



2011 State of the City Address
Mayor Mike McGinn
February 22, 2011
As prepared for delivery

Guests, council members, and the people of Seattle: Good afternoon. I am pleased to be here with you for this annual message.

And councilmembers, it is a pleasure. It's no secret that we disagree on some things. But it seems to be a secret how much we work together.

Specific call-outs to councilmembers:

Conlin – CTAC 3

Rasmussen – working together on Metro funding

Harrell – Open Government 2.0

Godden – working with us on a difficult budget

Clark – Rental Housing Inspection ordinance

Licata – Nightlife Initiative OR homelessness

Burgess – Families and Ed Levy, which we will talk about more later.

Bagshaw – Seattle Center: Chihuly/KEXP

O'Brien – Improving the sustainability of our utilities

But it is also true that we have, on occasion, vigorous disagreement. There's a reason for that. We face extraordinary challenges. And the stakes are high – because we care about our future.

I saw the President's State of the Union address. It moved me. Four weeks ago, President Obama stepped into the well of the House of Representatives and issued a challenge to America: "Win the future." In Seattle, we can help win the future. If there has ever been a city poised to help the President win the future, it is Seattle – right here and right now.

President Obama told us that, "From the earliest days of our founding, America has been the story of ordinary people who dare to dream. That's how we win the future." He could have been speaking of Seattle. For the last 160 years, Seattle has attracted innovators, builders, and hardworking people who saw in our city a chance to make the



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life they had always wanted.

I want to talk about what the City of Seattle will do in 2011 and beyond to win the future. To prepare for a new global economy. We will make sure that everyone in this city is included in that prosperity. We will protect and renew our quality of life. And we will build the next-generation infrastructure that makes all of it possible.

We are asked to do more than lead city government. The public expects us to provide them the tools they need to win Seattle's future.

We have that potential. And we have extraordinary assets in this city. We are blessed to have a beautiful harbor, surrounded by strong manufacturing and a world-class maritime sector. We have a wealth of educational institutions and innovative companies, both large and small, that are creating the new economy.

A diverse and educated population brings talent from all over the globe to our city. We have a thriving arts and cultural scene and strong, proud neighborhoods.

Not only that. Cities are the places where the future will be won. There's a physics of cities – the combination of educated, creative, passionate people who are brought together in one place.

The physics of cities means walkable neighborhoods, with people living near their jobs. That dramatically reduces our impact on Puget Sound, farmland, forests, and even our atmosphere. Which, as the scientists soberly inform us, will be dramatically changed unless we change our ways.

In that change lays economic opportunity. Cities that capture the value of reduced waste and emissions to create local jobs are cities that will lead in a tough global economy.

In his State of the Union speech, President Obama spoke of three primary areas that are essential to winning the future: Innovation, Education, and Infrastructure. Here in Seattle, we will lead on all three. The president said that, "We know what it takes to compete for the jobs and industries of our time. We need to out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build the rest of the world." He's right. That is what we need to do in Seattle in 2011. Seattle can out-innovate, out-educate, and out-build anyone.

We will get there by working hard to create new jobs. We will make sure that our children will succeed in safe neighborhoods. We will begin investing in the next



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generation of our city's infrastructure, including broadband, high-capacity transit, and the seawall. And we will provide an open, responsive and accountable city government that uses our financial resources efficiently.

President Obama said the first step to winning the future is innovation. Let me turn to jobs first. We know that Seattle is still hurting. After three years of recession, jobs are still hard to find. That's why last August we launched the Seattle Jobs Plan. It is based on the values of innovation and shared prosperity. By shared prosperity I mean that it's not enough that the city prospers, but that we widen the circle of prosperity to include all of Seattle.

Here's what we've done.

To support the success of Seattle entrepreneurs and businesses, we visited 485 companies to learn about their business and identify how we can help them grow. The city has already directly assisted 91 of those businesses.

We have also formalized a new "Business Advocacy Team" that is trouble-shooting regulatory and permit problems that businesses face.

Our Seattle Jobs Plan has delivered \$32.5 million in new financing to 79 businesses, retaining or creating 630 jobs. For example, West Seattle Thriftway received a \$1.9 million loan to improve energy efficiency in the store, helping lower costs and keeping existing jobs in place.

When Abdirizak Dodi needed a wheelchair-accessible taxi we extended him a \$35,000 loan, enabling Mr. Dodi to accomplish his goal of operating and managing his own taxi. That's a good job for him, and it directs services to seniors and individuals with disabilities.

In Southeast Seattle, Farmers Market and Grocery received a \$25,000 loan through the city's Healthy Foods Here program, helping this corner grocery store expand its product offerings and attract more customers from the surrounding neighborhoods. Fifteen more grocery stores will participate in this Healthy Foods Here incentive program.

In 2011, leveraging federal grants, we will deliver more than \$48 million in financing for small to medium sized businesses.

We are also investing in the skills of our workers.



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- Last year, 1,000 low-income adults received education and training services as a result of our investments.
- More than 250 of them secured jobs that resulted in a \$5,000 to \$10,000 annual increase in earnings.
- Many have earned up to 30 credits toward a college degree that can open the door to even better-paying jobs.

Let me share just one example of how this training has made a difference in someone's life. Two years ago Jeremy lost his job. Very quickly, he and his family found themselves homeless and living out of their car. Jeremy took any odd job he could find. He heard about Seattle Jobs Initiative and enrolled in SJI's welding training program. At first, Jeremy felt like he might be wasting his time because he wasn't bringing any money home to his family and he was unsure if he'd find a job when he was finished because times were tough all over. But, after spending 11 weeks developing and refining his welding skills and not missing a day of training, Jeremy realized the benefit of his hard work and persistence when he was one of the first of his classmates to secure a welding position with Genie Industries.

To help more people like Jeremy, we will step up our efforts this year on workforce education. We are partnering with the Seattle community colleges, a key source of career training, to increase the number of low-income young adults who complete certifications and degrees that lead to good paying jobs.

These are all important steps, but President Obama has called us to think bigger. Last month, the president issued the Better Building Challenge to America, calling on the country to make significant reductions in energy usage in commercial buildings. Mr. President, Seattle accepts your challenge.

We've already started. The 2030 District is a partnership of businesses, government and nonprofit – to create America's first high-performance building district right here in Seattle. Together we will make large reductions in energy use, water use and automobile emissions in Seattle.

We've started in our own city buildings. We will invest nearly \$2 million in energy efficiency projects this year, and in 2012 we will spend another \$4 million. We will make sure all city buildings are at least 20 percent more efficient by 2020.

We have launched Community Power Works, which will leverage more than \$100 million to retrofit homes and apartment buildings over the next three years. I see Michael Woo is here – please stand up. Thank you for your work on this project.



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Because of you and everyone else involved in this project, we will reduce utility bills and clean up our environment. And we're going to make sure that we give these jobs to the people who need it the most.

That's what we're doing so far. The Better Building Challenge requires more. Seattle, President Obama has challenged us. Now I am challenging you to show Seattle will lead. I am asking local businesses, our contractors, our workers in city government to take the lead on the president's Better Building Challenge.

Take one Seattle business – Optimum Energy. Founded by Nathan Rothman, it makes sophisticated computer controllers that regulate commercial buildings' systems to permanently reduce energy consumption, up to 60 percent in some cases.

This year, the company added 20 percent to its workforce in Pioneer Square, and it expects another 20 percent growth in 2011.

Optimum Energy is using local talent and Seattle innovation to improve energy efficiency all across the country — in Texas, California, New York, Boston.

But it still hasn't installed a project in the Puget Sound.

If we are to win the future with clean technology companies, we need to challenge the owners of our Northwest buildings to call up companies like Optimum Energy.

And if we do to that we won't just meet the president's challenge, we will lead it. We will be the innovation center that helps other cities meet the challenge.

President Obama's second point in his State of the Union address was that America faces a new "Sputnik moment." We must help prepare the next generation – our children and young adults – to succeed. As President Obama explained, "Over the next 10 years, nearly half of all new jobs will require education that goes beyond a high school education. And yet, many of our students aren't even finishing high school. The quality of our country's math and science education lags behind many other nations. America has fallen to ninth in the proportion of young people with a college degree. And so the question is whether all of us – as citizens, and as parents – are willing to do what's necessary to give every child a chance to succeed."

President Obama could be talking about our schools right here in Seattle. And right



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now, we are failing our students.

Seattle has one of the most educated populations of any city in the country. But our children aren't catching up – in particular students of color. In 2010 only 13 percent of African American students and 24 percent of Latino students met the state's 10th-grade math standard, compared with 68 percent of white students. This is unacceptable and unjust. Seattle must do better.

In some schools, Seattle is already doing better. Four of our middle schools – Denny, Mercer, Hamilton, and Aki Kurose – have used funds from the current Families and Education Levy to produce significant improvements in student learning.

Mercer Middle School is one of many Families and Education Levy success stories. Mercer's students represent the full diversity of Seattle. Ninety-four percent of the students are from communities of color. Nearly 75 percent are on free and reduced lunch. For most schools in this city and this country, those statistics would predict a high rate of student failure.

Not at Mercer. Principal Andhra Lutz has used the flexibility afforded by Families and Education Levy funding to create programs that help keep students in the classroom – and provide the support outside of class that they need to stay focused. The results speak for themselves. Mercer students are outperforming their peers around the state in math. Eighty-eight percent of students have met their grade-level standards in reading and math.

The Families and Education Levy helped make this happen. It gave Principal Lutz the freedom and flexibility to create new programs such as intervention for students struggling with math or with their attendance.

Programs aren't just funded – they are held accountable by the city's Office For Education. If something isn't working, then the money will be redirected to programs that are showing results.

Success breeds success. This year Mercer has received one of the first 14 state grants



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in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. President Obama has challenged Americans to improve student learning in precisely those areas of education. We're doing it at Mercer.

Mercer's working better, and that's great But it's not good enough to elevate just a few schools. School choice is gone. What that means is if you live in a neighborhood with a bad school, you're out of luck. Parents no longer have a choice. The levy will help schools across the city. But we're going to make the deepest investments in the schools and neighborhoods that need the most help.

That's why I started the Youth and Families Initiative, a community engagement process that shaped our Families and Education Levy renewal. More than 3,000 people participated in over 130 community meetings, including the Kids and Families Congress held in June. The community made it very clear to us that helping their children get the tools and support they needed to succeed was one of their highest priorities.

Thanks to the hard work of the community, Kevin Washington and our Levy Advisory Committee, and Councilmember Tim Burgess, we produced a Families and Education Levy renewal that reflects the community's priorities. The \$231 million proposal serves an important goal: **All students in Seattle will graduate from high school ready for college or a career.** The levy renewal will meet that goal by funding programs that the Seattle Public Schools budget doesn't cover. We will improve children's readiness for school. We will boost students' academic achievement and reduce the academic achievement gap.

This isn't your school district's operating levy. This money is directly invested in programs that help our children and families. We fund things like preschools, health clinics, tutoring, summer school, and similar wraparound programs. We need to fully fund the proposed Families and Education Levy efforts in each of these five areas if we are going to help our children succeed.

This is very clearly a moral issue. I suggest to you this is also a bedrock economic issue. As Baby Boomers retire, the new workforce will be diverse – up to 40 percent will be people of color. We will fail to compete on the global stage if we write them off today.

This investment reflects Seattle's values. We believe that it is our responsibility to all of



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our families to help them provide a better life for their children. We believe that fixing our schools is one of the most important things we can do together. And we believe that supporting this Families and Education Levy, as we have done three times since 1990, is one of the most valuable things we can do with our money.

Let's speak honestly about what's happening to education in the State of Washington. Tim Eyman has set this state on a path that will let our schools collapse and our children fail in order to save a few dollars. Mr. Eyman, you may have talked the rest of the state into destroying what we hold dear. But we are drawing a line around Seattle, at the city limit. It won't happen here. We're not going to stand by and watch public education fail in Seattle. That's why we're doubling the Families and Education Levy. I ask Council to stand with the community and stand for Seattle values and place this levy on the ballot as recommended.

The Levy is one part of our Youth and Families Initiative. We are also working with other funders – the school district, foundations, United Way and labor to coordinate our spending better. We are reviewing existing spending in City government to make sure it's doing the most good. And we're working with community groups. That's where we need you.

President Obama put it best: "While our government can provide every opportunity imaginable for us to serve our communities, now it is up to each of us to seize those opportunities." He called on all Americans to stand up and do what they can to serve their communities, shape our history and enrich both their own lives and the lives of others across this country. We need to do that in Seattle too.

I love volunteers. The best volunteers work on what they believe in the most. But I have some suggestions for you. We know that if students can't read by third grade, they will struggle in every subject and will be much more likely to drop out if they don't achieve these skills. If you can read, you can help a third-grader to read.

I'm also asking you to step up and mentor our youth at risk. Mentoring programs help teens get the support they need to graduate high school and go to college. I know the value of mentoring because it helped shape my own family. My father was just 16 when his own father died. He became a community leader, and would never have done so without mentors when he needed them the most. So contact me at mike.mcgin@seattle.gov. We'll connect you with the community groups that are



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providing mentoring and third-grade reading opportunities.

If our children will succeed, they need to be safe. And so we need to take a moment and discuss public safety in Seattle.

Good policing is done in a way that respects our community and its values – and delivers justice fairly for it to be effective. Good policing brings those values into everyday work with the community. We cannot keep our communities safe without building and maintaining the trust between officers and the people they serve. That trust is essential to keeping crime rates low – and to providing the racial and social justice to which we remain deeply committed.

What if Seattle had the kind of police officers who reached out to kids to teach them how law enforcement worked – and build trust with the community? We do. Officer Adrian Diaz, please stand up. You should see him at the South Park Community Center at late-night basketball, working on the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative. Officer Diaz also is responsible for the department's Police Explorers. Explorers is a youth program for those not necessarily who have an interest in law enforcement, but for all youth – giving them an opportunity to learn about the profession and become involved in police operations. The program is open to youth between the ages of 13 and 21. He's doing a great job at this important work. Thank you, Officer Diaz, for your service.

What if we had the kind of police officers that would walk kids to school and help them set up after-school programs? We do. Officer Denise Bouldin, please stand up. Also known as "Cookie" by many, Officer Bouldin began the Chess Club that is now a huge ongoing success in the Rainier Valley. She was looking for an activity about three years ago that could be used to prevent youth violence. Discussing it over with some kids officers were playing with, someone suggested a chess tournament. That led to the Chess Club, where kids are learning consequences – consequences of their actions in chess and in real life. Thank you, Officer Bouldin, for your service.

What if we had the kind of police officers who got to know their neighborhoods by walking them, talking with residents and businesses, and solving problems before they get big? We do. Officers Robert Besaw and Tom Burns, please stand up. These officers are beat cops in Belltown. They grew up in West Seattle together. And they know the people on their beat. They know the business owners, the neighbors, the homeless, and



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others in the community. By working with individuals in the Belltown area who need a place to sleep or a place to get help, these officers are able to identify and problems as they arise and quickly address them to help keep the community safe. Officers Burns and Besaw, Thank you for your combined 45 years of service.

These officers demonstrate every day what it means to protect and to serve. This is what we expect from the Seattle Police Department. But we have more work to do. Here's what we're doing right now. We have 30 more officers on the street and more foot patrols. We've started a new late night public safety initiative, and are using innovative programs like bringing a mental health officer on staff to do a better job of providing people the help they need. Later this year we are launching a new program in Belltown to address community concerns about open-air drug dealing by providing tightly supervised treatment options for non-violent offenders.

Let's talk about the numbers. We had 6 percent fewer major crimes in Seattle in 2010 than in 2009 – one of the lowest levels in decades. We saw substantial drops in homicide (14 percent) and robbery (20 percent). Overall, violent crime is down 9 percent. Property crime is down by 5 percent, although we did see a slight increase in vehicle theft and aggravated assault.

Statistics alone don't tell the whole story. Our officers do this work despite the dangers they face. They showed bravery in the manhunt for Maurice Clemons, even after he had gunned down four of their colleagues in Lakewood. And I know that the death of Timothy Brenton weighs heavily on the minds of our officers.

We expect more of our police force than simply responding to crime. We also expect that in every interaction between a member of the public and the police, people should trust and respect the police officers they encounter.

Right now, that trust is in danger because of the hateful words and tragic actions of some of our police officers. And it's also in danger because it looks like nothing's being done about it. Believe me, I understand that frustration.

The easy path for me would be to simply fire these officers. But if the rules aren't followed, the civil service commission or a judge could put them right back on the force. That's frustrating. We have layers of contracts and civil service rules that place a higher priority on an officer's job than public trust and confidence that we will hold officers



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accountable for their actions. And while this process takes a long time, I urge people to stay tuned.

We've already seen the first example. The police department's own Firearms Review Board correctly found that the shooting of John T. Williams was unjustified. They took away Ian Birk's badge, his gun, and determined he should not wear the uniform of the Seattle Police Department. That was the right thing to do. We have more cases coming up and you will judge whether we do the right thing in resolving them.

But we're not going to solve this problem just by firing cops after they make a big mistake on camera. We've got to get ahead of this problem.

We all have work to do. We have reorganized our command staff to implement our priorities of Fighting Crime, Reducing Fear and Building Community. I will hold Chief Diaz and the command staff accountable and expect these priorities to be implemented fully.

The officers of the Seattle Police Department have work to do as well. There is no place in the Seattle Police Department for those who do not share our values. That includes our commitment to racial and social justice. That includes our commitment to treating every member of the public with respect. That includes our commitment to working with the public as partners, instead of treating them as people to be commanded.

Improving our police department requires more than holding our current officers accountable for their actions. It requires us to think differently about how we recruit and build a police force that serves the public well.

Right now, just 18% of our police officers live in Seattle. 82% don't. It's hard to have a good local police force if the police aren't local. State law prevents us from requiring officers to live in this city. But we have over 300 officers who are eligible for retirement. That gives us an opportunity to recruit officers from the community and who understand our community and its values.

And we will do that. We will expand the targeting pool for new officers, to seek those who have the life experience and maturity to meet the high standards we have for the Seattle Police Department. We want a police force that looks like Seattle.

It's going to take more. DOJ may force changes. Some of those changes will force the



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union to come to the table and work around solutions that will help us hold officers accountable. Frankly, statements from the union suggest they are in a state of denial about the nature and severity of this problem. They need to face facts. The union has a responsibility to step up and be part of the solution. They owe it to their members. Serving as a cop in a city that doesn't trust cops is an awful position to place their members.

I also ask the community to work with us as we implement these changes. And I know that you will hold me accountable too. We won't win the future if we don't have trust that our community will be safe.

President Obama said that the third step to winning America's future is building the next generation infrastructure. I'm quoting him here: "To attract new businesses to our shores, we need the fastest, most reliable ways to move people, goods, and information -- from high-speed rail to high-speed Internet."

I'm going to talk about both, and I'll talk about broadband first.

When I talk about broadband, we're not talking about the speeds you get on your cable modem. We're talking about providing fiber optic cable to your home or your business. Remember when you had to hook your computer up to your phone? It was pretty cool at first, but then it became limiting. Then you got a cable modem. Remember how much better it was than dialup? Well, going to fiber optic cable from your current Internet connection is going to be even better. The jump in speed is astounding. And so will the jump in innovation.

Right now, the government of Australia is wiring their entire country with fiber optic cable. China is spending billions to expand their broadband, which already reaches more people than in North America. Yet our fiber networks are falling behind. As the Seattle Times recognized in an editorial earlier this month, slow speeds and unreliable service will make us uncompetitive in the global economy. I'm with the Seattle Times on this one.

We can see these problems here in Seattle. You may know that Pioneer Square has a new cluster of high-tech businesses. They will need fiber optic cable to compete.

Undead Labs is one of those businesses. It's a game development studio founded in 2009 by Jeff Strain. Jeff had a game company in Bellevue for many years, but when he founded Undead Labs, he wanted to do something different.



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Jeff's business runs on people. And he moved here from Bellevue because Pioneer Square is where he can find the people he needs to innovate and build his company. As Jeff explained it, his company needs to be located in a neighborhood that is creative, cultural, and centrally located in order to attract the top tech and artistic talent that Undead Labs has to have in order to thrive. He could not attract the same quality employees in the suburbs – for them, the Pioneer Square experience is just as important and exciting as the work they are doing creating an online world full of zombies.

That's why historic districts are more than just history. That's why art is more than just art. That's why the Nightlife Initiative is more than nightlife. It's about creating a place that people want to come to so that when companies want to recruit the best people in the world, they can come here. That's the physics of cities at work.

Pioneer Square meets Jeff's values. But it isn't meeting his technical needs. Unlike Bellevue, the broadband service he gets from current providers in Seattle is, in his words, "barely adequate." Jeff predicts that in three to five years, Undead Labs will have to leave Pioneer Square because there is not enough bandwidth for his fast-growing company. By then, he will be taking 50 jobs with him.

For Jeff and other businesses, a fast, reliable broadband connection is as important as electricity and running water.

Seattle is one of the Internet capitals of the world. And we're going to have a company leave because they can't get fast enough internet? We cannot win the future like that. We're going to have to do something about it.

Without better broadband, we will not be able to attract, let alone maintain high tech businesses and jobs in Pioneer Square.

We can help Jeff and his neighbors. Here's how.

Right now, Seattle City Light is opening up four blocks along First Avenue in Pioneer Square for utility work. We are taking advantage of that existing project to lay conduit while the street is open. We are asking broadband providers to partner with us and pull their fiber through our conduit so that, together, we can serve businesses like Jeff's.

If private providers won't do it, then we will figure out how to do it ourselves.



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But it's not just Pioneer Square and it's not just businesses. When I was in Beacon Hill the other day, I heard from residents that they can't get good internet service.

If we are going to win the future, we need to do better than this.

I'll tell you a little known fact. The City of Seattle has more than 500 miles of fiber that we've already paid for, and much of it is just lying there, unused. There's a name for it - it's called dark fiber.

In Jeff's case, we have to go four extra blocks to reach him. But there are companies all over Seattle that are sitting right next to that dark fiber. For most people, this would be a no-brainer - hook them up. But there's a law on the books that prevent us from doing that. When we laid the fiber 15 years ago, we had a law that said we wouldn't connect the private sector to it. That's unacceptable. We've got to get our act together and fix this.

Innovation should not be constrained by obsolete agreements. But it is in Seattle, where the City's ability to promote economic development through the provision of basic infrastructure has been so severely limited that we are expected to watch as local businesses struggle to access essential services like broadband. Jeff said that, "City government is supposed to drive the economic future of the community." He's absolutely right. Let's lower this barrier and empower Seattle's innovators.

Now I want to talk about transit. The next-generation infrastructure requires us to move people as well as information. We have to use our money wisely and make smart investments.

President Obama wants to bring high-speed rail to 80 percent of Americans in the next 25 years. I support that goal, and have already pledged to work with the mayors of Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, British Columbia, to connect us with high speed rail service.

Now, President Obama is focused on connecting cities. I'm focused on connecting neighborhoods. Here in Seattle, many of our neighborhoods do not have any passenger rail transportation at all. We are helping Sound Transit bring light rail to Capitol Hill, the University District, Roosevelt, and Northgate. And this year, we will break ground on the First Hill Streetcar project.



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That's a good start. But it's not enough. We know that transit in Seattle could be better.

We're working with Sound Transit to bring light rail to Capitol Hill, U-District, and Northgate. But understand that when they build that stop at Northgate, that will be the last stop they build in Seattle for 30 years. I'm not being a pessimist. That's just a pragmatic plan – and I support it. Those suburban cities need to be connected to be transit.

But we have some serious transportation needs of our own in Seattle that won't wait 30 years. When our neighborhoods took on density, we made a promise that we'd connect them with high-capacity transit to help them move people around. Government needs to fulfill its part of the bargain.

It's no secret that I support rail, which is one of the ways that we can increase capacity. Part of what we've learned through early outreach on the Transit Master Plan is that the public supports rail, too. 57 percent of those who responded to our Transit Master Plan survey said they want rail to connect to major destinations within the city.

When the Transit Master Plan is finished this summer, we'll know which corridors are the best for high capacity modes such as rail. And I will send to Council a Transit Master Plan for high capacity transit, including the kind of rail that makes sense for our overburdened corridors. We can reduce the \$4 billion we send out of our region to buy fossil fuels. We want to spend that money here in our economy.

Another high priority corridor that needs rail is the 520 Bridge. Right now the state plans to build a six-lane bridge, which will flow into the current four-lane highway in Seattle at Foster Island. They're engineering a traffic jam right next to the Arboretum and in Seattle's neighborhoods. And it's not going to be light-rail ready.

In addition, this bridge is planned to have variable tolling, which means that during various times of the day, the toll could be \$7 or \$8 roundtrip. If they're going to charge \$8 to cross the bridge, we need to give people a low-cost transit choice - otherwise we've just spent \$4 billion on bridge for rich people.

Last month I participated in a town hall meeting at Microsoft. Many of their employees are Seattle residents, and they told me how their commute across the lake on 520 would be greatly improved if light rail were available.



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We still have a chance to get this right. They're still designing the Seattle end of the bridge. If they design it for highway traffic and not light rail, we'll never get a chance to link our premier university with our premier high-tech center.

As some of you may know, I've made my views about this clear. I know that some people would prefer I go along quietly with these decisions. But I'm not going to apologize for standing up for Seattle. At the beginning of the speech I told you there were some things worth fighting about. We're not going to win the future unless we change how we plan to win the future.

There is more to providing an effective transportation system for a modern city than just the high-capacity projects I described.

Each year we're building miles of new sidewalks, bike lanes and crosswalks to make it easier for people to walk, bike and get to transit. By providing more choices, we can save people money, create safer, healthier communities, and create jobs. A recent study in Baltimore showed that projects to build bike and pedestrian infrastructure creates twice as many jobs as do projects to build roads and highways. We want to ensure all Seattleites have affordable and safe ways to get around.

That is the philosophy behind our Walk, Bike, Ride initiative. Better transportation isn't about the elite. It's about helping Seattle residents make better streets and better places.

One of my favorite examples comes from the Bitter Lake neighborhood. Along Linden Avenue, just north of 130th Street, there are about 1,000 seniors who live in apartment buildings and condos. It's one of the densest parts of the North End. And for many years, they didn't have any sidewalks.

A team of people was determined to do something about it. One of them, Richard Dyksterhuis, is here today. A retired teacher, he fought for four years to get the City to fix Linden Avenue and provide sidewalks, bike lanes, and create a street that was safe for all its users. He rallied his community behind his vision of "a world with sidewalks and neighbors who smile at you, who know you by name, who like you."

Their efforts paid off. In the 2011 budget, we were able to fund the entire 17 block Linden Avenue complete streets project. We break ground in October, and will finish in 2012. Thank you, Richard, for your hard work and your persistence.



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It will include sidewalks, ramps and curbs, along with a pedestrian crossing near the community center to help people get around. It includes dedicated bike lanes that help us complete the Interurban Trail. It helps get parked cars out of the way of pedestrians and bicyclists, and rechannels the road to produce safer speeds.

In 2011 we will launch more projects like this to help us create great urban places. There are projects like Linden Avenue all across this city that need to be priorities too. And you shouldn't have to have power brokers or big campaign donors behind it for it to get done in this city. Because people like Richard matter.

Part of Walk, Bike, Ride is building better urban places. Next month I will transmit to Council an ordinance to make it easier for mobile food vendors to get permits to operate in public spaces and vacant lots around the city. Not only will this help individuals start their own mobile food vending business, but it will help create vibrant urban places, and will be particularly helpful in supporting our nightlife industry, which is an important source of jobs and income for our City.

As we work on building better urban places, we must also focus our attention on building a better waterfront. That begins with the Elliott Bay Seawall. As you know, the existing seawall is 100 years old – the first timbers were laid in 1911 – and the structure is unsafe. 40 to 50 percent of the timbers supporting the seawall have been severely damaged by the tides, earthquakes, and even worms. If the seawall failed, Elliott Bay could be lapping at First Avenue.

We just saw a reminder of the risks we face. Our thoughts and prayers are with our friends and colleagues in Christchurch, Seattle's sister city in New Zealand, which hours ago was struck by a devastating earthquake. I want to extend condolences to the families of those who have perished and encourage generous donations to the relief effort. Donations can be sent to the Seattle Christchurch Sister City Association or the New Zealand Red Cross. We'll have their information available on my website. This is a devastating tragedy for Christchurch and a sobering reminder of the vulnerability of the seawall.

We've known about this problem for 10 years, and that we have to fund it by placing a proposal on the ballot. It's time for the Council to move forward with me on this plan.

By now the public knows that Council and I are divided on the deep bore tunnel. I



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believe the project is too expensive and too risky. Council doesn't share that view.

We need to let the public decide. Given that it is the taxpayers of Seattle who will be at risk if this project goes over budget, they are entitled to a vote on this project. When we are talking about a project of this magnitude, this expense, and this risk, the public deserves to make the choice.

We have laid out an ambitious agenda here today. That's appropriate if we are to meet the president's challenge to help him win the future. We are asking the public to partner with us in some important initiatives and projects in 2011:

- create jobs and meet the president's Better Building Challenge.
- help our children succeed by passing the Families and Education Levy
- bring better broadband to our businesses.
- bring rail and other high-capacity transportation to our neighborhoods.
- Fund the seawall and decide on the tunnel.

If we are going to convince the public to work with us on these important priorities, they need to have confidence that their City government will efficiently and accountably use the resources they give us. They need to have confidence that we will respond to their needs and concerns.

What would you think if we set measurable outcomes for what we wanted to achieve and publicize them for everybody to see?

We've done that. We have made available to the public the performance agreements that I have with all of my department directors. For the first time, the annual goals of every department are online. And you can judge for yourself how well we're meeting those goals.

What if every employee in this city committed to working to reduce spending? The City's public employee unions did that. They came forward and agreed to forego their pay raise to help us protect services. City employees, thank you.

And for the first time in years, we're going to sit down with our employees and listen to



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them to actively find savings in how we operate as a government. The people on the front lines have good ideas. It's time they were heard.

We're also not going to stand for mediocrity in government. We're starting a new program to start performance management, designed to get employees into the right jobs, give them the right skills, and make them better.

This isn't just about making sure that we keep the best performers in the city. It's about improving the performance of every employee. That can be done. Seattle Public Utilities has done it. In 2009 they fell far short of their standard of quickly responding to customer calls. Spending more money to add staff wasn't working. So they found ways to make their systems more efficient. They used technology better. They trained their employees better. And they instituted monthly performance evaluations of all call center agents.

The results speak for themselves. By the end of 2010, even though a dozen call center agents retired, and staffing is back down to 2007 levels, the call center has hit its service level target four months running. That's better performance than we've had in a couple of years. And we didn't have to hire new staff to do it.

We are holding ourselves and each other accountable to a higher standard. We are dedicated to working with you. That's why we want you fully engaged. In addition to our performance agreements now being online, we've launched our Engage Seattle project to better connect our government to you.

For City government to be responsive, it must be open, accessible, and transparent.

We just launched My.Seattle.Gov, a web service which allows users to create and customize their own Seattle.gov homepage. Ultimately, My.Seattle.Gov will provide web customers the ability to log in once to access all the city services they need, in the way that works best for them.

More additions to the City's online presence are coming soon, including **Seattle Speaks**, a new tool where constituents and City officials can discuss issues in an open and online forum; and **Ask.Seattle.Gov**, a new site for Seattle residents to directly engage decision-makers in city government.

I'm going to be out there in public too. You'll see me at town halls and walking tours.



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And it won't just be me. I'm going to bring department heads and employees with me. We're going to stop evaluating rules and regulations on what's easier for government, and instead base it on what's best for you.

It's important to get this right.

For too long, City leaders have not been responsive to the people. We have good people working here at the City, but they cannot do their jobs and help residents build a better Seattle if their leaders are not committed to working hard to respond to public concerns.

Many communities in our City have been left behind by previous economic booms. They feel that their neighborhoods are neglected. They feel that their families are being forsaken. As the recession spread through the City in recent years, more and more people began to feel the same way.

Government wasn't listening to them, and wasn't really focusing on their problems. We need to change. The old economy won't save us. The jobs we lost aren't the ones we're getting back. They'll be new and different jobs. Innovators will help us create economic recovery and win the future.

But this isn't just about changing our economy. It's about changing our politics. Just like the old economy won't save us, the old politics won't save us either. Here's what I mean.

The old politics was the power brokers and the elites going behind closed doors to decide what's best for us. They decided things for the special interest and not the public interest. The new politics asks all of you to participate.

The old politics is "logrolling" – where every project gets funded, to make everybody happy. But we don't have the money for that. The new politics puts those choices on the table, openly and transparently.

Under the old politics, the riskiest thing we could do is change. The new politics understands that the riskiest thing we can do is refuse to change.

We can't help President Obama win the future if we are scared of change.

It is by being open, accountable, and responsive – that we will enable the new economy and create the conditions that secure our own shared prosperity for the generations to



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come.

With the new politics, we can fulfill our own pledge to our country. Mr. President, you challenged us to win the future. On behalf of the people of Seattle, we are ready, willing, and we are very able to lead the way. Thank you.