

Good afternoon, my name is Dave Earling. I am a Senior Fellow for Transportation and Regional Development at the Cascadia Center in Seattle. Previously, I was a City Council Member in Edmonds for twelve years, a member of the State Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation, Chair of the Sound Transit Board, Chair of the Community Transit Board, and Chair of the Transportation Policy Board at the Puget Sound Regional Council.

By virtue of my previous transportation work and the work we have done at the Cascadia Center, I have come to the conclusion that it is time to re-examine the way in which we do business for transportation in Puget Sound. It is time to examine the way in which we plan, fund and prioritize transportation needs in our region.

Having Sound Transit, the Regional Transportation Investment District, Washington State Department of Transportation, six bus companies, three counties and scores of cities, towns, and communities all competing

for the same pots of state and federal money is a perplexing problem that we must address.

The public seems to wonder, “Who is in charge?” and yet at the same time they instinctively realize the transportation problem in Puget Sound needs to be fixed.

The Cascadia Center has been involved in three projects in the past 16 months that I would like to call your attention to.

The first project we identify as the Transportation Working Group (TWG). It was formed in September of 2004 to examine the short- and long-term transportation needs for the Puget Sound Region and the state. Thirty members of the business, labor, and environmental communities were involved in an intensive four-month study chaired by Doug Beighle, former Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission. In January 2005, we presented the group’s short- and long-term recommendations to the

Legislature. We are pleased that many of our short-term recommendations were incorporated into the Transportation Partnership legislation that passed in 2005.

The TWG made several long-term recommendations, two of which are relevant to today's discussion.

The first is: "New regional resources should be a major part of the financial contribution for improving regional transportation corridors. The TWG is calling for a continuation of our efforts to consider and negotiate regional funding and long-term changes in regional government reorganization. A dialogue with state and local elected officials will be essential to achieving these needed steps."

The second is; "In considering the principles that should inform regional governance improvements, the TWG believes that ideally a consolidated regional governance structure would be responsible for regional

prioritization in the context of resource availability, for regional systems planning and regional funding, and support of the region's growth management strategies".

The second project I would like to call to your attention is a survey we participated in with the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington, the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce and the Washington Appleseed Center for Law in the Public Interest. I want to emphasize this was not a scientific poll, but a survey from the database of approximately 1,300 we had accumulated with the TWG. It should be highlighted that many of the 395 respondents were elected officials and staff members of transportation agencies across the state and region.

The questions in the survey related to how planning and funding prioritization of projects in the region is currently handled and ways in which improvements could be made.

Related to today's discussion, the questions and answers from numbers 11, 13, 14, 16, 18 and 19 might be particularly helpful. These questions in broad brush are related to perception of the region's ability to integrate and prioritize transportation needs as we ask the question: Do we know who is in charge? The survey shows that the respondents do **not** believe there is a clearly defined integrated, prioritized plan, and they do **not** believe the public knows who is in charge.

The third project is a white paper prepared by Doug Hurley, summarizing three presentations made by San Diego, Denver and Vancouver, B.C. transportation leaders regarding their regional organization and how they have accomplished successful votes on multi-billion dollar proposals. The event, sponsored by the Seattle Greater Chamber of Commerce and the Cascadia Center, was attended by over 100 leaders from across the region.

While each region is organized differently, all share the same commitment to providing an integrated transportation system seeking financing for an agreed on plan. In each case a clear single point of accountability and a well-defined prioritized plan was a requisite for success at the ballot box.

Let me be clear that I am not critical of our transportation agencies themselves. People like Doug MacDonald, Joni Earl, Bob Drewel and Shawn Bunney have made remarkable contributions to the progress of the agencies they represent. Each of those institutions has a clear mission and a legitimate need to fund that mission.

Therein lies the problem. How do we go to the public with the many competing voices, each describing why their mission is more important than the others'?

We have made great progress for our state and region with the Nickel Package and last year's Transportation Partnership Funding Package. It is now time to be thoughtful and forward-looking in how we organize the Puget Sound as we continue to solve our infrastructure challenges.