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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, DC 20515-6015

June 11, 2002

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The Honorable Kenneth Mead
Inspector General
Department of Transportation
400 Seventh Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Mead:

Last year, your office reviewed the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (Sound Transit) plans to construct the Central Link light rail project in two segments. The first segment received a \$500 million full funding grant agreement (FFGA) on January 19, 2001. Based on significant cost and schedule changes and your review of the project, the Secretary of Transportation decided to hold funding for this project in abeyance until a number of financial and timing issues have been resolved and Congress has had time to adequately review a revised grant agreement.

Since that decision, the project has been revised significantly. Now Sound Transit is pursuing a 14-mile segment south of Seattle towards the airport that will serve substantially fewer riders and will cost just less than the original 21-mile project. Sound Transit recently completed an environmental assessment of this 14-mile segment and, just last month, a record of decision was completed on this project. The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) estimates that this project will request approval to enter into final design shortly, with the hopes of securing a revised FFGA later this year.

I am writing to request that you re-open your review of the Sound Transit's light rail project once FTA approves the new segment into final design. Your office should:

- Make sure that Sound Transit and FTA have adequately addressed all the concerns and recommendations included in your April 2001 report prior to the issuance of an amended FFGA for the current 14-mile light rail segment.
- Review the estimated costs of the revised project and determine the associated risks to the cost estimate.

- Review the proposed funding for the project, potential funding risks, and the impacts on other regional transportation programs (i.e. what assurances are there that funding commitments will remain intact given the revised alignment).
- Review the proposed project schedule and determine the risks associated with meeting this schedule.
- Review the safety issue of running buses and trains in the downtown bus tunnel.
- Assess whether or not this 14-mile segment can operate as a stand along system or if additional segments are required. If additional segments are required, must construction of two segments occur concurrently?

The results of your review should be completed prior to submitting a revised FFGA to Congress for review.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Stephanie Gupta of my Subcommittee staff on (202) 225-2141. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Harold Rogers
Chairman
Subcommittee on Transportation
and Related Agencies