December 22, 2006

The Honorable Bryan Cairns, Mayor
City of Mercer Island
9611 SE 36th Street
Mercer Island, WA 98040

Dear Mayor Cairns:

Thank you for your letter of November 13 concerning access for single occupancy vehicles from Mercer Island to the HOV lane on I-90 after conversion of the center roadway to high capacity transit.

The Governor's Office and the Washington State Department of Transportation intend to honor our understanding of the agreement reached by the signatories regarding Mercer Island access to HOV lanes. We have concluded 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 toll (HOT) lanes or another tolling regimen. It is important to emphasize that we do not know how long the lanes would operate as HOV lanes, and it is possible that those lanes may be operated as tolled lanes from the time of or even before the conversion of the center roadway occurs.

We would also note that other issues apart from Mercer Island considerations are involved in HOV lane access for Mercer Island. An equitable outcome must take into account the reasonable expectations of all the users of the corridor, including users of transit and other high occupancy vehicles who must be assured that the lane meets performance standards. In addition, the access and mobility opportunities provided for Mercer Island residents include new high capacity transit uses of the corridor as well as the private passenger vehicle uses.

Thank you again for your letter. Please let us know if you have additional questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Tom Fitzsimmons, Chief of Staff
Office of the Governor

Doug MacDonald, Secretary
Washington State Department of Transportation