

South Sound

CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE



2009 STATE LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The eight Chambers of Commerce that make up our Coalition represent approximately 3,262 businesses employing more than 185,977 workers in the cities of Algona, Auburn, Burien, Covington, Des Moines, Edgewood, Enumclaw, Federal Way, Fife, Kent, Milton, Pacific, Puyallup, SeaTac, Sumner and Tukwila. A common mission to enhance the competitiveness of the businesses in our region has forged this partnership that seeks proactive solutions to our region's challenges. With a unified recognition that our region is collectively and strategically vital to international trade and commerce in our state, we have unanimously developed the following 2009 legislative priorities for our South Sound region:

Enhanced Focus on South Sound Transportation Priorities: For far too long, the South Sound region's transportation infrastructure needs for traffic congestion relief have been overshadowed by Seattle and other King County megaprojects. The South Sound's strategic importance to our state's economic well being is indisputable. A comprehensive financing analysis (studying all financing sources available) must be performed by the Washington State Department of Transportation on the following "Top Tier" transportation priorities, so that our region can make informed decisions on the financing of our vital infrastructure needs:

**SR167 Extension/Expansion • I-5/SR18/SR161 ("Federal Way Triangle") Improvements • SR704 ("Cross-Base Highway")
SR 509 Extension (West of SeaTac) • SR 516 (Kent-Kangley Road) Improvements**

Regional Transportation Governance: Regional transportation governance must be scrutinized at all levels. The governance of our region's transportation system is confusing, duplicative and, at times, counterproductive. Any new governance structure must strive to consolidate and streamline decision-making and must have equal and fair representation from every region within its boundaries. We expect full representation of the South Sound's business interests in the region's transportation governance structure, otherwise we fear that critically important, and too-long delayed, "Top Tier" projects will be compromised.

Freight Mobility Financing: Freight mobility financing options must recognize the general benefits to society, as well as a particular user, from needed freight mobility infrastructure investments. Because international trade and distribution activities are so important to our region, we urge legislators to avoid transportation financing options, such as container taxes, which would hamper the state's competitiveness, drive economic activity to neighboring states or countries, or harm Washington's ports, manufacturers, growers, and exporters.

School Funding Structure Equity: We believe that the state's current education funding structure (which has recently been ruled unconstitutional) must be replaced by a system that provides full equality for financing the basic education of all of state's students, regardless of the region in which they attend school.

Give Running Start a Running Start: We believe that the Running Start program is an innovative and successful method of preparing our state's students for the workplace. The ability of high school students to earn college credit is a cost effective approach that enhances our state's ability to compete in a global marketplace. Unfortunately, the current funding allocation formula is inadequate and has resulted in a statewide, unfunded liability of \$35 million. We believe a funding allocation model must be developed specifically for Running Start students, similar to other non-traditional student allocation formulas, that would fully recognize the educational services provided at both the K-12 system and the community and technical college system.

Flood Control Infrastructure: We are deeply concerned about the severe regional economic impacts of a failed levee in our area. We have learned, all too well, the high economic and human costs of flooding in our state. Our region's levees do not meet Army Corps of Engineers standards and will cause the Federal Emergency Management Agency to enlarge flood plain areas. This will result in higher insurance rates for landowners and less buildable lands. We believe the state must establish a stable, statewide financing mechanism that recognizes the benefits to all our state's citizens resulting from the repair and replacement of aging levees across our state.

For more information, contact Tom Dooley at (360) 870-5225 or visit www.southsoundcoalition.com.