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East King County town hall June 19: Transportation at a crossroads

Learn more and comment about funding for roads, bridges, highways and bus service

Regional traffic congestion and the recent closures of a damaged bridge on Interstate 5 and a vulnerable century-old bridge in Kent continue to call attention to the need to maintain, preserve and improve our vital transportation network that our economy depends on. But where can we turn for the funding needed to pay for these investments?

The public is invited to an open house and Town Hall meeting with elected leaders from cities and the county to learn more about our critical infrastructure needs for roads, bridges and transit service.

The state Legislature continues to seek common ground on transportation funding. Without a solution, cuts loom for local roads, bridges and Metro bus service – potentially worsening congestion and delaying improvements needed to keep the region moving.

The meeting is co-hosted by the Sound Cities Association, the city of Bellevue and King County, which are seeking [sustainable transportation funding options](#).

Town hall meeting and open house

- Wednesday, June 19
- 5:30-6:30 p.m. open house and comment period; 6:30-8 p.m. moderated panel discussion and questions
- Bellevue City Hall, 450 110th Ave. NE
- Send questions to the panel by email to community.relations@kingcounty.gov or via Twitter to @kcroads or @kcmetrobus. Join the conversation on Twitter using #TransFuture
- Speakers and panelists include Bellevue Mayor Conrad Lee, Auburn Mayor Pete Lewis, Kenmore Mayor Dave Baker, Kirkland Mayor Joan McBride, Mercer Island Mayor Bruce Bassett, Sammamish Councilmember Don Gerend, County Councilmembers Jane Hague and Rod Dembowski, and Deputy King County Executive Fred Jarrett.

“Our aging roads and bridges are at-risk, our bus service is at-risk – and that puts our economy at risk,” said Sound Cities Association President Denis Law, Mayor of Renton.

“We are at a critical juncture. Keeping our regional economy strong and enhancing our quality of life depends on being able to move people and goods safely and reliably,” said Bellevue Mayor Conrad Lee. “Congested roads are hindering our ability to do this.”

“King County expects to close 35 bridges in the next 25 years and reduce yearly storm response due to revenues that continue to decline,” said Harold Taniguchi, director of the King County Department of Transportation. “Please attend this meeting to add your voice and story to this important debate that will determine the future of transportation in our region.”

Steep funding shortfalls for city and county roads, Metro bus service

City and county roads and bridges are aging. Revenue sources currently available to cities and the county are not keeping pace with the costs of replacement and expansion to meet growth. King County unincorporated roads carry more than one million trips per day on some of the oldest roads in the state. But county funding from local property tax, gas tax and grants has declined by one-third since 2009, and will continue to fall.

Local governments also have experienced a substantial down-turn in revenues this past decade. Contributing factors include reductions in car tab fees, the 1 percent limit on annual property tax increases, and serious reductions in property values, taxes and fees.

King County Metro Transit faces cuts up to 17 percent starting in fall 2014, including elimination of 65 routes and reducing service on 86 other routes. Metro’s temporary \$20 vehicle license fee ends next year, and other efforts to keep buses on the road are drying up as reserves and temporary stop-gap measures are exhausted.

More information is available on [King County’s transportation future](#) and [Sound Cities Association](#). To request an interpreter or reasonable accommodations for this open house and town hall, contact Sara Stefano at community.relations@kingcounty.gov or 206-263-9770. To best fulfill requests, please contact us by Monday, June 17.

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