

PROVIDED BY GARY PLANO AT
THE 9/8/08 COUNCIL MTG



Mercer Island School District #400

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Gary S. Plano, Ed. D.
Superintendent

Debbie Southards
Executive Assistant

September 8, 2008

Honorable Jim Pearman, Mayor
Mercer Island City Council
9611 SE 36th Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040

RE: Public Comment on Proposed Tolling on I-90

Dear Mayor Pearman and members of the City Council:

On behalf of over 435 employees of the Mercer Island School District who may be impacted financially under the 520 Tolling Commission's currently proposed tolling scenarios, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you this evening.

The Mercer Island School District employs the best and brightest in the workforce in Washington State. While nearly one-third of our employees are Island residents, over two-thirds of our employees live off Island and would be impacted by the tolling scenarios. For example under the Department of Transportation's Scenario Number 3, an employee would pay \$5.85 per day (this is, \$2.60 in the morning and \$3.25 in the late afternoon) to travel to and from his/her place of employment. On an annual basis, the financial impact to a 183-day employee to travel to and from work would be \$1,071 and to those employees who work year-round, the financial impact would be over \$1,500.

If the I-90 Bridge is tolled, especially in both directions, it means that our employees do not have another route available for their commute to work and are subject to extra fees. This hardship will certainly impact our ability to attract the best and brightest teachers and support staff to continue to deliver the high quality educational programs many on the Island deserve and expect.

Due to these unique circumstances, I support the Mercer Island City Council's Resolution being proposed tonight, which includes:

- **No tolls on I-90:** *Tolls must not be imposed on travel to and from Mercer Island on I-90, which provides the only means of public access to/from the Island.*
- **One toll-free segment:** *Tolling at a single location would provide the tolling ingress and egress from at least one direction. If and when tolling I-90 across Lake Washington is considered, at least one route to and from Mercer Island must remain un-tolled.*

I thank you for the opportunity to weigh in on these important issues on behalf of the Mercer Island School Board and the employees of the Mercer Island School District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary S. Plano".

Gary Plano, Ed.D.
Superintendent

MISSION

Mercer Island School District, in partnership with the community, commits to providing that all students will be prepared to thrive in life; progress academically, intellectually and personally; graduate prepared to compete and succeed in post-secondary education and work; and be inspired to contribute to society.

Capital Facilities Review

As part of a comprehensive master planning effort, the Superintendent has directed that a complete assessment of the District's facilities be reviewed in order to ensure that teaching and learning spaces support the District's educational plan and vision for 21st Century learners. A comprehensive master planning effort will include: North Mercer Campus, Administration, Transportation and Maintenance Centers, Mercer Island High School Campus, Islander Middle School Campus, the campuses of Island Park, Lakeridge and West Mercer Elementary Schools, and the Recycling Center in downtown Mercer Island. A Capital Facilities Advisory Committee has been named to include both District and City staff as well as parents and community representatives. The Superintendent will present a set of recommendations to address the findings of this comprehensive study no later than June 30, 2009.

Title IX and Field Use

On March 13, 2008, the Education Equity Group presented an athletic equity evaluation report to the Board of Directors pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and Washington State gender laws. A new Title IX Officer was named by the Superintendent in the spring of 2008, and a Title IX Steering Committee, comprised of students, staff and parents, convened last spring and continues to provide oversight and guidance to District staff. Additionally, Jeff Lowell will assist the Athletic Director in the implementation of new policies and procedures as well as the scheduling of ball fields and facility use by community-based groups.

Technology

Thanks to our community support of our public schools, the District will be receiving over \$6.4 million dollars from the capital levy over the next four years. Interactive white boards will be installed in nearly 50% of the classrooms by 2012. All of the classrooms will get document cameras and LCD projectors. Network infrastructure upgrades includes increased bandwidth in order to utilize resources such as streaming video currently unavailable with the current network. Two teachers on special assignment have been hired this school year to coach teachers on the integration of technology and to develop core lessons to be used throughout a content area and/or grade level. This major investment of infrastructure aligns with the District's new 2020 Vision: *Successfully Preparing Students for the Cognitive, Digital and Global World.*

Bond Refinancing

After consultation with the District's bond underwriter, the School Board approved the refunding (refinancing) of a portion of the District's outstanding voted debt. Bond market conditions in late August and early September placed refunding \$3,205,000 of the 1997 bonds and \$5,370,000 of the 1998 bonds in a favorable economic position to obtain significant savings.

The savings produced by refunding the 1997 and 1998 bonds will directly benefit the District's taxpayers in the form of a lower property tax burden. The savings cannot be used for District purposes. The bond refinancing produced a total of approximately \$550,000 over the next six years.

Letter to Mercer Island City Council

September 30, 2008

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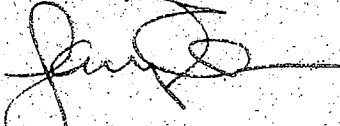
I-90 Tolling

As a major employer on Mercer Island, our Superintendent provided the City Council with information about potential impacts tolling might have if the I-90 Bridge is tolled. Approximately 53% of our employees commute eastbound and 47% use the westbound lanes of I-90. Additionally, many school programs travel westbound for athletics and activities; school budgets will be negatively impacted due to the additional costs that tolling would require. As stated earlier to the City Council, tolling I-90 will certainly impact our ability to attract the best and brightest teachers and support staff in order to continue to deliver the high quality educational programs many on the Island expect and deserve.

Over nearly two decades, the City of Mercer Island and the Mercer Island School District have demonstrated that a successful partnership meets the needs of its residents. While we believe the Inter-local Agreement has served us well over the years, it's time the City Council and School Board reexamine ways we can work together to achieve great things for the residents of the Island; perhaps a joint meeting of both elected bodies is due. If you have questions or additional topics you would like discussed, please forward those suggestions to City Manager, Rich Conrad, who will work with the Superintendent on gathering that information for you.

We look forward to enhancing that partnership in a manner that meets the 21st Century needs of our children.

Sincerely,



Gary Plano, Ed. D.
Superintendent



Patricia Braman
Mercer Island School Board of Directors, President

