes |
| Amy Ockerlander | City of Duvall | Yes |
| Ron Paananen | Parsons Brinckerhoff | Yes |
| Blake Trask | Washington Bikes | Yes |
| Noah Ullman | Executive Assistant to Senator Fain (proxy) | Yes |
| Bryce Yadon | Futurewise | Yes |

**Meeting Organizers**

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| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Affiliation** |
| Brenda Bauer | Road Services Division, King County |
| Jay Osborne | Road Services Division, King County |
| Susan West | Road Services Division, King County |
| Bob Wheeler | Triangle Associates |
| Evan Lewis | Triangle Associates |
| Rachel Aronson | Triangle Associates |

**Other Meeting Attendees**

| **Name** | **Affiliation** |
| --- | --- |
| Alan Painter | King County CSA |
| April Sanders | King County Council Staff |
| Bill Greene | King County Road Services Division |
| Brad Clark | King County DPER |
| Chris Arkills | King County Executive Office |
| Harold Taniguchi | King County Department of Transportation |
| Ivan Miller | King County PSB |
| Jenna Kaluza | Oakpointe Communities |
| John Resha | King County Council Staff |
| Kathy Lambert | King County Council |
| Katie Kuciemba | Sound Cities Association |
| Lauren Smith | King County PSB |
| Lise Kaye | King County Council Staff |
| Mark Johnston | Skyway resident |
| Ruth Harvey | King County Roads |
| Shelley Davis | King County PSB |
| Tricia Davis | King County DNRP |