

September 2011 Meeting

Unincorporated Area Roads

by Peter Rimbos, Corresponding Secretary

On Tuesday, September 6, the Greater Maple Valley Unincorporated Area Council held its regular monthly meeting. The following topics were discussed: Unincorporated Area Roads; Black Diamond Master Planned Developments; and Area Council Elections and Advisory Issues Survey.

Your Area Council serves as an all-volunteer, locally elected advisory body to the King County Council representing all rural unincorporated area residents living in the Tahoma School District.

Unincorporated Area Roads

Jay Osborne, Manager in the Road Services Division (RSD) of the King County Department of Transportation, discussed the updated Strategic Plan for Road Services based on current and projected budget constraints. Part of that Plan is a new "Tiered Level of Service" that would be implemented beginning in 2012, pending King County Council approval. The Plan shows revenues are insufficient to sustain the preservation and maintenance of the entire county road system. Consequently, RSD has prioritized which roadways will be serviced to keep them in working order, while allowing other roadways to deteriorate due to lack of maintenance and preservation.

RSD is significantly constrained by a structural funding problem due to losses of major sources of funding in recent years: elimination of the Local Option Vehicle License fee, voter-approved initiative limiting property tax growth to 1% annually (thus, not necessarily keeping pace with inflation), exhaustion of levy capacity, steady decline in gas-tax revenues, and the decrease in federal and state grant funding available.

In the meantime, costs for labor, materials, equipment and for meeting standards and regulatory requirements have generally increased. Sixty-five percent of the RSD revenues are from property taxes. Only 12% comes from the gas tax. Property values have gone down reducing property tax receipts and people are driving less, reducing gas tax receipts. As a result, RSD is looking at about 18% layoffs by the end of this year.

Mr. Osborne focussed on meeting unincorporated area road needs under this constrained budget environment. The targeted approach focusses on five ranked priorities: regulatory compliance, core safety, preservation and maintenance, mobility, and capacity (only for urban connector arterials to support urban growth).

It is estimated \$240M is needed annually for optimal management of the unincorporated area roads system. This includes the costs of completing the backlog of road projects, of meeting new transportation system needs, and of adopting an approach to minimize lifetime costs of existing roads, bridges, etc. However, under the current funding structure, only \$102M is estimated to be available annually beginning in 2015--insufficient to fund infrastructure maintenance and preservation to sustain the current condition of the system.

There would be difficult choices to make since the system would eventually deteriorate to failure conditions. Some bridges and roads would eventually need to be load-limited to prevent damage. Speed reductions on some roadways, more lane closures for emergency repairs, and increased congestion would eventually occur. Some complete closures of roads and bridges might be necessary. Maintenance would be primarily reactive in nature, and the associated needs and costs would accelerate as infrastructure condition deteriorates. Emergency and storm response capability would be limited due to lack of resources. Mr. Osborne termed this scenario as "managing risk in a declining system."

As a result, a Tiered Level of Service has been established which consists of: Tier 1--the "spine" of the County road system (e.g., Issaquah-Hobart Rd.), totals 105 mi (7%); Tier 2--connectors and backup for Tier 1 roads (e.g., Cedar Grove Rd.), totals 166 mi (11%); Tier 3--highly used "local" roads (e.g., Sweeney Rd. SE), totals 193 mi (12%); Tier 4--residential "dead-end" roads, totals 510 mi (32%); and Tier 5--local roads that have alternate access, totals 590 mi (38%). All five Tiers will be addressed when it comes to regulatory compliance and safety, but only the highest tiers for preservation and maintenance. In the greater Maple Valley area about 60% of the unincorporated roads are Tier 4 and 5. The King County Council will be discussing and voting on the Tiered System later this month and it will be reflected in the 2012 budget. [More information can be found here.](#)

Public Comment

Greg Wingard provided an update on proposed expansion of Pacific Raceways. The King County Council's Transportation, Economy, and Environment (TrEE) Committee is looking at a proposed new Ordinance that would change current uses on the site, plus the underlying zoning. Mr. Wingard categorized this as a "spot zone" and, thus, illegal. If considered a "pilot project," as proposed, then this could happen across the board for other projects. Both a "spot zone" or a "pilot project" would be a problem for the Rural Area. King County Department of development and Environmental Services (DDES) Director John Starbard testified to the TrEE Committee that the existing Conditional-Use Permit (CUP) process is adequate without the need for the proposed Ordinance. The TrEE Committee has asked for the King County Executive's position on the proposed

Ordinance. Mr. Wingard asked the Area Council to contact the Executive. The Area Council discussed this in closed session and decided to send a letter to the Executive with a cc to the TrEE Committee. The letter will state the Area Council sees no need for the proposed Ordinance, as it appears existing CUP process is sufficient to the task and is deeply concerned about the precedent any new Ordinance would have across the Rural Area.

Black Diamond MPDs

The Black Diamond Hearing Examiner is expected to issue his Recommendations concerning proposed Development Agreements for the YarrowBay-proposed Master Planned Developments (MPDs) by Wednesday, September 14, thus concluding the Open-Record Public Hearings. The Hearing Examiner's Recommendations will be submitted to the Black Diamond City Council.

Closed-Record Public Hearings before the City Council will start on Wednesday, September 21, at 6:30 PM in the Black Diamond Elementary School on Baker St. Subsequent sessions will be held on Thursday, September 22; Saturday, September 24; and Monday, September 26. Times for these sessions will be posted on the [City of Black Diamond MPD page](#).

Members of the public who testified either orally by by written comments in the Open-Record Public Hearings are eligible to do so again in the Closed-Record Public Hearings. The Area Council will again provide both Oral Testimony and Written Comments. Area Council Elections and Advisory Issues Survey The Area Council discussed its 2011 Election and Advisory Issues Survey plan. Council elections would cost between \$5,500 and \$7,000. The Area Council decided to delay its elections until February 2012 and tasked its Election and Advisory Survey to look into election planning and report back at its October Monthly Meeting. The next Area Council election will be for half of its 16 members (members serve staggered 4-yr terms).

The Advisory Issues Survey, as in past years, will be used to gauge area residents on topics of importance to the rural community. These surveys have proved incredibly helpful to the Area Council in understanding the sentiments of Rural Area residents and to accurately convey them to local and state elected officials. The next Survey will take into account the new Community Service Area (CSAs) recently established by the King County Council. The CSAs encompass most of unincorporated King County and include community-based organizations such as the current UACs. The Area Council is considering an all electronic Election Ballot and Advisory Survey plan on its web site that would be supplemented by publishing paper copies in the local newspapers.

Council Business

County-Wide Planning Policies

The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) is accepting Public Comments on its update of the County-Wide Planning Policies (C-WPPs). At the next GMPC meeting on Wednesday, September 21, the Final Draft of the update will be voted upon. The Area Council plans to testify on the suitability of placement of Schools in the Rural Area that primarily serve adjacent Urban Development and its related impacts on local residents. The Area Council voted to sign on to a Joint Rural Area UAC letter to the Suburban Cities Association (SCA) asking it to reconsider a proposal it made to the GMPC to exempt 19 existing School-District-owned sites (1 in the Tahoma School District) from any new policies on restricting tightline sewer extension into the Rural Area. The Area Council remains concerned that urban-serving schools sited in the Rural Area put pressure on rural infrastructure, such as roads, due to increased bus and car traffic. Also, since schools are gathering places for day, after-school, and evening meetings and activities, demands on road capabilities and safety will be further increased over rural requirements. For more information on the GMPC and the update to the CPPs see: <http://www.kingcounty.gov/property/permits/codes/growth/GMPC.aspx>.

Area Council's Annual Model Train Show

Planning has begun for the Annual Train Show that will be held the weekend of October 22 and 23 at Gracie Hanson in Ravensdale. More information to follow.

Ravensdale Park

Fields will be complete and ready for use by Thanksgiving.

Next Regular Monthly Meeting: Date/Time -- Monday, October 3, 2011, at 7:00 - 9:30 PM. Location -- Fire Station at 231st St & SR-169 (NEW LOCATION) across from the Sheriff's Precinct).