

**Comments to PSRC Transportation Policy Board
on North Link and Global Warming
John Niles, CETA, April 13, 2006**

Good morning and thank you. I'm John Niles, Technical Chair of the pro-transit Coalition for Effective Transportation Alternatives (CETA). We are in favor of **mass** transit, but we oppose **massive** transit that costs way too much for what it does. We are passionate critics of Sound Transit's urban railroad programs, Link and Sounder. We support redirecting light rail and commuter rail resources into improvement and expansion of bus service, ride sharing, and transportation demand management

As Governor Jaime Lerner of Curitiba, Brazil explained during his visit to Seattle this week, a well-designed bus system with creative, high-tech enhancements – a bus system that actively confronts and challenges the automobile for the use of some streets at certain times, as is the case right now on Third Avenue – a Rapid Bus system can do just as well moving people as light rail in a tunnel, sooner, and for much less money. Governor Lerner said, "the future [of transit] is on the surface ... Metro-nize the bus."

CETA already reported to you last November that the EIS for North Link, the five mile light rail tunnel project connecting downtown Seattle to Northgate, shows that its construction consumes 17 trillion BTU of energy – equivalent to a line of tanker trucks from here to the Canadian border, each carrying 8000 gallons of diesel. The energy pay back period on this light rail Big Dig is 87 years – that's the time to recover via energy-efficient light rail operations the fuel that is burned up in constructing the tunnel, tracks, and stations. PSRC staff's response to this comment was that this is **not an issue** that PSRC needs to deal with. A few days ago, Sound Transit reported that same stance in the Final EIS; in effect, **so what, we don't care, we don't have to care.**

So, in the 24 remaining days before a Federal Record of Decision is issued on this project, CETA is going to pursue this sustainability concern a different way – describing the linkage to greenhouse gas and climate change.

Tonight, at the Seattle Public Library is the local premiere of the HBO documentary on climate change titled "**Too Hot Not to Handle**," with the tag line, "global warming is the most urgent threat facing humanity today."

CETA has now reported to Mayor Nickel's Green Ribbon Commission on Climate Protection, that the North Link tunnel construction will emit 640 thousand metric tons of CO2 but yield in operations only a 14 thousand ton annual reduction in CO2. **640 emitted – just 14 saved annually.** Do the math. It shows North Link light rail is part of the global warming problem, not part of the solution.

In the introduction of Governor Lerner last Monday, Mayor Nickels informed a full Benaroya auditorium that he wanted Seattle to become the most sustainable city on earth. The North Link tunnel project works against sustainability. PSRC should step up and revoke the authorization of this project. PSRC should join with CETA in recommending that the U.S. Government put a hold on the North Link Record of Decision until Sound Transit, or the Mayor, or PSRC or somebody, can justify the imbalance of this project between costs and benefits.