

**MOTION 2019-11:
A MOTION OF THE PORT OF SEATTLE COMMISSION**

opposing Initiative 976, a ballot proposition that would significantly hamper the ability of the State of Washington and local government entities from adequately funding transportation infrastructure.

The title of Initiative 976: Initiative Measure No. 976 concerns motor vehicle taxes and fees. This measure would repeal, reduce, or remove authority to impose certain vehicle taxes and fees; limit annual motor-vehicle-license fees to \$30, except voter-approved charges; and base vehicle taxes on Kelley Blue Book value.

**ADOPTED
OCTOBER 22, 2019**

INTRODUCTION

Initiative 976 would jeopardize billions in critical transportation funding (\$4.2 billion over six years, according to the state's Office of Financial Management, including funds for critical regional corridors like the Puget Sound Gateway program, voter-approved Sound Transit system expansion projects, municipal road maintenance, and more.

TEXT OF THE MOTION

The Port of Seattle Commission hereby expresses its opposition to Initiative 976, a proposal that would drastically reduce the amount of funding available for critical statewide transportation projects. As a public government entity charged with operating transportation facilities in service of regional economic growth and passenger mobility, this initiative poses a direct threat to the Port's ability to carry out its mission. We partner with the State of Washington and municipal partners on infrastructure development and must oppose any effort to hinder the ability of those partners to collect revenue to fund transportation infrastructure.

STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF THE MOTION

Under RCW Title 53, the statute that enumerates the powers granted to port districts, ports are charged with the development of transportation facilities. This is the essential function of ports, and an acknowledgment that transportation infrastructure—be it port terminals, an airport

runway, or a state highway – are shared resources that are developed by government entities for use by the public. Ports were specifically created by voters in Washington state to combat the potential dominance of private industry along the waterfront, and represent the core Washington state value that the public owns the waterfront. At the Port of Seattle, we use public resources collected through our taxing authority to leverage private sector investment and partnerships with other public entities to maximize regional economic development.

The Port's partnership with the State of Washington on the replacement of the Alaskan Way Viaduct is a recent and illustrative example of the regional, and indeed statewide, gains that can be made through such partnership. The Port of Seattle contributed \$275 million to that project, out of a total cost estimated at \$4.1 billion. Other partners included Washington State, City of Seattle and King County. Additional projects where the Port and the State of Washington have partnered include 1) the Puget Sound Gateway Program, connecting growers and shippers in Central and Eastern Washington with seaport and airport facilities needed to get their goods to market, and 2) the FAST Corridor, a critical project to reduce the impact of freight congestion on communities, Sound Transit Link Light Rail to Sea-Tac Airport, and the South Park Bridge, to support failing infrastructure in a near-by Port community.

In addition, Initiative 976 would greatly reduce funding options for cities, who provide vital services such as preservation and construction of roads, and provision of transit services. For cities that use Transportation Benefit Districts, the initiative would eliminate \$60 million in transportation revenue every year. The City of Seattle is one such municipality, and it also partnered with the Port on efforts to ensure that our industrial operations on the waterfront can coexist with non-freight users in the city, and promote public safety and efficient movement for all modes. The Safe and Swift Corridor and the Heavy Haul Corridor are both examples of key partnerships with the City that would be jeopardized by the passage of Initiative 976.

The impact of Initiative 976 on transit has troubling implications on transportation equity, and the Port of Seattle Commission has made the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion a core consideration as we carry out our state-authorized mission to support economic development. Passage of the initiative would not only harm the ability of cities to build infrastructure and partner with entities such as the state and port districts to reduce congestion, it would also diminish the availability of transit services. Transit keeps single-occupancy vehicles off roads, promoting mobility for all modes. But it also is key to providing economic opportunity to historically underserved groups, who may live far from urban centers and need transportation options to support fair employment. Therefore, from a social justice and economic equity perspective, the implications of Initiative 976 are concerning.

In addition to the deleterious impacts Initiative 976 would have on city road and transit funding and state transportation funding across the board, it would also harm Sound Transit 3, approved by voters in 2016. Because of how the initiative is written, it is not clear yet what the exact impact to Sound Transit would be. However, estimates have pointed to a potential \$20 billion hit to Sound Transit 3, which was a \$54 billion package overall. The success of Sound

Transit 3 has broad implications for the Port, including in our efforts to promote light rail access to the airport. Meanwhile, the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions, and the Sounder South Expansion, are key to reducing congestion and speeding the movement of freight, and serve as additional examples of negative outcomes that could result from passage of I-976.

For the reasons outlined in the above statement, the Port of Seattle views potential adoption of Initiative 976 as a direct threat to its core mission of promoting economic development and developing industrial facilities to serve regional trade activity.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ATTACHED

Full text of Initiative 976, as submitted to the Washington Secretary of State