



King County

Dow Constantine
King County Executive

News Release

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Executive's proposal to extend jail contract clears way for cities to consider shelving plans for a new municipal jail in north/east King County

New regional jail planning group would keep track of available bed space and manage jail populations

King County Executive Dow Constantine today proposed creating a regional jail planning group and providing cities with 150 beds in the King County Jail until 2020. This move, coupled with current and potential contracts that north/east King County cities have with other jurisdictions for jail beds, enabled Seattle Mayor Mike McGinn to recommend ending the process of siting a new regional municipal jail to house misdemeanor offenders.

"By making the best use of space in our existing jails, we create the time to explore every option for meeting the region's future need for jail bed beds," said **Executive Constantine**. "I will continue to work in partnership with our cities to ensure we have the right amount of jail capacity – teaming up to do what makes the most sense for our residents."

Mayor McGinn applauded the new regional approach. "My staff has been working hard with King County to find a regional solution that would avoid the need to build a new jail. This agreement accomplishes that," he said. "Going forward, we won't be focused only on jail beds; we'll be looking for additional safe and appropriate alternatives to detention."

"King County's offer for a regional solution and additional beds through 2020 provides our city the confidence to cancel the EIS process," said **Shoreline Mayor Keith McGlashan**. "That is truly good news for our community, particularly for our residents in the Ballinger neighborhood now that Shoreline no longer has a site under consideration for a jail."

Specifically:

- Executive Constantine is proposing to make 150 jail beds available to contracting cities through an extension of the jail services contract to 2020. He is also proposing that the cities and county launch a regional jail planning and management group that will cooperate on monitoring and meeting the

region's long-term needs for jail capacity.

- Mayor McGinn is recommending to Bellevue, Clyde Hill, Kirkland, Redmond, Shoreline and Yarrow Point that they end the siting process for a new jail in north/east King County.

The Executive also recognized the leadership of the South Correctional Entity, known as SCORE, which is building a new regional municipal jail to serve cities in south King County. "By taking a cooperative approach to addressing their jail needs, the cities of Auburn, Burien, Des Moines, Federal Way, Renton, SeaTac and Tukwila have helped relieve pressure on the county's jail system," he said.

The Executive's proposal is based on recent changes that provide an opportunity for the county and cities in north/east King County to meet their jail capacity needs through 2020 with existing facilities. These changes include a decline in inmate population in King County, which frees up jail beds in the county's facilities, and more contracting options becoming available to cities to meet their needs for jail beds for misdemeanor offenders. These options did not exist when the north/east cities started planning for a regional municipal jail in 2008.

If all parties can work cooperatively to monitor and manage the regional jail population, these changes will allow for cities and the county to meet their jail population needs without construction of a new facility at this time.

"I would like to thank the County Executive for working with the cities," said **Redmond Mayor John Marchione**. "I am optimistic that the cities and county can have a regional conversation and, working together, can develop a long-term solution that meets our collective jail bed needs."

"Our efforts to enhance regional cooperation between the cities and the county is paying off," said **Metropolitan King Council Chair Bob Ferguson**. "That collaborative effort will continue to guide us as we work to manage our jail space needs."

Seattle City Councilmembers also support the regional approach. "When Dow Constantine became King County Executive, he promised to advance a new regionalism. This agreement does exactly that," said **Seattle City Councilmember Tim Burgess**. "In coordination with King County, Seattle will continue its focus on providing the best public safety services and, at the same time, embracing effective alternatives to incarceration."

"By working together with the cities that comprise the North/East Cities group and King County, we have produced the favorable outcome of a proposed extension to the jail agreement with the county until 2020," said **Seattle City Councilmember Bruce Harrell**. "This option avoids the immediate need to build a new jail for misdemeanor crime. With the misdemeanor jail population decreasing, this is a prudent approach at this time."

"The extension to 2020 allows us to re-evaluate our practices by coupling enforcement with new alternatives to criminal prosecution. We must re-redirect our approach to public safety: in the U.S., one in every 15 black men, 18 or older, is in prison or jail," **Seattle City Councilmember Nick Licata** said. "Providing safe and

healthy communities means having viable alternatives to jail, such as pre-booking diversion programs. We cannot rely on just throwing more people into jail; it contributes to breaking up families and fracturing communities.”

Seattle City Attorney Peter Holmes applauded Executive Constantine’s announcement for both affirming a regional approach to jail requirements and affording additional time to planners. “We must not become complacent, but use the additional breathing room to explore new and innovative alternatives to incarcerating misdemeanor offenders. Our long-range goals must be to reduce recidivism rates while keeping Seattle out of the jail-building business with smarter, more efficient policies toward crime” he said.

Jail population and capacity could be affected by outside factors, such as actions by the state Legislature to change criminal sentencing guidelines, or continued risks to existing jail facilities from potential flooding in the Green River Valley. These risks require regional cooperation to monitor and manage.

The King County Council recently extended the jail services contract to 2016. The county expects to begin negotiations next year on the 2020 jail extension agreement with the cities. Once complete, the agreement must be approved by the King County Council.

Mayor McGinn’s proposal to end the environmental review process will be considered by the other cities for approval this year.

This release is also posted on the King County Executive's Web site, at www.kingcounty.gov/exec

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King County provides regional services to 1.9 million residents including more than 340,000 people living in unincorporated areas. Services include Metro transit, public health, wastewater treatment, courts, jails, prosecutors, public defenders, community and social services, the King County International Airport, and local services such as police protection, roads services and garbage collection. King County is the 14th largest county in the nation, covering 2,134 square miles, 39 cities, 760 lakes and reservoirs, and six major river systems with 3,000 miles of streams.