

Rick Brater – Appointee for Road Services Division

Questionnaire for Executive Department and Key Subordinate Unit Appointees

Appointee: Please prepare written answer to the below questions and return the answers to the lead staff for the Committee of the Whole no later than the close of business on March 13, 2019. This questionnaire will be printed in the committee packet, provided to the Councilmembers and become part of the public record of your appointment.

1. *Please describe your experience and what qualifies you to lead the agency to which you have been nominated?*

I have worked for over 30 years in the Puget Sound Region in various transportation agencies including Washington State Department of Transportation, Washington State Ferries and King County Road Services Division. I appreciate the opportunity to utilize this experience and my skill set as the Director of the Road Services Division. I feel that I can contribute to the integration of the Road Services Division into the new Department of Local Services consistent with its mission. Road Services Division has a history of engaging the community and building relationships with the residents of the unincorporated area of King County, and this new department will allow greater collaboration with other county agencies to address constituent concerns.

During my 19 years with the King County Road Services Division, I have served as the Engineering Services Section Manager, the County Road Engineer, and now Interim Road Services Division Director. As the Road Services Division Director Designee I am working collaboratively with the new Department of Local Services leadership team to bring a new department into operation and to seamlessly provide effective leadership to staff during the transition to the new department. I have built positive relations with staff across this highly unionized and complex transportation organization by leading teams, collaborating with labor, and providing clear direction.

I bring strong technical skills to the position including management of large and complex projects and programs. I directed and managed the Washington State Ferries Ferry Terminal project for eight years. This included oversight of design and construction for all Washington State Ferries Ferry Terminal projects. As the King County Road Engineer and as the Engineering Services Section Manager, I have managed and delivered nearly \$900 million worth of road infrastructure projects.

Given the exceptional funding challenges the Road Services Division has faced, I led the development and implementation of a risk based asset management system that ensures the safety for the users of the road network, maximizes the effectiveness of road fund investments and slows the decline of the system to the greatest extent possible.

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Communication and partnerships with stakeholders are critical to the county's ability to meet its vision for the Road Services Division in the unincorporated area of King County. As the Road Services Division Director, I will work collaboratively with the executive, council, residents, the Washington State County Road Administration Board, regional, state and federal entities, and across county departments to address road issues in the unincorporated area of King County.

As the King County Road Engineer and Engineering Services Section Manager, I led the successful replacement of the South Park Bridge, a \$160 million project that required building relationships with a diverse community of interests, including partnerships with the Muckleshoot Tribe, and agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration, Washington State Department of Transportation, City of Seattle, Port of Seattle and the City of Tukwila along with other key stakeholders. Delivering a new moveable bridge located at a superfund site that has listed fish species at the location of the bridge was a significant achievement for the county and region.

Equally important is the ability to meet and work with constituents of King County. Over the years, I have worked directly with residents and neighborhood organizations to address issues on their streets and neighborhoods.

King County, the new Department of Local Services and the Road Services Division will need to be strategic, creative, collaborative and passionate in order to meet the challenges ahead for the County and the Road Services Division. With over 30 years of experience working in transportation agencies, I understand what it takes to meet these challenges and look forward to serving as the Director of the Road Services Division.

2. King County has a well-established policy for examining and considering equity and social justice in its decision-making process. Please describe your thoughts on the topic and how you plan to advance these goals in your leadership of the agency?

As the King County Road Services Division Director I am fully committed to implementing the county's goals as outlined in the Strategic Plan for Equity and Social Justice. The Road Services Division has a unique opportunity to make improvements to change the character, accessibility, safety and mobility of historically disadvantaged communities. These improvements can have an immediate, real and meaningful impact for historically disadvantaged communities in King County. As the Director of the Road Services Division, I understand the linkage between the Road Services Division's

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responsibilities and how we can achieve significant movement towards the King County Equity and Social Justice goals.

In order to best meet the needs of county residents, it is critical that we carefully consider projects through an equity perspective. The Road Services Division evaluates projects and programs using census data and other relevant demographic and community data, to better understand the socio-economic context and inform pro-equity strategies. For example, when selecting bridge replacements for the proposed Bridge Safety Program, Road Services Division staff used a pro-equity project scoring methodology developed by King County Parks. When prioritizing emergency snow and ice response, the Road Services Division prioritizes King County Metro's highest priority transit routes, which may be the only source of transportation for lower-income residents.

One of our best equity tools is grant opportunities. Through grants, we can leverage our funding to provide road-related capital improvements that serve the needs of communities whose residents are low-income, racially/ethnically diverse, or have limited English proficiency. A good example is the White Center-Greenbridge Connector Project where the grant provided funding for an ADA friendly staircase and pedestrian bridge linking the westside of Greenbridge and 11th Avenue SW as part of the White Center revitalization and increased the ability for walking or biking in the community.

Internally, the Road Services Division will continue to train and educate our staff on equity and social justice principles. We are working with the Department of Local Services leadership to implement a very rigorous training approach in which all employees will participate in equity and social just basics training annually, and supervisors and above are required to take at least 48 hours of advanced equity and social justice training biennially.

At this time, a unique opportunity exists to make large strides forward in creating a more diverse workforce in the Road Services Division. In 2019-2020, approximately 20% of the current staff in the division will be eligible for retirement because they have either reached the age of 65 or have completed 30 years of service. As our employees retire, we will continue to utilize equity and social justice recruitment goals as part of our succession planning and build a strong skilled and diverse workforce for the future.

Under the collaboration goals of the new Department of Local Services, I expect even more engagement discussions and understanding of the needs of our historically disadvantaged communities. Through this new dialog, I believe new opportunities will

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arise and we will build new partnerships. These partnerships will help us by focusing on specific needs of each community as informed by those communities. I will work with the Department of Local Services leadership and its economic development and communication teams to build an even greater department/division focus on achieving King County Equity and Social Justice goals.

3. *What is your vision for the agency you have been nominated to lead?*

There is a need for both short and long term visions for the Road Services Division. The Road Services Division needs to be very focused on the here and now, but also have an eye to the future given the revenue challenges for this fund. We need to be especially mindful of the importance of the King County road network on the day to day lives of our users (over 1,000,000 a day), especially their safety as they use the system each day.

My immediate vision for the division is to deliver the best services and programs possible with the limited resources available, build a workforce that reflects the community, the values of King County and embraces the goals of best run government and Equity and Social Justice.

The reality of operating a road network with the limited funding we have makes it necessary for us to keep focused on what we must do to keep the system open and as safe as possible as road conditions decline. I will update the 2014 Strategic Plan to review assumptions and adjust goals, strategies and policies based on the current environment.

My longer term vision is to develop the framework for a “resilient, sustainably funded, unincorporated urban and rural road system that supports our communities and the economy by connecting people to employment, education, commerce and recreation, and is well-integrated with the regional transportation network...” as identified in the 2014 Strategic Plan for Road Services.

The framework includes taking advantage of the resources and mission of the Department of Local Services. Working with the King County Council, Department of Local Services and the Road Services Division I hope to build partnerships and trust with all of our King County communities, and to make a difference in our historically disadvantaged communities by leveraging all available opportunities to improve, safety, accessibility and mobility within these communities. We will also work to build

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partnerships with our incorporated cities and regional partners to move forward with new funding strategies that benefit all the constituents of King County.

4. What challenges does this agency currently face?

The division faces three primary challenges: insufficient funding resulting in road system deterioration; maintaining a skilled, engaged, and nimble workforce in an ever changing business environment; and maintenance facilities that do not support efficient service delivery.

The greatest challenge for the division and the County is insufficient funding resulting in road system deterioration. Current funding levels do not support the levels of service needed for aging and deteriorating road assets. As outlined in the division's Strategic Plan, without significant increases in funding, 35 bridges are at risk of closure over the next 25 years and over 70 miles of roadway could be restricted or closed. Updating the Strategic Plan for Road Services and working with the Department of Local Services director and executive office to develop options to address road funding challenges will be a top priority as Road Services Division director.

Managing safety risks associated with hazardous and changing conditions drives the division budget, business plan proposals, and daily operations. Safety is the number one priority for the management of county roads and prioritizing safety within funding constraints is an ongoing challenge. This includes daily maintenance activities that are critical to keeping roads and bridges safe for the traveling public. All of the identified needs/countermeasures identified in the 2016 High Collision Location/High Collision Rate report are anticipated to be completed by the end of the current biennium. We will prepare a new three year High Collision Location Report in 2019 with implementation of identified actions to begin in the upcoming biennium.

Maintaining a skilled, engaged, and nimble workforce in an ever changing business environment is another challenge. Creating stability in the workforce has been essential to supporting the Road Services Division productivity and effectiveness and will be critical for me to continue. A significant portion of the Road Services Division workforce will be eligible for retirement within the next biennium and we have encountered some difficulties attracting and retaining qualified, skilled staff in the current economic climate.

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In 2019 – 2020, approximately 20% of the Road Services Division current staff will be eligible for retirement because they have either reached the age of 65 or have completed 30 years of service. Succession planning, targeted recruitment to fill key positions, and ongoing professional development to grow existing staff will be focuses for me. One of the challenges will be addressing the vibrant regional economy presents for the Road Services Division’s ability to recruit and retain skilled staff. To stay competitive as an employer the Road Services Division will need to continue creative recruitment efforts, meaningful employee engagement activities, full participation in the County’s new Investing in You program and employee development.

Lastly, Road Services Division’s current maintenance facilities do not support efficient service delivery. Some facilities are outdated, undersized, deteriorated and do not support contemporary approaches to maintenance work and environmental compliance. Some sites lack adequate facilities to support staff needs for restrooms, heat, changing areas, etc. These issues will need to be addressed in a strategic manner. I will also support the Department of Local Services leadership’s response to the budget proviso to study the costs and possibilities of moving some Department of Local Services offices closer to the unincorporated areas.

5. *How do you plan to address those challenges?*

In the short term, the creation of the new Department of Local Services provides the Road Services Division with an opportunity to further utilize and enhance our abilities to apply best run government/lean practices to streamline service delivery to our customers. We will work with the Department of Local Services leadership on the implementation of service partnership agreements and opportunities to increase transparency and service levels in unincorporated area of King County and to build cross departmental teams to improve the effectiveness of our internal business practices and service delivery to our customers.

We will be vigilant in our inspection and operation of our roadway assets. Using our risk based asset management approach, the division will work to ensure the safety for the users of the road network, and to maximize the effectiveness of road fund investments such as the Bridge Safety Program to slow the decline of the system to the greatest extent possible.

In the long term, King County, the new Department of Local Services, and the Road Services Division will need to be strategic if we are to attain the aspirational vision for a “resilient, sustainably funded, unincorporated urban and rural road system that supports our communities and the economy by connecting people to employment,

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education, commerce and recreation, and is well-integrated with the regional transportation network...” as identified in the 2014 Strategic Plan for Road Services. The challenge ahead is how to reach the aspirational goals given the pragmatic realities of the funding gap for the unincorporated road network. This will require creative thinking, engaging employees in finding efficiencies, building partnerships, and working collaboratively with King County Council, the suburban cities and regional partners.

I look forward to this challenge and feel I can be successful in leading the Road Services Division through these challenges, contributing to delivering quality services to the residents of King County.

6. How can your agency do a better job of serving the public? How do you plan to implement those changes?

The opportunity of being part of the new Department of Local Services provides the Road Services Division with a new opportunity to listen to our customers and shape best run government/lean practices to streamline service delivery. We will work with the Department of Local Services leadership team on the implementation of service partnership agreements and opportunities to increase transparency and service levels.

In addition, I am committed to working with Department of Local Services to improve service delivery by:

- Exploring new and better ways to provide services.
- Strengthening and expanding partnerships between the county, communities, residents, and other entities.
- Improving delivery, responsiveness and quality of local services.
- Improving local services through robust employee engagement while embracing equity and social justice and continuous improvement.
- Strengthening unincorporated communities by supporting local planning and community initiatives.
- Providing support for innovative funding strategies.
- Using our enterprise and data systems to identify public concerns.

We will build on lean initiatives like our effort to consolidate multiple public contact phone numbers and email addresses into one point of entry for inquiries, feedback, and service requests. This improvement streamlined and enhanced the customer experience by making it easier to contact the county about roadways, and it ensures that inquiries are promptly routed to the right work unit. This also reduced redundant responses as customers tended to send the same request to multiple contacts.

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Our service partnership agreements will facilitate identification of shared projects and interests, including drainage, flooding, agricultural drainage assistance program and fish passage program. They will also guide the building of cross departmental lean teams to improve our implementation of such symbiotic services and programs between departments.

This is a unique time, and the goals of the new department will provide a great opportunity to improve the quality of service for the public, and will help build a better understanding of community needs and desires.

7. *How do you plan to promote ethical behavior among your staff and in your agency?*

I plan to lead by example by exhibiting ethical behavior in all of my actions. I plan to hold my staff and the employees of the Road Services Division to the same standard.

8. *Does your prior work history or any other relationship create any conflicts of interest with carrying out the duties of leading the agency to which you have been appointed?*

No.