January 10, 2011

James Irish
Deputy Director
Office of Environmental Affairs and Sustainability
Sound Transit
Union Station
401 South Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: East Link SDEIS Comments

Dear Mr. Irish:

As a cooperating agency we wish to comment on the East Link Supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement (SDEIS).

We are pleased to see that Segment A of I-90 has been determined to have nationally and exceptionally significant features, and is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

We wish to comment upon a very important historical aspect of Segment A: the well established historical use of high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes by Mercer Island single-occupancy vehicles (SOV). This operational characteristic has been in place for the entire life of I-90. Originally established in a Memorandum Agreement in December, 1976 (Exhibit A), the importance of this operational characteristic was recognized in the Amendment to 1976 Memorandum Agreement, August, 2004 (Exhibit B). Extensive consultations between the City of Mercer Island and the State of Washington concluded with an agreement which was memorialized in a letter dated December 22, 2006 from the Office of the Governor and Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation to the City (Exhibit C).
The City of Mercer Island expects and believes that the conclusion reached by the State of Washington “...that when the center roadway is converted to high capacity transit, Mercer Island residents should be permitted HOV lane access until the HOV lanes are converted to high occupancy (HOT) lanes or another tolling regiment” will be fully honored.

We recognize and appreciate that this operational characteristic is unique for generalized transportation planning but we also suggest that the use of HOV lanes by Mercer Island SOVs is necessary and appropriate for this very unique and historically significant segment of I-90. The City of Mercer Island deeply appreciates the support and assistance provided by the State of Washington in our collaborative efforts to improve mobility within the region, without significant unmitigated adverse impacts to the Mercer Island community.

We would especially like to thank Sound Transit and the Washington State Department of Transportation for working diligently in partnership with us to address and seek resolution of the many issues raised in our DEIS comment letter dated February 24, 2009. We look forward to our continuing collaboration and partnership in this effort.

Sincerely,

Jim Pearman
Mayor

Enclosures

Cc: Senator Patty Murray
    Senator Maria Cantwell
    Congressman David Reichert
    Deputy Mayor El Jahncke
    Councilmember Bruce Bassett
    Councilmember Mike Cero
    Councilmember Mike Grady
    Councilmember Dan Grausz
    Rich Krochalis, Regional Administrator, FTA
    Daniel Mathis, Division Administrator, FHWA
    Pete Jilek, Urban Area Engineer, FHWA
    Elizabeth Healy, FHWA