THE CITY OF RIDGEFIELD
230 Pioneer Street | P.O. Box 608 | Ridgefield, WA 98642

September 2, 2025

Re: C-TRAN Board Representation

Dear Board Composition Review Committee (BCRC):

On behalf of the City of Ridgefield, we thank the BCRC for your work seeking to address Board composition certification requirements added during the 2025 WA Legislative Session, to assure proportionate representation on the C-TRAN Board of Directors. We especially appreciate the vote taken on August 12 by the BCRC to maximize proportionate representation while assuring compliance with ALL provisions of RCW 36.57A.050, and we are in strong agreement with the analysis and reasoning provided by Chair Coston in her letter to WSDOT dated August 25, 2025.

Thus, we find the response letter from WSDOT's Interim Public Transportation Director, dated August 28, 2025, very troubling and a significant overreach. First, there is no cited statutory authority for WSDOT to assert that its methodology for determining proportionality is correct, or that the BCRC's rationale is inconsistent with applicable RCWs. RCW 36.57A.050 contains no review or approval authority for WSDOT in this inquiry, nor does the new section of RCW 47.66, added by Senate Bill 5801 in 2025. The new language simply states that "[a]ny public transportation benefit area established under chapter 36.57A RCW that is not fully in compliance with the requirements of RCW 36.57A.050 by October 1, 2025, may not receive awards for any state grant program available under this chapter." There is nothing in the bill about a certification process or who makes the ultimate determination of whether a PTBA is in compliance. In fact, WSDOT's recently crafted "certification form" reinforces this point, with three boxes for the agency to check and a signature from the agency's director self-certifying compliance. There is no reference to a review and approval process that WSDOT has any authority to conduct.

However, even if there is an unstated review authority for WSDOT, their Interim Public Transportation Director's August 28 letter bases an assertion of non-compliance on a "plain reading" of the statute. Specifically, that members must be selected to assure "proportional representation, based on population". We agree with that reading but disagree with their analysis and outcomes.

WSDOT's Interim Public Transportation Director does not account for how the population of component Cities and the Unincorporated County are represented in Clark County. The population of component Cities

in Clark County are represented by City Councils AND one or more Clark County Councilor. Clark County has a Home Rule Charter, passed by the voters in 2014, and reviewed/amended in 2020-2021, with the next review in 2025-2026. Relevant for the BCRC's work, Clark County Charter, Article 2, Section 2.1 (County Council Composition) states that "[t]he Council shall consist of five (5) members. The voters of each of these districts shall nominate and elect one (1) Council member to represent their district." (emphasis added) The County Council Districts include population in both the Unincorporated and incorporated areas of Clark County. Thus, under the County Charter, and plain reading of the statute (as stated by WSDOT), proportionate representation by population requires that the BCRC recognize that representation isn't simply divided into jurisdictional elected officials. Representation on the C-TRAN Board of Directors for each City's population must include both City Council and County Council seats.

This distinction is very important when evaluating statutory compliance under RCW 36.57A.050, both to assure "proportional representation, based on population" and the additional requirement that "[a] majority of the governing board may not be selected to represent a single component City." Again, using the WSDOT assertion of plain language, actual representation—by population—requires a full analysis of which political subdivisions represent population in each of the Cities and Unincorporated County.

To begin the analysis, here is the simple current C-TRAN Board Composition:

Jurisdiction	Representatives
Vancouver	3.0
Unincorporated Clark County	2.0
Camas	1.0
Washougal	1.0
Battle Ground	1.0
Ridgefield	.33
La Center	.33
Yacolt	.33

However, that simple table does not accurately reflect representation "based on population". As detailed above, the formula to determine representation by each Board seat for Cities is correctly calculated by adding the direct vote from City Council and the percentage of County Council votes that represent the

population in each City. For example, the City of Ridgefield currently has .33 of a direct seat on the C-TRAN Board. As of the April 1, 2024 OFM Population Report (the latest official figures available for PTBA population), Ridgefield also represent 3.46% of the overall PTBA population. Thus, Ridgefield's population are additionally represented on the C-TRAN Board of Directors by that percentage of the two County Council votes. (.33 + (3.46% * 2)). That gives the City of Ridgefield a TOTAL of .4 votes on the existing C-TRAN Board of Directors.

Here is how the formula results in actual representation, "based on population, of each of the component Cities located within the public transportation benefit area and the Unincorporated areas of the county located within the public transportation benefit area represented" (RCW 36.57A.050), for the **current** C-TRAN Board of Directors:

Jurisdiction	Representatives
Vancouver	3.89
Unincorporated Clark County	.72
Camas	1.12
Washougal	1.08
Battle Ground	1.10
Ridgefield	.40
La Center	.35
Yacolt	.34

As you can see, WSDOT's stated concerns regarding under-representation for the City of Vancouver's population with the current Board composition are unfounded. The City of Vancouver's population is 44.33% of the PTBA, and its representation on the Board is 43.23%. However, Unincorporated Clark County is greatly under-represented, due to the fact that the only representatives of that area are County Councilors (and in fact a single County Councilor for each member of that population, due to elections by District).

The BCRC attempted to balance representation for Cities and the Unincorporated Clark County populations by shifting a single Board seat from the small Cities to the County Council who—to greater and lesser extents—represent that population.

This shift created the following actual Board representation based on population:

Jurisdiction	Representatives
Vancouver	4.33
Unincorporated Clark County	1.08
Camas	1.18
Washougal	.62
Battle Ground	.48
Ridgefield	.60
La Center	.36
Yacolt	.34

In this model, representation for the City of Vancouver (48.16%) and Unincorporated Clark County (8.01%) populations increases, though there is still under-representation for the Unincorporated Clark County population. Importantly, however, is the recognition that representation for the City of Vancouver is just under 50%, which is the threshold the BCRC must stay under to meet RCW 36.57A.050 requirements of creating the most proportionate Board composition without a majority of members representing a single City.

Finally, here is the actual representation, based on population, for the proposed Board allocation from the WSDOT Interim Public Transportation Director's letters:

Jurisdiction	Representatives
Vancouver	5.33
Unincorporated Clark County	1.08
Camas	.51
Washougal	.45
Battle Ground	.48
Ridgefield	.43
La Center	.36
Yacolt	.34

This Board composition would result in "representation, by population," for the City of Vancouver, of 59.35%. That exceeds the majority threshold which is a violation RCW 36.57A.050. C-TRAN would be unable to certify (using WSDOT'S PTBA Certification Form) that it is in compliance with Section B – Single City Representation. As a result, based on the language added to RCW 47.66 in 2025, C-TRAN would be ineligible for all grants under that Chapter. That is an outcome that the BCRC has been working diligently to avoid.

The bottom line for the City of Ridgefield is this:

1) The BCRC has sole statutory authority to determine appropriate representation that meets statutory requirements. There is no other local or state entity which has statutory review and approval authority for certification of Board Composition meeting proportionality of representation.

2) WSDOT's analysis of appropriate representation by population is flawed, as it does not understand or integrate County Charter-specific representation by County Councilors. Their analysis and proposal for Board Composition create an illegal majority of representation for the City of Vancouver.

3) Thus, we would request that the BCRC ask that C-TRAN submits the WSDOT certification form for the 3-3-3 composition already approved at the August 12 meeting, as the selected Board Composition "assure[s] proportional representation, based on population, of each of the component cities located within the public transportation benefit area and the unincorporated areas of the county located within the public transportation benefit area...to the extent possible within the restrictions placed on the size of the governing body of a public transportation benefit area."

4) If WSDOT asserts authority to deny certification of the BCRC's work and withhold grant funding, we believe C-TRAN should immediately appeal that action as inconsistent with State Law and creating harm to the agency and the people it serves.

5) If, alternatively, the BCRC chooses to adopt the WSDOT Interim Public Transportation Director's unlawful suggested board composition, the City of Ridgefield will immediately begin to evaluate our legal options, as C-TRAN's Board of Directors would illegally allow majority representation and allocation of C-TRAN resources by representatives of a single City's population.

We welcome any questions from the BCRC about our legal reasoning or population representation methodologies contained within this letter. We are happy to provide full, transparent information – including the spreadsheets supporting the included tables which we are forwarding separately to C-TRAN staff – to ensure the BCRC has what you need to successfully complete your Statutorily authorized task.

Thank you for your work and assistance.

Sincerely,

Matt Cole, Mayor
City of Ridgefield

Enclosure:

CTRAN PTBA Board Composition Analysis 2025