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ADVOCATES FOR CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION

THE CASE FOR CONVENTION CENTER EXPANSION

BILL SUMMARY:

SB 5875 and HB 2178 authorize the Washington State Convention and Trade Center (WSCTC) Board of Directors to conduct engineering and design studies necessary to fully scope the potential expansion of the convention center. The bills would authorize the board to move forward on acquiring an interest in property that would be a potential site for the expansion. This legislation does not commit the State to funding the total expansion, and would require the legislature to approve long-term financing before any construction begins.

BRING BILLIONS OF NEW MONEY INTO THE STATE ECONOMY

In the last four years alone, we have missed out on \$1.7 billion in potential convention business because the WSCTC did not have adequate space or available dates to accommodate demand. This is not a *Field of Dreams* “build it and they will come” wish. The demand –and the opportunity – is there if we are willing to invest in our future.

CREATE JOBS NOW, IN THE COMING YEARS, AND PERMANENTLY

Approving this first step will create jobs immediately in the architectural and engineering sectors hit hard by the drop in construction activity. Then, if construction is approved by the Legislature, the project will create some 3,000 construction jobs, just as many other stimulus-related projects are wrapping up. Plus the increased tourism activity is expected to create some 3,500 permanent jobs.

“Expansion of the Washington State Convention & Trade Center will create and sustain thousands of jobs –just when we need them most – and stimulate new and existing business throughout the region.

Rick Bender, President, Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

A SMALL INVESTMENT NOW PRESERVES A HUGE OPPORTUNITY FOR OUR FUTURE

The legislation authorizes the WSCTC Board to conduct the engineering and design studies necessary to fully scope the project, to evaluate co-development opportunities, and to secure an option for the Metro transit site owned by King County. If we fail to secure that site now, budget challenges could force the County to pursue other options, costing us access to the only site that provides a cost-effective expansion opportunity and maintaining the center’s proximity to major hotels. But before any final commitments are made, detailed plans and cost estimates would be presented to the legislature for approval as early as next year.

“From a Paramount arts and cultural perspective, expanding the convention center and the business it drives is a vital aspect of the strategic vision for our region’s business ecology.”

Josh LaBelle, Executive Director, Seattle Theatre Group



Seattle Convention Profile:

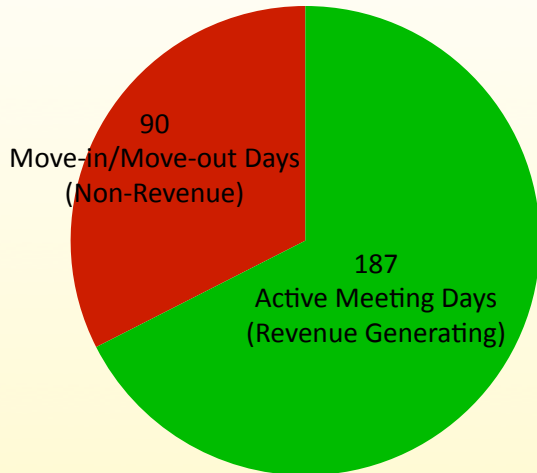
- ➔ Associations stay an average of 7 days, inclusive of move-in/move-out, with core meetings of 4.5 days and average delegate stays of 3.5 days
- ➔ Attendees spend on average \$1,100 per trip
- ➔ The total economic impact of each attendee trip is \$1,857
- ➔ Last year, 86% of WSCTC conventions booked by Seattle’s Convention and Visitors Bureau were national or international. These out-of-state attendees contribute millions of dollars in economic impact for the city, region and state

EXPANSION DOESN'T REQUIRE NEW TAXES

The existing special hotel/motel tax levied in the City of Seattle and throughout King County provides a revenue stream that will be adequate to pay for the expansion of the Center. This tax source was originally established to ensure that the WSCTC had adequate funds for marketing, operations, maintenance and periodic upgrades to the facility. The expansion is consistent with the original legislative intent in creating the tax.

2008-2009 Average Citywide Event Days

Based on an average of 50 meetings



HELP THE CONVENTION CENTER WORK EVEN BETTER FOR THE TAXPAYER

The WSCTC has a twenty-year track record of efficient and effective operation. The convention center boasts the highest utilization and revenue-per-square-foot numbers of any convention center in North America. But we can do even better. An expansion will provide much greater scheduling flexibility, maximizing our potential to generate revenue and minimizing the no-revenue move-in and move-out days.

A STATEWIDE IMPACT FROM A STATE ASSET

On average, delegates extend their stay by 2.4 days beyond their convention dates. Whether visiting Mt. Rainier or enjoying the wineries of Eastern Washington, these additional visit days translate into additional spending on lodging, rental cars, meals, cultural activities and retail sales across the state.

“The WSCTC has been undersized for years. It’s crucial that our state’s largest convention center expand in order to stay competitive, and for Spokane to follow in helping maximize meeting and convention business for Washington State.”

Harry Sladich, President/CEO, Spokane Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau

KEEP SEATTLE AND WASHINGTON COMPETITIVE

All of Seattle’s prime competitors – Anaheim; Los Angeles; San Francisco; San Diego; Phoenix; Denver; Vancouver, B.C.; even Portland – have facilities that provide more space and more flexibility. In fact, despite Seattle’s position as one of the country’s prime convention destinations, the WSCTC is only the 68th largest venue in North America.



Rendering of the Expanded Convention Center