

Statement of John Niles, Co-chair, CETA
Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives

To the Puget Sound Regional Council General Assembly, May 20, 2010
About the Transportation 2040 Plan, agenda item 7b.

CETA, Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives, is a volunteer organization that supports transit. We support investments that bring the biggest ridership gains per dollar along with regional coverage and service levels providing citizens in urban centers with alternatives to driving alone. Since CETA began in 2002 we have also supported transportation pricing, such as road use fees that are higher at congested times on the busiest highways.

On the Transportation 2040 Plan, while we have further analysis underway to extract and highlight important implications, we today want to call out the following point of interest: PSRC's professional, computer-based forecast of public transit bus and train ridership in the 2040 preferred alternative¹ is 881,500 daily, split between 717,100 bus-only trips and 164,400 rail trips per day, meaning those involving one or more rail boardings. These rail trips represent less than 1% of the 2040 forecast of 19 million total trips per day, including cars, bikes, transit, and walking.ⁱ Transit's market share goes from 3% in 2006 to only 5% in 2040.

While it's remarkable that only 164 thousand train trips per day would come from a \$40 billion Sound Transit investment over 30 years, more amazing is this: The PSRC rail ridership forecast for 2040 is a 47% reduction from the Sound Transit forecast of 310,000ⁱⁱ riders per day in 2030 that was a claim in the Sound Transit phase 2 "Mass Transit Now" campaign mailer sent at government expense to every household in the taxing district.

Said another way, forecasts of light rail's contribution to mobility are sinking rather than growing with the passage of time.

Rail boardings in PSRC's 2040 Plan encompass both light rail and commuter rail from Sound Transit, phases one, two, and the still unfunded phase three taking light rail out to terminal stations in Everett, Tacoma, and Redmond. The higher forecast for 2030 put out by Sound Transit to win its tax election was based on less track and fewer train stations than PSRC used in reaching its lower 2040 forecast.

The PSRC 2040 Plan also shows that the productivity of rail investment is very low compared to the bus expansion in the Plan. For example, according to our calculations using the PSRC investment figures, each new daily train rider beyond the baseline costs \$573,000, but each additional bus rider costs much less, \$109,000. There have been other studies that show we can attract more transit riders with buses for less money than we can with trains. Now you have more numbers in the PSRC Transportation 2040 Plan to prove that.

USDOT Federal Transit Administrator Peter Rogoff gave a speech in Boston on

¹ Under the preferred, financially constrained alternative for 2040 regional transportation development described in the PSRC 2040 Plan.

Tuesday May 18 in which he noted the high cost of train networks compared to bus improvement, and said, "Might it make more sense for us to put down the glossy brochures, roll up our sleeves, and target our resources on repairing the system we have?"

The 2040 Metropolitan Transportation Plan of PSRC illustrates FTA Administrator Rogoff's point of view extremely well. We urge the Regional Council members to get a clear picture from PSRC Staff regarding real performance measures for the transportation investments consistent with the goals of our Region.

We recommend starting with these questions:

1. Compared to the most recent year, complete with cutbacks, how many additional hours of transit service are projected for the Region under the 2040 Plan, yielding how many new riders?
2. What are the operating costs and capital costs per new rider by mode?
3. What are the residential and employment densities our urban centers will have to adopt to make this plan work?
4. What laws will the State legislature and U.S. Congress have to change to allow for the level of road pricing called out in the Plan?
5. How many more households will be brought within 30 minutes of job centers by transit compared to now?
6. What are the level-of-service impacts to municipal streets and corridors?

Given the future scenario that the 2040 Plan presents – with Sound Transit Phase 2 and 3 completion, achievement of density targets, a doubling of bus service – is this really the best we can plan to do?

The public deserves to see, for their \$189 billion investment, clear performance measures, tracked over time, in one place, to determine whether or not past, current and future investments are bringing about sustainable growth. To not provide this puts public funding and programs at risk in the future.

Thank you, and call or write if any questions.

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ⁱ PSRC Transportation 2040 trip forecasts are in [Exhibit 4-29 in Transportation 2040 Final EIS](#). PSRC staff tells CETA that the Exhibit is mislabeled; it should say "trips," not "boardings."

ⁱⁱ The Sound Transit 2030 ridership forecasts are in the ["Mass Transit Guide: The Sound Transit 2 Plan," 2030 ridership table on page 5](#), issued October 2008.