

King County Councilmember

District Eight

Spring 2007



King County Courthouse

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King County

Dow Constantine

Dear Neighbor:

This year, transportation has been the primary focus for King County and the Puget Sound region. As a member of the Sound Transit Board of Directors, the King County Council Transportation Committee, the Regional Transit Committee, and the Regional Transportation Improvement District (RTID) executive board, I have spent many hours forging the plan for our region's transportation future.

As a member of the Sound Transit board, I was the co-sponsor of a motion to study future light rail expansion to West Seattle, North Highline, Burien and Ballard. I also fought to include the Burien Transit Center's Garage in the Sound Transit 2 plan—as this project will help ensure that Burien's redeveloping downtown area will become a transit hub for Southwest King County.

I succeeded in placing funding for key local mobility projects in the RTID ballot proposal, including the replacement of the South Park Bridge, improvements to the Spokane Street viaduct, and a new Lander Street overpass. These projects are crucial to giving West Seattle and Burien commuters more options to access downtown during viaduct demolition.

On the King County Council, I was the prime sponsor of legislation that created a King County Ferry District (see inside article), continuing our efforts to save passenger-only ferry service to Vashon Island, make the Elliott Bay Water Taxi service permanent, and explore new ways to take advantage of Puget Sound and Lake Washington as transportation corridors.

I will continue to advocate for our neighborhoods as funds from the Transit Now ballot issue are disbursed and as we are able to expand existing systems and create new opportunities for waterborne transit, light rail, and roadway improvements.

Please do not hesitate to contact me with your ideas and comments as we work together to keep King County moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dow".

Dow Constantine

Metropolitan King County Councilmember

Summer sun welcomes back Water Taxi



The sun was out to welcome back the Elliott Bay Water Taxi for the 2007 summer season on Sunday, April 29 as West Seattleites flocked to Seacrest Dock for their first ride.

A record-setting first-day crowd of 2,545 passengers made the crossing as King County Metro's waterborne transit route resumed service between West Seattle and Pier 55 on the downtown waterfront.

The Water Taxi is coming off a record-breaking year, with both the boat and the shuttle setting new ridership marks. The Water Taxi also proved its worth as an alternate route into downtown when 1,613 riders set a weekday ridership record after a fatal car accident led to a temporary closure of the West Seattle Bridge.

Argosy Cruises operates the Water Taxi service, under a contract with King County, using the 149-passenger MV Sightseer. Boats depart about every 40 minutes during commute hours and hourly during the middle of the day. Evening service is offered on Friday and Saturday nights, and for Mariner night games, with the last boats leaving Pier 55 at 10:30 p.m. and Seacrest Dock at 11 p.m.

The free shuttle van service (Route 773) provides a direct connection from Seacrest Dock to the Admiral District, the West Seattle Junction, Alki and Harbor Avenue. It operates between 6:30 a.m. and 7:30 p.m. on weekdays.

For more information on the Elliott Bay Water Taxi, call (206) 553-3000 (TTY 206-684-1739) or go to the Metro Transit website. Riders can also check on the current operating status of the Water Taxi by calling (206) 205-3866.

Ferry District will enable operation of waterborne transit

The King County Council unanimously approved my ordinance to create a King County Ferry District on April 30.

This district could allow King County to save the Vashon Island passenger-only ferry service, which the state has threatened to discontinue. Loss of the passenger-only ferry would put thousands more cars each week onto the West Seattle Bridge and Highway 99.

The ferry district could also support year-round Elliott Bay Water Taxi service, and fund the study of possible new waterborne transit routes throughout the county.

Waterborne transit works. Last year, the Water Taxi carried a record 122,650 passengers between West Seattle's Seacrest Park and Pier 55 on the downtown waterfront. In the long-term, the ferry district will enable us to operate the Water Taxi year-round, while upgrading our boats and docks.

With the looming construction projects on the Alaskan Way Viaduct and the Evergreen Point Bridge, we must seize this opportunity to use our open waters to let people get out of gridlock.

Legislation to protect Maury Island aquatic reserve defeated

During the legislative session in Olympia this year I worked to support Senator Erik Poulsen on an important environmental bill he sponsored. Senate Bill 6011, would have blocked the construction and operation of an industrial barge loading facility within the sensitive Maury Island Aquatic Reserve.

Washington's aquatic reserve program was designed to protect, restore and enhance critical tidelands. The Maury Island reserve is important to our endangered salmon and southern resident orcas, as well as shorebirds. Yet the state Department of Natural Resources created a loophole in the reserve's management plan to allow valuable tidelands—owned by the citizens of this state—to be leased out for an industrial gravel barging facility.



The bill to “preserve the reserve” was approved by the Senate but was never allowed a final vote in the House. A statewide coalition of environmental organizations, including Washington Conservation Voters, Washington Environmental Council, Washington State Audubon, Preserve Our Islands, and People for Puget Sound worked valiantly with Senator Poulsen and our local state representatives. The State League of Women Voters also backed this effort.

After a decade of fighting to save this shoreline, I am disappointed that this critical legislation did not pass. I look forward to continuing the struggle to protect the aquatic reserve, restore the integrity of the reserve program, and make our state get serious about saving the Sound.

Council program provides vans for non-profit groups

Last month, I stopped by the Burien Senior Center for a ceremony to hand over the keys to a retired van from the King County fleet.

Other recent van recipients have included the Fautleroy Children's Center and Transitional Resources, a West Seattle non-profit group providing mental health rehabilitation services.

This program is no giveaway: The recipient organization must sign a contract pledging to use the van to provide transportation to people traditionally underserved by public transit, including children, seniors, low-income people and the disabled.

Since 1996, the King County Council has

distributed over 250 retired vans to various non-profit organizations or governmental entities. King County vans are retired and prepared for donation after eight years in service.



Councilmember Constantine is joined by Burien Mayor Joan McGilton (far right) and friends of the Burien Senior Center for the van presentation ceremony.



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If my staff can be of assistance to you, please contact:

King County Council District Eight stretches from Seattle's Alki neighborhood south to Normandy Park, and from Tukwila west to the coast of western Vashon Island. The district incorporates the neighborhoods/cities of Boulevard Park, Burien, Campbell Hill, Georgetown, International District/Chinatown, Normandy Park, Pioneer Square, SeaTac, SoDo, South Park, Tukwila, Vashon/Maury Islands, West Beacon Hill, West Seattle, and White Center.

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