April 29, 2009

Honorable Christine O. Gregoire  
Governor, State of Washington  
Legislative Building 200  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Gregoire:

This letter is to request a partial veto of 2SSB 5433 (modifying provisions of local option taxes), specifically sections 8 through 11. These four sections allow certain transit districts to seek voter approval of annual vehicle taxes of up to $20 per vehicle for the purpose of funding public transportation services or improvements. Although we are very supportive of public transportation, and the important services provided by local transit agencies, we feel strongly that it is premature to access the type of revenue source allowed in this bill and then restrict the proceeds to such a limited purpose.

As we look to the future for alternative funding sources to support the increasing transportation needs in Washington State, it is crucial that we not close off various funding sources without a thorough study of all available transportation funding options. Additionally, given the complexity and interconnectedness of our transportation needs, it is not wise public policy to limit scarce funding sources to just one identified transportation mode.

Furthermore, the Legislature has recently provided additional local transportation “tools in the toolbox” by expanding the types, and uses, of local transportation revenue options included in the Transportation Benefit District (TBD) law, which may be used to fund public transportation services. Although the expanded TBD authority remains on the books, many local governments have yet to exercise this option. Before additional transportation authority is granted to local governments, we prefer they access the authority granted to them in current law.

As you know, the transportation budget presented to you provides funding for the Joint Transportation Committee to conduct a detailed study of alternative sources of
transportation funding. Prior to the outcome of that analysis, it would be premature to enact limited transportation funding sources of the type identified in sections 8 through 11 of 2SSB 5433. We trust you agree.

Therefore, we respectfully request you veto sections 8 through 11 of 2SSB 5433. We look forward to continuing our important work together on solving the state's pressing transportation needs. Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Mary Margaret Haugen  
State Senator, 10th Legislative District  
Senate Transportation Chairman

Chris Marr  
State Senator, 6th Legislative District  
Senate Transportation Vice-Chairman