



Snohomish County Council

For Release: August 7, 2007

Contact: 425.388.3494

Email: county.council@co.snohomish.wa.us

NEWS RELEASE

County Council sets priorities for new revenues

The Snohomish County Council on Monday took action to provide the County Executive with direction regarding how new revenues coming to the county in 2008 should be spent. New money is anticipated from a variety of sources including the State Legislature's passage earlier this year of SSB5089, the Streamlined Sales & Use Tax Agreement, that will mean an additional \$3 million in 2008, and \$7 million in 2009 and later years. Other sources of funding will come from the retirement of an existing debt issuance in 2009 that will free up \$1.4 million each year, and a redirection of \$1.25 million of Real Estate Excise Tax revenues from debt service into capital projects.

"This is an exciting opportunity to provide extra funding for important programs at no additional cost to taxpayers," said Council Chair Dave Gossett. "We need to take steps before the money starts coming in to ensure that it is used to make a difference in important projects, and not just absorbed into the County budget where the impact can't be measured."

According to a letter sent by the Council to the Executive, the REET money should be put in a reserve to be assigned by the Council to transportation projects. "Transportation remains the number one priority for county residents, and this will provide additional funding for high priority projects," said Councilmember John Koster.

The letter further directed the \$1.4 million previously assigned to debt service should be set aside in a separate fund to help pay for a future Law and Justice Center that is currently being studied within the county. Councilmember Kirke Sievers commented, "We know that a new facility to house the courts, prosecutors and other criminal justice functions will be needed in the near future. Putting the money aside now will help the county respond to that need when the time comes."

By far the largest source of new revenues will come from the passage of the sales tax streamlining legislation. The Council identified five priorities for expenditures: avoiding layoffs if revenues fall short of needs; adding staff to the court and prosecutor's office to

handle drug court and domestic violence cases; payment of debt service on the purchase of the Cathcart property; payment of master plan costs for the Cathcart property; and dividing any remaining funds equally among parks, transportation and criminal justice programs.

“We want to maximize this money to provide the greatest possible benefit to the greatest number of residents,” said Councilmember Dave Somers. “The Council’s plan targets several areas of need within this county including transportation, parks and criminal justice.” Added Councilmember Gary Nelson, “This is a responsible approach to give the Executive sufficient time to incorporate these priorities into his budget proposal.”

The County Executive will present his budget proposal to the County Council on September 28, 2007.

#####