

RTA Workshop
December 3, 1993

Members Present:

Bruce Laing, Chair; King County Councilmember
Bill Brubaker, Vice-Chair; Snohomish County Councilmember
Bill Stoner, Vice-Chair; Pierce County Councilmember

King County

Martha Choe, Seattle Councilmember
Don Davidson, Bellevue Councilmember
Mary Gates, Federal Way Councilmember
Audrey Gruger, King County Councilmember
Greg Nickels, King County Councilmember
Norm Rice, Mayor, City of Seattle
Cynthia Sullivan, King County Councilmember

Pierce County

Ken Madsen, Pierce County Councilmember
Paul Miller, Tacoma Councilmember

Snohomish County

Dave Earling

Washington State Department of Transportation

Sid Morrison, Secretary

Mr. Kalberer began by referring to the synopsis of work done by the JRPC, contained in a salmon-colored report.

Mr. Laing said I was asked whether this information is available to the public and if so, where? Mr. Kalberer said these documents can be found on the 15th floor of the Exchange Building. There may be some charge for copying of the documents, he noted.

Mr. Laing said I thought this would be an impressive stack of materials. Mr. Kalberer said these documents are present today and can be displayed.

Mr. Aubrey Davis provided the findings of the Expert Review Panel. (A written document is on file.)

Mr. Brubaker asked is the ERP suggesting an alternative financing plan? Mr. Davis said this is not the role of the panel; however, some of us have some ideas we will be talking to the RTA about.

Mr. Davidson asked did the ERP agree that the timing of the construction and putting into

service of the plan was realistic? Mr. Davis said yes. Since the ERP's work has been accepted, he said, the FTA seems to be relying on this kind of process in the future instead of staff oversight. Portland went through this same process, he said; the panel needs to be independent of the operating agencies so they can be objective.

Mr. Laing said the JRPC's system plan did not have a completed financing plan. Will the ERP continue to be of assistance in the review of that plan?, he asked. Mr. Davis said this would be possible.

Mr. Earling asked if, in the modeling for the TSM alternative, commuter rail in both the north and south were included. Mr. Davis said we looked at the south corridor only. The north came in later and we have not looked at it, he stated. The ERP could be asked to look at this, he noted.

Mr. Davidson asked did the ERP look at any alternative that took commuter rail outside the Seattle corridor? Mr. Davis said no.

Mr. Laing said there is a list of potential policy questions for each of the subjects. These are intended to be tools that individual board members may wish to use, he noted. The most important thing is to identify issues we think should be addressed in our work program, he noted.

Mr. Kalberer gave a review of the system plan and financial plan.

Ms. Sullivan said when you take the capital and operating/maintenance costs over 50 years, the highway, bus and rail system costs are not equal, but they are close enough to be considered roughly equivalent. The real principal value of the HCT system are air quality improvements, reduced land consumption and preservation of lifestyle, she stated. Mr. Kalberer said we worked with the DOT to look at what the cost would be to expand the highway system to meet the same capacity supplied by the HCT rail system. We discovered the expansion of the highway system would cost \$14 to \$16 billion, he said, which is twice the cost of the rail system. We looked at plans from 1967 and 1968 and there was a \$32 to \$34 billion investment in that system.

Ms. Sullivan asked did you take all variables and compare them. Mr. Kalberer said I believe so.

Ms. Sullivan said I believe there is a PSRC analysis of those costs. Mr. Kalberer said the bus system is less expensive, and it also does less.

Mr. Nickels said this question was posed by Mr. Jarrett, and it was an "apples and oranges" comparison. Mr. Morrison's predecessor went back and looked at a rough estimate of the cost

for highways, he said, and made the following qualification: It wouldn't be possible to do this, given the community attitude. Making a head to head comparison would be risky without more analysis, he said.

Mr. Davidson asked do we need a whole system to provide the capacity improvement? Mr. Kalberer said the rail system that was proposed and the ridership projected for it by 2020 in no place used all of the capacity by 2020. The rail system by 2020 was 70% used at the Ship Canal, he noted. The capacity of the rail system is determined by capacity of the bus tunnel, he explained. The rail capacity is substantially more than we projected being used. For the use one gets in the elaboration of the rail system, less capacity is used, he stated.

Mr. Laing said one of the items for small group discussion is further elaboration on where an all bus system breaks down. This could be discussed by the small groups, he added. Mr. Kalberer said that is a good question. There are a lot of misconceptions. Building a rail system plus using buses adds capacity in Seattle, he said. If you are just looking at increasing capacity in Seattle, he continued, there are cheaper solutions. The JRPC solved that problem, he said, but it provided capacity into other areas of the region consistent with the growth management plan.

Mr. Rice said even if you don't have capacity problems, you may want to make some of those choices to have better movement on existing roadways.

Mr. Miller said my presumption is one of the factors that influences the bus versus rail question is the issue of what the public would support from a financial standpoint. They would support a rail-based system, he said. To what extent was that public support information a factor in influencing the final decisions?, he asked. Mr. Kalberer said there are many JRPC members present who could answer that question. My observation was that it did not play a dramatic role, he stated. One of the conclusions is that the public, by 10%, supported spending twice as much on a bus/rail system over a rail only system, he continued. I am skeptical of such polls, he said, and even with that, I do not personally believe it was a major factor in the decision.

Ms. Choe said this was a factor in dramatically increasing TSM funding. There was unanimous support for the TSM and similar connections. That was why we chose to go above what we spent in TSM, she said. In our minds it wasn't a substitute for the rail but it was in addition to the rail, she stated.

Mr. Eric Gleason gave a presentation on the bus proposals.

Mr. Paul Matsuoka gave a presentation on the rail proposals.

A break was taken at this time.

Mr. Kalberer gave a presentation on the financial scenarios.

Mr. Davidson said Mr. Kalberer indicated this is a federal corridor; are you considering that one-third of the funding would be federal? Mr. Kalberer said yes.

Mr. Miller said the earlier financial layout showed zero funds for right of way/HOV lanes. Would this be funded entirely by the state?, he asked. Mr. Kalberer said that is the assumption.

Mr. Nickels asked wouldn't the Governor's proposal have a larger slice for the state portion? Mr. Kalberer said the 1.5% assumes what you could do with .5% with no federal financing. The only way you could catch back up would be with some significant state contribution. The relationship between one-tenth of one percent is about \$27 million, he said, which is a penny on the gas tax statewide. The big difference is that our .10% is inflating much faster than one cent per gallon on the gas tax, he continued. We have to be alert as to whether or not the mechanism used by the state for replacement of the sales tax inflated at a reasonable rate, he said, or accept a slower construction schedule.

Mr. Laing raised the issue of equity. I have forgotten how precise the system plan is in addressing equity. I am trying to fit that in, he added. It puts it in term of revenues generated with a county portion of the service area compared to the expenditures being made in system facilities in that area, he said. Mr. Kalberer said state law requires we look at equity questions. This relates to revenue as raised and expenditures made within corridors. The JRPC plan includes a great deal of discussion of equity issues. One of the decisions was of that any money raised for rail investment, 50% of that for the first five years must be spent in the county of origin, he explained. The basic notion is that given the decision to start rail in the middle of the system and work out, he continued, in the early years, 50% of the money raised in Pierce and Snohomish Counties would be transferred and used in King County. The reverse would take place later on, he added. The dilemmas were how to fit the notion of incremental decisionmaking and low tax rates with long term commitments being made to parts of the region to provide facilities at some point in time. We have struggled with this question at the JRPC level, he concluded.

Mr. Rice said some jurisdictions need the opposite; some need buses instead of rail. Mr. Kalberer said one of the things you think about is to the extent that if you decide it is not feasible to invest in a transit system exclusively with local and federal dollars and you need to have state tax dollars, we should think about the possibility that state funds raised would not necessarily all have to flow into the transit program. We might consider using these funds for roads and transit purposes, he said. We could then address equity problems in another way. Perhaps initially the decision to provide access to an industrial area is an unfunded road need, he explained. One way to achieve equity is to balance state dollars between road funds and support of the rail program. We could achieve equity from a transportation standpoint instead

of in one element, he concluded.

Mr. Laing asked, before we break, what do you want to accomplish? We have question sheets in the packets, he noted. Mr. Kalberer said we have been dealing with procedural questions about getting the RTA started. What do you think? How are we going to talk about them amongst ourselves? What is the most troublesome issue? We would like to put these subjects on the table, he said. Staff is trying to enhance the opportunity for RTA members to talk among themselves and to get on the table those issues you think need more discussion, debate and information, he stressed.

Mr. Earling said some of us have to leave at 5:00 p.m. Mr. Laing asked whether other members have time constraints.

Ms. Choe said I am very concerned that we need to engage in discussion. We should be very protective of the time set aside to talk amongst ourselves, she said. Mr. Laing said I do not disagree.

Mr. Davidson suggested the small discussion groups proceed today but voting be delayed until next Friday's meeting so members can absorb the information provided today. Ms. Gates said I support this suggestion.

Mr. Laing said it has been suggested the Board take action on December 10. We could arrange the agenda on the December 10 to continue these conversations, he said.

Mr. Madsen said I was not a member of the JRPC and I need the information provided today. I wish we would consider a process for making decisions on an issue, he stated. Mr. Laing said I would like to reiterate the purpose of the red "dots" stickers included in today's materials. We have a draft work program designed so we can make significant decisions by March, he said; the work program is intended to be enhanced and made more specific based on our feedback. The dots emphasize where there is the most consensus of issues we want included as part of the work program between now and March, he stated.

Mr. Rice said I approach this asking what are the barriers from making a maximum or minimum decision? We have to make a decision soon and it isn't going to be easy, even if it is the minimum program. I believe RTA members should understand that instead of trying to tweak it downwards, he stated.

At 4:00, the RTA broke into small discussion groups.