

Dear Mercer Island Residents:

We have formed the **NO TOLL ON I-90** group in order to inform Mercer Island residents about the proposed tolling of the I-90 bridges, and to make our city and state representatives aware of the opposition of Mercer Island residents to tolling on I-90.

The state has formed the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee to evaluate issues relating to tolling options on SR520 and on I-90, and to report its findings to the 2009 state legislature. The Committee has held several public forums to obtain public input on the implications of tolling. But despite its name, the 520 Tolling Committee is not limiting its attention to the SR 520 bridge. Four of the nine tolling scenarios evaluated by the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee involve tolling I-90. None exempt travel to and from Mercer Island from tolling. The 520 Tolling Implementation Committee has studied as one its "Tolling Choices" **tolling I-90 starting in 2010** (scenario 9), a scenario supported by the city councils of Seattle and Clyde Hill. You can see the studied "Tolling Choices" on the Committee's website at: www.build520.org.

On October 6, 2008, the Mercer Island City Council passed a resolution advocating that no tolls be placed on travel to and from Mercer Island. So far the Tolling Implementation Committee has refused to study this scenario, stating that it has neither the time nor the money. Tolls on I-90 are proposed in BOTH the east and west directions, whether one is traveling to or from Seattle or to or from Bellevue, except in scenarios 8 and 9, where there are no tolls on the East Channel segment. Estimated tolls, in 2007 dollars, range from \$2.60 to \$3.25 between 5AM and 7PM, and in the \$.75-\$1.95 range on nights and weekends. Thus, assuming a minimum of one \$6.00 round trip for work 50 weeks per year per family, each household would spend a minimum of **\$1,500 per year**. Mercer Island families, unlike other Puget Sound households, however, do not use the I-90 bridge only to go to and from work. As it is our only access off the island, we need the bridge for every activity - medical appointments, shopping, entertainment, student after-school activities, and everything else. The **\$1,500 a year is a baseline which can easily be doubled, tripled or multiplied by a greater number**, depending on the number of family members and family activities.

Nothing justifies singling out the I-90 bridge - as opposed to also tolling I-5, I-405, SR 522, Highway 99, the Alaska Way Viaduct, the West Seattle Bridge and the rest of the Central Puget Sound area - in order to help pay for the SR 520 bridge. Furthermore, the I-90 toll may start at about \$6.00, but if the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, whose toll booth toll has increased from \$3.00 to \$4.00 and from \$1.75 to \$2.75 for transponder users within one year, is any indication, I-90 users can expect a similar rate of increase, if only to keep up with an increasing debt repayment schedule. Tolling I-90 to pay for a new SR-520 bridge would place a disproportionate share of the costs on Mercer Island residents and employees who would receive little or no direct benefit from a new SR 520 bridge. There would, for example, be no increased capacity on I-90. Indeed, the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee's own evaluation shows that I-90 users would be contributing more to the financing of the SR 520 bridge than the users of the SR 520 bridge. With multiple daily trips, Mercer Island residents, using I-90 as their only egress, thus would shoulder a disproportionate share of the cost of SR 520. In addition, I-90 users are already contributing to SR 520's construction through the state gas tax, state risk pool, federal bridge fund, and the state sales tax deferral. We thus feel that it would be unfair to tax the users of I-90 to pay for a new SR 520 bridge, rather than to toll SR 520 alone, or to employ a taxing scheme that more broadly taxes all residents of the Central Puget Sound Region.

Studies by the Implementation Committee have also shown that **diversion of traffic from SR520 to I-90 would be minimal (around 5%) if SR520 alone is tolled**.

To single out I-90, as proposed, amounts to a "penalty tax" for living on Mercer Island, attending school there, working there, doing business there. I-90 is a lifeline we have no choice but to use for most essential, everyday activities. Tolling I-90 would have a negative impact on island schools, property values, and housing demand. Families and individuals looking for a place to live would have to evaluate an unusual added expense of living on Mercer Island. This added expense would have to be considered not only for the residents themselves, but for anyone coming to visit or work on the island, whether friends, relatives, or persons delivering goods or services. Schools on Mercer Island, public as well as private, will be negatively affected by the daily commuting cost of employees and students. Many programs—such as after-school sports practices, athletic contests, evening music and performing arts programs, dances, tutoring, teacher/parent conferences and curriculum nights - represent a small sampling of after school-related activities directly affected. Tolling on I-90 would unfairly impact public safety personnel (police/fire) and city employees, as well as private business employees who generally live off-island, but may have to travel to Mercer Island more than once a day to participate in evening city council meetings, workshops, and other meetings and events.

Tolls on I-90 impose an unfair, disproportionate financial hardship impacting Mercer Island more than any other community on the Eastside or in Seattle. We have prepared a petition for your consideration/use. You can download an electronic copy from this website. Please read it, sign it, and gather signatures from friends and neighbors and other opponents. Please mail it to: **"No Toll on I-90", P.O. BOX 374, Mercer Island, WA 98040**.

Also, please send an email with your opposition to our state representatives for the 41st District:

Clibborn.Judy@leg.wa.gov

Jarrett.Fred@leg.wa.gov

Maxwell.Marcie@leg.wa.gov

More information about the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee can be found at www.build520.org. Comments on the proposal can be emailed to that website address as well.

Thank you,

Eva Zemplyni and Lisa Belden, Co-Chairs