

August 27, 2008

Mr. Bob Drewel, Executive Director
Puget Sound Regional Council
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, Washington 98104-1035

Subject: Tolling on Lake Washington Bridges

Dear Mr. Drewel:

Thank you for facilitating the City of Newcastle's involvement in the SR-520 tolling discussion. We appreciated Charlie Howard's briefing to our City Council on August 5, 2008.

While the City Council has not yet established an official position or statement on this important regional issue, our conversation on the topic included several interests and concerns that we want to share with you.

- First, we see the tolling issue as one of high significance to the Newcastle community because many of our residents use the floating bridge(s) regularly if not daily for employment commuting and social destinations. Accordingly, we must be actively involved in the evaluation and decision-making processes.
- Second, we appreciate the complexities of the financial analyses and the myriad variables that go into them. We understand that many factors are still unknown or are in flux. Yet, one or more of the analyses showed revenues in excess of need. We see a high value in continuing to recalculate the analyses until the expected toll revenue over time is as close to total expected costs as reason and facts allow. We anticipate it will be difficult for the public to support a toll scenario that is projected from the outset to generate a surplus.
- Third, we advocate for continued analysis of the options of tolling only SR-520 versus both bridges. Prima facie, it seems logical that tolling only SR-520 would yield greater use of and congestion on the I-90 corridor (and likely the I-405 corridor) than the models show at this time. Were greater congestion on one or both of these corridors to occur as a result of tolling only one bridge, the quality of life of our residents would suffer disproportionately to the benefit of the new bridge.

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- Finally, if tolling must be a part of the SR-520 funding strategy, then (without taking a position on early tolling at this time) we ask that the tolling scenarios that are examined in greater depth cover the SR-520 costs at the least expense to users over the shortest possible timeframe.

We look forward to the continuation of this process, and would greatly appreciate maintaining ongoing involvement in the discussion.

Very Truly Yours,



Ben Varon
Mayor, City of Newcastle

c.c.: Deputy Mayor Hubbell and City Councilors
The Honorable Representative Judy Clibborn
The Honorable Representative Fred Jarrett
Mike Doubleday, Doubleday Government Relations
John Starbard, Newcastle City Manager
Maiya Andrews, Newcastle Director of Public Works
Bob Baker, Newcastle City Clerk