



# KING COUNTY

1200 King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue  
Seattle, WA 98104

## Signature Report

August 16, 2011

Ordinance 17169

Proposed No. 2011-0288.2

Sponsors Phillips and Gossett

1 AN ORDINANCE relating to public transportation and  
2 imposing a two-year congestion reduction charge of twenty  
3 dollars on vehicle registration renewals in King County in  
4 accordance with Chapter 373, Laws of Washington 2011.

5 STATEMENT OF FACTS:

6 1. The 2011 Washington state Legislature adopted Engrossed Substitute  
7 Senate Bill 5457, which became Chapter 373, Laws of Washington 2011,  
8 which amends chapter 82.80 RCW, to provide the King County council  
9 authority by a two-thirds vote to impose a temporary two-year congestion  
10 reduction charge of twenty dollars on vehicle registration renewals to  
11 allow Metro transit to continue to provide the current level of transit  
12 service that helps reduce congestion and the corresponding burdens placed  
13 on local roads and highways.

14 2. Approval of the congestion reduction charge would enable Metro  
15 transit to reduce congestion by avoiding transit service cuts in the 2012-  
16 2013 biennium - cuts that could result in the loss of an estimated nine  
17 million passenger trips annually and lead to an associated increase in  
18 traffic congestion.

19           3. Proceeds from the charge would reduce congestion by enabling Metro  
20 transit to maintain service at current levels. The proceeds from this  
21 temporary charge will also allow the county and Metro transit to avoid  
22 future service cuts that would lead to increased congestion by working  
23 with other transit agencies, regional leaders and the Washington state  
24 Legislature to craft a long-term funding solution for transit and other local  
25 and state-wide transportation needs.

26           4. Sustaining current levels of bus service is particularly important now to  
27 help people cope with high gas prices, to keep congestion in check as the  
28 Alaskan Way Viaduct and State Route 520 bridge replacement projects are  
29 underway, and to get people to jobs as the region's economy continues to  
30 recover.

31           5. Approval of the congestion reduction charge is consistent with the  
32 King County Strategic Plan Economic Growth and Built Environment  
33 goal to encourage a growing and diverse King County economy and  
34 vibrant, thriving and sustainable communities, specifically with regard to  
35 the objective to meet the growing need for transportation services and  
36 facilities throughout the county.

37           6. The temporary congestion reduction charge would supplement the  
38 many actions Metro transit has taken over the past three years to manage  
39 the unprecedented financial challenges resulting from the recession.

40 Metro transit began to address its sharply falling sales tax revenue in the  
41 2009 supplemental budget, and is following the nine-point deficit

42 reduction plan adopted by the council in conjunction with the 2010-2011  
43 adopted budget, which includes:  
44 A. Eliminating staff positions;  
45 B. Deferring planned expansion of bus service;  
46 C. Reducing capital programs;  
47 D. Making non-service-related cuts;  
48 E. Increasing revenue through a property tax swap;  
49 F. Digging deeply into reserves;  
50 G. Making some bus service reductions; and  
51 H. Raising fares. Passenger fares have been raised four times, by a total  
52 of eighty percent, over the past four years.

53 7. Metro is implementing numerous efficiency recommendations of the  
54 2009 Performance Audit, and has negotiated new contracts with the  
55 Amalgamated Transit Union Local 587 and other transit unions that are  
56 generating significant ongoing savings and thereby helping to preserve  
57 service.

58 8. All of these actions will generate three hundred ninety-eight million  
59 dollars between 2008 and 2011 to offset the loss of sales tax revenue.

60 9. Despite these sweeping reforms, Metro transit still faces a revenue gap  
61 of approximately sixty million dollars per year for 2012 through 2015  
62 because sales tax receipts continue to be lower than projected before the  
63 recession.

64 10. Given this revenue gap, if the proposed temporary congestion  
65 reduction charge authorized by the Legislature is not approved Metro  
66 transit will have to cut up to six hundred thousand hours of transit service,  
67 or about seventeen percent of the current system beginning in 2012.

68 11. It is estimated that a reduction of six hundred thousand hours of  
69 transit service would result in a loss of nine million passenger trips  
70 annually, and lead to a corresponding increase in personal vehicle trips per  
71 year, significantly increasing congestion on our roads and highways.

72 12. In 2010 the council and executive convened a regional transit task  
73 force that made recommendations on a new policy framework for the  
74 future growth, and if necessary, contraction of the Metro transit system.

75 13. On June 15, 2011, the regional transit committee adopted the Metro  
76 Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 that uses the  
77 recommendations of the regional transit task force as the basis for new  
78 policy guidelines to determine the allocation of transit service additions  
79 and reductions.

80 14. The council has adopted a congestion reduction plan indicating the  
81 proposed expenditures of the proceeds from the congestion reduction  
82 charge. The adopted plan is consistent with the recommendations of the  
83 regional transit task force and implements the policy guidelines in the  
84 Metro 10-Year Strategic Plan for Public Transportation.

85 15. In combination with the reforms already implemented, imposing the  
86 temporary congestion reduction charge will enable Metro to continue to

87 reduce congestion by preventing major service cuts through 2014. If the  
88 temporary congestion reduction charge is not imposed, Metro transit  
89 would have to proceed with substantial service cuts during the 2012-2013  
90 budget biennium in order to assure a financially sound future for the  
91 transit system.

92 16. In authorizing a temporary congestion reduction charge, the  
93 Washington state Legislature recognized the important role transit plays in  
94 fighting congestion, as well as the value of the sweeping reform measures  
95 Metro transit has implemented to address the agency's difficult financial  
96 situation.

97 BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

98 SECTION 1. As required by Chapter 373, Laws of Washington 2011, a  
99 congestion reduction plan indicating the proposed expenditure of the proceeds of the  
100 congestion reduction charge has been approved by the council.

101 SECTION 2. A. In accordance with Chapter 373, Laws of Washington 2011,  
102 which amends chapter 82.80 RCW, King County hereby approves the imposition of an  
103 annual congestion reduction charge of twenty dollars per vehicle registered in the  
104 boundaries of King County for each vehicle subject to vehicle license fees under RCW  
105 46.17.350 (1) (a), (c), (d), (e), (g), (h), (j), (n), (o), (p) or (q), and for each vehicle subject  
106 to gross weight license fees under RCW 46.17.355 with an unladen weight of six  
107 thousand pounds or less.

108           B. The congestion reduction charge approved by this ordinance applies only to  
109 vehicle registration renewals and is effective upon the registration renewal date as  
110 provided by the state Department of Licensing.

111           C. The congestion reduction charge approved by this ordinance shall not apply to  
112 vehicles identified in Chapter 373, Laws of Washington 2011, Section 2(6).

113           D. The congestion reduction charge approved by this ordinance shall be imposed  
114 on the first day of the first full month following the date that is six months after the  
115 effective date of this ordinance. Collections of the approved charge shall begin on the  
116 same day.

117           SECTION 3. Proceeds from the congestion reduction charge must be expended  
118 in a manner consistent with the recommendations of the 2010 regional transit task force,  
119 the King County Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 and the previously  
120 adopted congestion reduction plan, which prioritize improving the productivity of Metro  
121 transit services. At a minimum for the period in which the congestion reduction charge is  
122 imposed, one hundred thousand of the lowest productivity service hours shall be reduced  
123 or restructured and the resulting service hour savings reinvested. Consistent with the  
124 King County Strategic Plan for Public Transportation 2011-2021 and King County Metro  
125 Service Guidelines, priority for the reinvestment of service hours shall be given first to  
126 existing service quality issues, including those related to tolling, followed by investments  
127 in underserved corridors.

128           SECTION 4. Proceeds from the congestion reduction charge, including accrued  
129 interest, shall be placed in the King County Metro public transportation enterprise fund -  
130 operating sub-fund (464) and expended as authorized in Section 3 of this ordinance.

131           SECTION 5. This ordinance takes effect on the later of its effective date as  
132 determined by the King County charter or one day after the effective date of the  
133 ordinance adopting the congestion reduction plan.

134           SECTION 6. The charge approved by this ordinance and imposed as set forth in  
135 section 2.D. of this ordinance expires with vehicle registrations that expire two years after  
136 the imposition of the charge or no later than June 30, 2014, whichever comes first.

137           SECTION 7. The executive is authorized to execute an agreement with the  
138 department of licensing for the collection of the congestion reduction charge consistent  
139 with chapter 46.68 RCW.

140           SECTION 8. A. In order to comply with Chapter 373, Laws of Washington  
141 2011, Section 2(1)(d), the executive shall prepare and transmit to council by July 1, 2012,  
142 a report detailing the expenditures to-date of the proceeds of the congestion reduction  
143 charge through June 1, 2012.

144           B. In order to comply with Chapter 373, Laws of Washington 2011, Section  
145 2(1)(e), the executive shall prepare and transmit to council by June 1, 2014, a report  
146 detailing the expenditures of the proceeds of the congestion reduction charge.

147           SECTION 9. A. The executive is requested to develop a two-year congestion  
148 reduction transit incentives program to begin when a congestion reduction charge is first  
149 imposed, and to submit an ordinance to council by November 1, 2011, proposing the  
150 program.

151           B. The program shall offer King County vehicle owners, as part of the annual  
152 vehicle registration renewal, an opportunity to receive transit ridership incentives in the  
153 form of free ride tickets. Each household in King County that has a vehicle owner who

154 paid the annual vehicle registration renewal fee shall be eligible for eight free ride tickets  
155 during each twelve-month period for which a congestion reduction charge is imposed.  
156 Only households with addresses in King County are eligible.

157 C. The program shall offer vehicle owners an option to donate the value of the  
158 free ride tickets to the county's human services ticket program. The program should  
159 complement Metro's current human services ticket program and must consider the  
160 potential impact to Metro's near-term and long-term financial plans.

161 D. The goal of the program will be to increase ridership on Metro transit and help  
162 reduce congestion on King County roads and highways.

163 E. The 2012-2013 transit budget should include funding for the congestion  
164 reduction transit incentives program.

165 SECTION 10. A. The executive is requested to begin implementing, by the June  
166 2012 service change, new right-sized services provided at reduced operating costs to  
167 replace a minimum of five thousand annual service hours and up to twenty thousand  
168 hours of traditional transit services in east and south King County communities along the  
169 urban growth boundary and adjacent to rural areas, including currently served rural areas.  
170 For the purposes of this subsection, "right-sized services" means services that are  
171 appropriately scaled to the market served and the mobility needs of the local community,

172 B. To ensure a smooth transition, implementation should, to the extent  
173 practicable, include the following elements:

174 1. Consideration of local service needs;

175 2. Stakeholder involvement, including input from and coordination with  
176 community agencies or organizations willing to partner with Metro transit;



177           3. Provision of modified fixed-route, dial-a-ride, Community Access  
178 Transportation, VanPool, VanShare or other flexible shared-ride concepts that address  
179 local mobility needs and can be provided at a reduced operating cost; and

180           4. Transit route and facility modifications as may be necessary to accommodate  
181 any new service concept.

182           SECTION 11. A. The executive is requested to discontinue the downtown  
183 Seattle ride free area by October 2012, and to develop and submit to council by May  
184 2012 an implementation plan to guide the elimination of the ride free area. The plan  
185 should be filed in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the  
186 council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all  
187 councilmembers.

188           B. The implementation plan may include, but is not limited to the following  
189 elements to ensure a smooth transition:

190           1. Outreach and coordination with downtown Seattle human service agencies,  
191 including a description of a partner program or programs designed to help mitigate the  
192 increased cost of trips in downtown Seattle for disadvantaged populations;

193           2. Consideration of an increase in the number of trips or level of subsidy  
194 available through the human services ticket program;

195           3. Outreach with downtown businesses, including further promotion of the  
196 ORCA card system;

197           4. Coordination with the city of Seattle and affected transit agencies.

198           5. A customer information plan to help riders transition to the new fare  
199 collection procedures in downtown Seattle;

200           6. Descriptions of any transit route and facility modifications; and

201           7. Employee training.

202           C. In order for the city of Seattle to continue to benefit from the ride free area in  
203 downtown Seattle, the city must negotiate a new methodology that accurately off-sets the  
204 cost of the service and that acknowledges the minimal benefit to the county in providing  
205 these services.

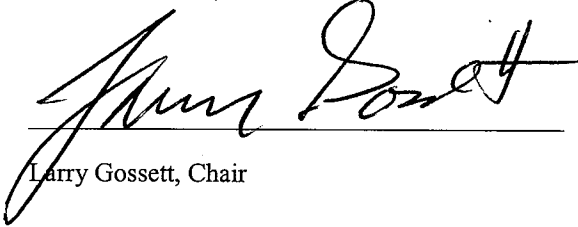
206           SECTION 12. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person

207 or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the application of the  
208 provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.  
209

Ordinance 17169 was introduced on 6/20/2011 and passed as amended by the Metropolitan King County Council on 8/15/2011, by the following vote:

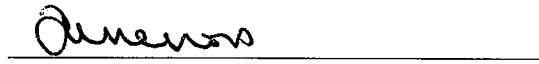
Yes: 7 - Mr. Phillips, Mr. Gossett, Ms. Hague, Ms. Patterson, Ms. Lambert, Mr. Ferguson and Mr. McDermott  
No: 2 - Mr. von Reichbauer and Mr. Dunn  
Excused: 0

KING COUNTY COUNCIL  
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON



Larry Gossett, Chair

ATTEST:



Anne Noris, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED this 25 day of AUGUST, 2011.



Dow Constantine, County Executive

RECEIVED  
2011 AUG 25 AM 10:47  
CLERK  
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

Attachments: None