July 15, 2003

Sound Transit Board of Directors
401 S Jackson Street
Seattle, WA 98104

Washington State Transportation Commission
PO Box 47308
Olympia, WA 98504-7308

Dear Members of the Sound Transit Board and Washington State Transportation Commission:

I am writing to communicate our recommendation for selection of the R8-A alternative for the I-90 2-way Transit/HOV project and our commitment towards development and execution of a future Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining our collective interest in developing and implementing High Capacity Transit (HCT) in the I-90 corridor. Both efforts are essential to furthering our common vision to improve cross-lake mobility. In doing so, we will be strengthening the economic vitality of our region and building upon our regional commitment to move people and freight better.

This recommendation is the result of years of analysis and solid evaluation of the performance and benefits of the alternatives for achieving two-way transit/HOV access across I-90. The R8-A alternative has been shown to provide the greatest overall cost/benefit for all modes of travel in the corridor.

Additionally, through the work of the consultants and the Steering Committee, R8-A addresses safety concerns1 and preserves the bicycle lane at its current width of 10 feet. In response to concerns of the bicycle community, the R8-A alternative includes screens to block debris and glare, lighting upgrades on the path, and spaces for aid personnel to reach the path if necessary.2 We encourage WSDOT to keep the bike path open during all phases of construction.

We view R8-A as an essential first step towards achieving a long term transit vision for the Eastside, providing a strong transit connection between East and West King County and improving our region’s economy, mobility and quality of life. Selection of R8-A as the preferred alternative, means this initial phase will provide mobility improvements for transit and HOV users – a key for building strong support for the development of HCT in the corridor.

We support the approval of the MOA before Sound Transit adopts the final EIS for I-90. The MOA will address the development and implementation of High Capacity Transit (HCT) in the I-90 corridor according to the following principles:

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1 4/29/03 Presentation to I-90 Steering Committee, 5/03 Project Newsletter, and I-90 DEIS (4/25/03)
2 4/25/03 I-90 DEIS, 5/03 Project Newsletter
• R8-A with HCT deployed in the center lanes is the ultimate configuration for I-90;
• Construction of R8-A should occur as soon as possible as a first step to the ultimate configuration;
• Upon adoption of R8-A, move as quickly as possible to implement HCT in the center lanes;
• Commit to the earliest possible conversion of center roadway to two-way HCT operation based on outcome of studies and funding approvals.³

We believe this MOA will provide policy direction and commitment among the key stakeholders. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Alan Merkle, Mayor,
City of Mercer Island

cc Mercer Island City Council

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³ HCT is defined as a transit system operating in dedicated right-of-way such as light rail, monorail, or a substantially equivalent system