

Determining North/East Cities' Municipal Jail Needs

Media Briefing

November 20, 2008

- **Why cities in north and east King County, including Seattle need a municipal jail**
The cities will lose all their municipal jail beds at King County when their contract ends in less than five years because the County will not have room in its existing jail facilities to house city misdemeanor inmates. The County has told cities they should be planning a replacement facility.
- **Cities need a municipal jail because some misdemeanor offenses require jail time regardless of diversion and treatment programs**
State law requires that people sentenced for DUI serve jail time; domestic violence charges are a mandatory arrest and booking in jail.
- **Police officers need a facility in King County where they can book people into jail**
Even if cities continue to contract with Yakima for some of their jail bed needs, police officers need to book locally and get back out on the streets. Driving five hours round-trip to Yakima every time an officer needs to book someone in jail takes officers off the streets for too long.
- **Over the next 20 years, cities in north and east King County, including Seattle, estimate they will need a 640-bed municipal jail**
Alternatives to jail and treatment affect the size of the municipal jail – but cannot replace the need for a municipal jail. Seattle estimates it will need 445 beds, while the other north and east cities estimate they will need almost 200 beds collectively.
- **Cities have three options & all involve building a new municipal jail somewhere**
 - Participate in a regional process with north and east cities, including Seattle
 - Participate in a regional process with other cities and King County
 - Build separate municipal jails
- **The North/East Cities are pursuing a regional solution and have identified six potential sites to study for a regional municipal jail**
The NEC group is early in the process of studying and then identifying a preferred site. No decisions will be made until some time in 2010.
- **SEPA – Environmental Review**
These six potential sites will undergo a full public process and environmental impact evaluation.
- **Timeline**
 - December 2008 – Public forums held near the newly identified potential sites
 - January 2009 – Scoping meetings on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
 - Third Quarter 2009 – Release draft EIS; public comment period on the draft EIS (public meetings will be held)
 - Fourth Quarter 2009 – Respond to public comment & finalize EIS
 - 2010 – Identify preferred site

- **Community Input & Outreach**

- Public forums to share information about newly announced sites, hear from community
- NEC staff available to attend community-organized meetings
- SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act) requires a look at alternatives and provides opportunities for community input
- The legislative body's review & approval process provides opportunities for community input
- Cities will work with local news media to continue getting the word out to the public
- Web site: <http://www.necmunicipaljail.org>

Why the NEC Needs Municipal Jail Facilities

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- **Cities are responsible for jailing people convicted of misdemeanor offenses.** People are most often booked in municipal jails on misdemeanor charges related to property (e.g., theft), driving under the influence (DUI), traffic related charges, misdemeanor assault, and misdemeanor domestic violence.
- **Continuing to contract for jail beds is not a long-term solution.** Police officers need a local place to book people into jail so officers can get back on the streets quickly. Driving five hours (round-trip to Yakima) every time an officer needs to book someone in jail or transport someone to court is inefficient and takes officers off the streets for too long. Although there are municipal jails in Kirkland and Issaquah, they have a combined capacity of only 76 beds – which is not enough to meet the North/East cities’ projected need of 640 beds.
- **Many cities located in King County have a contract with King County that allows them to house their misdemeanants in the County’s jail.** The County is responsible for housing felons and those arrested for misdemeanors in unincorporated areas.
- **Because of space constraints in existing County facilities in downtown Seattle and Kent, King County will no longer have room to house city misdemeanor inmates when the current contract ends on December 31, 2012.**
 - A King County jail population study found that by 2015, King County won’t have enough jail beds to house its own felony jail population.
 - Cities are considering building a municipal jail because they will lose all of their misdemeanor jail beds when their contract with King County ends in roughly four years.
 - This means that the NEC group has roughly four years to site and build a new municipal jail. They must begin this process now, as siting and building a jail normally takes at least six years. They realize this is a challenging schedule, which is why they must identify a site in 2010.
 - To ease the schedule pressure a bit, cities are working with King County to see if they can negotiate a one-year extension to the current contract.
 - Regardless of whether an extension is granted, the County has made one thing clear: it cannot continue to house city misdemeanants at its existing facilities and cities should be planning a replacement facility.
- **Although no one wants to build a jail, one thing is certain; a jail must be built somewhere.**

Required Jail Time for Misdemeanor Offenses

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- **Cities need a municipal jail because police officers need a place to take people who are a danger to themselves and others.**
- **Some misdemeanor offenses require jail time regardless of diversion and treatment programs.**
 - State law requires that people sentenced for driving under the influence (DUI) serve jail time. For example, someone with one prior DUI conviction must spend at least 30 to 45 days in jail; someone with two or three prior DUI convictions must spend at least 90 to 120 days in jail.
 - Domestic violence charges are a mandatory arrest and booking into jail.
 - A number of people booked in jail were previously diverted from jail or released from jail – but then failed to come back to court, resulting in arrest (in Seattle, for example, 33% had been previously diverted or released – but then failed to come back to court).
 - While the NEC group looks to other local city jails (such as Renton or Issaquah) or other county facilities, such as Yakima, as alternatives to King County’s jails, these facilities cannot guarantee replacement of the beds that will be lost at King County facilities. What’s more, in Seattle’s case, its police officers book almost 1,000 people per month at King County – that’s too many people to process through one of the local city jails or to take to Yakima.
 - While diversion and treatment are important, not everyone successfully completes the programs. In Seattle, for example, about 45 percent of defendants complete Day Reporting and 32 percent of defendants complete Community Court.
- **Alternatives to jail and treatment affect the size of the jail – but cannot replace the need for a jail.**

Projected Number of Jail Beds for the NEC

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- **A brief look at the NEC's misdemeanor inmates**

- The average misdemeanor inmate spends only a short amount of time in jail on a misdemeanor charge (e.g. Seattle misdemeanor inmates average 10 days in jail). Some people are booked and released within 48 hours. Others may spend up to a year serving a jail sentence.
- People are most often booked in jail on misdemeanor charges related to property (e.g., theft), driving under the influence (DUI), traffic related charges, misdemeanor assault, and misdemeanor domestic violence.
- Sixty-three percent of the inmates are pre-trial defendants.

- **Determining how much municipal jail space the NEC group needs**

Cities in King County hired a consultant to create a long-term jail population forecast, as well as develop some preliminary long-term municipal jail housing options. The consultant estimates that in 2026, Seattle will need approximately 445 municipal jail beds and the other cities located in north and east King County will need roughly 200 beds. Thus, the NEC group estimates a 640-bed regional municipal jail will meet its needs for the next 20 years.

Municipal Jail Bed Space Projections

	2026	
	ADP*	Bedspace
Seattle	387	445
North & East KC cities	167	192
Total for NEC group	554	637

**Average Daily Population*

- Seattle's projection assumes a 15 percent growth rate factor spread over 20 years (less than one percent per year) based on overall Seattle population growth; the other north and east cities assume a 25 percent growth rate.
- The jail bed space projections are 15 percent higher than the average daily jail populations to allow for peaking factors (e.g., Saturday nights are busier than Tuesday nights; the jail population in August is higher than December, etc.).
- The projections assume that eight to 10 percent of the people currently in jail will be diverted due to an increased use of alternatives to incarceration.

NEC Municipal Jail Options

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The North/East Cities have three options and all involve building a new municipal jail somewhere:

- **Continue participating in a regional process with the other cities.** The south end cities are working together to develop a plan to meet their jail needs in the south end. The cities in northern and eastern King County, including Seattle, have formed the North/East Cities group to jointly plan for their municipal jail needs. The NEC hired a consultant who specializes in correctional facilities, Carter Goble Lee, to look at the tradeoffs between a single municipal jail vs. multiple smaller jails. The study showed that there would be significant savings, primarily in operating costs, if these cities jointly build a misdemeanor jail.
- **Participate in a regional process with the other cities and King County.** On July 7, 2008, the King County Council passed legislation requesting that the County Executive begin negotiations with cities for a possible extension of jail services, prepare a proposal for the expansion of the Regional Justice Center (RJC) in Kent, and collaborate on planning for additional jail beds. The NEC and King County have also been exploring the possibility of developing an annex to the County jail in downtown Seattle.
 - Links to the following documents are available on <http://www.necmunicipaljail.org>:
 - King County's [news release](#) on jail planning
 - King County's [report](#) on jail planning
 - Seattle's [news release](#) regarding the County Council's action
 - [JAG's PowerPoint](#) presentation to County Councilmembers
 - [Frequently Asked Questions](#) specifically related to the County's proposal
- **Build multiple municipal jails to meet individual cities' needs.** The cities would need to find ways to meet their responsibility for misdemeanants, including the possibilities of building jails and contracting with other jurisdictions. The City of Seattle, for example, would identify a site within its city limits and fund the land acquisition and capital costs. Cities could consider contracting with King County to operate their municipal jails or they could staff and operate it.

In any of these options, a jail must be sited and built.

NEC Site Selection

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- **The factors guiding site identification included:**
 - Adequate acreage, with a range from 4-12 acres;
 - Adjacent uses, with a preference for commercial/light industrial;
 - Regional access, to freeways, transportation facilities and transit, as well as the ability to locate support services, such as offices and courts;
 - Ease of Acquisition/Ownership, with a preference for public property or sites available for purchase; and
 - Geographic distribution throughout the northeast region.
- **The five cities that use the largest number of jail beds are Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Seattle, and Shoreline.**
- **Collectively the five cities initially identified 12 preliminary candidate sites, located in the following areas:**
 - Seattle
 - Bellevue
 - Kirkland
 - Shoreline
 - Redmond
 - Unincorporated King County
- **The NEC group asked its consultant, [Carter Goble Lee \(CGL\)](#) to assess the 12 preliminary sites to help it determine which sites should undergo environmental evaluation.**
 - The CGL site evaluation report and the site comparison chart are available online at <http://www.necmunicipaljail.org>
- **Seattle sites**

Seattle initially identified four possible candidate sites: two in north Seattle and two in south Seattle. To maintain geographic equity within the city, Seattle selected one site in north Seattle and one site in south Seattle for further evaluation in the environmental impact study (EIS) process. Of the two north sites, the Armory Way site received a higher ranking, both in the CGL assessment, as well as in an assessment by City staff. Of the two south sites, the West Marginal Way site received a higher ranking, both in the CGL assessment, as well as in an assessment by City staff.
- **Shoreline site**

Shoreline initially identified three possible candidate sites. Two sites scored high in the assessment from CGL. The highest scoring site was deemed too difficult to integrate because it is owned by the State of Washington, which is already working on a comprehensive plan for its future use. In addition, the other site recently became available for purchase. As a result, Shoreline's second highest scoring site was selected for further study in the EIS process.
- **Eastside sites**

Five possible candidate sites on the eastside were initially identified. Of those possible sites, the two sites with the highest scores from CGL were selected for further study in the EIS process.

- **Potential Annex to King County Jail in Downtown Seattle**

The NEC is working with King County to explore developing an annex to the County jail in downtown Seattle. The NEC and King County have agreed to include the vacant County-owned site located at the southeast corner of the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Jefferson Street – which is adjacent to the King County jail – as one of the sites for consideration under the EIS.

- **The following six sites will undergo a full public process and environmental impact evaluation:**

- King County Jail Annex, southeast corner of the intersection of Fifth Avenue and Jefferson Street, Seattle
- Seattle north, 1600 W. Armory Way
- Seattle south, Highland Park Way S.W. & West Marginal Way S.W.
- Bellevue, 555 116th Ave. N.E.
- Shoreline, 2545 N.E. 200th St.
- Unincorporated King County, 13225 N.E. 126th Pl.