

County Council

12 Dec. 2007

Dave Gossett
John Koster
Gary Nelson
Kirke Sievers
Dave Somers

Bipartisan council unanimously overrides executive budget vetoes

Citing the public's overwhelming demand for traffic congestion relief, the Snohomish County Council today unanimously rejected County Executive Aaron Reardon's vetoes of a one percent increase in the county property tax for roads for 2008. Only property owners in the unincorporated county pay the road tax.

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"Transportation is the number one concern we hear from the public," said Council Chair Dave Gossett. "It is our duty as elected officials to use every reasonable tool at our disposal to provide some relief for the people stuck in traffic."

The additional \$477,500 in revenue from the one percent increase will be used to accelerate improvements to three highly congested county roads – 20th Street SW from the US-2 trestle to Cavalero, North Road west of Mill Creek, and Seattle Hill Road east of Mill Creek.

"These are 'nuts and bolts' projects that offer relief to drivers using these roads to get back and forth to work every day," said councilmember Dave Somers. "Every extra dollar we can put into these important projects will pay dividends for county drivers."

As well as relieving congestion, accelerating transportation projects will also help keep the costs of these projects down. "Construction costs are rising every day," said Councilmember Kirke Sievers. "It would be penny wise and pound foolish to avoid taking a small tax increase now if it means paying far more for the same work in the future."

The one percent increase would cost the owner of the average \$300,000 home an extra \$3.30 next year.

Tax Reduction

"We were able to reduce the general fund property tax by one percent," said Councilmember John Koster. "When it comes to the taxpayer's money, this council is pretty conservative. We use our resources wisely and we avoid those feel-good new programs where costs are bound to balloon in the future," he said.

Another Override

The council also overrode the executive's veto of Ordinance 07-127, a housekeeping measure that will also increase the transparency of county finances.

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Ordinance 07-127 amends county code to bring it into compliance with Ordinance 07-091, which exempts court employees from county personnel rules if the court itself has adopted guidelines or rules. Ordinance 07-091 was approved by the council earlier this year upon the recommendation of the executive.

The new ordinance does not limit the executive's responsibility for financial management, but it will allow the council to better track costs through the periodic financial reports already required by county code.

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