



**King County**

**Claudia Balducci**

**Councilmember, District 6  
Metropolitan King County Council**

December 10, 2019

Washington State Transportation Commission  
PO Box 47308  
Olympia, WA 98504

**Re: Request to remove recommendation R15 from the Washington State Transportation Commission Road Usage Charge final findings and recommendations**

Dear members of the Washington State Transportation Commission:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input as the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) makes its final recommendations for a Road Usage Charge (RUC). As a county councilmember representing portions of east King County, vice president of the Puget Sound Regional Council and member of the Sound Transit Board of Directors, I work daily to address the challenges of building and maintaining a transportation system that works for everyone. Because of this, **I ask WTSC to not adopt draft recommendation R15** – *“Expenditures of RUC revenue should be made subject to Amendment 18 (restricted to highway purposes),”* a recommendation that arbitrarily restricts how we invest and build a modern transportation system in Washington state.

**Let’s modernize Washington’s transportation funding system today**

Washington state has changed considerably since 1944 when the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment was passed, from a lower density, largely rural state to one with heavily urban areas that increasingly are reliant on more efficient modes of travel. This dated funding model fails to take into account the many ways that people get around, particularly in some of our most dynamic, dense and therefore congested regions. With the right policy framework, the RUC offers a unique opportunity to modernize how our state funds mobility for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. We need a modern funding system that is flexible for different areas, including supporting modes that move high volumes of people in our densest regions.

**Local governments need more tools, not less**

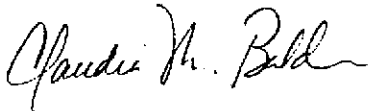
Local governments and the regions they serve need more flexibility to fund transportation, not less. Limiting a significant portion of state transportation dollars for highway purposes forces the burden of many mobility solutions, including transit, walking and biking, upon local funding sources. Compounding this issue, Washington state fails to provide state funding for transit at levels similar to peer states.

According to the Joint Transportation Committee's 2019 *Transit Capital Needs Assessment*, "...Washington lags [in its state funding] among states where transit plays an important role in the transportation system." This funding system where state transportation dollars are handcuffed to only one purpose trickles down to local government taxpayers in significant ways. For example, many local transportation projects are funded using regressive taxation that has a disproportionate impact on those least able to pay.

**Doubling down on the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment limits transportation solutions available in Washington state**  
Limiting what projects can be funded via state transportation dollars constrains the solutions available to solve the mobility challenges that many regions in Washington state face. This funding restriction runs counter to the Washington State Department of Transportation's practical solutions approach, which seeks to identify and solve problems as quickly and inexpensively as possible – all while achieving the state's transportation system policy goals. The 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment's restrictions often obstruct innovative and smart solutions that address congestion challenges, are cost-effective, promote equity and foster better environmental outcomes. By extending the 18<sup>th</sup> Amendment restrictions to RUC revenues, the state promises to continue to tie one hand behind its back as local transportation leaders work to move people, freight and services across our state.

Thank you again for your consideration to remove recommendation R15 from the WSTC's final findings and recommendations. As Washington state moves forward to meet the challenges of 21<sup>st</sup> century, let's ensure we discard transportation policies developed for the 1940s.

Sincerely,



Claudia Balducci