



# Mercer Island School District #400

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Gary S. Plano, Ed. D.  
Superintendent

Debbie Southards  
Executive Assistant

November 26, 2008

Bob Drewel, Chair  
520 Tolling Implementation Committee  
c/o Puget Sound Regional Council  
1101 Western Avenue, Suite 500  
Seattle, WA. 98104-103

Dear 520 Tolling Implementation Committee Members:

On behalf of over 435 employees of the Mercer Island School District who will be impacted financially under the 520 Tolling Commission's currently proposed tolling scenarios, I am taking this opportunity to speak for them on this very important issue.

The Mercer Island School District employs the best and brightest of 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.

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. Here are just a few highlighted examples:

- MISD school buses that take students to various off-island school related events ---- the Marching Band, music competitions, JV and Varsity sports teams (e.g., the high school cross-country team that likely takes three buses to meets due to the number of team members, football, soccer and basketball teams, swimming, water polo, gymnastics, volleyball, and tennis teams that travel off-island for their games/meets) will all result in increased costs to families and to the school district. Tolling will also impact elementary schools, the middle school and high school cultural events too.
- Our buses are repaired off-island and those additional tolling costs will negatively impact our budget. The fuel we use in our vehicles arrives via I-90, as well as all of the books, teaching materials used at our schools, the school cafeteria milk, food, and drinks. All of our deliveries come via I-90 and would be tolled.

## 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.*

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- There will certainly be a negative impact on teachers/staff who come back to the island (another round-trip on I-90) to participate in late afternoon and/or evening school activities such as sports teams coaches, leaders of musical programs and productions (the Marching Band, Symphony, Wind Ensemble, Jazz Band, Choir, etc.) and other performing arts (plays, musicals, Steel Drum Band), not to mention teachers/staff involved in leading the school newspaper, debate teams, chess teams, school clubs, community service for students, tutoring, curriculum nights, fund-raising events, parent-teacher conferences, school festivals, PTA involvement, etc.

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. 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 Plano". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "P".

Gary Plano, Ed.D.  
Superintendent