



Better Than Promised



*An informal history of
the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle
By Bob Lane*

"As I look back over my career at Metro, one thing stands out—the importance of talented and motivated employees."

Dick Sandaas, former executive director



*"I don't think anyone has visitors and doesn't point to Lake Washington and say, 'Hey, we cleaned up that lake.'
We're the only people in the country who cleaned up an urban lake."*

Penny Peabody, former staff administrator and Metro Council chair



*"What I would like to remember is that Metro was a responsive agency.
We took a great deal of pride in answering questions of the public. And if we couldn't answer them, we would call back."*

Bob Matsuda, special projects and research coordinator



*"It was almost a utopian environment we were working in.
Our relationships with the Metro Council and the community were successful."*

Charles (Tom) Gibbs, former executive director and one of Metro's first employees



"The single major thing is that Metro represented the citizen declaration to preserve the quality of our environment."

C. Carey Donworth, first Metro Council chairman

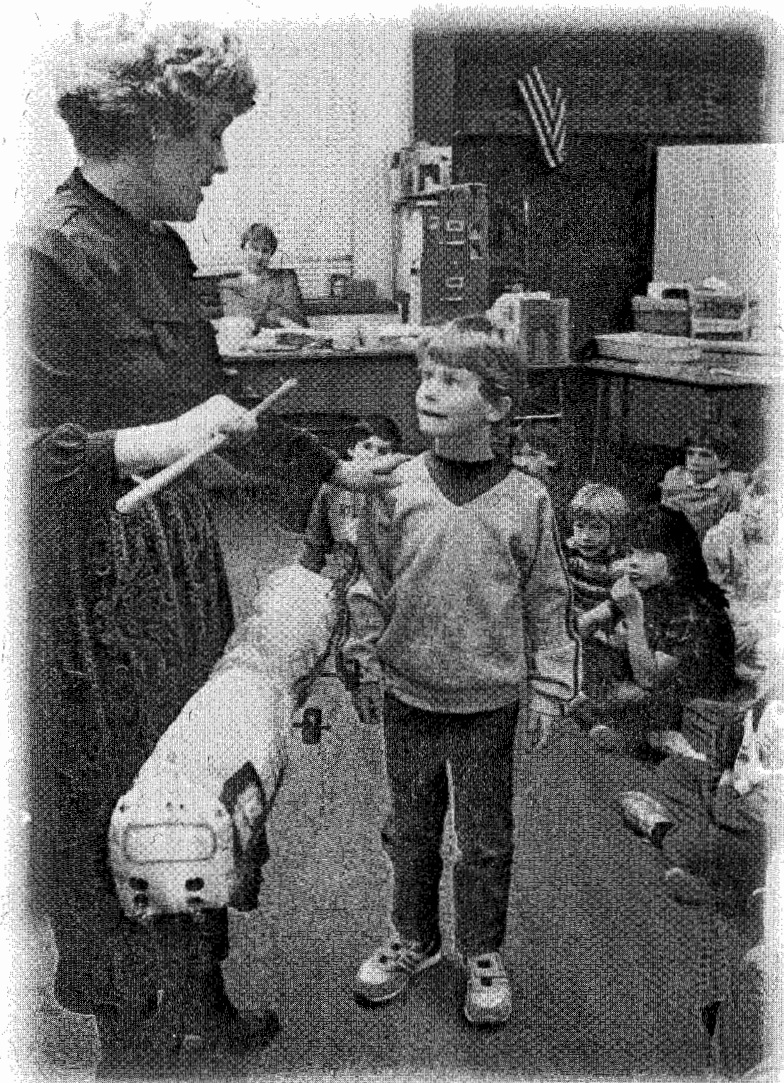
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the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle*



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Roy Scully/Seattle Times Photo

Students from Soos Creek Elementary School watch attentively as Elaine Chapman demonstrates a model of an articulated bus in 1983.

Line-worker helpers Renee Nash, left, and Christy Fawcett prepare a support cable for the trolley-overhead system. In 1979, Metro rebuilt and expanded its trolley system, the first such renewal in the United States.



Ned Ahrens Photo



Water quality employees, Dave Waddell, left, and Gary Yoshida take a break during stream monitoring work in King County.

Ned Ahrens Photo

Foreword

By Carolyn Purnell

Looking back over Metro's more than three decades of service to the Seattle-King County region, I am struck by the sense of pride exhibited by the men and women who staffed the agency. Employees took great pride in their jobs, pride in their accomplishments and pride in their community. And rightly so. Never before had local government taken on such critical regional challenges and responsibilities. And never before had government responded like Metro did.

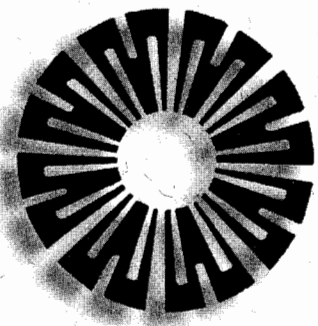
Metro wasn't just another place to work; it was a place where caring people could make a difference in the area's quality of life. Clean water. Efficient and affordable public transportation. These two forces drove the Metro mission and motivated Metro employees.

From the cleanup of Lake Washington and Elliott Bay to the development of the regional transportation system, Metro always delivered. And Metro never forgot its responsibility to the public whose tax dollars supported the agency's services. Citizen involvement is what helped make Metro special and what accounted for the agency's success.

I had the privilege of being Metro's last executive director. While my tenure had its share of challenges and heartache, it is an honor to have served. In spite of the many distractions the consolidation with King County brought, we remained focused on our mission. I am proud of the outstanding people of the Metro organization. They always conducted themselves professionally, with character and grace.

Countless people contributed to the Metro story and to our success. I thank the many volunteers who worked with us over the years to make our accomplishments possible. I thank our elected and appointed officials who guided the agency and made the tough decisions. I thank all the citizens who cared enough about their community to get involved in water quality and public transportation issues. I thank the many businesses and other organizations that worked with us on cooperative ventures. I thank the legislators, both at the state and federal level, who supported our programs, projects and services.

And finally, I thank each and every employee who gave their energy, creativity and talent to always deliver "better than promised."



METRO



Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Building a legacy of clean water	1
The beginning of Metro	3
Water pollution woes	7
The Legislature responds	11
Voters back Metro plan	13
Conduit, concrete and commitment	17
People power prevails	23
Creating the can-do ethic	24

Chapter 2

A sound investment and regional transit	27
A clear victory	29
Protecting area waters	30
Forward Thrust: successes and failures	32
Metro Transit gets rolling	35
Voters approve transit plan	37
Ridership gains and growing pains	40
Expansion brings artic, part-time drivers	44
Bus fleet grows to meet service demands	47
Innovation drives transit system	48
Merger proposal surfaces	50
Honors and awards	52

Chapter 3

Challenges, triumphs and consolidation	55
Pipeline project stirs controversy	57
Debate over secondary treatment	58
Showdown on secondary treatment	60
Siting issue draws citizen ire	62
Council settles secondary-siting issue	64
Source-control programs evolve	66
John Lesniak: Common sense and commitment	68
Biosolids: controversy and success	69
Moving into the 1990s	71
Tunnel project dominates decade	73
Complaints spawn cultural change	77
Employees set workplace goals	80
Dwyer decision keys Metro, county merger	83
West Point project meets challenges	87
Moving into the next century	89
Metro functions merge into county government	91
Executive directors	92
Metro Council chairs	95
Bibliography	96
Acknowledgments and credits	97

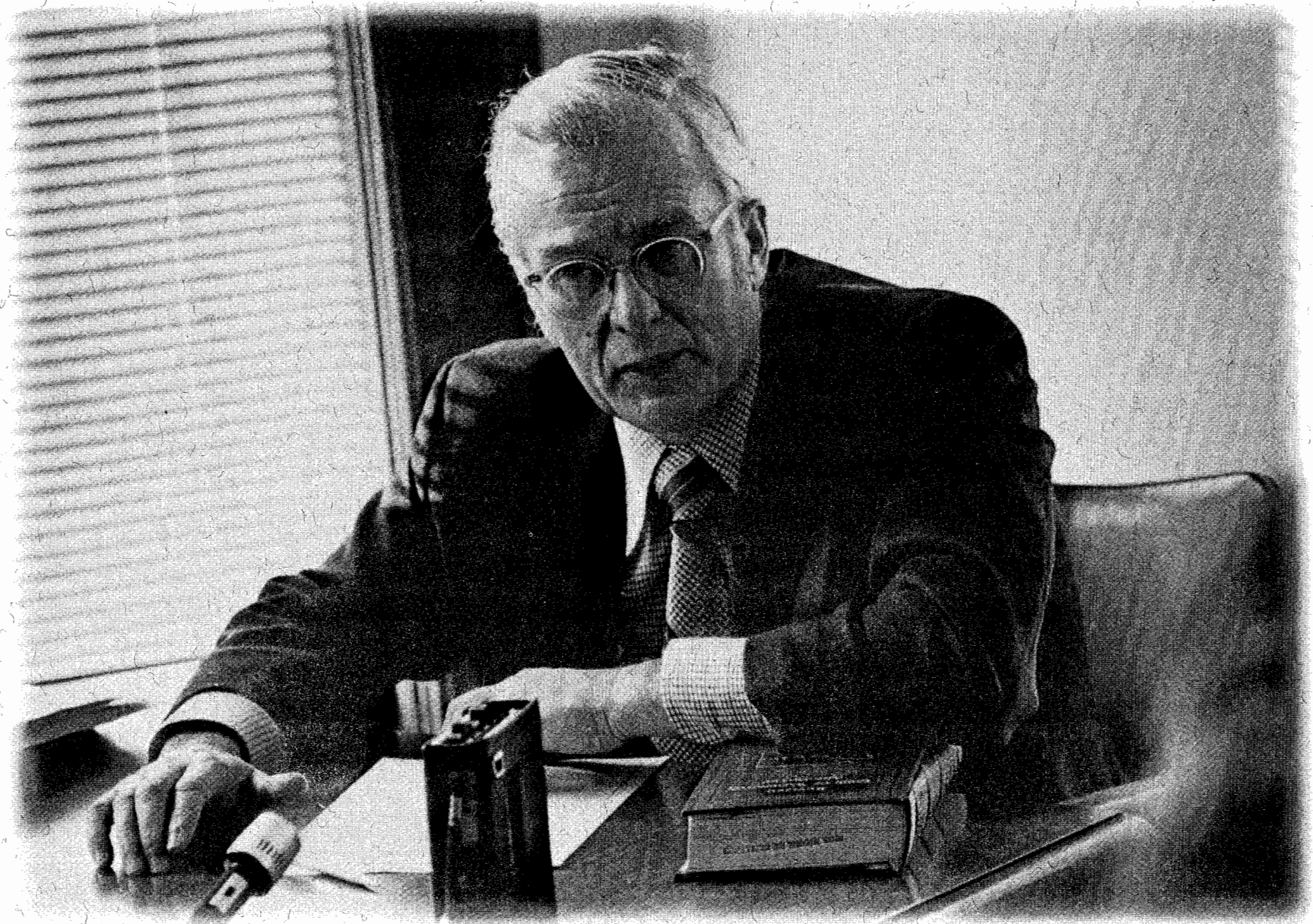


Princess Sparklingclear banishes Polly Pollution and King Algae from Lake Washington during a light-hearted ceremony celebrating Metro's achievements.

Chapter One



Building a legacy of clean water



Known as the father of Metro and a fierce advocate of community causes, James R. Ellis served as Metro's legal counsel from 1958 to 1979.

The beginning of Metro

A dark-haired young man strode forcefully along downtown Seattle's Fourth Avenue on Nov. 20, 1953, the future of the region in his briefcase. To one side was the imposing and posh Rainier Club, its landscaping lush and green even in the dead of winter. His destination, however, was the Downtown YMCA, an architecturally interesting building somewhat worn by generations of young feet. He was to deliver a noontime speech he had been thinking about and working on for months.

Seattle and nearby suburban areas were beginning to stir with postwar growth and prosperity, but Seattle still was a city of the 1930s even as it celebrated its 100th birthday. The Smith Tower at First Avenue and Yesler Way was its tallest building. Stone and brick were traditional building materials, and cobblestone streets were not uncommon.

The Seattle Rainiers played minor league baseball in a stadium south of downtown, and the only football was found in Husky Stadium at the University of Washington.

There were no freeways, although Dwight D. Eisenhower was president and his administration would build a

national network of limited-access highways inspired by the German autobahns Ike had seen as commander of Allied forces in Europe during World War II.

There was only one floating bridge crossing Lake Washington. New homes were spreading haphazardly across blueberry fields and pastures on the east side of the lake. The bridge provided easy access to downtown Seattle where many jobs were located. Similar growth was occurring north of the city limits at 85th Street, again with little forethought, often on lots bordered by poor streets without sidewalks. Stormwater ran in open ditches and homes were served by septic tanks. Many of the buyers were young families, most of them WWII vets who had gone to college under the GI Bill and now had good jobs. They wanted homes at reasonable prices.

Families were buying cars built in Detroit (a '53 Chevy Bel Air sedan was priced at \$1,874). Few of them rode the bus, and public transit ridership was in a long, slow decline following a heroic performance in carrying hundreds of millions of riders during the war years.

Metro Milestone

Sept. 9, 1958

Voters in the greater Seattle area approve the creation of Metro, giving it responsibility for sewage treatment. Its official name will be the Municipality of Metropolitan Seattle.

Metro Milestone

Oct. 1
and 6, 1958

**First meetings of
the Metro
Council.
C. Carey
Donworth is
elected chairman.**

The area's beauty came from its waterways, lakes, bays and rivers. But many were polluted and beaches often were closed to swimming in the summer.

Boeing Co. engineers, having successfully built and flown the B-52 jet bomber, were working on the world's first successful passenger jet. The Dash 80, the prototype of the 707, would not fly until July 1954.

No one worried about cholesterol, exercised daily or ordered double-tall lattes in Seattle in 1953.

James R. Ellis pushed open the Y's doors, marched across its tiled lobby and up the stairs. He followed a side corridor to a meeting room and sat down and opened his briefcase. When members of the Municipal League had settled down, he began to speak from the heart, as he would for decades to come.

This was his city, his home. A graduate of Seattle's Franklin High School, he attended Yale, the University of Chicago and the University of Washington Law School. During the war years, he served as a meteorological officer in the Army Air Corps.

But home again, a law practice growing, he began to sense the region's problems. And, in what would become a lifelong practice, he wanted to do something about it.

His speech, when it was reprinted later, was nearly 10 single-spaced pages.

"Today's growing pains spring not only from a great population increase, but from a revolution in urban living," he told league members. "We are no longer satisfied with close-platted homes and walk-up tenements. We demand a view from our picture windows and consider the family car an absolute necessity.

"This urban revolution has spread our enlarged population over an area of nearly 150 square miles, including some two dozen cities, towns and unincorporated communities," he said.

State legislatures, dominated by rural areas, were reluctant to recognize the new problems of cities, and the cities themselves were slow to assume leadership. "Seattle is a young city with a chance to lick its metropolitan problems before being swallowed up by them," Ellis said. "It is axiomatic that if we are to do so, we must recognize the symptoms early and deal with them promptly and effectively."

Ellis ticked off the symptoms one by one: signs of obsolescence and decay creeping into areas of the city, the flight of young people and middle-income families to the suburbs, traffic congestion that threatened to strangle the community, and the creation of a dozen or more special

districts each year to provide services, such as water supply and sewage disposal, not available from general-purpose government.

There were several ways to solve the region's problems, including major annexations by Seattle or extending its services without annexation. But Ellis focused on one: the creation of a single metropolitan government given authority to do what the cities and the county could not or would not do individually.

To illustrate his point, Ellis said Seattle, seven small cities and 75 water districts were dealing with water supply piecemeal. Conditions were perhaps worse when it came to water pollution. "There has been no coordinated attempt to solve the metropolitan sewage-disposal problem," he told league members.

Acknowledging that what he was saying would be controversial, Ellis added: "A provocative suggestion for the solution of metropolitan-area problems is the concept of a metropolitan government made up either of directly chosen representatives from the entire area or of indirectly chosen representatives from the communities therein on a federation principle. This would be a government of limited powers to which would be delegated only those functions requiring areawide attention. These would include, as a minimum, water supply, sewage disposal, arterial roads, mass transportation and basic planning."

Continued drift by civic and government leaders would make the ultimate solution much more difficult, he said as he urged the league to seek formation of a metropolitan-problems advisory committee that would refine and advance the idea with the goal of taking a metropolitan-government proposal to the Legislature in 1955.

Ellis was not urging the creation of a single new government. He was recommending that existing governments be empowered to work together to solve problems they could not deal with individually. His focus was on the functions of government, not its form. He was rebuked the year before for attacking the form of government.

In 1952, the League of Women Voters, the Municipal League and other good-government advocates (known as goo-goos) went after King County government. A board of freeholders (a group of citizens) was elected to design a new county government, and Ellis was appointed its special counsel. Their goal was to replace an 1880s form of county government that did not perform well in the 1950s.

The freeholders recommended a county-manager form of government and replacement of the three-member board of commissioners with a seven-member council. Many elected positions, including coroner, sheriff, auditor and treasurer, would be replaced by professionals appointed by the county manager. The remaining elective positions

would be nonpartisan. In effect, the courthouse would be shorn of cronyism and party politics.

Courthouse politicians flipped. Within a few days angry and fearful opponents had raised \$30,000 and plastered the city with brochures asking: "Is this Moscow or is it Seattle?" Ellis campaigned for the proposition and attended countless community meetings to speak on its behalf. Generally, a couple of sheriff's deputies in civilian clothing would move into the audience and encourage heckling and laughter.

The goo-goos lost badly, the measure was soundly defeated on election day.

"I learned a lot about the county and its problems," Ellis would recall. "I learned the (existing) county charter would not address what bugged people—roads that ended abruptly, a lack of sewers, etc."

He came to believe structure was not the key, but that addressing the functions of government was.

Despite the bitter loss of 1952, Ellis was ready to try again. "The growing metropolitan area presents the most striking challenge in local government today. If we, as citizens, are not too spoiled to undertake hard work ... and if we apply imagination and perseverance to this challenging job of local citizenship, we can build a city beyond compare. There is a better way than the one we now follow."

Municipal League members were electrified and energized. "I was very much impressed with the thinking Jim had introduced," said C. Carey Donworth, a member of the citizens' group that planned and lobbied for the creation of Metro and who would become the Metro Council's first chairman. "There is no question that he was the spark plug, even at this early point."



It would take longer than expected, but the goo-goos would prevail. This was the beginning of Metro.

Metro's governing body, the Metro Council, meets to discuss agency business, circa 1969.

Water pollution woes

R. (Reginald) H. Thomson was the wizard of Seattle's infrastructure in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The city's chief engineer, his fingerprints were on the city's water, sewer, electrical and street systems.

He was a genius who built the first wood-staved Cedar River waterline to Seattle, designed and built huge sewer lines still in use in the late 1990s, constructed the city's first electrical powerhouse on the upper Cedar River and planned massive re-grading projects that swept away the hills that made getting around difficult in downtown Seattle.

A graduate of Hanover College in Indiana, Thomson was a self-taught surveyor and engineer. His hand on government 80 years ago determined how and where Metro would treat wastes decades later. Thomson's engineering was so good, and his politics so astute, that he served seven Seattle mayors.

In planning the city's sewage system, Thomson looked far into the future and designed a mammoth brick sewer 12 feet in diameter that far outstripped the needs of his time. It still carries much of Seattle's sewage across the North End

for treatment at the West Point plant.

Thomson didn't build a treatment plant at the end of the North Trunk Sewer because in those days treatment was not an issue; one only needed to dump sewage in salt water where nature would take care of it.

"The theory in the old days was that if you got it to the water you were okay," said C. J. (Chuck) Henry, who was director of Seattle's sewer utility until joining Metro in 1962.

Thomson's North Trunk Sewer came to daylight at the base of the bluff at West Point in 1913; he rejected an earlier plan that would have put the outfall at the foot of Denny Way. A dam blocked the lower half of the sewer line where it came through the bluff, but a smaller pipe exited the dam. In the mid-1950s, the pipe daily carried 40 million gallons of the city's sewage through an outfall line that ended a short distance offshore in about 25 feet of water.

At any tide, the sewage caused a fan-shaped stain in the water of Puget Sound that was easily seen from the air. At certain tides, the sewage washed back onto shore. When it rained hard sewage spilled over the dam in the North Trunk

Metro Milestone

Dec. 17, 1958

**Harold E. Miller
becomes Metro's
first executive
director.**

Metro Milestone

June 1, 1959

**Metro opens
its first office at
152 Denny Way
in Seattle.**

Sewer and spread across the beach. The sandy spit was coated with a dark slime, and health officials closed nearby beaches because of bacterial contamination.

"The beach was black, it was ugly, terribly ugly," said Ted Mallory, a city engineer who also left Seattle's sewer utility staff for a job at Metro in 1962.

Above West Point was Fort Lawton, an Army base built decades before to protect Seattle and Puget Sound from foreign fleets. In the 1950s the fort was in the first line of defense in the Cold War.

When engineers drew plans for the Metro water quality system, they penciled in a 125-million-gallon-per-day primary treatment plant at the end of R. H. Thomson's brick sewer. They abandoned dilution as the solution because attitudes about treatment were changing and because the state Pollution Control Commission was demanding it.

There was no public access to the beach and, with a strong military presence in the fort above, it was unlikely the public would ever get near the point. To build a major primary plant elsewhere would require replumbing the city, at huge cost. It was easy to rationalize the decision to build a treatment plant on a sand spit Metro critics in the future would describe as one of the region's finest beaches.

West Point was not the only ugly place in a region where about 53 percent of all sewage received no treatment. In total, 60 outfalls discharged untreated waste into the Duwamish River, Elliott Bay and Puget Sound.

Around Lake Union, Green Lake and Lake Washington, combined sewers overflowed in rainy weather, contaminating those waters and often forcing closure of swimming beaches. Additionally, 10 secondary treatment plants (very high-tech for the time) discharged effluent into Lake Washington. By the early 1950s, scientists were beginning to suspect the lake was in failing health because of the phosphorous-rich effluent. Within a few years there would be no doubt the lake was ill, as the effluent stimulated the growth of algae that deprived the lake of light and consumed oxygen from the water. When the algae died it drifted ashore in stinking heaps.

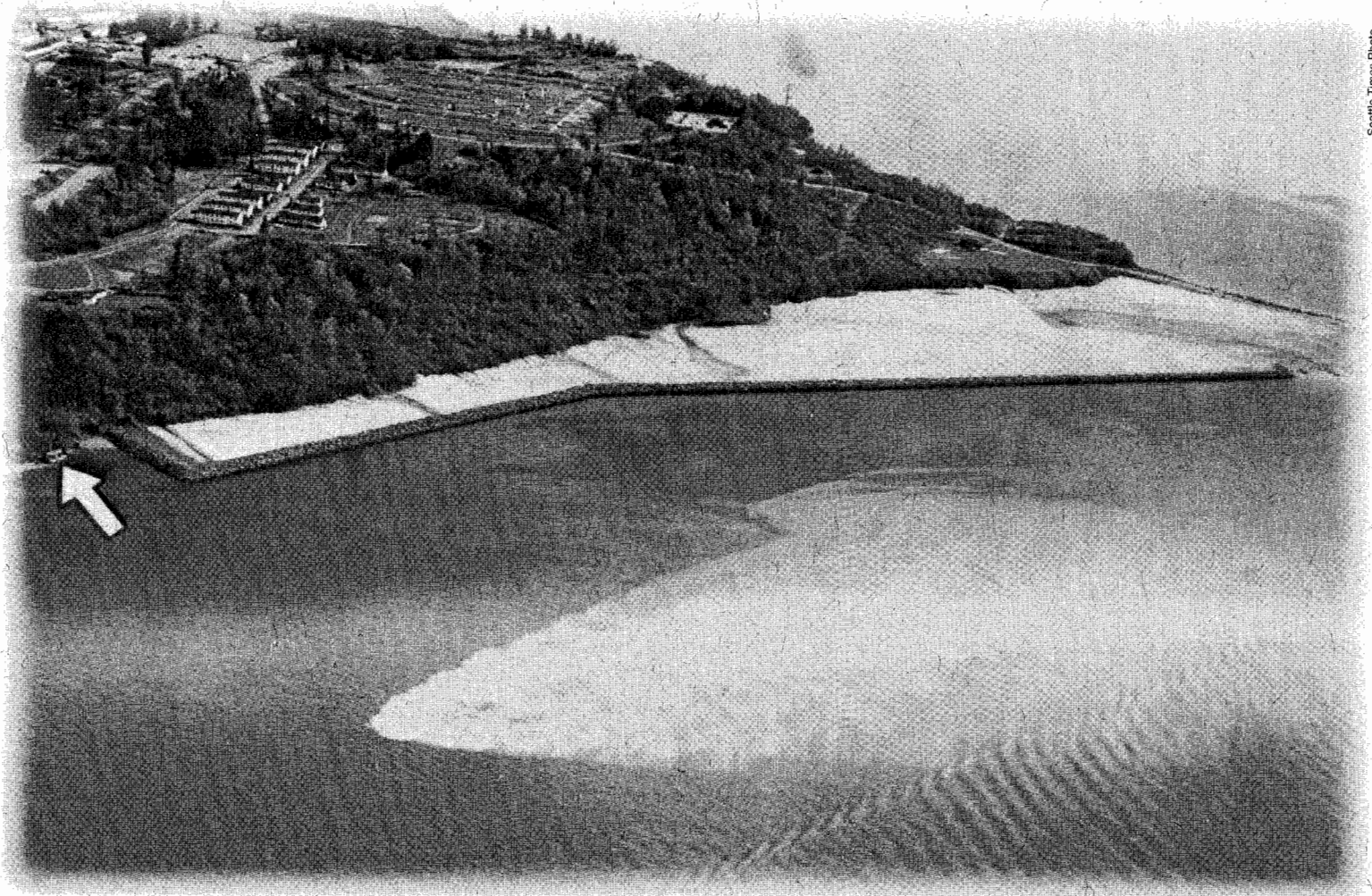
James R. Ellis, the young Seattle attorney who was pushing for a metropolitan form of government, recognized that the pollution problem was regional in nature. A growing body of citizens agreed that no one municipality could deal with it.

Engineering studies also would recommend a regional solution, but in 1955 there was no government with the authority to develop an areawide sewage treatment system. Seattle could take care of its problems, but not those of neighboring cities and sewer districts. There was no

provision in the law under which the county could do the work or which would allow them all to band together in a common effort.

At the urging of the Municipal League, Seattle's Mayor Gordon Clinton and the King County Board of Commissioners appointed a 48-member citizens group—the Metropolitan Problems Advisory Committee. With Ellis as its chair, the committee went looking for the answer.

Raw sewage rising from an outfall pipe clouds the water at West Point in 1963. The pollution ended after Metro built a treatment plant at the site to replace the outfall.



Seattle Times Photo

*In May 1958,
members of a
citizens'
committee, led by
chairman Dr.
Clayton
Wangeman,
standing at left,
strategize with
Seattle Mayor
Gordon Clinton,
far left, on how to
gain voter
approval of a
Metro ballot
measure.*



Seattle Times Photo

The Legislature responds

Nobody thought it had a snowball's chance. The Legislature in Olympia was rural, conservative, suspicious and didn't care a whole lot about Seattle's problems.

But there in the legislative hopper for the 1957 session was a bill allowing the creation of metropolitan districts and giving those districts authority to deal with six urban issues: public transportation, sewage disposal, water supply, regional parks, garbage disposal and comprehensive planning.

The Metropolitan Problems Advisory Committee had looked at metropolitan-type governments in the United States and Canada and had focused on one in operation in Toronto. Members of the committee, including Ellis, C. Carey Donworth (a Seattle business management consultant), Kirkland City Councilmember Al King and volunteer attorneys Bob Beach and Ray Ogden labored evenings and weekends around Ellis' kitchen table drafting legislation.

"It was an unusual response in the number of people attracted to support a cause," Donworth would recall.

"They realized an important thing was at stake."

The draft legislation created a federation of existing governments to deal with urban problems. The metropolitan municipal corporation, as it was called, would be governed by a board including representatives of the board of county commissioners and the mayor of the central city. There also would be representatives from city councils of each of the other large cities and one chosen to represent a group of smaller cities. It would have 15 members who would elect a chair.

The law required a vote of the people to establish a metropolitan district. An odd condition also required favorable majorities within the central city and in the suburban area outside the city. It was a condition that would make it tough to create Metro in 1958 and to consolidate it with King County government in 1991.

But the bill was locked in a committee because its chairman was from Snohomish County, which for years would have an obsessive fear it would be overrun by a King County metropolitan district. Citizen proponents asked Seattle Democrat John O'Brien, the speaker of the House, to help. He did, by telling the committee chair that none of his other bills would reach the floor if the Metro bill were not

Metro Milestone

Dec. 22, 1960

State Supreme Court affirms the constitutionality of the Metro enabling act and the validity of its contracts with component agencies.

Metro Milestone

May 4, 1961

**Metro publishes
its first call for
construction
bids—for the
Richmond Beach
and Carkeek Park
treatment plants.**

released. O'Brien had the clout, and the bill moved out to a vote. In the Senate the legislation was sponsored by Senators R.R. (Bob) Greive and William Goodloe.

Despite resistance from Eastern Washington legislators, the Metro bill passed the last day of the 1957 session. The citizens had done a good job in rounding up help. Besides O'Brien, they had the support of newly elected state Rep. Dan Evans, who later would serve as governor and U.S. Senator; Greive, who would have a seat on the Metro Council through his future election to the County Council; Ed Munro, a powerhouse legislator who also would be elected to the Board of County Commissioners and sit on the Metro Council; Floyd Miller, a lobbyist for Seattle who would later serve the city as mayor and who would sit on the Metro Council; and then Seattle Mayor Gordon Clinton and the full City Council.

Gov. Albert Rosellini, a Seattle Democrat, supported the plan and signed the bill when it came to his desk.

Seattle City Councilmember David Levine was a strong friend of the metropolitan proposal. At an earlier closed meeting of the council, Levine asked, "Is Metro really us?" The answer was yes. "We're inviting others in to help us?" he asked. The answer was yes. "Do we have a majority on the council?" The answer was yes.

"If Metro is us, I don't know why we're asking questions," Levine said. "It's pretty simple. We need it and it is us. There's no reason to be against it."

Ellis, who recounted the Levine anecdote, later would say simply: "So we found ourselves with potent allies."

Voters back Metro plan

E

lection Day. Sept. 9, 1958.

Fearful, optimistic, worried, on edge, proponents of the creation of a metropolitan district in King County suffered through the long voting hours of election day. The Metro proposal had failed in a March special election because of the dual-majority requirement of the state enabling law, and there was worry about what would happen if it missed a second time. They gathered to await election results, hoping their campaign strategies had been correct.

"There was a fair amount of optimism," said C. Carey Donworth, because of changes made after the March defeat. Frankly, proponents had gerrymandered the proposed metropolitan district by trimming away huge areas of south King County that had voted against it in March (many later would petition to annex to Metro). They also proposed giving Metro only one function, sewage disposal, instead of the three (sewage, water supply, comprehensive planning) before voters in March. In addition, scientific and engineering evidence supporting the Seattle area's water-pollution problems and the need for a regional solution continued to grow.

Still, there was doubt as the goo-goos listened for election results. It had been a long campaign, stretching almost from legislative approval of enabling legislation the year before. Critics were hostile. The plan, some said, smacked of super government, would cost too much and was unnecessary.

Nicholas A. Maffeo, a Renton attorney, was one of the most vocal opponents. He said the Metro plan was "an unwarranted attack upon our historical form of local self government." Approval would impose an overwhelming financial burden on property, he said, suggesting the Metro proposal was communistic in nature.

Maffeo knew he needed more than words to make his point. Appearing in a television debate with proponents, he scooped a wet mess of algae from a jar



Members of the Robert Block family posed for a campaign photo at Matthews Beach on Lake Washington. The emotional photo helped galvanize voters to support the Metro ballot proposition.



University of Washington scientist, Dr. W. T. Edmondson, who played a critical role in the campaign to save Lake Washington, speaks to the crowd at the West Point Treatment Plant dedication on July 1966.

and gulped it down—proving, he said, that it wouldn't hurt you.

Lake Washington itself offered vivid evidence in support of doing something dramatic that summer of 1958. It was a dry summer and the lake level dropped. Algae formed clots and mats and piled up on the lake shore, where it rotted and emitted putrid odors.

University of Washington scientists had been warning the lake was in trouble for several years. Dr. W.T. Edmondson, a

zoologist and expert on lakes (a limnologist) said the awful algae was *Oscillatoria rubescens*, a life form that showed up in other lakes, particularly in Europe, as they began to die.

Edmondson became a point man in the campaign, talking and informing the public of the lake's problems, telling reporters and citizens that the phosphorous-rich effluent from 10 secondary treatment plants on the shore was causing the problem. Hundreds of thousands who turned out for the summer's Gold Cup hydroplane races at Seward

Park didn't need a scientific explanation—they could see, and smell it, as they picnicked on the beach.

More weight was added to the proponents' case in the summer of 1958 with publication of the final draft of a regional sewerage study by the engineering firm of Brown & Caldwell. The study, which began in 1956, was directed by Harold E. Miller, formerly manager of a San Diego sewer agency. Miller later would become Metro's first executive director.

"All beaches within the area are subject to dangerous contamination," the report said. Overflowing sewers contaminated Lake Washington and Green Lake and the discharge of treatment-plant effluent into Lake Washington had pushed it to "the first stage of degradation due to nutrient enrichment."

Brown & Caldwell warned that unless changes were made, the "inestimable value" of Lake Washington as a recreational and scenic asset was likely "to be greatly reduced or perhaps lost completely."

The engineering firm and Edmondson provided greater detail to affirm a study by UW Prof. Robert O. Sylvester, who reported in 1952 that bathing beaches were often contaminated by bacteria from overflowing sewers and septic tanks and that the biochemical condition of the water was not satisfactory.

Health officials warned that children swimming at contaminated beaches could become ill from exposure to bacteria in the water. Parents worried their kids could get meningitis or infantile paralysis (polio).

The Lake City treatment plant in Seattle's North End began operating in 1952; its outflow doubled the amount of secondary effluent being discharged to Lake Washington. That immense flood of new nutrients obviously stimulated growth of *Oscillatoria rubescens*.

R.H. Bogan, an assistant professor of civil engineering at UW, added to the clamor for change: "The ideal solution will be to carry all wastes from the Lake Washington drainage area to Puget Sound," he wrote. The state Pollution Control Commission, long worried about the lake, in August 1958 ordered that treatment-plant effluent be sprayed on the land, not dumped in the water. Gov. Albert Rosellini, a Seattle Democrat, said the lake's condition represented "a disgraceful situation" that posed a public-health threat.

Pollution Control Commission reports in 1955 and 1956 also had fueled arguments over lake quality. The reports warned that continued discharge of effluent would lead to the uncontrolled growth of algae "which eventually will take over the lake."

Everyone was saying the right thing. But it wasn't heard by residents of south King County, particularly those who didn't see or smell the lake. Their no vote in the March 1958 election was so strong the measure failed to win the required favorable majority outside Seattle, although city voters approved.

Besides the obvious problems with the lake, several other actions helped sway voters in September 1958.

Metro supporters persuaded the Robert Block family to allow their five children to appear in a campaign photo. The memorable photo—which was used in campaign literature, on posters and on billboards—featured the kids at Matthews Beach, next to a sign warning not to swim there. A second political event won the support of several suburban mayors whose opposition had been strong in March.

Seattle Mayor Gordon Clinton told Ellis that suburban cities and sewer districts were left "holding the bag" in the March election because they would have wound up owning useless treatment plants. He suggested Metro buy them out. Further, the mayors of Bellevue, Kirkland, Beaux Arts and Hunts Point called a press conference to recommend the size of the district be trimmed, that its authority be limited to sewage-disposal and that Metro be required to pay for city or sewer district systems it would acquire.

Metro Milestone

July 20, 1961

**Ground-breaking
for the Renton
Treatment Plant.**

Metro Milestone

July 1, 1962

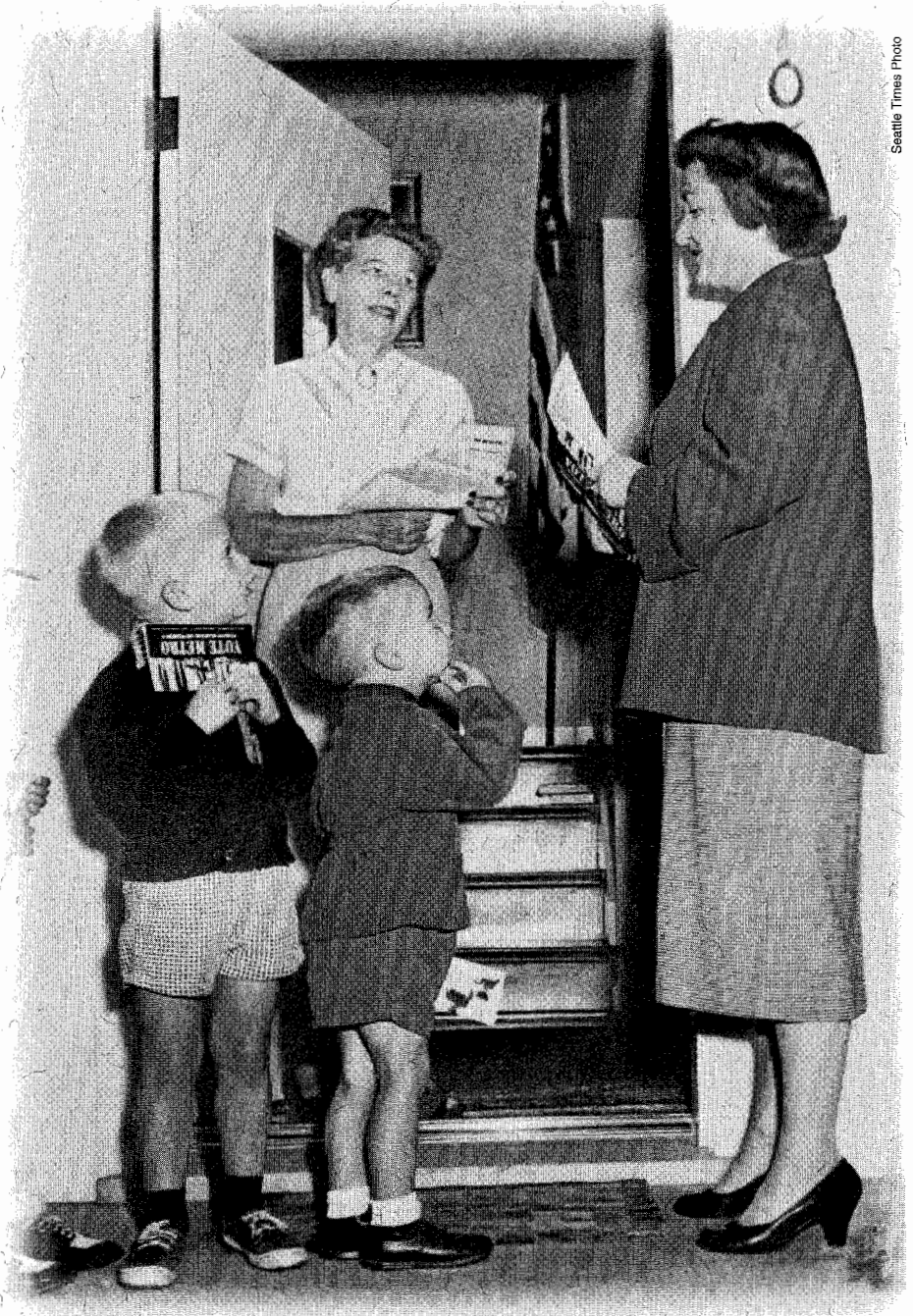
Metro levies its
first sewer service
charge—\$2 a
month.

Metro supporters distribute campaign information on Sept. 8, 1958. An estimated 5,000 volunteers, including children and adults, participated in the "Metro March." The supporters had plenty to cheer about the following day when voters in both the city of Seattle and county approved a proposition to establish a metropolitan municipal corporation.

Kirkland Mayor Byron Baggaley, originally an opponent, then campaigned strongly for the September 1958 proposal. Kirkland, which had voted no in March, voted 2 to 1 for creation of Metro in September.

When Edward Logan, the county's superintendent of elections, finished counting the Sept. 9 vote it was a clear and substantial victory for the citizens' movement: Seattle Yes—58,617, No—15,693; suburbs Yes—41,703, No—7,860.

Less than a year later, Metro would receive Look magazine's All-America City Award, long before it had poured a yard of concrete or treated a gallon of sewage. The honor was not for improving water quality, although those honors would come. It was for "progress achieved through intelligent citizen action."



Seattle Times Photo

Conduit, concrete and commitment

The Metro Council's first meeting was Oct. 1, 1958, about three weeks after voters said yes.

On Oct. 6, 1958, C. Carey Donworth was elected chairman. He would hold the post until 1980. James R. Ellis was appointed legal counsel on Oct. 22, a job he would hold until 1979. In December, Harold Miller was lured from the directorship of the Pollution Control Commission (PCC), where he had gone after completing the Brown & Caldwell engineering study, to become Metro's first executive director. Maralyn Sullivan soon was hired as clerk of the council and administrative assistant to Miller.

Metro rented office space on the second floor of a building at 152 Denny Way, above a tailor shop. (The building is still there, on the corner of Warren Avenue North.) Soon the small Metro staff was joined by employees of Metropolitan Engineers, the joint venture hired to design the system voters had approved. The firms were Brown & Caldwell, R.W. Beck and Associates, Hill & Ingman and Carey and Kramer. They all crowded into small work areas, where the engineers set up drafting tables and unpacked their slide rules and pencils.

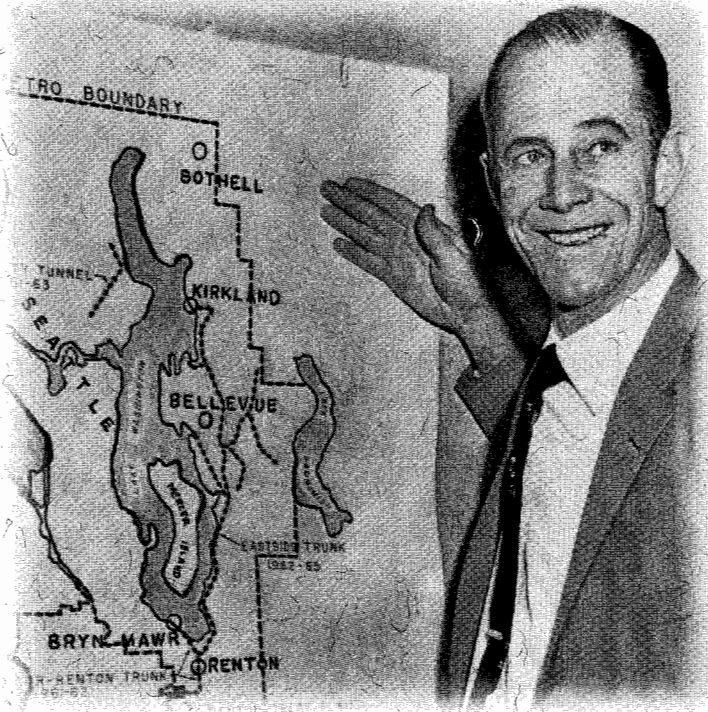
In July 1959, Miller brought a PCC engineer, Charles V. (Tom) Gibbs, to Seattle. Destined eventually for the Metro staff, he at first worked four days a week at Metropolitan Engineers and one day at Metro. Within a few months he would be working full time at Metro developing a water-quality-monitoring program; in 1967 he would become executive director.

Metropolitan Engineers would design four treatment plants, more than 100 miles of large tunnels and interceptor sewers and dozens of pumping stations. It would take nine years and cost about \$140 million to build it all, of which Metro borrowed \$125 million. (If it were to be done in the 1990s, the cost would exceed \$1 billion.) At the same time, Metro began planning the 1962 takeover of the treatment systems it would acquire from suburban cities, Seattle and sewer districts.



Forde Photographers

Meeting to discuss a pending agency issue are, from left, James Ellis, legal counsel; Maralyn Sullivan, administrative assistant and clerk of the council; C. Carey Donworth, Metro Council chairman; and Harold E. Miller, Metro executive director.



Harold E. Miller, Metro's first executive director, displays a map showing the beginning steps planned in the agency's water pollution control construction program in October 1959.

With that takeover in sight, the staff expanded. C.J. (Chuck) Henry, Ralph Bucklen and Ted Mallory were hired to help begin Metro operations July 1, 1962. They scoured the West Coast for treatment plant operators who would help run the district plants Metro would acquire. Miller hired Fred

Lange from the Vallejo, Calif., sewerage system to serve as technical director.

Metro also began levying its \$2 monthly sewer charge on July 1, 1962, taking note that the original engineering study called for a \$2.50 fee. Metro never directly billed individual property owners for sewer service; it charged cities and sewer districts, based on the number of customers they served, and those agencies collected Metro's fee as part of their regular sewer billing.

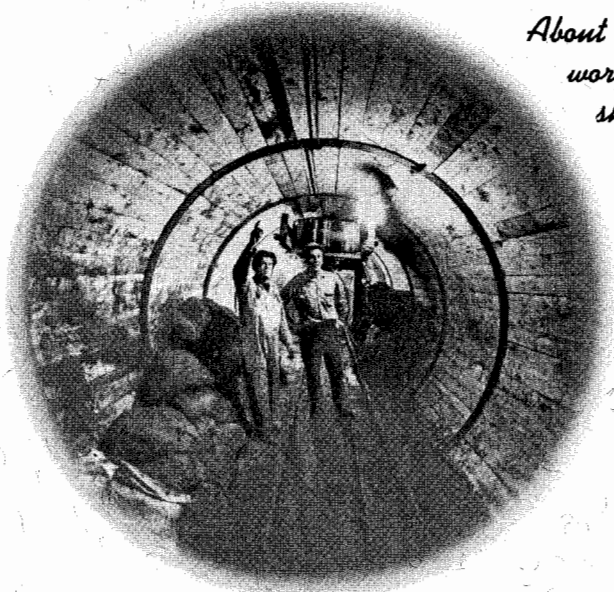
Ground-breaking ceremonies became common. The Metro construction program was so vast that nearly every major

contractor in the region worked on one or more sewer projects. Gibbs said out-of-state contractors also came to Seattle for Metro work.

Metro broke ground for its first major project, the Renton Treatment Plant, on July 20, 1961. The secondary treatment plant would be built on 53 acres purchased from the Great Northern Railroad and the Earlington golf course; the Longacres race track would be a neighbor.

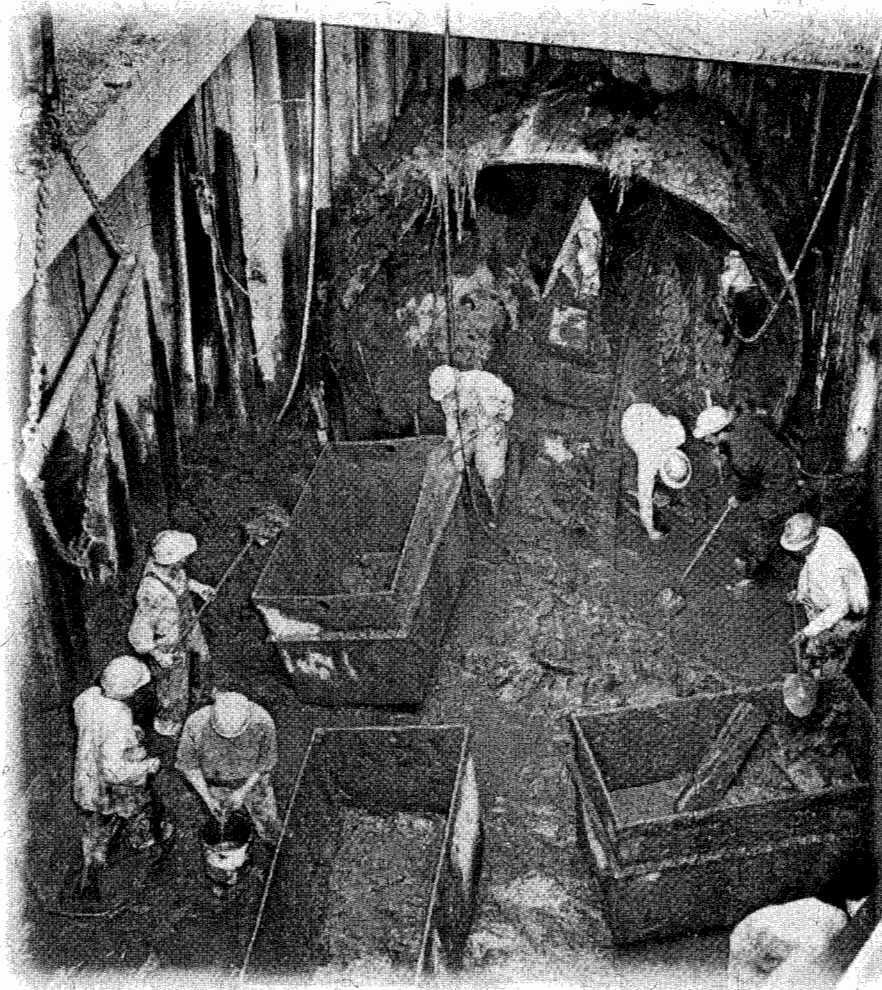
During a ground-breaking ceremony, a fleet of convertibles carried dignitaries through the 108-inch-diameter sewer pipes that were to be used in the plant to illustrate the immensity of the work Metro had begun. The plant, now called the East Division Reclamation Plant, has an ultimate capacity of 144 million gallons a day. In its first phase, the plant would treat an average dry-weather flow of 24 million gallons a day.

One of the toughest projects was a 3.3-mile sewer tunnel running from Matthews Beach to the North Trunk sewer. Because it would be bored through deep, wet soil, the tunnel would be constructed under air pressure. The air pressure, which would keep the water out, was regulated by state law. Engineers soon determined that working conditions specified by the law were outmoded and dangerous to workers and would cause significant delays and higher cost.



Bruce McKim/Seattle Times Photo

*About 160 feet below surface,
workers examine wooden
sheathing in a Metro tunnel
project near Ravenna
Park in north Seattle in
April 1965.*



Johnny Closs/Seattle Times Photo

*Workers in September
1968 slog through
mud in the cofferdam
at the end of a two-
mile tunnel running
under Second Avenue
in downtown Seattle.
The sewer project took
workers to depths up
to 160 feet.*

Metro Milestone

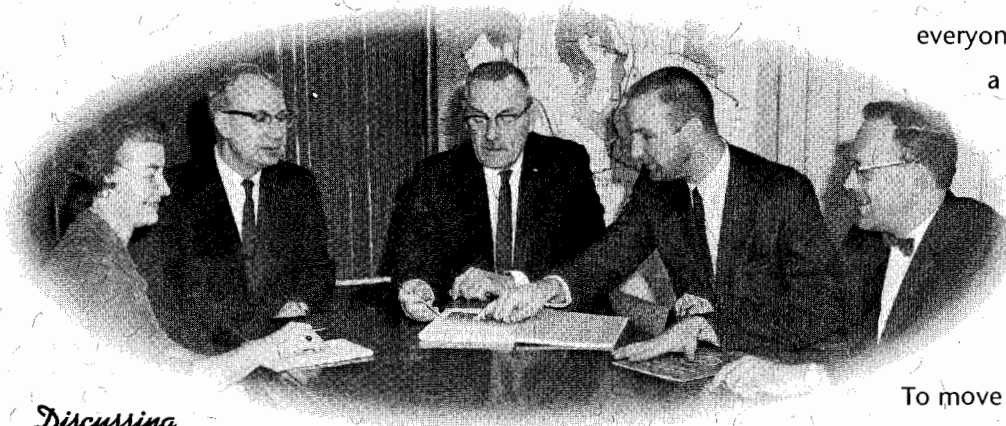
Sept. 11, 1962

**Voters reject a
proposal to give
Metro authority
to plan and
operate a
regional transit
system.**

Metro Milestone

Feb. 23, 1963

The first
treatment plant
effluent is
diverted from
Lake Washington.
Metro celebrates
with "Lake
Washington
Day."



Discussing the planned Metro water pollution control construction program are, from left, Maralyn Sullivan, administrative assistant and clerk of the council; Chuck Henry, who became Water Pollution Control Department director; Fred Lange, who retired as Metro's second executive director in 1967; Tom Gibbs, who succeeded Lange as executive director; and Bob Loomis, director of Finance and Administrative Services.

Metro convened a symposium of experts who recommended changes. The Legislature agreed and the tunnel was built on schedule under air pressure of as much as 32 pounds per square inch at a cost of \$6.7 million.

Metro built about 10 miles of tunnels under new regulations of the state Department of Labor and Industries without a fatality or claim for permanent injury.

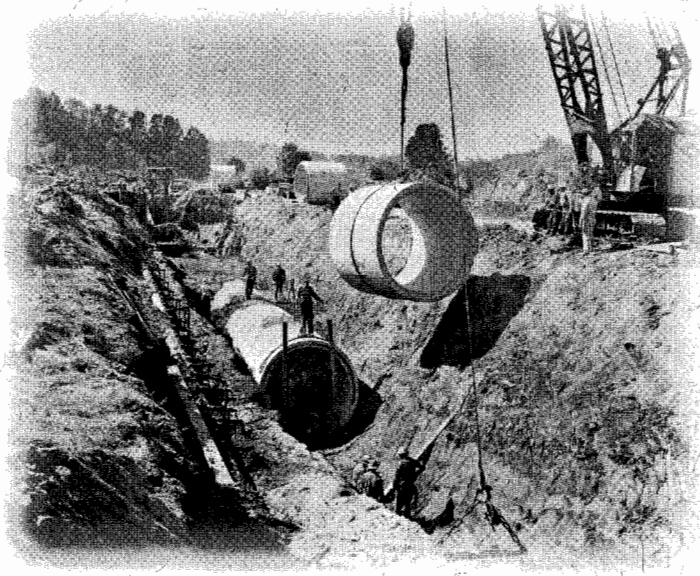
Everyone working in the tunnel, including casual visitors, was required to have a physical examination first. And

everyone finished up a tunnel visit with a long sit in a decompression chamber, which eliminated the possibility of the bends, a painful and crippling ailment common to tunnel workers and divers. After working four hours in the tunnel, workers decompressed for three and a half hours.

To move sewage from the Kenmore area to the tunnel entrance at the Matthews Beach pumping station, Metro built a seven-mile-long underwater pipe along the shore of Lake Washington and planned to add a second line in the future to serve increasing population. The pipe, supported by concrete pilings, was built offshore to avoid tearing up neighborhoods.

As Metro continued planning and building, it also began finishing things. In July 1962, it dedicated the small Carkeek Park Treatment Plant with a beach party for children. In October, Metro acquired West Point—where R.H. Thomson's sewer still spilled raw sewage on the beach—from the U.S. Army.

In February 1963, the first treatment plant effluent was diverted from Lake Washington, and in April the Richmond Beach Treatment Plant was completed. In July, a contract was awarded for the \$12 million West Point Treatment Plant.



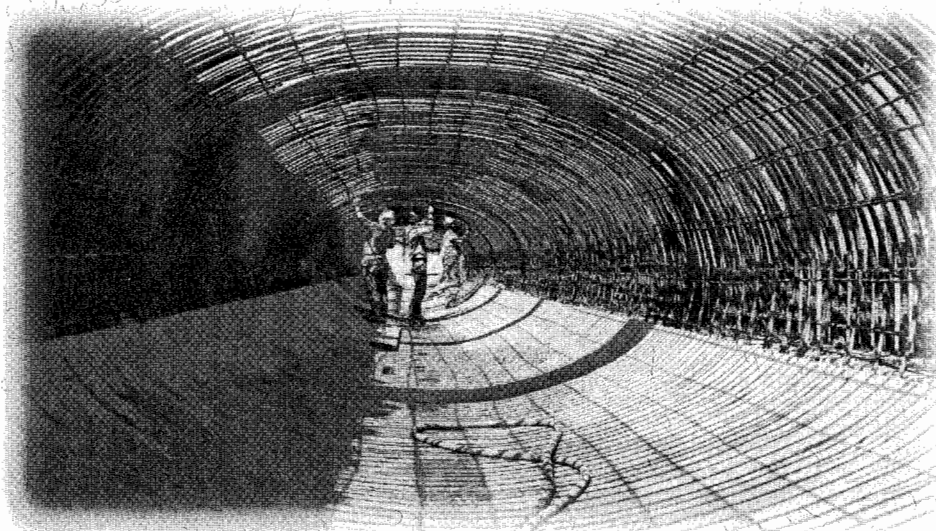
Seattle Times Photo

Workers position 10-foot-long sections of precast concrete sewer pipe near the Longacres Race Track as part of the Eastside trunkline project in September 1961.



Citizens gather at a beach party near the Carkeek Park Treatment Plant as Seattle Park Board President Waldo J. Dahl throws another "no swimming" sign on the fire. Pollution kept people out of the water until Metro's new treatment plants opened.

Workers finish preparation of steel reinforcing before concrete is poured at a sewer project near the Lake Washington waterfront in Renton. Unlike this oval-shaped line, most Metro trunklines are round and were precast.





Citizens, dignitaries and Metro employees gather to celebrate the dedication of the West Point Treatment Plant on July 20, 1966.

People power prevails

July 20, 1966. At West Point, it was sunny and a fresh northwest breeze blew across Puget Sound, ruffling the U.S. flag that flew over the recently completed treatment plant. The media were there for the dedication, along with Metro and other government officials and a crowd of citizens. Opening of the plant would end the water pollution that began in 1913 when R.H. Thomson pushed his 12-foot-diameter trunk sewer through the bluff and raw sewage began flowing into shallow water just offshore.

Gov. Dan Evans, who helped swing passage of the Metro enabling act as a freshman legislator in 1957, was there. Dr. W.T. Edmondson, the UW scientist who identified water-quality problems in Lake Washington, stood in the crowd, along with unselfish citizens who worked for years on behalf of clean water.

Nearly 13 years after delivering the YMCA speech that started it all, James R. Ellis used the dedication ceremony to honor volunteers who helped in the creation of Metro.

"This is a fitting dedication because it recognizes that many people made it possible," Ellis said. "Ten years ago this concrete and steel was a will-of-the-wisp and these miles of

great tunnels and pipe were a fragile idea. It took many people to spin that idea into a concept and many more to transform that concept to this site.

"The bridge to this time and place was not built by power, nor by wealth, nor an established elite. In plain truth, it was built by the citizens of people no larger than ordinary life."

Speaking from the heart, Ellis lauded the citizen effort.

"We are transients on these hills and shores and the waters are not ours to spend. Ten years ago the urban drainage basins of the nation were heavily polluted.

"Today most of these waters have gone from bad to worse—but not here. Today most of the nation's press are looking for scapegoats—but not here. Today most local councils are still waiting for someone else to do it—but not here.

"Here we watch a welcome turning point in the story of our lakes and rivers and inland sea. Here we mark some proof that urban man can live and work in a beautiful land without destroying beauty."

Metro Milestone

Nov. 20, 1964

Fred Lange
appointed
executive
director,
succeeding
Harold E. Miller.

Creating the can-do ethic

From the beginning, through Metro's assumption of public transit responsibilities in 1973 and until the very end, the ethic was there: "Do better than promised."

It guided Metro and its staff for more than 35 years. It stimulated 12-hour work days, often stretching across six or seven days a week. It built a waste-disposal system and a mass-transit system, both among the best in the nation.

It instilled a sense of self confidence, a spirit of determination and a commitment to quality that led to the deeply felt belief that Metro could do anything—and do it right. It led to an attitude critics one day would condemn as arrogance.

"It came from Jim Ellis," said Penny Peabody, who began work at Metro as a public information officer and who would later become chair of the Metro Council. "It was made part of our culture and it was put into practice by Tom Gibbs."

There was no class on the Metro ethic for new employees. "It was there," said Gibbs, who joined Metro as a young engineer and

who became its third executive director. "Hal (Miller) drummed it into me. We set tough goals and then beat them."

Richard Sandaas, a former Metro Councilmember and Metro executive director, said: "The ethic allowed Metro to depart from traditional ways of doing things. We had the accountability to get things done, we also had the ability to map it out. We had the opportunity to take risks. We capitalized on that."

In a sense, it was like a campaign, said Aubrey Davis, a Mercer Island resident who chaired the Metro Council's Transit Committee during creation of Metro Transit. "All the people knew what had to be done, wanted it done well and could see progress."

Metro has done reasonably well, Davis added. "That has led to a higher sense of satisfaction than many government activities can afford."

Ted Mallory, a retired Metro technical services director, said staff regularly met with Ellis in the early days, when Ellis was Metro's legal counsel. He credits Ellis and Miller for instilling the ethic in

the small, young staff. "They both were very dynamic and positive and had great expectations of the Metro staff. They expected 150 percent every day," Mallory said.

For Gloria Overgaard, manager of transit operations, the ethic meant service. People worked whatever hours it took to do the job. "There was a tremendous sense we were there to serve the public and we would do whatever was necessary."

When Mike Bergman joined the transit development staff in 1980 no one told him there was an ethic to be heeded. "But the workplace ethic sunk in over time. It was an ethic that encouraged independence of thought."

For Bob Matsuda, a 30-year employee who retired in 1995 as special projects and research coordinator on the water-quality staff, the ethic was represented by a pride in the agency and in its accomplishments. "People felt what they were doing was important. There was a strong sense we were stewards. The people paid us, we ought to do it. I learned through observation; it was a culture that was very obvious. We were not told 'this is how you will perform,' but it was an observed excitement, a new challenge."

Daryl Grigsby, who became director of Metro's Water Pollution Control Department in late 1993 after working for the city of San Diego 11 years, is convinced the ethic still exists.

"I thought I had a good grasp of how local government works," he said. "Coming to Metro was an eye-opening experience because of the quality of the people and their dedication. Being part of an organization that makes a difference to the whole region and having a legacy of things to look back at is definitely energizing.

"Most wastewater utilities just do their thing. But here it's being part of the group that cleaned up Lake Washington and Elliott Bay and is still making major contributions to Lake Sammamish and the Duwamish River."

Ellis acknowledges imposing the ethic on the staff. "If you do something you promised, it's not news. If you do more, you get public credit.

"I wanted government to be trusted, and I was no more idealistic than Miller or Gibbs. It was like a crusade, the meetings when we talked about how we could make things different."

Ellis remembers that engineers said it would take 10 years to carry out the plan to clean up Lake Washington, Elliott Bay and the Duwamish River.

"I said, we promised 10 but let's do it in nine."

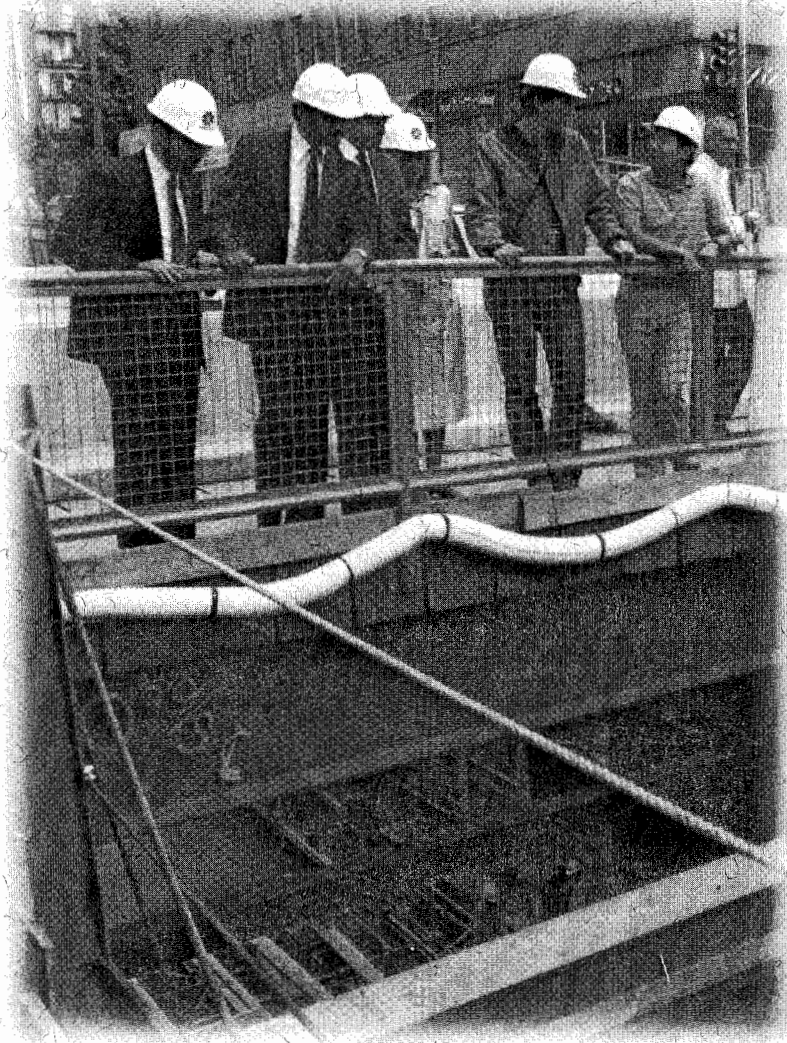
And they did.

Metro Milestone

July 22, 1965

Renton
Treatment Plant
dedicated in
memory of
Harold E. Miller,
Metro's first
executive
director.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Members of the Citizens' Transit Advisory Committee view construction of the downtown Seattle transit tunnel in September 1987. Formed in January 1974, the citizens' committee advised the Metro Council's Transit Committee on key transportation projects and services.

Members of the Citizens' Water Quality Advisory Committee review a water pollution control project in 1989. For 20 years, CW2AC served as an advocate for developing environmental and technical solutions to the region's water-quality problems.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Chapter Two



A sound investment and regional transit



*Bob Matsuda gives instructions to divers conducting monitoring work in Puget Sound.
Matsuda retired at the end of 1995 as special projects and research coordinator for Water Pollution Control.*

A clear victory

One of the easiest ways of determining the relative health of Lake Washington is simply to look down into it. If you're close to shore and the water is clear, you'll see rocks and sand and maybe some plant life, as well as debris tossed in by shore-side strollers. There may be a small fish or two.

It's harder in deep water, where there's nothing to be seen but the water itself. To determine how clean deep water is, scientists for years have gone out in small boats and lowered a simple white eight-inch disk on the end of a string. They measure how much string they play out before the disk disappears and then make some conclusions about cleanliness and quality.

In 1950, University of Washington scientists could see the disk when it was 12 feet deep and felt satisfied the water was clean. By 1962, when 10 treatment plants around the lake were dumping 20 million gallons of effluent into the lake daily and providing phosphates on which algae thrived, the white disk disappeared in the organic murk at about three feet. In 1966, it faded from sight at two and a half feet as the algae population grew thicker and the water looked like thin pea soup.

In 1963, Metro began piping lakeshore treatment plant effluent into new interceptor sewers as part of its \$140 million campaign to clean up the lake, the Duwamish River and Elliott Bay. Some subtle improvement in water quality soon was noted. The last of the old treatment plants was closed in 1968, and the flow of effluent into the lake ended. Scientists were ready for a slow but sure recovery of water quality.

It came quickly that summer, however. UW scientists, led by Dr. W.T. Edmondson, could see the disk at a depth of nine feet. It would get much better: in later years the disk routinely would be visible at depths of 17 to 20 feet, with a maximum depth of nearly 25 feet in 1993.

Unlike algae, which assails the eyes and the nose, some factors of water quality are invisible and can only be measured in the laboratory. Phosphorous, the element from treatment-plant effluent that fertilized algae in Lake Washington, was found in concentrations of 70 parts per billion in the 1960s. That was enough to feed the fantastic growth of algae that darkened the water and washed ashore to rot and smell. After the last lakeshore treatment plant was closed, the concentration of the chemical dropped quickly to about 16 parts per billion, a level maintained into the 1990s. Algae sightings became rare.

Metro Milestone

July 20, 1966

**West Point
Treatment Plant
dedicated.**

**Contract cost was
\$11.9 million.**

Metro Milestone

March 16, 1967

Charles V. (Tom)
Gibbs appointed
executive
director.

Protecting area waters

Water quality along Seattle's waterfront improved dramatically, literally overnight, as Metro completed its interceptors and halted the discharge of most raw sewage into Elliott Bay. In 1970, with closing of the city's old Diagonal Avenue treatment plant and completion of the Elliott Bay interceptor sewer, dissolved-oxygen levels in the Duwamish River estuary soared from a low of three tenths of a milligram per liter to more than four milligrams per liter, creating a healthier environment for marine life. Other improvements have pushed the dissolved-oxygen level to more than eight milligrams per liter in 1995, while diversion of East Division Reclamation Plant effluent from the river to Puget Sound virtually has eliminated ammonia in the river.

Completion of the Elliott Bay interceptor "made Seattle's commercial waterfront one of the cleanest in the world," Metro said modestly in a 20-year review published in 1979. Metro's work attracted favorable comment from TV newsman Walter Cronkite and from national magazines. Time magazine said in early 1969: "Unlike most cities, Seattle is doing something about the mess ... Metro succeeded in less time and at less cost than had been expected."

Underwater surveys and lab analysis of water samples from West Point showed similar improvement after the new treatment plant ended the flow of raw sewage onto the beach. The concentrated flow of effluent from the deep outfall pipe was causing no harm to the nearby marine environment.

Much of Metro's first work had been completed on or ahead of schedule. The cost was within 2 percent of estimates made in 1961.

Surely, Jim Ellis' early dictum of "doing better than promised" had been met. But the work was far from complete. The continued protection of Puget Sound and freshwater lakes and rivers would consume much of Metro's time and effort and nearly \$2 billion over the agency's lifetime.

Metro would spend more than \$300 million on pipeline extensions, reduction of combined-sewer overflows and other system improvements in its second-stage program, which began in 1966. Paying for the work required the first increase in Metro's sewer charge. The fee was bumped from \$2 a month to \$2.75 in 1971 and future increases would follow.

The cost of the third stage, which included moving the East Division Reclamation Plant outfall from the Duwamish River to Puget Sound, was \$267 million. In 1995, Metro was in the midst of its fourth stage of work, which is highlighted

by reconstruction of the West Point Treatment Plant to provide secondary treatment. The fourth stage will have a final cost of about \$1.3 billion at completion.



Keith Purves Photo

Located on the Lake Washington Ship Canal, Metro's Environmental Laboratory provides services that help protect public health and enhance area water quality.

Forward Thrust: successes and failures

In 1962, just as Metro was beginning to build the sewer lines and treatment plants that would clean up Lake Washington, four small towns proposed Metro be given transit authority.

Under the law, Bellevue, Lake Forest Park, Medina and Beaux Arts had enough clout to put the proposal on the September ballot. But they didn't have the political muscle to get it passed, and the measure was voted down, the victim of little support and public disinterest. After all, the region's attention was focused on the Seattle World's Fair that summer and fall and everyone was impressed that the recently opened Interstate 5 freeway had handled the crowds of motorists bound for the fairgrounds without many of the traffic jams that had been forecast.

Jim Ellis, the father of Metro and its legal counsel since 1958, looked around in the 1960s and saw other regional problems that needed attention: The area was short of parks and public swimming pools, its arterial streets were in poor condition and blighted by telephone and power lines, storm-drainage systems needed significant improvement, and, of course, there remained a need for a regional

transportation system. Ellis, too, was concerned about preserving open spaces and greenbelts from the suburban population that was surging toward the Cascade foothills.

With the support of other civic activists and key business and government leaders, Ellis created a group that would be called Forward Thrust (his wife, Mary Lou, suggested the name) and he became its president. The committee would identify community needs that would cost \$5 billion to satisfy.

In 1968, Forward Thrust sponsored ballot propositions totaling \$819 million, the equivalent of several billion dollars in the 1990s. Voters approved spending \$333.9 million, including \$40 million for the Kingdome and \$118 million for parks and recreation needs.

A transit plan costing \$1.15 billion and including 49 miles of rail on legs to Ballard, northeast Seattle, Bellevue and Renton was part of the Forward Thrust package. It received a favorable majority of 50.9 percent, but state law required a 60 percent majority to pass because the local share of \$385 million was to be paid from excess property taxes.

Forward Thrust returned to the ballot in 1970 with a second package of improvements costing \$625 million. It included \$440 million for a \$1.3 billion rail plan nearly identical to the 1968 proposal, \$80 million for stormwater control, \$55 million for community centers and \$40 million for public-safety buildings. As the second Forward Thrust program began taking shape, the Boeing Co., Seattle's principal employer, began making huge cuts in programs and payroll as airlines suffered through a severe recession and canceled airplane orders. Boeing was building a supersonic transport, also canceled.

Boeing employment in Washington was sliding rapidly from a high of 101,544 in January 1968, to a low of 37,200 in October 1971. Those who hadn't been laid off feared they were next. Billboards urged the last person leaving Seattle to turn out the lights.

Because of the bleak economic climate, voters were frightened about losing their jobs, keeping their homes and buying food for their families.

New taxes for civic improvements were not on any priority list, and not one Forward Thrust proposal passed. Citizen activists will remember that day in May 1970 as the dreariest and most disappointing in King County election history. Only 46.3 percent voted for the transit plan, and \$300 million in federal funds promised Seattle instead went to Atlanta, which built a rail transit system.

Metro Milestone

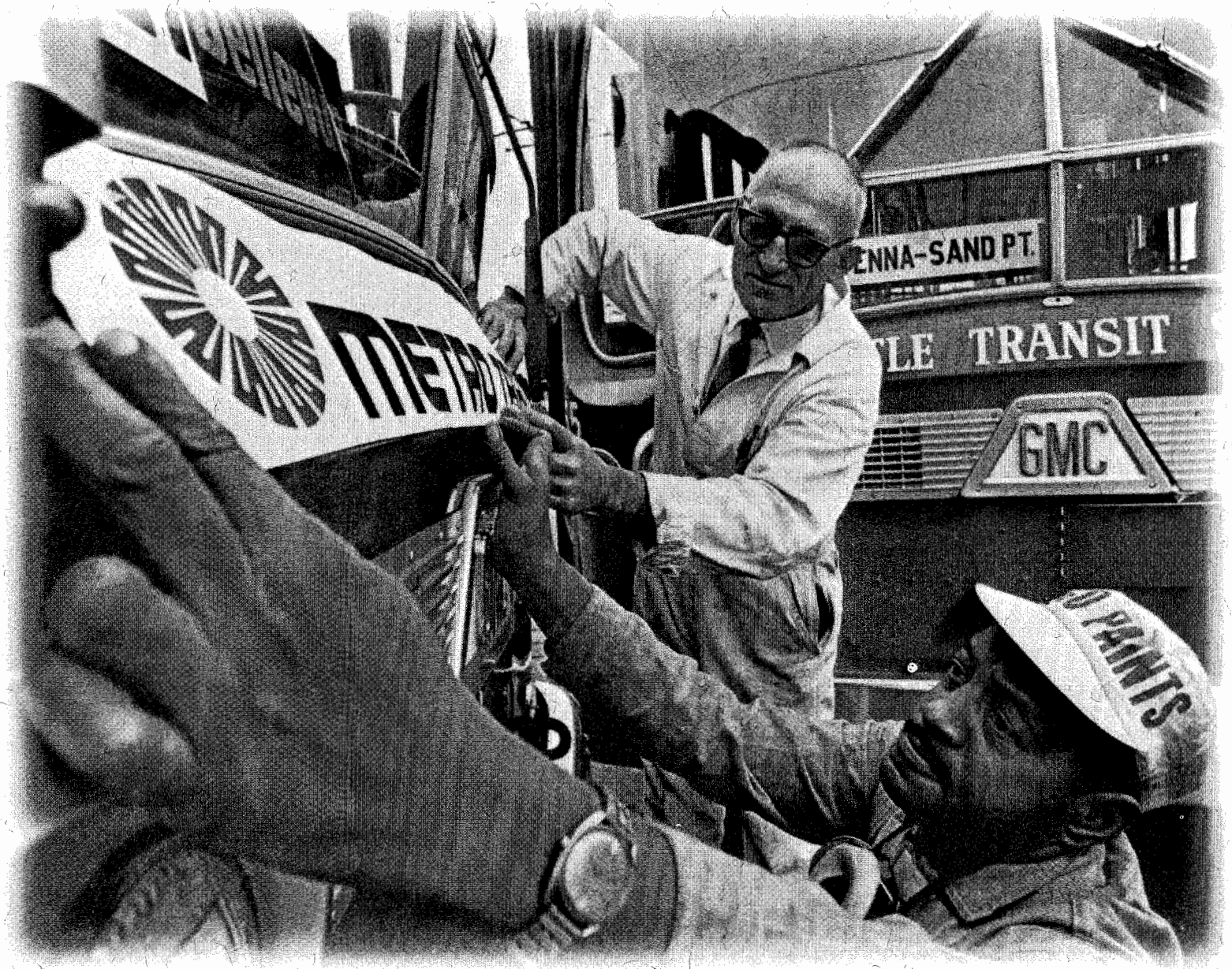
March 30, 1967

The Lake City treatment plant is closed, ending the flow of effluent to Lake Washington less than nine years after Metro was formed. Lake waters will begin to improve within the year.

Metro Milestone

Feb. 13, 1968

King County voters reject a Metro rail plan proposed as part of a Forward Thrust package of community improvements.



Jerry Gay/Seattle Times Photo

*Signed and ready to roll, buses await the first day of Metro Transit operations on Jan. 1, 1973.
Applying the new Metro logo are Grover McCoy, left, and Vic Citron.*

Metro Transit gets rolling

Despite the disheartening 1970 defeat of the rail plan, the region did not hesitate in moving forward with new transportation efforts.

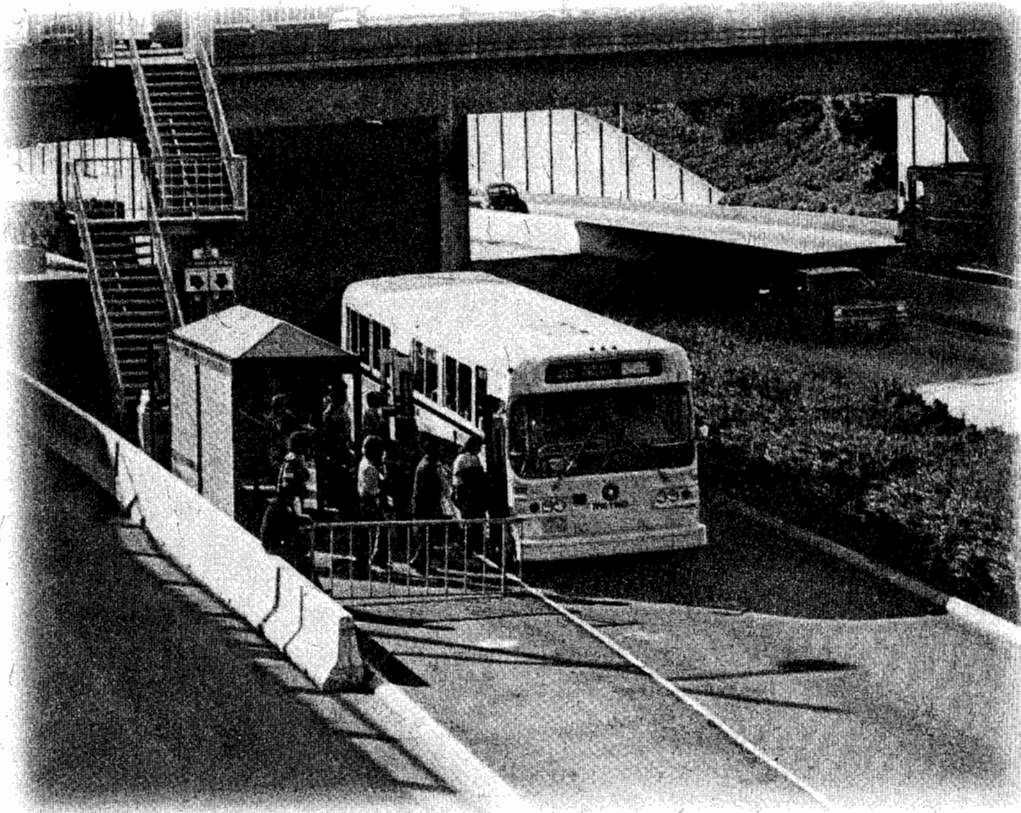
In early 1971, the Metro Council agreed it would operate a regional bus system if the state would authorize a tax subsidy. Councilmembers were convinced by the failure of the Forward Thrust proposals that property taxes could not be used to pay for mass transit and that another subsidy was necessary.

A citizens' committee chaired by Republican Joel Pritchard (Washington's lieutenant governor in 1995) and Democrat David Sprague (a Seattle businessman and former legislator who would serve later as chair of a transit advisory committee) recommended Metro be given authority to levy (voters willing) a sales tax of three tenths of one percent. The committee and others worked hard in Olympia. The Legislature, prompted by Sen. R.R. (Bob) Greive of West Seattle, gave Metro that authority in its 1971 session, sparking a new round of planning for a countywide bus operation.

Unlike the top-down process used in the Forward Thrust campaign, the effort to develop a plan for an all-bus system became a grassroots planning effort. Leading the charge were Larry Coffman, who worked as Metro's sole transit planner, Wally Toner, a Seattle consultant, and Wally DelaBarre and Arnold Cogan of Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall (DMJM), the firm hired to design the regional bus plan. The group enlisted the public in drafting policies and standards and drawing bus routes.

Toner searched through county election records for the names of those who voted often and particularly in off-year school and special elections. "The theory was that people who voted schools and off-year elections consistently were the financial well spring of the community," Toner said.

Although targeting specific audiences is common in political campaigns of the 1990s, it was an unusual approach then. Toner developed the tactic in 1971, based on community organization work he had done for VISTA in the late 1960s.



Passengers at a "Freeway Flyer" stop board an express bus in the Montlake area of Seattle.

Ten thousand good voters received personal letters inviting them to a series of 50 planning meetings in 10 communities around the county.

Metro officials, members of DeLaBarre's staff and Metro councilmembers attended meetings in schools, churches and community centers that attracted up to 50 people or more. Citizens drew lines on paper, recommending routes, and proposed policies they thought would make a bus system work for them.

The principle, Toner said, was "that no campaign can shine up a bad ballot measure. If the people haven't had a hand in developing the ballot measure, there is a good chance they will reject it."

The plan written by DMJM drew on Seattle Transit procedures and plans and citizen ideas, but it also offered some dramatic new approaches to bus service. While Seattle Transit pioneered express bus service, with its Blue Streak run from a Northgate park-and-ride lot to downtown Seattle, Metro Transit would have 25 express routes covering 650 miles. There would be 850 miles of service on 100 local routes, which would feed the express system and circulate in neighborhoods. Ridership would reach 57 million in 1980, the plan predicted.

DMJM proposed a series of "Freeway Flyer" stops on freeways at which express buses would stop to pick up passengers transferring from local buses. In addition, it called for 1,200 bus shelters and 50 park-and-ride lots with 16,000 parking spaces. The DMJM system required more transfers, which upset some riders accustomed to riding without transfer from their home neighborhood to jobs and shopping downtown, but it promised to speed service.

Voters approve transit plan

In September 1972, voters authorized Metro to take on the challenge of building a new countywide bus system and approved a sales-tax increase of three tenths of one percent to pay for it. (The Legislature in 1969 promised to share revenue from the state motor vehicle excise tax with transit, a promise Metro eventually would go to court to enforce.) Approval of Metro Transit and its new tax base was the first time voters had said yes to a transportation measure since 1918, when city residents approved the purchase of the privately owned Seattle Electric Street Railway.

Among those surprised by the election were Metro officials who really hadn't expected the measure to pass.

Although the Metro Council and its staff had done little pre-election planning for how a merged, countywide system would function, they rallied quickly. Under the direction of Charles V. (Tom) Gibbs, executive director of Metro, and Mercer Islander Aubrey Davis, chair of the council's Transit Committee, Metro put together a 100-day campaign to build the new system.

New routes were planned and schedules were written. Metro officials figured out how to take over purchasing,

personnel and other front-office chores from Seattle Transit and Metropolitan Transit. Tom Gibbs, Jim Ellis, Metro's legal counsel, and Dick Page, a former deputy mayor of Seattle working as Metro's director of Public Services, negotiated the purchase of the city transit system for \$6.5 million, with the money to be spent on transit improvements within the city. Metro paid \$1.2 million for Metropolitan Transit Corp. Bus drivers got in their cars and made trial runs on the new suburban routes they would be driving. "It was a fire drill," Gibbs said.

Davis balanced his business, position on the Mercer Island City Council and transit duties during the frantic 100 days. "It was a shotgun marriage," Davis would say of the merger. "We didn't have the liability of knowing what wouldn't work. We broke quite a few molds and made some mistakes."

Gibbs, Page and other Metro staffers knew little about bus operations. "We were so naive that it never occurred to us we couldn't make it happen," said Penny Peabody, who was Metro's media representative then and the first woman hired by Metro for a nonclerical position.

Metro Milestone

May 19, 1970

A rail transit proposal is defeated in the second Forward Thrust election.

Metro Milestone

Sept. 19, 1972

King County voters give Metro authority to develop a regional bus system and to levy a sales tax of three tenths of one percent to support it.

Seattle Transit employees naturally were concerned about their future. Their worry was not about their jobs, which were guaranteed by law, but about what it would be like working for another agency whose skills were in water pollution control and whose leaders knew nothing of their transit traditions.

"Emotions were very similar to those felt now," said Jim Patrick shortly before the merger of Metro and King County was completed in 1995. "It was a natural reaction to significant changes in our lives." Patrick started work as a driver for Seattle Transit in 1960 and retired from Metro more than 30 years later as deputy executive director.

To Patrick and others, however, one advantage was clear: Metro Transit would be financially secure, compared to the Seattle system, with sales and vehicle excise tax revenues flooding in. The tax receipts, more than \$15 million in 1973 the first year they were collected, would allow transit to prove it could do the job.

A necessary task in the first 100 days was naming the consolidated system. There was a contest and scores of names were offered, both goofy and inspired, including Clear Water Transit Works, Blue Streak Transit, Seattle-King County Metro, Comet, Kismet, KART, KAT and Rainwater Highball. But the simplest won.

Another challenge facing the new system was the development of a common color scheme for the bus fleet. Coaches inherited from Seattle Transit bore several colors, including red-and-gray and green-and-white patterns. Metropolitan Transit Corp. buses were painted "army green" and white. At one point in Metro Transit's first days there were 15 color schemes on transit buses working in Seattle, said Jess Dawson, who was superintendent of equipment then.

Aubrey Davis thought Metro Transit would use blue and green paint on its buses because they were Northwest colors. But committees and citizens had other ideas. The first new Metro buses, built by AM General, would come painted white, brown and ochre. The original pattern had swooping curves of color that were difficult to paint and which soon became straight bands. With the planned replacement of almost its entire diesel-bus fleet, Metro in 1995 decided on a new color scheme, combining vivid yellows and Northwest blue-greens. The design and color scheme were recommended by a team composed of the Metro Arts Committee, Metro employees and the public.

Public approval of the new transit system came in the nick of time. The Seattle bus system slowly was going broke. It had last bought new buses in 1963 and the cash held for new equipment had been spent on operations. In 1971, when Lloyd Graber retired after 30 years as manager of Seattle Transit, the system had a deficit of \$1 million. It was

a difficult time for a system that was proud of having operated on cash from the farebox for most of its history.

The Seattle City Council imposed a 50-cent monthly household tax (after voters forced the repeal of a \$1 tax) to help support transit and directed the city's lighting department to collect it. City Light, unhappy at raising funds for buses, marked the transit tax clearly on its bills, which many refused to pay.

Bus patronage was dwindling as freeways and a second Lake Washington bridge were built and families scattered into suburbia, beyond the reach of existing transit service.

During World War II, Seattle Transit carried 300 million riders a year because gas rationing forced workers to leave their cars at home and run for the bus every morning. By 1953 ridership dropped to 64.7 million. In its last year, 1972, Seattle Transit counted barely 30 million riders. The system was in a spiral of failure: When it cut service to reduce costs it lost paying passengers, forcing additional reductions in bus hours and miles, which cost it more riders and revenue.

The average bus was about 19 years old. Seattle was operating trolley buses that were built in the early 1940s and a fleet of gasoline-powered buses bought in 1952 that had logged nearly one million miles each. The big diesel coaches it had acquired a decade earlier for the Blue Streak

freeway express service offered the only hint of modernity; other than electric trolleys, only they had the horsepower to climb Queen Anne Hill with a load of passengers. It was amazing the system held together, but a skilled and professional team of transit mechanics and operators kept it rolling.

Clearly, Metropolitan Transit Corp., the private bus line offering suburban service, was in worse shape. It operated a fleet of tired and dilapidated highway coaches, many of them worn out at least once in previous Greyhound service. Metropolitan Transit Corp. didn't have a decent bus barn: it operated from a former taxi-cab garage on South Dearborn Street on the edge of Seattle's International District. Metropolitan drivers frequently serviced their own buses and many drove them home at night.

King County was subsidizing Metropolitan, handing over just enough cash to keep the buses rolling until Metro Transit could move in, plenty of money in its pockets, and buy up the failing company.



Brill trolley buses, built in the early 1940s, were among the fleet Metro inherited from Seattle Transit when the agency took over regional transit operations in 1973.

Ridership gains and growing pains

Husky fans crowd Metro buses following a University of Washington football game. Special service to sporting and community events helps ease traffic congestion.

Early in 1973, Metro began a national search for its first transit director. Carle Salley applied, came to Seattle from Pittsburgh and charmed the socks off the selection committee.

A true bus fanatic, Salley had a friendly smile and a bushy blond mustache. He will be remembered for several things: shaping Metro Transit by planning the purchase of the nation's first fleet of articulated (bending) buses and for drafting specifications for a huge fleet of buses so different no one would build them.



Metro officials, in campaigning for voter creation of Metro Transit, had promised they would buy no more diesel buses. The old buses then in service had ankle-level exhaust pipes that blasted people on sidewalks with diesel smoke and odor. They were very unpopular.

Salley seized on that promise and added more as he began drawing plans for a fleet of new buses: lower floors, wider doors, bigger windows, huge destination signs, quieter engines. There would be articulated motor coaches and trolley buses and standard-sized buses. Manufacturers would be asked to bid natural gas engines.

"He was a good hands-on person, creative and innovative," said Aubrey Davis, Transit Committee chair. It was Davis' feeling that Salley would have preferred designing buses to operating them.

In the spring of 1974, Salley sent his specifications for 605 motor and trolley buses to more than 50 manufacturers. In January 1975, Metro was embarrassed when not one maker bid on any part of the big order because of the radical specifications. Metro found itself buying most of its buses from foreign manufacturers.

"We were not able to shape the industry by moving in new directions," Davis said. "We were not told there would be no bids, but we got the signal we were doing too much."

Executive Director Dick Page said Metro would not give up its effort to buy a better bus. Later that year, however, faced with increasing ridership and a rapidly aging fleet, Metro bought 145 AM General buses.

New buses for the growing Metro Transit system were desperately needed. In late 1973, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries cut the flow of petroleum to the United States, causing a national fuel-supply crisis. That prompted Metro to add new routes and buy and lease used coaches to serve the additional riders who flocked to Metro buses.

The rapid increase in ridership was "a kick in the tail and a shot in the arm," said Bob Sokol, who moved from a driver's job to administration as the two systems merged in 1973.

Rick Walsh, a driver who would become deputy director of the Transit Department in future years, drove buses to Seattle from California, Texas and New Jersey. The New Jersey buses, to become known here as "Jersey Junkers," were worn out when Metro bought them. Half broke down as Metro operators and mechanics drove them to Seattle.

Walsh remembers the old buses rattling into Seattle carrying heaps of empty lube oil and transmission fluid containers.

"We kept buses we should have buried," Sokol said. "Vehicle maintenance was and is sound, so there was time to keep the old junk running."

Metro paid \$8,000 each for the buses and then spent that much more on repairs when they arrived. "They looked nice, and they ran," Walsh said, "and they helped meet a 13 percent increase in ridership by the end of 1974."

For all the challenges and problems 1974 offered, things got worse at year end. Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union staged a two-week strike, seeking better pay and medical benefits. Metro was new to big union negotiations, and the local was suffering from dissension within its ranks. Young members formed the Ralph Kramden Caucus (for the bus driver character played by Jackie Gleason on the early, early black-and-white TV sitcom "Honeymooners") and nipped at the heels of the old-boy leadership that worked out contracts and other issues with Seattle Transit management over dinner and drinks at the Bush Garden Restaurant.

With transit ridership on the rise, Salley persisted in his efforts to find a better bus for Metro. He took Metro councilmembers and staffers to Europe to see articulated

Metro Milestone

Oct. 8, 1972

Congress passes the Clean Water Act, requiring all sewer agencies to provide secondary treatment. Metro will seek a waiver of the requirement.

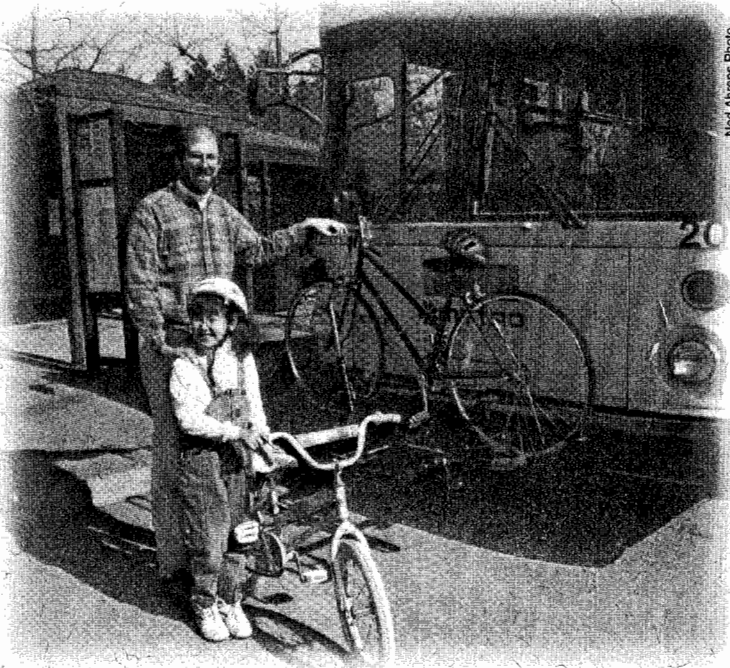
Metro Milestone

Jan. 1, 1973

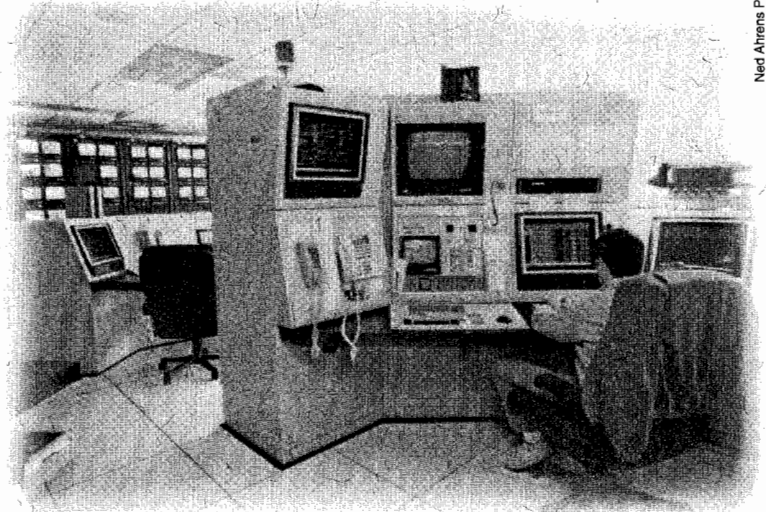
Metro Transit
begins operation
with a base fare
of 20 cents.

buses in action and continued to perfect specifications for Metro's first buy of the unusual coach. He would be gone from the agency long before the first M.A.N.-AM General artics were delivered in 1978, but his insistence on improved design and capacity would serve Metro well in the coming years.

Another legacy of Salley's tenure as transit director is the ride-free area in downtown Seattle. Mayor Wes Uhlman's office proposed that bus travel downtown be free. Salley worked out the details, gave it the name "Magic Carpet" and devised the scheme, still in service in 1995, under which outbound riders pay upon reaching their destination.



That allowed buses to open both doors at downtown stops, greatly speeding up loading and unloading. In 1993, Metro resumed collecting fares downtown during late night and early morning hours to give operators more control over who boards buses and to reduce the likelihood of violence against operators and passengers.



Transit employees work behind the scenes to keep service and systems operating safely and efficiently in the downtown Seattle transit tunnel.

Data management coordinator Mark Gorow and daughter demonstrate how to use a bicycle rack on a Metro bus. Metro Transit boasts the largest fleet of bike-rack-equipped buses in the nation.

Conductor Eldo Kanikheberg pulls "Old 99," the Waterfront Streetcar, into the Madison Street Station on Seattle's waterfront.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Ned Ahrens Photo



Councilmember George Benson, left, who spearheaded an effort to bring vintage Australian streetcars to Seattle's waterfront, enjoys congratulatory applause during an event in his honor in June 1992. Joining Benson on the podium is Paul Toliver, who became Metro's transit director in 1988.

Expansion brings artics, part-time drivers

About 3:30 in the morning one day in 1977, Transit Director Charles (Chuck) Collins looked out the window of Metro's old North Base (across from the Seattle Center) and was amazed to see buses heading out.

Because he was in a contract-negotiating meeting with Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union, there were

plenty of transit administrators present. Collins asked why buses were rolling so early in the morning when no one was out waiting for a bus.

The answer he remembers: "We've always done that."

Collins later discovered the early-morning runs were left over from World War II when the old Seattle Transit System scheduled early buses to get Bremerton shipyard workers to the Colman ferry dock downtown. His staff dug through Metro's schedules and discovered similar oddball runs that cost as much as peak-hour buses but produced no riders. Collins wiped them all out and added the hours of service when people wanted to ride the bus.

Executive Director Dick Page hired Collins early in 1976, replacing Carle Salley. Collins, an aide to King County Executive John Spellman, moved his office only two blocks from the Courthouse to Metro's new headquarters in the Pioneer Building. He had no transit experience.

Collins arrived to find the fledgling bus system in serious trouble. It was facing a deficit, the result of the addition of new service without considering the long-range financial consequences. The state Legislature was refusing to



Neel Ahrens Photo

With a warm handshake, John Van Dyke, right, is congratulated as operator of the year during an August 1987 ceremony.

distribute Metro's share of the motor vehicle excise tax. There were discipline problems and a high accident rate.

Rick Walsh, deputy transit director, was a driver when Seattle Transit merged with Metro. "In 1973, the system functioned fairly well. There was a great spirit, a holdover spirit from Seattle Transit. The staff was very professional, they had an attitude they could get anything done.

"What suffered, as in any rapid expansion, was that you lose focus on details," Walsh said.

What Collins wanted, according to Walsh, was "more accounting and professional management."

Collins requested that Metro purchase all the articulated buses the agency could afford because the 60-foot bending buses could carry 70 or more passengers and increase productivity. Then, after a computer study of the contract with Local 587, Collins took his most dramatic step: He called for the hiring of part-time bus drivers as a regular part of the transit work force.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Veteran bus driver Don Brady has a lot to smile about. Twice in his 20-year career he captured the top bus-driving award in an international competition.

Part-timers would be paid only for the runs they made in the morning or evening peak hours. They would receive few benefits. Metro would enjoy cost savings, and the bus system would be more productive.

"We operated a lot of the system two hours in the morning and two hours in the evening, and we did it economically," Collins said.

Penny Peabody, who served as executive director after Page resigned and before Neil Peterson was hired, said Metro was the first transit agency in the nation to hire part-time drivers. "It just meant thousands of more hours of bus service," she said. "We didn't have the revenue to support expansion, short of cutting Seattle service to support suburban expansion."

By 1995, nearly half of Metro's drivers were part-timers. The route to a full-time job begins with part-time assignments.

Metro Milestone

April 17, 1974

**Richard S. Page
selected to
succeed Tom
Gibbs as
executive
director.**

Metro Milestone

May 23, 1974

King County
Executive John
Spellman
suggests Metro
and the county
be consolidated.

Despite stiff union resistance, which included "sick-outs" that shut down up to 25 percent of the system at times, Collins won a contract allowing part-time drivers and imposing a new discipline system. Collins tied the change to the agency's goal of carrying 57 million passengers a year. "Even with the artics, we could not get there," he said. "We needed the part-time drivers to make the goal."

Henri Hartman, Metro's first woman base chief who started at Metro in 1975 as a computer operations supervisor, said: "Collins would not take no for an answer. He wanted to drag transit into the 20th century, and in three years he did it."

Collins continued to look for ways to improve. He stopped hiring by seniority, hired outsiders and broke the mold of middle management. He created a "war room" and a "hit parade," on which the route drawing the most customer complaints was posted. The rule was a route could stay on the list only two weeks.

Even though he shattered many old transit traditions, Collins found much to admire in the veterans who came to Metro from the semi-militaristic management system developed by Lloyd Graber over 30 years as director of Seattle Transit.

"There were hundreds of those wonderful things Graber left," Collins said. "He wouldn't let a bus go out with a scratch or visible damage. What was so much fun was

taking the best of two cultures and trying to mold one. There was one that was thoughtful, imaginative and committed. And there was one with a lot of wonderful operating traditions."

In 1977, the Metro Council boosted the base fare from 20 cents to 30 cents to make the budget balance and to pay for service improvements. Under Collins' leadership, Metro replaced its cumbersome 30-zone arrangement begun in 1973 with a simple two-zone system.

Collins left Metro in late 1979 knowing Metro Transit had exceeded its ridership goals. Passenger counts totaled 58.2 million in 1979 and 66 million in 1980, a doubling of ridership since 1973.



*Transit operator Larry Bach gets into
the holiday spirit.*

Bus fleet grows to meet service demands

Over the years, Metro bought 1,455 new buses. They included the first-ever articulated, or bending, buses used in North America. The agency added a total of 151 of the bending buses in 1978 and 1979, and 130 of them still were in service in 1995.

The fleet also includes 236 dual-power articulated buses used in the downtown Seattle transit tunnel. The 60-foot-long tunnel buses, which have both diesel and electric motors, are built by Breda, an Italian manufacturer of railroad cars and buses.

Metro also purchased 109 trolley buses in 1979 for the rebuilt and expanded trolley system, the first such renewal in the United States. Those buses, the first new trolleys built in America in many years, suffered startup problems but now are seasoned, reliable performers. Metro's fleet also includes 46 60-foot bending trolleys delivered in 1987 and 157 M.A.N. 40-foot diesel buses.

In one of its last acts in 1993, the Metro Council ordered a fleet of buses that would burn natural gas and launch Metro toward eventual conversion of the entire diesel fleet. Critics complained natural-gas buses would cost

too much and would do nothing to improve air quality, but the council insisted.

Newly elected King County Executive Gary Locke, however, canceled the natural-gas bus order and approved the purchase of a fleet of 360 clean-burning diesel buses that will be among the most sophisticated ever purchased here.

The zoo bus, a project of the Central Base Drive for Excellence program, whisks riders from West Seattle to the Woodland Park Zoo.



Neal Athrens Photo

Innovation drives transit system

One needed to be hale and hearty to ride buses in Seattle in the good old days. You needed the ability to climb steep steps into the bus and then the strength to hold on while it swerved through traffic. Bus design was not done with people who used wheelchairs in mind.

In 1978, the Metro Council leaped ahead of the rest of the nation and ordered wheelchair lifts on a fleet of 109 new trolley buses. In 1995, nearly 1,000 of Metro's fleet of about 1,150 buses were lift-equipped and about 95 percent of all weekday runs are handled by accessible coaches.

AM General won a contract in 1978 from Metro to build the electric trolley buses. Ten trolleys were delivered early

Demand for vanpools has grown steadily since the city of Seattle transferred its fleet to Metro in 1984.



Ned Ahrens Photo

for testing and Metro discovered the AM General-installed wheelchair lifts didn't work. Metro told AM General to stop adding lifts to buses on the production line.

Ed Hall, a Metro engineer, began designing a lift. Eventually, it would become an industry standard and sold nationally as the Lift U Lift. In 1979, Metro bought a fleet of 259 Flyer motor coaches and all came equipped with Hall's lift in place. Later, Metro would install them on the trolley buses and all of Metro's lifts would be of Hall design. While mainline transit buses equipped with lifts were at the heart of Metro's policy for aiding riders with disabilities and elderly riders, it wasn't enough. Not all passengers were capable of riding standard coaches and some needed more personal and door-to-door service.

In 1979, Metro Transit began a program under which it subsidized half the cost of taxi service for qualifying low-income elderly and disabled persons. In addition, it began door-to-door reserve-a-ride van service, mostly for patrons in outlying areas. Non-profit social service agencies operated the vans under contract with Metro.

Service to this group of passengers was so important to Metro that the Metro Council appointed a special Elderly

and Handicapped Transit Advisory Committee to offer guidance on transportation issues. Vanpools were another innovation designed to serve those whose needs could not be met with mainline transit buses.

Seattle started a commuter pool with 21 vans during the fuel-supply crisis of 1979. It was transferred to Metro, with 130 vans, in 1984. The system expanded again in 1987 when the Boeing Co. transferred its fleet of 100 vans and 65 vanpool groups to Metro.

In 1994, the van program tallied 2.7 million passenger trips. Passenger fares, the sale of surplus vans, grants and a self-insurance reserve cover all of the capital and operating costs and about 45 percent of administrative costs. By 1995, more than 530 vans were in use.

Metro's vanpool program twice has won the public leadership award of the National Association for Commuter Transportation.

Use of vanpools leaves a little more space on area freeways and arterials for those who can't give up the auto. Metro estimates that operation of 500 vanpools means about



Metro began providing wheelchair lifts aboard its buses long before the federal government required coaches to become accessible to riders with disabilities.

4,500 autos are left at home each day. Again, recognizing that a regular 40-foot bus doesn't serve every commuting need, Metro in 1977 began experimenting with what it called paratransit service. Essentially, it was bus service provided by smaller vehicles seating 15 to 24 persons.

By 1995, paratransit had been renamed subcontracted transit service and Metro was operating 100,000 hours of annual service on 29 routes. In 1994, the system carried 730,000 passengers. In 1992, Metro began offering an experimental dial-a-ride

(DART) program in Federal Way. DART service began in the Issaquah area in 1993, and in 1995 the Federal Way system was modified to allow the small buses to deviate from fixed routes to better serve customers.

In 1995, Metro and Seattle began an experimental program called LINC that provided neighborhood service in Ballard using small buses. Drivers dropped patrons at regular transit stops, or almost anywhere else they wanted to go within the boundaries of the service area. That kind of service is expected to become more common in the city as Seattle develops the urban-village segments of its new comprehensive plan.

Metro Milestone

Sept. 9, 1976

**Metro estimates
it will cost \$700
million and take
30 years to make
area waters
"squeaky clean."**

Metro Milestone

July 13, 1977

Neil Peterson
succeeds Dick
Page as executive
director.

Merger proposal surfaces

In May 1974, County Executive John Spellman launched a trial balloon. Let us, he said, merge King County and Metro. It was not the first time it was suggested. It would not be the last. Early in 1975, a Metropolitan Study Commission appointed by Seattle, the county and suburban mayors recommended that all urban areas be placed under one government. In essence, it was proposing a two-tier government: one to manage regional things, like water, transit, planning, sewage disposal, and a second level of town governments to provide local services.

Other suggestions continued to bubble in the political pot. One proposal would have put the merger issue to the public in a complicated two-vote process. Another idea, quickly squelched, would have allowed the County Council, by a simple majority vote, to take over Metro. It was proposed by state Sen. Gary Grant, who as a King County councilmember in later years, continued to argue for a merger.

Metro, other critics complained, had become a de facto land-use planner because of the way it built new sewer lines.

In June 1977, Gov. Dixy Lee Ray signed legislation authorizing a merger election in November 1978, or later. Then, in October 1977, a King County Charter Review

Committee appointed by Spellman recommended merger and creation of a 17-member Metropolitan King County Council. The County Council finally scheduled a merger vote for November 1979.

Meanwhile, the Metro Council began looking at ways it could reorganize to meet the criticism that it was not representative. Neil Peterson, Metro's new executive director, said a study showed only Seattle was proportionately represented on the Metro Council, with 40 percent of the county population and 40 percent of the vote on the council. Unincorporated areas had 37 percent of the population and 24 percent of the council seats. Small cities had 17 percent of the population and held 32 percent of council seats. It would not be the council's only such look at restructuring.

As the election neared, a citizens' committee was formed to oppose the merger, with Madeline Lemere as chair. She had been part of the citizens' effort that led to creation of Metro in 1958. Gary Grant, however, continued to argue that the Metro Council was not accountable to voters.

On Nov. 6, 1979, it wasn't even close. County voters, well aware of the water quality and transit work Metro had done, voted three to one against the merger proposal.

Metro employees load barrels of food onto an articulated bus during an annual food drive to fight hunger.

Employees show heart and soul

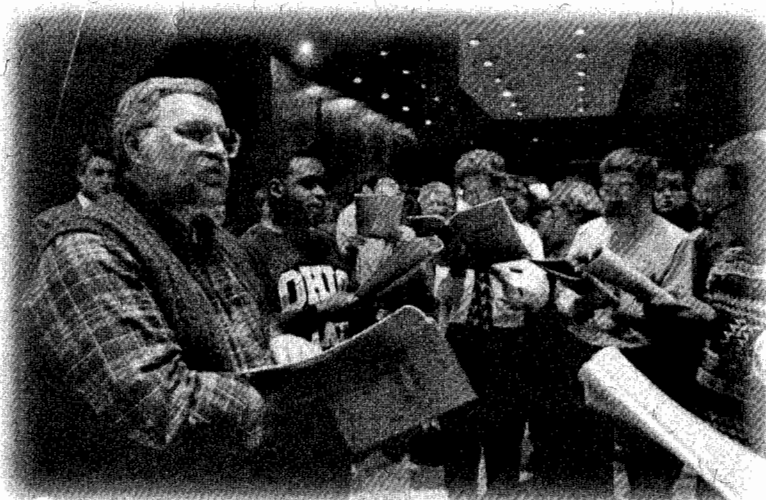


Ned Ahrens Photo



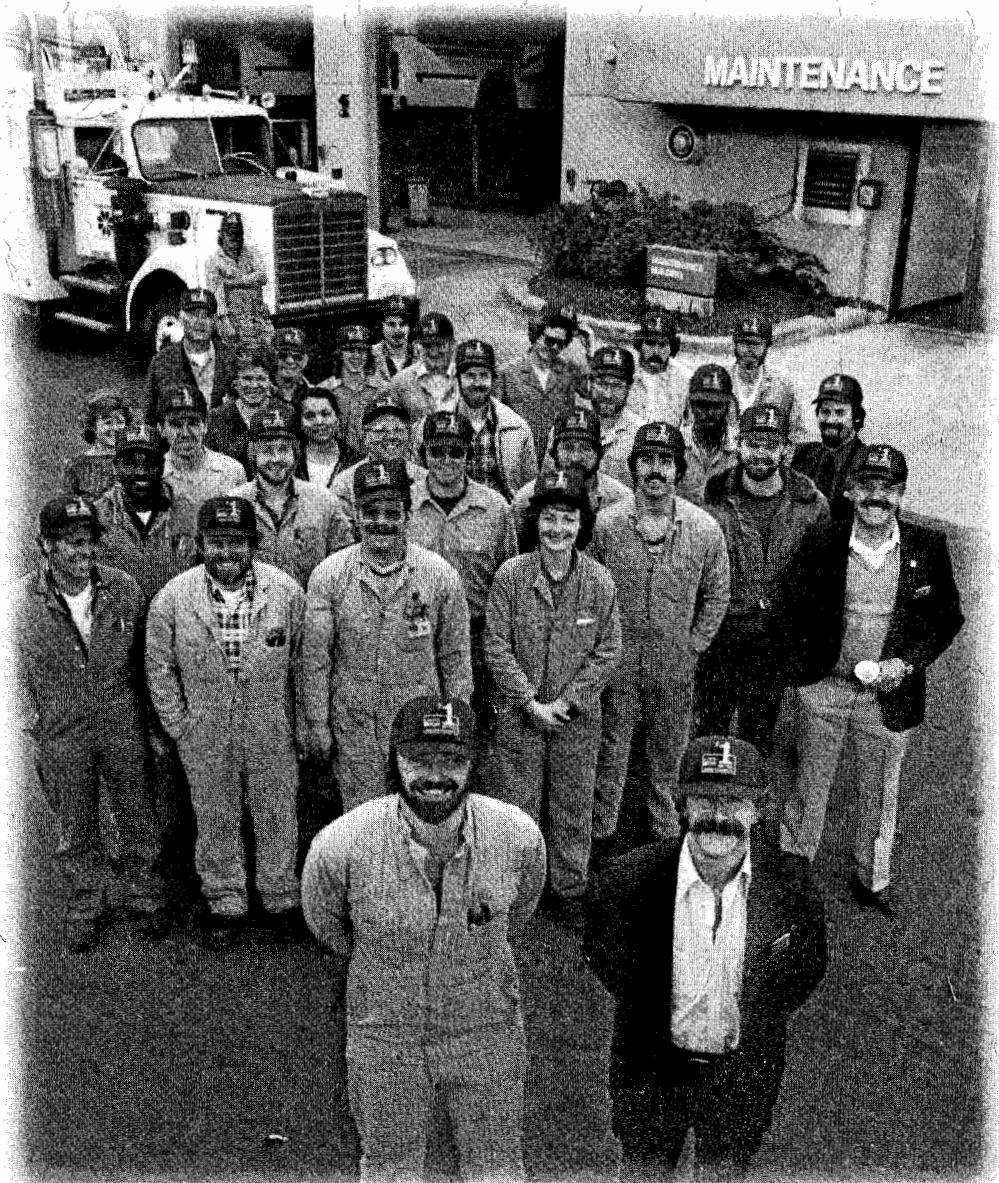
Ned Ahrens Photo

Transit and water—Metro's two main functions—come together during the Seafair milk carton derby race at Green Lake in July 1989.



Exchange Building employees, led by Carl Johansen, left, enjoy holiday-season caroling in 1994.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Ned Ahrens Photo

In 1983, maintenance workers at East Base celebrate after being named by the U.S. General Accounting Office as having the top preventive maintenance program in the country.

Honors and awards

Over the years Metro received scores of honors and awards, and many of its staff were individually recognized for their accomplishments. They include:

1960

Metro and its component cities received the Look magazine "All-America Award" for the citizen effort creating Metro.

1983

Metro Transit designated as the best major transit system in the U.S. by the American Public Transit Association.

1986

Honor Award from the Seattle Chapter of the American Institute of Architects for design of the water quality laboratory.

1987

American Consulting Engineers' Council gives its Award of Engineering Excellence to Metro for

engineering design of the Renton effluent transfer system; the Pacific Northwest Council of the American Society of Civil Engineers gives Metro its Achievement Award for the same project.

Metro and Seattle honored by Washington Environmental Council for their Hanford tunnel separation project.

1988

Metro's vanpool program honored by Urban Mass Transit Administration for its safety program.

U.S. Department of Transportation cites Metro Transit's maintenance program as the best among public transit agencies.

The Waterfront Streetcar receives an Honor Award from the Waterfront Center of Washington, D.C.

The East Division enjoyed a remarkable year: award of excellence from the Department of Ecology; award of excellence from EPA Region X; national EPA first place award for outstanding wastewater treatment facility.

1989

West Division receives American Public Works Association designation for a Project of Historical Significance for cleanup of Lake Washington, 1959 - 1989; it also receives an Operations Award from the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies.

1990

The Washington Society of Professional Engineers selects the downtown bus tunnel for its Outstanding Engineering Achievement.

The American Institute of Architects presents its Commendation Award to Metro for tunnel station design.

1991

The downtown Seattle Transportation Project receives the American Consulting Engineers Council Engineering Excellence-Grand Award.

1992

For the second time, the American Public Transit Association selects Metro Transit as the best major city system in the United States.

*Metro
Milestone*

Nov. 6, 1979

**King County
proposal to
merge with
Metro is defeated
overwhelmingly.**

Metro Milestone

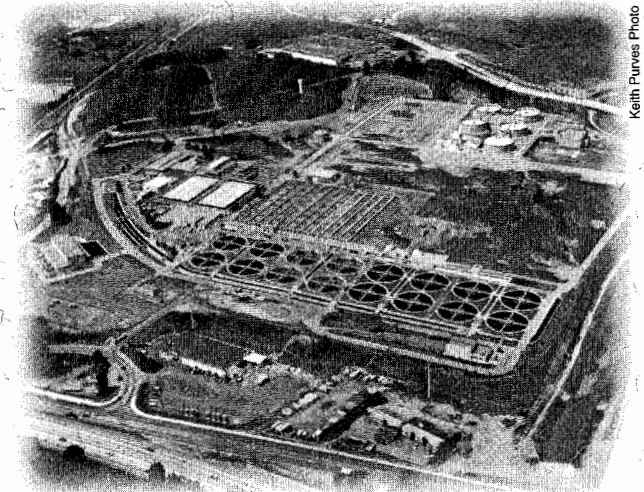
Dec. 19, 1979

Jim Ellis, who had served as general counsel for Metro since October 1958, is honored at a civic banquet on his retirement.



Ned Ahrens Photo

An aerial view of a construction project to enlarge the capacity of the East Division Reclamation Plant near Renton. Work on the \$230 million project began in 1991.



Keith Purves Photo

Lighting the way to a brighter transportation future, the Downtown Seattle Transit Project required a combination of construction methods.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Employees working in the West Point capital project division, Technical Services Department, review work plans at the project site in 1992. From left are Alberta George, Tony Morris, Adam Strutynski and Paul Galeno.

Chapter Three



Challenges, triumphs and consolidation

Using a computer-controlled system, Bill Nitz monitors wastewater flow in Metro's sewerage system.



Deep in concentration, Dan Sturgill takes sediment samples from Alki Beach in West Seattle.



Ned Ahrens Photo



Seattle Times Photo

Gary Isaac administers a dye test as part of a water quality study in January 1964. Isaac later became superintendent of operations and maintenance for the Water Pollution Control Department.

Pipeline project stirs controversy

In the 1960s, when Metro built its secondary treatment plant at Renton, anglers worried about how discharges from the new plant would affect fish in the Duwamish River. Metro promised the state that if the effluent became a problem it would be diverted to Puget Sound.

In 1980, as the volume of effluent was growing and the accumulation of ammonia and chlorine in the river became stronger, Metro agreed it was time to go.

Engineers considered several alternatives, including a pipeline to Alki Point and a tunnel to Point Pully on the Puget Sound shoreline in the Seahurst area. The tunnel was significantly cheaper—\$279 million versus an estimated \$357 million for the Alki pipeline. Metro chose the 6.2-mile-long tunnel. It would be 10 feet in diameter.

Residents of south King County erupted in anger. In July 1981, however, Executive Director Neil Peterson recommended a \$531 million plan that included the Seahurst tunnel, as it became known, and expansion of the East Division Reclamation Plant at Renton.

The tunnel project failed both technically and politically. About 500 people attended a public meeting in August

1981 to protest the project. The route of the proposed tunnel was uncertain geologically and scientists learned that effluent from the outfall would circulate around Vashon Island, rather than be flushed out to sea.

Facing a 1986 deadline for completion of the so-called effluent transfer system, the Metro Council early in 1983 abandoned the Seahurst tunnel idea and ordered the construction of an 11-mile pipeline under the Duwamish River and along West Marginal Way South and Harbor Avenue Southwest to a deep-water outfall off Duwamish Head. Refined engineering estimates were \$202 million for the Duwamish pipeline and \$179 million for Seahurst.

The effluent transfer system, which includes a pump station, force mains, tunnel and outfall, was finished in March 1987—a few months late but still ahead of the fish runs in the river. The project, which presented significant design and engineering challenges, illustrates Metro's ability to get the job done. With the east division plant's effluent diverted to Puget Sound, the Duwamish River saw marked improvement. Ammonia nearly disappeared from the river and oxygen levels improved significantly.

Metro Milestone

June, 1980

C. Carey
Donworth retires
as Metro Council
chairman and is
succeeded by
Gary
Zimmerman.

Metro Milestone

Nov. 4, 1980

King County voters narrowly approve increasing the transit sales tax to six tenths of one percent. New revenue will support added service and help pay for future capital programs.

Debate over secondary treatment

Metro's sewage treatment plants at West Point, Carkeek Park and Alki were all built to provide primary treatment of wastewater. Primary treatment removes about half the solids in the waste stream through skimming and settling, followed by chlorination of the effluent. Secondary treatment removes up to 95 percent of the solids in the influent through a more complex process and chlorinates the nearly clean liquid discharged through the outfall.

Metro made the decision to provide only primary treatment at these marine plants based on the best scientific information available. Metro engineers and public officials reasoned that it just didn't make sense to spend more money on secondary facilities.

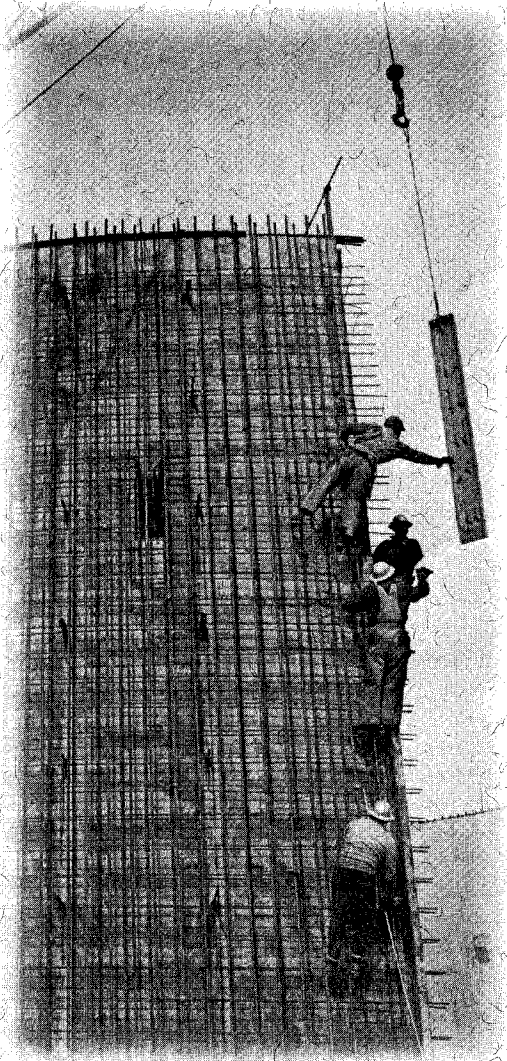
The secondary-treatment issue lay dormant until passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972. The act required secondary treatment at all wastewater plants in the United States.

Metro, working with a group it helped form, the Association of Metropolitan Sewerage Agencies, persuaded Congress to amend the Clean Water Act in 1977 to waive secondary treatment at plants that could prove that discharge of primary effluent was not harmful.

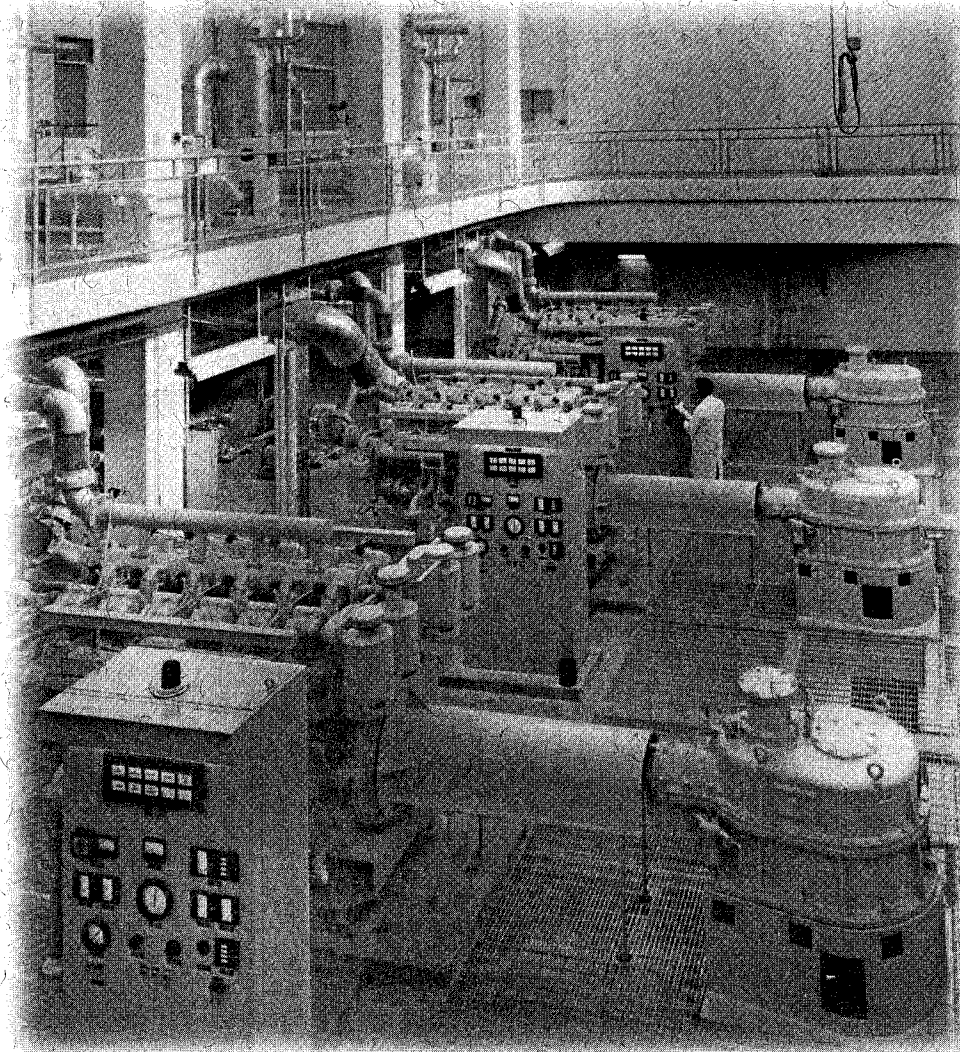
Metro struggled with the waiver issue and proposed other treatment processes that would meet federal requirements of providing "the best available treatment of wastewater to make all waterways fishable and swimmable." Engineering studies conducted at the time indicated secondary treatment would cost up to \$240 million at West Point and increase the sewer rate by several dollars a month.

"It really wasn't important to this community (at that time) to spend money on secondary treatment," Metro Executive Director Tom Gibbs said shortly after he left Metro in 1974.

In the coming decade, scientists conducted further studies of Puget Sound to determine if secondary treatment would be beneficial. The research found increasing levels of toxic materials in the waste stream and in marine life, mostly heavy metals such as copper, zinc and lead. The studies concluded that secondary treatment, along with pretreatment of industrial waste before discharge to sewers, would reduce the level of toxins in Puget Sound.



Workers erect a digester tank at the West Point Treatment Plant as part of a \$573.5 million construction project to upgrade the facility to provide secondary treatment of wastewater. Construction work began in May 1991 and was completed, except for landscaping, in 1995.



A technician checks to ensure the sewer pumps at the West Point Treatment Plant are operating properly. The plant opened in 1966 with a treatment capacity of 125 million gallons per day.

Showdown on secondary treatment

Aug. 9, 1984. It was a nice summer day and the Metro Council's Water Quality Committee was conducting a workshop in an unusual place, the University of Washington waterfront activities center on Union Bay. It was a pleasant setting, with large, old trees and green lawn sloping to Lake Washington.

The committee's topic was the number one ongoing subject at Metro: future levels of sewage treatment. The Environmental Protection Agency tentatively had agreed to issue a secondary-treatment waiver for Metro's West Point Treatment Plant and had asked the state Department of Ecology for concurrence. Ecology supported the secondary-treatment requirement and had directed smaller communities to comply.

Congress had supported waivers for ocean dischargers but in less than a week it switched position and said it wanted secondary treatment nationally and would pay 75 percent of the cost.

As the elected members of the Water Quality Committee gathered on the UW campus, it was clear the tide had

turned. At the workshop, the councilmembers learned that water-quality studies had shown the presence of toxins in the outfall near the West Point Treatment Plant.

Additionally, councilmembers were told that other studies had changed scientists' views of how Puget Sound was flushed. The common belief had been that Puget Sound poured directly into the Strait of Juan de Fuca and the Pacific Ocean. New research showed that sills in the bottom of the sound contained its water, causing it to slosh back and forth. Instead of being flushed directly to sea, pollutants were retained within Puget Sound and worked out into the strait slowly.

At noon, workshop attendees carried brown-bag lunches outside. Gathering at one spot on the lawn were Executive Director Alan Gibbs, who had moved to Metro from the state Department of Social and Health Services in late 1983; John Spencer, who had resigned recently as deputy director of Ecology to become director of Metro's Water Pollution Control Department; and Ernesta Barnes, a former Metro staffer now working as regional administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency.

"Gibbs said he was sure the Metro Council would go for secondary treatment," Spencer recalled of the lunch-hour gathering. "Within 24 hours, Ernesta and Don Moos (director of Ecology) announced that the feds had withdrawn (the waiver) and that the state had withdrawn its concurrence.

"The thing that turned out to be the clincher," Spencer said, "was that secondary treatment was effective on toxics."

"That's where the body shifted position," Metro Council Chairman Gary Zimmerman would say later of the workshop. "But the handwriting was on the wall."

In her announcement of withdrawal of the waiver, Barnes said: "Too many bottom fish are showing signs of disease. Too many oyster and clam beds are closed to harvesting. Too many people are wondering if it is safe to sail or swim in Puget Sound."

A few days later, Gibbs recommended the Metro Council not appeal the EPA/Ecology decision to withdraw the waiver. Metro should plan on building secondary-treatment systems and should seek federal and state money to help pay for them.

"My own personal view is that the time for arguing and debating is behind us," Gibbs told the council. "We need to move on."

The arguments had been fierce, however, and would continue with some engineers and scientists arguing money could better be spent on cleaning up storm drainage and reducing or eliminating the discharge of toxins into sewers.

Metro Milestone

Nov. 4, 1983

The Metro Council approves a downtown Seattle bus tunnel served by dual-power buses to end a deadlock with the city over downtown transit service. Alan Gibbs becomes executive director.

Metro Milestone

July 18, 1986

Metro Council votes 19 to 16 to provide secondary treatment at West Point following a federal decision to deny Metro a waiver of the secondary requirement. The new plant is to be "on line" before end of 1995.

Siting issue draws citizen ire

One fierce debate over, it was time for another: Where should Metro build federally required secondary-treatment systems?

West Point was an obvious choice because a primary-treatment plant had operated there since 1966. The city was plumbed so that wastewater flowed to the point, the result of engineering work by R.H. Thomson, city engineer in the early 1900s.

It was an argument similar to those heard in 1962 when Metro chose West Point for its largest new treatment plant. But one thing had changed. In 1962, Metro's neighbor on the bluff above the point was the Army, operating out of Fort Lawton, and the uplands and the sandy spit below were closed to the public.

By 1984, however, Fort Lawton had become Discovery Park. Its acres of grass and trees, and the sweeping views of Puget Sound, were transferred to the city after the military decided it no longer needed the fort. Park visitors could walk down the steep hill and trudge along the beach in front of the treatment plant.

So, as engineers suggested expansion of the treatment plant at the point, the city, park lovers and environmentalists were screaming "No, no, no!"

Some people thought the primary plant should be torn down and the beach restored to natural conditions. Mayor Charles Royer said an enlarged West Point Treatment Plant would be as damaging to the city as construction of Interstate 5.

Hundreds of individuals would fight Metro. Scores would attend Metro Council meetings and hearings to protest any plans to expand the West Point plant. Community organizations worked together to thwart Metro.

Day after day, year after year, Bob Kildall was among the most consistent and the most persistent in working for Discovery Park and in dreaming for the day when West Point would again just be a sandy spit with tidal ponds, beach grasses and walking paths through the old plant site. He formed organizations and created alliances, raised funds and wrote letters to newspapers and never gave up.

Despite his frustration with Metro, Kildall doesn't discredit the agency.

"If you compare Seattle to other cities, Metro is an excellent example of citizens at work and of a successful approach, at that time, to successful water quality," Kildall said. "It was a

popular citizen movement ... Metro wouldn't have made it, except it was a citizens' effort."

Citizens supporting Discovery Park and opposing expansion of the treatment plant were just as civic minded, he said.

"We had two good groups of people colliding."

*A bird's-eye view
of the West Point
Treatment Plant
in June 1976
before conversion
to secondary
treatment.*



Seattle Times Photo

Council settles secondary-siting issue

July 17, 1986. The Metro Council met in a large auditorium in the Plymouth Congregational Church in downtown Seattle. Councilmembers sat at tables pushed together in a large U, with key staff members nearby. The audience perched on folding chairs crowded along the walls.

Chairman Gary Zimmerman called the meeting to order early in the afternoon. The summer sun would set before it adjourned.

"I have a higher level of ambiguity than most, and it is easy for me to let everyone be heard," he said later. "I would always try to get both sides on the record, to let them feel they were heard. So, the meeting was long."

Executive Director Alan Gibbs already had recommended rejection of two other proposed treatment-plant sites—at Interbay and in the Duwamish industrial area—and had proposed that Metro's major secondary system be installed at West Point. That was the least-costly alternative, Gibbs said.

His long-range plan also included secondary treatment at the existing Alki and Richmond Beach treatment plants and a major reduction in combined-sewer overflows. The estimated cost was \$1.3 billion, with nearly \$600 million of that total for improvements at West Point.

The audience was fidgety and hot as the afternoon wore on, but its attention never flagged.

After an emotional debate on a procedural issue, the council finally voted 18 to 17 to abandon a Duwamish plant as an alternative, even though the council's Water Quality Committee had endorsed the Duwamish plant. That moved the council into a debate over expansion at West Point.

When Zimmerman figured everyone had been heard, the council voted 19 to 16 to approve putting secondary-treatment systems at West Point. Zimmerman voted for the Duwamish project but later cast his vote for the West Point alternative on the last ballot of the evening, giving expansion of the existing plant a wider winning edge.

Mayor Charles Royer and six Seattle City councilmembers voted for the Duwamish proposal. (Councilmember Norm Rice voted to expand West Point; two other members were absent.) They were supported by Bellevue and Kent and some King County Council representatives. But votes from other county councilmembers and suburban cities and sewer districts, whose representatives made it clear they didn't want to pay extra to give Seattle a park, made a winner of the West Point expansion proposal.

Royer campaigned hard for the Duwamish proposal. His persuasion worked, with County Executive Tim Hill and the Bellevue City Council agreeing to support his position.

"A few months ago, we had only a handful of votes," Royer said after the council vote. "I'm disappointed. But we were out-muscled by the numbers—not on the merits."

In 1995, Royer said: "It was a democratic decision. The debate was all about money. But when you ratcheted it over the long haul I don't think money was necessarily the issue."

The city's opposition presented a grave danger for Metro. It needed a shoreline permit from Seattle to build on the beach at West Point. The city could deny the permit, leaving Metro with no alternative plan and facing state and court penalties for missing deadlines.

Metro submitted its application to Seattle in December 1986. Seattle's Department of Construction and Land Use recommended denying the permit in July 1987. A hearings examiner, ruling in November, opposed issuing a shoreline permit.

In early 1988, however, the Seattle City Council voted 6 to 3 to award a shoreline permit to Metro. After reviewing social, economic and environmental considerations, it accepted the principal argument for expanding West Point: There was no feasible alternative.

Opponents appealed the decision to the state Shoreline Hearings Board. After long hearings and debate, the board voted 3 to 3 on granting the appeal. It would not overturn the Seattle permit.

Metro Milestone

March 6, 1987

**Boring of the
downtown transit
tunnel begins.**

Metro Milestone

Nov. 8, 1988

King County voters urge acceleration of rail transit planning in an advisory ballot. Metro begins work, then a three-county Joint Regional Policy Committee is formed to guide transit planning and, finally, a Regional Transit Authority assumes control.

Source-control programs evolve

Converting primary treatment plants to secondary treatment was just part of Metro's water quality program outlined by Executive Director Alan Gibbs. The program included efforts to strengthen the agency's industrial-pretreatment programs to reduce toxic discharges and to begin a community-education program on the dangers of toxic compounds.

Through its industrial-waste program, Metro monitors and regulates the discharge of pollutants into the sewerage system. Metro issues permits limiting the discharge of chemicals and it can levy fines. The goal is to protect the treatment process, but another major result has been the reduction in the use and discharge of harmful chemicals and a cleaner effluent and biosolids produced by treatment plants. Dangerous waste materials now are recycled by industry or shipped away for proper disposal.

"We are not just a regulator, but we work with industry to accommodate as much waste as we can that the treatment plant is designed to treat," said Doug Hildebrand, industrial-waste-program officer. "Industry has been cooperative, and pretreatment efforts have been successful. Metro has not had to act as a police force."

Another way Metro controls what enters the wastewater system is through the hazardous-waste-management program. In years past, citizens had no place to take hazardous household trash. To address the problem, Metro joined Seattle, King County, the Seattle-King County Health



Katherine Jones/Seattle Times Photo

Dave Galvin checks common household products for hazardous ingredients in 1989. Through educational and recycling programs, Metro helped keep toxic chemicals out of the wastewater system.

Department, the Metrocenter YMCA and other groups in planning household hazardous-waste roundups. Consumers were invited to bring toxic trash out of their basements and garages to the weekend events in the late 1980s.

Concerned citizens, who had been stockpiling old paint, used motor oil, dribs and drabs of insecticides and pesticides, rushed to unload. The roundups got a lot of DDT, a pesticide banned in the 1970s. They attracted materials up to 50 years old, such as lead arsenate and white lead paint. It was estimated that 4,000 households hauled material to the roundups, disposing of 117 tons of waste that included 5,000 gallons of oil and 220 car batteries.

"We were overwhelmed," said Dave Galvin, who manages the hazardous-waste program. "Each roundup drew 1,000 cars or more and tons of stuff. It wasn't the long-range answer."

The answer was the opening of two permanent household hazardous-waste-disposal sites in Seattle and the creation of a wastemobile that serves the rest of King County on a regular schedule. Manufacturers have responded, too, with less toxic products or with substitutes that pose fewer environmental threats.

"This illustrates Metro's willingness to take a leadership position when it could have said we'll just treat the stuff

that's in the pipe," Galvin said. "But the reason for the program's success is that it is regional in nature, all governments are participating."

Through the efforts of both the household hazardous-waste and industrial-pretreatment programs, "we've seen the quality of wastewater improve dramatically at the source," Galvin said.

The success of the two programs reflects what Galvin calls Metro's "can do" attitude, which promotes reasonable risk taking. "That 'can do' attitude is important," he said. "When a job appears the response is—how can we do it?"



Ned Ahrens Photo

Industrial-waste specialist Cathy Foss descends into a manhole during an on-site inspection in April 1987. Through the industrial-waste program, Water Pollution Control employees monitor and regulate the discharge of pollutants into the sewerage system.

John Lesniak: Common sense and commitment

A young man, John Lesniak, was superintendent of the West Point project. He helped plan the work and later would manage construction. Lesniak studied Metro as a student at the University of North Carolina. With degrees in geology and regional planning, he moved to Seattle and went to work for the agency in March 1979 as an assistant water-quality planner.

The Magnolia community offered some of the stiffest opposition to expansion of the West Point plant. Residents feared the impact of five or six years of construction and the trucks carrying treated wastewater solids that would rumble to and from the plant long after work was complete.

Lesniak helped negotiate an agreement with the community that would ease its concerns and aided in drafting a court ruling that established deadlines and construction schedules requiring that the secondary-treatment system be in operation by Dec. 31, 1995.

Under that agreement, construction workers were bused to and from the job site and construction materials arrived in barges that unloaded at a temporary pier, reducing the number of heavy trucks crossing Discovery Park to reach the plant site. Metro provided \$30 million for the development of other shoreline beaches in the area and gave the Magnolia community \$2 million.



Nad Ahrens Photo

In addition, plant design minimized the impact of the structure on users of Discovery Park, with Metro spending nearly \$70 million just to cover, screen and in other ways diminish the plant's appearance. The site is bordered with man-made mini-hills called berms, and tens of thousands of native trees and shrubs will be planted on those berms.

Lesniak was proof the Metro ethic lived on in a younger generation of workers at Metro. He worked long hours to do his best for Metro and the community.

"He was absolutely pivotal to West Point," said Executive Director Dick Sandaas. "He was technically bright, he had a sensitivity for community concerns—and good common sense, too."

Mark Bloom, chairman of Heart of America, an early critic of treatment-plant expansion, said: "Because of John and his honesty, the West Point settlement was made for the benefit of the entire community."

A few days after Christmas in 1992, John Lesniak died of cancer. He was 38.

Biosolids: controversy and success

Metro's efforts to recycle biosolids, the nutrient-rich material that remains after the sewage-treatment process, has earned the agency international acclaim. Those efforts have also stirred controversy.

Since 1972, Metro has been committed to recycling biosolids, rather than burn it or take it to a landfill as do some other sewerage agencies. Some biosolids are sold to private companies that compost the material with sawdust to create a soil amendment popular with commercial and home gardeners. Other biosolids are used in special projects to enrich infertile soil. Successful projects have included sites in Seattle's Gasworks Park, Myrtle Edwards Park and Discovery Park.

Seeking other uses of biosolids, Metro contracted with the University of Washington to test use of the treatment-plant residue on trees at the university's Pack Forest. It also signed an agreement to deliver biosolids to a strip coal mine near Centralia for use in land restoration.

Expanding on the successful silviculture concept, Metro spread biosolids on land owned by the Weyerhaeuser Co. and other forest-products companies. And it bought its own forests to guarantee it would have sufficient property for

recycling biosolids. That's when Metro ran into community opposition.

One tract acquired by Metro was near Yelm, in Thurston County, on a bluff above the Nisqually River. Living nearby were actress Linda Evans, reputed channeler J.Z. Knight and hundreds of others who scolded Metro for what they thought was a dangerous idea. A second tract Metro purchased was at Cumberland in southeast King County. Living on the edge of that forest was Valerie Cunningham, a woman who feared biosolids and led a challenge to Metro's plans to spread it on her doorstep. (In 1989, she would lend her name to the court case that would consolidate Metro with King County.)

The Yelm opponents delivered hundreds of people in fleets of buses to Metro Council meetings in 1989 to fight the biosolids-recycling plan. Evans came to at least one, but stood inconspicuously and quietly in the crowd and answered reporters' questions politely.

The council chamber in the Pacific Building was jammed with critics, and the protesters from Thurston County spilled out into the elevator lobby, while some held signs on the street. Their protest was well planned: Speakers painted

Metro Milestone

Sept. 7, 1989

**Richard Sandaas
is appointed
executive
director.**

Metro Milestone

Oct. 29, 1989

American civil Liberties Union files federal suit challenging constitutionality of the Metro Council. Four area citizens offer their names as plaintiffs.

verbal pictures of environmental destruction and public health hazards if Metro biosolids were ever spread in that forest. They ignored the 1988 Environmental Protection Agency finding that Metro biosolids met federal standards for soil enrichment and that the Metro recycling program was the nation's most outstanding.

It was obvious Metro would never truck biosolids to its Yelm property. Eventually Metro sold the Yelm site and it was logged by its new owner.

Metro faced another setback during the Yelm controversy. The new owner of the Centralia coal mine abruptly canceled its contract for Metro biosolids. Fortunately, one of agency's good biosolids customers, a composting firm, agreed to take extra truckloads.

After those difficulties, Metro worked hard on a strategy that emphasized the recycling value of biosolids. And thanks to the industrial-pretreatment and hazardous-waste-education programs, the amount of metals and pathogens in biosolids was reduced so significantly the federal government approved its use for agricultural crops.

Metro also worked with the Northwest Biosolids Management Association and the national Water Environment Federation to provide information to the public about biosolids recycling.

Because of these efforts, by 1995 Metro was over the hump and its biosolids enjoyed public acceptance. Biosolids continue to be used for gardening compost and on Western Washington forests. A big market is in Eastern Washington where knowledgeable dryland wheat farmers and hop ranchers will take all the biosolids available.

"What could be better," said Pete Machno, biosolids program manager. "We have come from an end-of-the-world scenario to having the most enviable biosolids-recycling program in the world."



Richard Heyza/Seattle Times Photo

A tanker truck sprays treated wastewater solids on trees at a Pack Forest research site near Eatonville. In later years, Metro refined its biosolids-recycling techniques.

Moving into the 1990s

By 1980, the transit sales tax of three tenths of one percent, which had seemed so generous when voters approved it in 1973, no longer could do the job. The 1970s had brought the nation some of its worst inflation just as Metro was building bus shelters and bus bases, rebuilding its trolley bus system and buying diesel and electric coaches.

A new plan, one that would carry Metro Transit to 1990, required additional funding if ridership goals were to be met and key projects completed. Metro planners in 1980 envisioned an enormous increase in ridership to 138 million passengers by 1990 and a near-tripling of the bus fleet to 2,300 buses and 1,800 vanpool vehicles.

A stagnant economy, reductions in federal aid, relatively cheap gasoline and static patronage totals meant those ambitious projections would not be achieved by the 1990s. (In 1995, Metro carried about 75 million riders and had 1,150 buses.)

Metro asked voters in September 1980 to approve increasing transit's share of the sales tax to six tenths of one percent, which would give transit an additional \$500

million over the coming decade. The measure was defeated, gaining only a 47 percent favorable margin. Undeterred, Metro officials asked Penny Peabody, who had recently left the agency after serving as acting executive director, to lead the effort to win voter approval in the November general election. Working with her was former Renton Mayor Charles Delaurenti.

Learning there was a meager budget from citizen contributions, Peabody agreed to do her work as a volunteer and to aim the few available dollars at getting the message to voters.

The Peabody-Delaurenti team succeeded. The new tax was approved in the November general election, receiving a 51 percent favorable majority. Although



Community relations planner Patty Waller, left, talks with Velva Maye, a member of the Northgate Transit Center Design Review Committee. Early citizen involvement played an important role in developing the facility.

the grand plan for the 1980s never was realized, the new tax base funded many other improvements over the decade and, because a share of it was reserved for capital projects, enabled Metro to finance the \$483 million downtown bus tunnel at the end of the decade.

Metro's steady source of funding is one reason why the agency has achieved its success. In addition to the six tenths of one percent of King County sales tax, transit receives a 2 percent share of the motor vehicle excise tax. Riders through pass sales and the farebox contribute about 25 percent of transit operating costs. State and federal grants provide the balance of Metro's transit operating and capital costs.

Planner Andrea Tull shovels dirt over a time capsule during opening ceremonies for the Bellevue Transit Center in September 1985. The center was the first in a series of regional facilities designed to make it easier for bus riders to transfer between routes.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Tunnel project dominates decade

In 1980 a pedestrian with decent legs and lungs could outpace a Metro Transit bus on downtown Seattle streets during the evening rush hour.

With more than 500 coaches downtown during the peak hour of the day and with thousands of cars and trucks competing for street space, traffic slowed to a crawl.

Transit planners envisioned huge increases in patronage and a doubling of the transit fleet by the 1990s, posing the threat of worsening congestion downtown.

Neil Peterson, a state Department of Social and Health Services administrator who succeeded Dick Page as Metro executive director in 1977, reported that about 30 percent of transit operating costs were incurred just in moving buses through downtown Seattle. Riders spent about 30 percent of their commute travel time creeping through the central city.

Peterson, a bold and controversial executive director, hammered at his transit-planning staff to produce something exciting.

“In reviewing the long-range transit plan I remember being singularly unexcited,” he would recall later. “There was nothing that would capture the public’s imagination. What set Metro apart was that Metro always was on the leading edge with new and alternative methods. There wasn’t anything in it.”

One idea was to build major bus terminals just north and south of the central-business district. Express buses would drop commuters at the terminals where they would board electric circulator coaches that would take them to their offices and stores in the central-business district. Third Avenue could become an attractive transit mall.

Initially, Mayor Charles Royer was the leading proponent of the terminal proposal. “I thought that we could get more transit miles for the buck with a circulator system,” he remembered later.

Peterson opposed the terminal plan. “We felt strongly that those transfers were the last thing. We got into a real tug of war, it was pretty brutal.”

Although Peterson played a major role in water-quality issues—including maintaining Metro’s campaign for a

Metro Milestone

June 21, 1990

**Penny Peabody
runs against and
defeats Gary
Zimmerman for
chair of the
Metro Council.**

Metro Milestone

Sept. 6, 1990

U. S. District Judge William Dwyer rules composition of the Metro Council unconstitutional in the American Civil Liberties Union lawsuit. Elected officials step up their search for agreement on a new form of regional government.

waiver of secondary-treatment requirements, developing a salmon-planting program in regional streams and focusing on Duwamish River pollution problems—he probably will be best remembered for his final hoorah: the downtown Seattle bus tunnel.

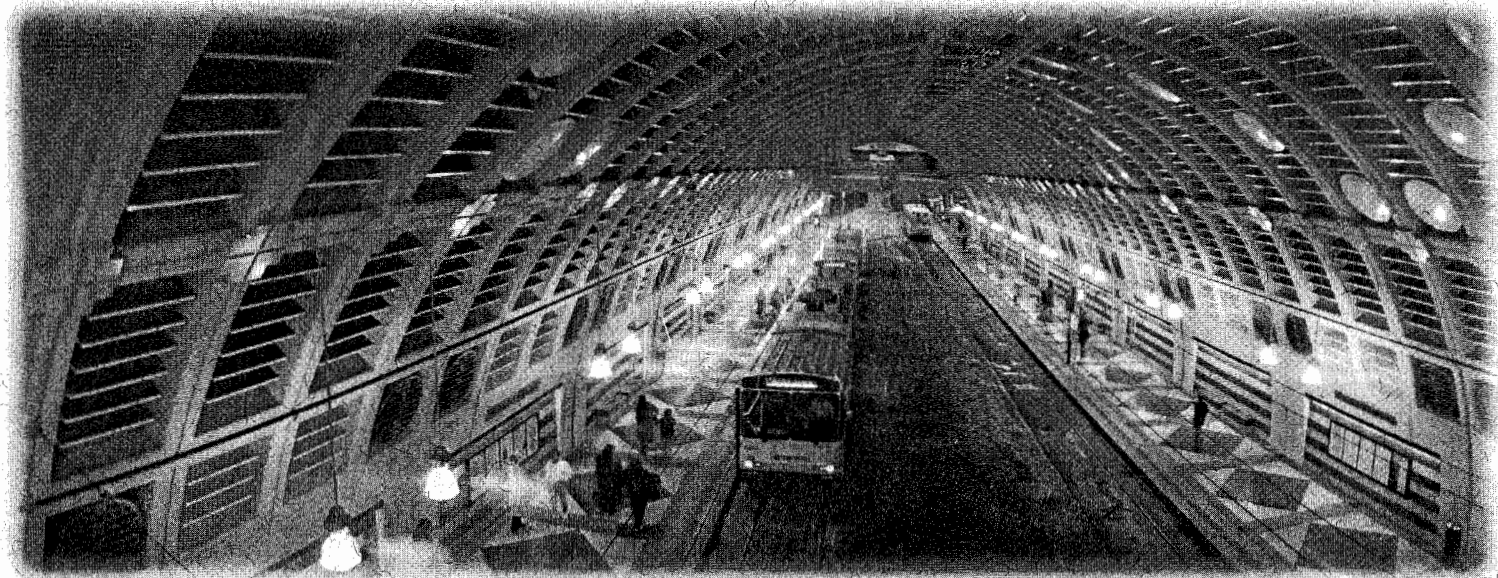
When Peterson resigned in late 1983 to marry Tracy Duiker, Metro finance director, the Metro Council deliberately sought a nonpolitical administrator, one who would serve more as a city manager and not as a political adventurer.

"I felt strongly they were paying me for options and for recommendations and, man, I gave them

recommendations. I wasn't shy about it," Peterson would recall.

To break a deadlock with the city over the downtown project, Peterson—now a lame duck after announcing resignation plans—proposed construction of a tunnel and the use of dual-power articulated buses that would use electric motors in the tunnel and diesel engines on surface streets. He offered Metro funds to make major improvements on Third Avenue.

"I remember the presentation so well," Peterson said. "The councilmembers were so relieved we had a compromise



Served by five passenger stations, including one near Pioneer Square, the downtown Seattle transit tunnel provides a friendly environment for bus riders.

they could buy into. The proposal was such an olive branch that it allowed Seattle to say yes."

The council approved his proposal in November 1983 to end five years of debate.

By this time, Royer had become a supporter of the tunnel proposal.

"I was on all three sides," he would say later. "I was for it, against it and I was neutral. Initially, I thought that it would be a major investment without a lot of return. Ultimately I was convinced it was right, and I am today convinced. I was persuaded by Jim Ellis, who said we would need the tunnel for rail service. He said downtown would be the most expensive mile of rail and why not do it now?"

Planning and design of the ambitious "Downtown Seattle Transit Project" were managed by L. Joe Miller and later by David Kalberer. Vladimir Khazak served as project engineer. The tunnel is 1.3 miles long and runs from Union Station under Third Avenue and Pine Street to Ninth Avenue. Designed to accommodate future conversion to light trains, the tunnel is served by five underground stations that provide access to nearby stores and office buildings.

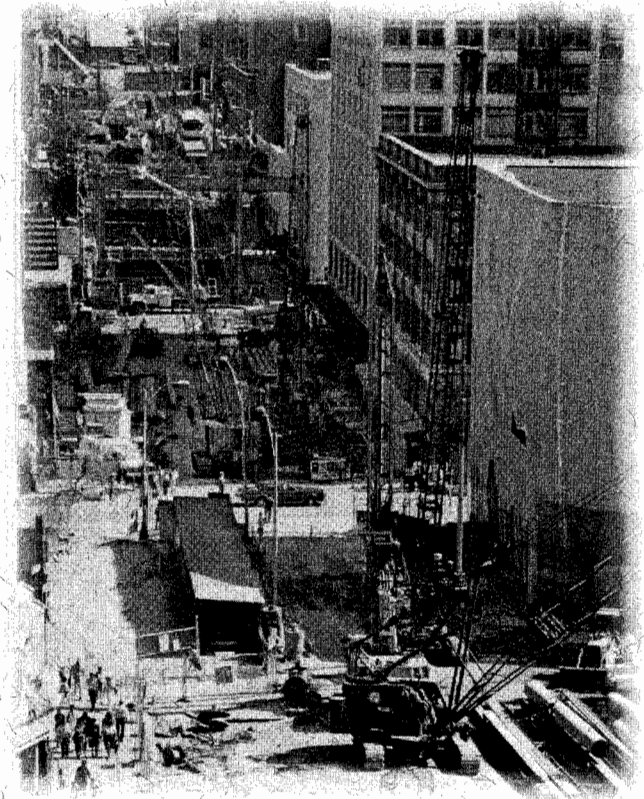
Engineers working on the project were challenged by the need to cross under, and then over, the Burlington Northern railway tunnel. Using lasers and careful

measurements, they safely made the crossings and negotiated the right turn from Third Avenue into Pine Street.

Although the tunnel was bored, the five stations required cut-and-cover construction. Pine Street was closed to traffic and Third Avenue offered motorists and pedestrians a new detour every day. Making life worse downtown was the simultaneous construction of several major office buildings.

A team of artists was hired to create art for the tunnel, working with a \$1.5 million budget. Works selected included huge murals in the Westlake Station, high-tech electronic art in the University Street Station and small tiles decorated by school children at the International District Station. Art also was part of the architecture of the tunnel. Metro earned rave reviews in national publications for its design and for the use of art.

The first bus drove through the tunnel March 15, 1989, to demolish a rumor that a bus couldn't make the turn



Ned Ahrens Photo

Pine Street was closed to traffic during construction of the bus tunnel in downtown Seattle. Simultaneous construction of several major office buildings added to the confusion.



Mighty Mole, played by long-time Metro employee Mary Peterson, leads the celebration during kickoff of the Downtown Seattle Transit Project as Metro employees and invited guests look on.

from Third Avenue into Pine Street. Jim Patrick, a Metro administrator and former bus driver, took a 40-foot coach through the tunnel first. Then Bruno Laritz, an instructor, took the first of the

new 60-foot dual-power coaches through the tunnel successfully.

It wasn't a speedy trip. Dips and bumps slowed Laritz and he had to steer cautiously over some temporary steel and plank decking.

Kalberer made three trips through the tunnel on a bus. "I'm having a good time," he told reporters. "But this is a great day for the people who designed it ... and for all the people who have done a good job. It's their victory."

Metro reopened Pine Street to traffic a year ahead of schedule, and the tunnel itself went into operation Sept. 15, 1990, as promised. The tunnel was completed months ahead of opening to give Paul Toliver, transit director, and his staff time to train drivers and supervisors and to learn how to operate it.

The tunnel's final cost was \$483 million, significantly more than the original estimate of \$415 million, because of inflation and unexpected problems encountered in the boring of the tunnel.

The tunnel was not built without controversy, however. In late 1988 and in early 1989, the agency was rocked by charges that it had purchased granite from South Africa for use in the downtown bus tunnel despite a Metro Council policy prohibiting buying materials manufactured or produced there. Metro adopted the policy, as did other government agencies, to protest the formal discrimination practiced in South Africa.

It became a heated and emotional issue involving members of Seattle's minority communities. Metro Councilmember Ron Sims, an African American, called for the firing of involved employees. Executive Director Alan Gibbs finally resigned to clear the air, even though he had not been involved in the decision to buy the South African stone.

In March 1989, the Metro Council Rules Committee determined there had been no staff cover-up and said there was no need for further discipline. "The committee said it found no evidence the Metro staff tried 'to avoid or undermine' the council's 1987 policy banning the use of products manufactured in South Africa," The Seattle Times reported. The tarnish remained, however.

Complaints spawn cultural change

In late 1989, the newspaper headlines shouted: "Metro Racist." Minorities and women working at Metro nodded in agreement, but others were bewildered. How could this be? Metro believed in affirmative action, hired minorities and women in all departments and was among the first public agencies to hire contracting firms owned by women and minorities.

In November 1989, Metro Councilmember Charles DeChabert reported to the council on a study he had completed. It showed, DeChabert said, that minority employees were disciplined and discharged disproportionately throughout the agency. Alarmed by his report, the council's Finance and Personnel Committee approved creation of a task force that would conduct a detailed study of the problem.

DeChabert was named chair of the task force. Metro Councilmember Jean Carpenter would serve, along with employees from all Metro divisions and representatives of two major unions, Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union and Local 6 of Service Employees International Union. The task force affirmed and documented equity problems at Metro.

In its final report, the DeChabert task force held nothing back. "Metro has, over time, created a culture that practices or facilitates disparate treatment of women and minorities in all departments," it said.

"Acts of discrimination among union members occur frequently throughout the agency. Victims are often alienated in the workplace and are labeled a problem when reporting an incident. They may be threatened physically or with the loss of their jobs if they continue to complain," the task force report said.

"The task force and (its) consultant were consistent in finding an overall lack of management accountability and commitment to equal-employment opportunity and affirmative-action and human-relations issues."

Managers often focus simply on the hiring of minorities and females "to achieve affirmative-action goals while failing to address equal-employment opportunity in the work environment," the task force contended.

"In contrast with the high value Metro management has placed on technical achievements, 'on time and under

Metro Milestone

Sept. 15, 1990

**Bus service
begins in the
\$483 million
downtown
Seattle transit
tunnel.**

Metro Milestone

May 1991

**Construction
begins on
secondary-
treatment
facilities at West
Point.**

budget,' there is little or no value placed on the effective development and management of Metro's human resources.

"The work environment created by Metro's management style, termed 'paramilitary' by some management, has fostered an attitude of separatism and autonomy, instead of unity and collaboration," the task force concluded.

In simpler terms, employees were unhappy for what they considered unfair practices related to hiring, firing and promotion. Employees also desired more participation in the decision-making process.

Responding to the DeChabert report, the Metro Council, led by council chair Penny Peabody, directed Metro management to launch a corrective effort that was of unprecedented magnitude. It involved a cultural-change process, work-redesign efforts and strategies to provide a more participatory workplace. The overall goal was to create a new way of doing business at Metro, changing the agency from one of hierarchical command and control to one in which all employees were respected and allowed to participate in making decisions.

Anita Dias, a water-quality planner, was assigned to work as coordinator of the cultural-change process. Metro was dominated by a "white male engineering attitude" that

focused on completing projects, Dias said. "But as more women and minorities joined the agency, they wanted to concentrate on workplace issues in addition to doing projects."

Executive Director Dick Sandaas acknowledged that employee complaints represented one of the biggest problems he faced as executive director. "We didn't know if it would work," he said of the cultural-change process. "But we needed to do something."

Labor issues added to Metro's problems. Management and Local 587 of the Amalgamated Transit Union were at loggerheads over a contract. Metro had gone to court to resist a union demand for arbitration of the dispute. Deciding labor-management relations had to improve, Sandaas and Peabody concluded that the union had to be a part of the cultural-change discussion. They met with Dan Linville, president of the local.

"We gave them respect, we didn't beat them up," Sandaas would recall.

A consultant, Rhonda Hilyer, a former union leader and the daughter of a former member of the ATU, introduced Metro and the union to a form of collaborative negotiations in which the parties would talk about interests instead of

taking strong positions. Called collaborative bargaining, the new approach was built around five principles of agreement: interest, trust, respect, understanding and esteem.

Collaborative bargaining, which the Water Pollution Control Department and its unions had pioneered, ended the deadlock and still is used by Metro and labor unions in handling contract negotiations.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Benefits supervisor Cynthia Mack, center, makes a point during a cultural-change meeting in October 1992. Metro held 13 employee meetings to redefine the mission, values and goals of the agency.

Employees set workplace goals

Training became an important tool of the cultural-change process. With labor unions participating, the first cultural-change meeting occurred in late June 1992. About 400 employees attended. By the time the process was over, in December 1993, Metro would schedule 13 events, and 90 percent of the agency's work force of about 4,500 employees would participate.

At that mass meeting, employees emphasized behavior that would be rewarded: commitment to service; creativity; treating others with dignity, respect, fairness and equity; assuming responsibility for individual actions; and encouraging employees to take responsible risks. Metro also would reward those who sought diverse viewpoints and opinions, who encouraged teamwork and created growth opportunities for workers.

Behavior not tolerated, employees decided, would include: a lack of responsiveness to customers; discourteous treatment of the public; the waste or misuse of public resources; stereotyping, discriminating against or harassing fellow workers or spreading hurtful or inaccurate information about others.

Employees also helped develop mission and value statements for the agency. The overall mission statement developed by employees was simple: "To provide the best possible public-transportation and water-quality services that improve the quality of life for our total community."

"We value excellence in public services," the cultural-change participants wrote. "We are committed to a workplace where all people have the opportunity to contribute to their fullest potential. We are committed to diversity and recognize that it strengthens us by bringing energy, creativity and originality.

"We value the power and effectiveness of teams to enhance participation and collaboration to achieve quality results. We want to hold ourselves accountable and be evaluated by the results we achieve and by the ways we work together to achieve them."

Cultural-change goals developed by employees included: To be recognized by the citizens of the region as an outstanding, visionary organization, responsive to changing public needs.

To be recognized by Metro employees and the community as an outstanding place to work for all people.

To achieve higher levels of excellence through creative and effective teamwork.

To have a diverse work force in an organizational environment that allows all people to achieve their full potential.

Work teams throughout Metro organized to decide how to achieve the cultural-change and participatory workplace goals. The Water Pollution Control Department was an early leader.

Department employees focused on employee empowerment, explored ways to improve efficiency and discussed ways to remove barriers that hindered teamwork. Department managers quit wearing suits and ties to work because they were viewed by other workers to impede communication. The department began a gain-sharing program where employees share the savings realized by work-improvement ideas and efforts that are implemented.

In the Finance Department, employees focused on work-redesign efforts that would cut costs, improve customer service, increase security and lead to greater employee satisfaction. Employees were encouraged to take risks, become critical thinkers and be open to greater challenges.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Good driving skills and a positive attitude helped earn Mattie Robinson the Operator of the Year award for 1993. Robinson, the first female operator to earn the honor, shared the award with co-worker Raymond Sullivan.

Work redesign achieved results. Self-managed work teams eliminated unnecessary processes and procedures. Cross-training opportunities improved employee morale. And employees took actions to cut costs and improve service.

The Transit Department made progress as well. Communication between workers and management improved, while teamwork increased. At North Base, for example, workers still meet frequently to keep the cultural-change and participatory workplace messages alive.

Have the cultural-change process and efforts to create a more participatory workplace produced long-term results?

"I think it has worked," said Dick Sandaas, who retired as the cultural-change program was ending. "It provided a change in direction for the agency. The results can be amazing when you empower the people."

Metro Milestone

Nov. 5, 1991

Proposal to merge King County and Metro fails at the polls on a technicality.

Metro Milestone

July 16, 1992

Tom Kraft elected
chair of Metro
Council,
replacing Penny
Peabody, who
resigns for health
reasons.

Jim Patrick, a bus driver who became deputy executive director and who was involved in union negotiations and cultural change, can see benefits. "The cultural-change process did a lot on an individual basis to help people better understand how to deal with issues and conflicts in the workplace," he said. "It led to collaborative negotiations, where we talked about interests rather than positions."

Mattie Robinson, co-operator of the year for 1995, has mixed opinions about the results of cultural change. "There's been some change," she said. "They talk a little differently, they smile a little more. That sort of thing. But some people never change."

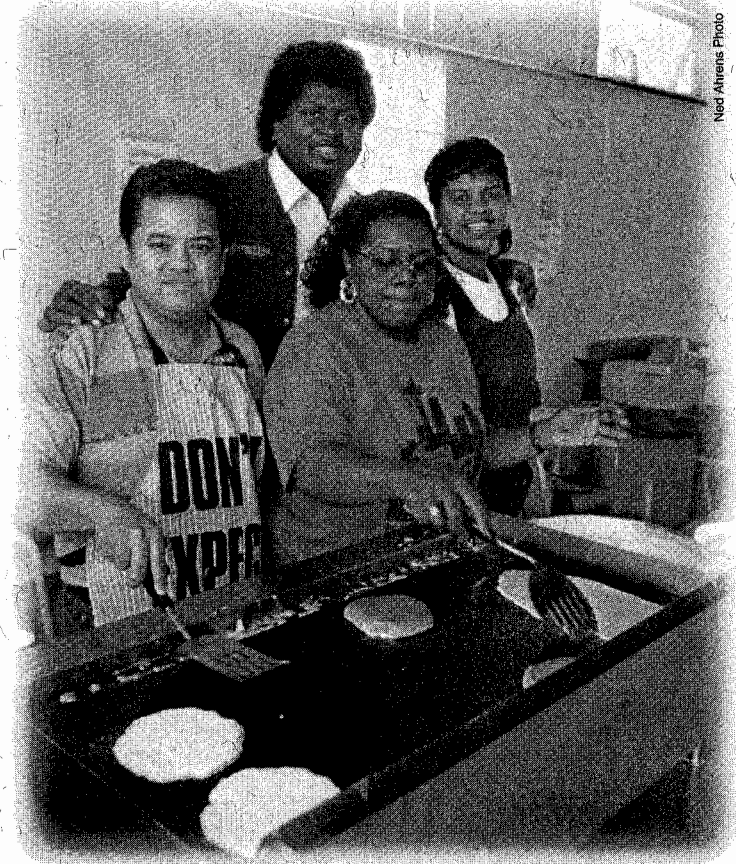
Transit Director Paul Toliver, who succeeded Ron Tober in 1988, reflected on cultural change at Metro.

"We still have problems, but we're getting better," Toliver said. "This is a place most people would give their right arm to work for, and we only take the best."

Toliver said union grievances were down from 300 in 1992 to 96 in 1994; arbitration dropped from 34 cases in 1992 to 12 in 1994 as the cultural-change philosophy took root at Metro.

By increasing diversity and by giving people an opportunity to have a say in their destiny, Metro "will become known not so much as a builder of tunnels but as a developer of people," Toliver said.

Transit employees, from left, Charlie Farrell, Donald Caswell, Charlene Broussard and Terrie Kennedy pitch in for their community during a pancake feed to support the Metro/King County charitable campaign.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Dwyer decision keys Metro, county merger

In April 1989, the nine justices of the U.S. Supreme Court sat in their chambers in Washington, D.C., and signed a decision in what would become a landmark case from New York City.

Their decision in the lawsuit filed by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) would flash to the West Coast like a tsunami and, literally, wash Metro away.

For many years an eight-member panel called the New York Board of Estimate met to deal with budget, zoning, land-use and other citywide issues. Sitting on the board were the mayor and comptroller of New York, the president of the New York City Council and the presidents of the five New York boroughs. None was elected to the board. They became members of it simply because they were elected to other office.

The Supreme Court decided the composition of the Board of Estimate was unconstitutional because it violated the equal rights provisions of the 14th Amendment. The flaw emphasized by the court was that the boroughs were widely different in population and that citizens of the

boroughs were unequally represented on the board.

In October 1989, after being encouraged by some elected officials who thought the Metro Council was not representative, the Seattle chapter of the ACLU filed a suit against Metro that made similar charges.

Lending their names as plaintiffs were Valerie Cunningham, who lived near the site in Cumberland Metro bought for the recycling of biosolids and who fought and helped defeat that Metro project; Imogene Pugh, a south King County resident and member of a citizens' group formed to challenge Metro's plan for the proposed effluent tunnel and outfall at Seahurst; Elizabeth Springer of Tukwila, a retired King County employee; and Monica Zucker of North Seattle, an ACLU board member.

The case became known simply as "*Cunningham vs. Metro.*"

The ACLU arguments mirrored those made in the Board of Estimate case. Certain cities represented on the Metro Council have "substantially disproportionately" greater voting power than do others, the initial complaint said. As an example, it said that residents of Mercer Island had five

times the voting power on the Metro Council than did residents of some unincorporated areas.

Citizens of unincorporated areas are therefore "systematically denied equal voting power," the suit charged.

In announcing the lawsuit, Kathleen Taylor, executive director of the ACLU in Seattle, said: "The principle of one person, one vote is something most everyone supports. Yet the Metro Council doesn't work that way."

The legal argument was partly over whether the Metro Council was elected or appointed. Metro attorneys argued a majority of councilmembers were appointed and, therefore, the Board of Estimate decision did not apply. ACLU attorneys argued the opposite, that a majority were elected.

On Sept. 6, 1990, U.S. District Judge William Dwyer ruled in favor of the plaintiffs.

Citing the Supreme Court decision, Dwyer said: "No person's vote may be reduced in value compared to votes of others because of where he or she happens to live."

Dwyer wrote: "There is no doubt that Metro has been a great historic achievement. Its original aim was to bring

local governments together in a federation to clean up pollution in Lake Washington. In this, Metro succeeded."

However, Dwyer added, efficiency of government and public acceptance cannot justify a denial of equal protection under the Constitution.

In a line that was widely quoted, Dwyer concluded: "That the buses run on time cannot justify a dilution of a citizen's right to vote."

The judge reminded the public that change is not always bad.

"There are always risks in change, but often worse ones in rigidity. There is no reason to believe that the vigorous government and citizens of this region will fail to make Metro a continuing success if a change in the method of selecting its council is required to meet Constitutional standards," he said.

Dwyer ruled the Metro Council was an elected body. By his count, 24 of the 42 members were elected. The remaining 18 were appointed. Because a majority are elected, the council is an elected body, he said.

Because the Metro Council exercises governmental powers, it must comply with the 14th Amendment's one person-one vote principle, Dwyer added.

"The current system of selecting Metro councilmembers results in impermissibly disproportionate representation and hence a violation of the equal-protection clause," Dwyer wrote.

In November 1990, Dwyer gave public officials a "reasonable time"—until April 3, 1992—to present to him a "fully adopted" plan to revise the method of selecting the Metro Council.

By coincidence, officials of King County and its cities met Sept. 5, the day before Dwyer published his ruling, to consider creation of some form of regional government. Called by County Councilmember Lois North, that gathering would expand into what became known as the regional governance summit.

A consensus was quickly reached by the summit: a change was needed. How to make the change occupied elected officials over the next 10 months and about 30 public meetings. At the end there was general agreement to schedule an election at which voters would be asked to approve the merger of Metro and King County, to create a new 13-member Metropolitan King County Council and to decide if the new council should be nonpartisan.

Seattle and suburban cities were wary, fearful of losing the voice they had enjoyed for more than 30 years on the Metro Council. They sought a nonpartisan county body.

But the County Council voted 5 to 4 not to put the partisanship question before voters. Councilmembers were under tremendous pressure from the political parties to maintain partisan elections, but North, among others, said the public didn't want a nonpartisan County Council.

Consequently, a majority of the Seattle City Council voted to oppose the merger plan that had been scheduled for the November general election ballot. Joining the city in dissent were suburban officials who complained they gave up an important degree of control in the new government in trade for a nonpartisan council. But when the County Council rejected the partisanship ballot proposal, suburban areas got nothing in return, city officials said.

The good-government groups, the Municipal League and the League of Women Voters, campaigned for passage of the merger proposition. The Seattle Times and Post-Intelligencer also endorsed merger. The Times said "citizens of King County deserve a voice and a vote in how the region plans for the 21st Century. (The proposition) is a powerful move in the right direction."

In the November 1991 general election, the merger plan failed on a technicality.

State law imposed a dual-majority requirement on the merger question, demanding that voters in Seattle and suburban areas separately approve the merger. The issue

Metro Milestone

Nov. 3, 1992

**Merger of Metro
and King County
approved in
second election.**

Metro Milestone

Nov. 16, 1993

**Metro Council
names its last
executive
director—Carolyn
Purnell.**

was approved by Seattle voters, but those voting outside the city rejected the proposal and it failed to pass.

The April 1992 deadline slid by with no plan approved for correction of the Metro Council's representation faults. The Legislature looked at several schemes but failed to approve any in its 1992 session.

In June, after the Legislature gave up, Dwyer used his hammer and ruled that if nothing happened by April 30, 1993, only the county executive and members of the County Council could vote in the Metro Council. Suburban members could watch and comment, but their votes would be stripped from them.

Dwyer's ruling prompted a revival of the regional summit process. By late August, the summit delegates had reached consensus on another ballot proposal. Like the earlier version, it would merge Metro and the county and create a 13-member Metropolitan King County Council. A new feature, designed to satisfy the cities' demand for 'a voice and a vote,' created three special County Council committees that would deal with transit, water quality and other regional issues. Each committee would have 12 members, with city representatives holding six of those seats. Partisanship no longer was part of the package.

While there were critics of the plan, the cities spoke for the measure. "We are standing together united in a challenge

to form a new government," said Seattle Mayor Norm Rice. "We are not here to take away from what Metro has accomplished, but to say that to meet future challenges we need a new form of government."

C. Carey Donworth, Metro Council chair from 1958 to 1980, said he would vote for the merger. "Simply, I think we need to get on with the questions of management of both Metro and the county we are dealing with," he said. "It does not serve the interest of the public to prolong debate over who does what."

And on election day, Nov. 3, 1992, voters did approve merger. Sixty-three percent of Seattle voters favored it, while 53 percent in the rest of the county gave their blessing to satisfy the dual-majority requirement.

The last meeting of the Metro Council was Dec. 16, 1993.

The council had the usual long list of routine business to deal with, but it took other appropriate and timely action, too.

Metro was created by citizens who had the energy to struggle to make their dreams for clean water and efficient public transit come true. In its closing moments the council adopted a series of special resolutions thanking them all.

West Point project meets challenges

Metro spent the next two years preparing for consolidation with King County. Leading the effort for the agency was Carolyn Purnell, the first woman and first African American to serve as Metro executive director. Purnell, who also served as one of three deputy county executives during the start-up of Executive Gary Locke's administration, kept Metro staff focused on carrying out its public transportation and water pollution control missions.

During Purnell's tenure, Metro kept the West Point secondary-treatment project on schedule and on budget. The \$573-million West Point project represents the single-largest investment ever made to protect the water quality of Puget Sound.

Metro broke ground on the ambitious project in May 1991. The project team faced innumerable challenges, including a court order to complete the project within four and one-half years—an extremely aggressive schedule.

Other challenges came from the more than 200 permit conditions imposed by local, state and federal agencies, including a requirement to limit the plant's "footprint" to 32 acres. Typically a project of West Point's magnitude

would require 75-80 acres. Engineers met this challenge, in part, by designing 20 percent of the plant underground.

Permit conditions also required stringent noise and odor controls: There could be no discernible noise or odor in adjacent public-access areas.

Limiting truck traffic through the neighboring Magnolia community presented another major challenge. To accommodate this condition, the project team built a temporary dock 300 feet into Puget Sound where barges could unload construction materials and load excavation spoils. Truck traffic was further reduced by locating a concrete batch plant on site. To limit car traffic in the Magnolia area, the project bused construction workers to and from the site each day.

Large construction efforts often present the unexpected, and the West Point project was no exception. In 1992, workers uncovered a Native American shell midden, or food-refuse area, which temporarily halted construction. Archaeologists estimated the midden to be 3,600 years old—the oldest find in the central Puget Sound basin.

Artifacts recovered from the find included mammal bones, fish bones and rock tools. After consulting with area tribes, Metro arranged temporary storage and exhibition of the artifacts at the University of Washington's Thomas Burke Museum. The handling of the archaeological find at West Point earned Metro the State Historical Preservation Office's Annual Award in 1994 for outstanding achievement in preservation planning.

Archaeologists sift through rock and soil at West Point where workers uncovered a Native American shell midden, or food refuse area, in early 1992 during construction of secondary-treatment facilities.



Ned Ahrens Photo

Despite the obstacles, Metro met the court-ordered timetable to begin secondary-treatment operations at West Point by Dec. 31, 1995.

"Building a secondary facility under a tight deadline while meeting the numerous permit conditions presented its challenges, especially considering we had to keep the existing primary plant operating," said Daryl Grigsby, Water Pollution Control director. "The West Point project, designed and constructed with the utmost sensitivity to the community and the surrounding environment, is among the greatest accomplishments achieved by the agency. It represents an important investment in our region's water quality."

Design features of the upgraded West Point plant include earthen berms and a 3,000-foot-long retaining wall along the plant's eastern boundary. These features, and the addition of 10,000 trees and 150,000 shrubs and smaller plants, will blend the facility into the nearby shoreline and hillside. Other features of the project include a new wetland and a 20-acre shoreline park, providing twice the shoreline area previously accessible to public.

Moving into the next century

Like other transit operators across the county, Metro has faced several challenges in recent years in providing the type of transportation services needed by its customers. An aging population, employment shifts, and population growth in suburban areas all contributed to the problem. And while transit ridership remained flat, King County faced some of the worst traffic jams in the nation.

To tackle these challenges, Metro, at the direction of the county executive, initiated a six-year plan to reconfigure its transit system. The plan was developed after more than a year's work with input from customers, potential customers, a citizen advisory group, public workshops, elected officials and city and county planners.

The new service plan focuses on connecting major Eastside destinations through fast, frequent service, providing improved suburb-to-suburb service without first traveling through downtown Seattle, and adding more service within suburban areas.

Innovative technologies and new equipment are being considered to achieve the plan's goals, including the use of small buses or vans that circulate in neighborhoods and

move people around the local community and bring riders to regional transit services at transit hubs.

The six-year plan targets 355,000 annual hours of new bus service by the year 2001. This service is being funded in part by a \$96 million savings achieved from the county executive's decision to purchase clean-diesel buses instead of buses fueled by natural gas and by dedicating more of the agency's annual revenue to operations instead of the capital budget.

"This will be the foundation for a better transportation system in King County, whether or not the region builds a rail system," Executive Gary Locke said at the plan's unveiling in June 1995. "We will see more vans, more small buses, more and better transfer hubs and more frequent service. We want to offer a variety of services to meet a variety of needs."

Whether a multi-county, high-capacity transportation system will ever be developed is still an unanswered question. In November 1988, King County residents said "yes" to an advisory ballot asking if rail planning should be accelerated. Metro began work, but the effort soon expanded with the formation in 1990 of the Joint Regional

*Metro
Milestone*

Dec. 16, 1993

**Last meeting of
the Metro
Council.**

Policy Committee to oversee development of a rail-bus plan for King, Snohomish and Pierce counties. A complex proposal offering rail from Tacoma to Everett was developed. It had a long-term price of about \$13 billion, which was too much for elected officials to consider.

In 1993, using new state enabling legislation, the three counties voted to create a Regional Transit Authority to plan and operate rail and bus systems. The authority and its staff whittled away at the \$13 billion plan, reducing its scope and substituting light rail on shared rights-of-way for much of the heavy rail in the earlier proposal.

The cost came down to \$6.5 billion, and the measure was put on the ballot on March 14, 1995. But the proposal failed because it lacked support in Pierce and Snohomish counties.

After the defeat, the state Legislature authorized funding of the RTA through June 1996. The RTA board then began studying the various options available under state law including returning to the voters with the same proposal, revising the RTA district boundaries and modifying the proposal, developing a new proposal to submit to voters or taking no action. The board decided the no-action alternative was unacceptable because the traffic-congestion problem will not go away and will only get worse. Voters likely will have another chance to consider an RTA ballot proposal in 1996.



Neel Ahrens Photo

King County Executive Gary Locke learns about the North Base body shop from shop lead Bill Marshall during a visit in February 1994.

Metro Milestone

Jan. 1, 1994

**Metro becomes
the King County
Department of
Metropolitan
Services.**

Metro functions merge into county government

Under terms of the voter-approved consolidation, Metro continued to function independently until January 1994, when the agency joined King County government as the Department of Metropolitan Services. The county executive and County Council then began discussions on how best to consolidate Metro's functions into a new regional government.

The decision came in September 1995 when the council approved a new structure for the county's executive branch, effective January 1996. Metro's Technical Services Department, which supported the agency's many construction projects over the years, was dissolved and its functions allocated to support transit and water pollution control areas. The Finance and Human Resources departments merged into reorganized county departments. Metro's Transit Department joined the county's roads division in a new Transportation Department. Metro's

Water Pollution Control Department consolidated with the county's surface water management and solid waste divisions into a new Natural Resources Department.

With the consolidated plan in place, the county executive and county council hope to create a high-performance, customer-focused government that delivers needed services to the public as cost efficiently as possible.

For some people, that may sound like a tall order. But for the 4,500 former Metro employees who are now part of King County government, the key to achieving the county's goals is simple: "Do better than promised" and anything is possible.

Metro executive directors

HAROLD E. MILLER

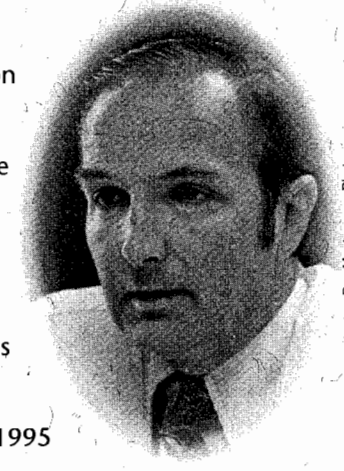
He became Metro's first executive director in February 1959. He served until he died at his desk June 3, 1964. Miller came to Seattle in 1956 to direct the engineering study that led to Metro's first comprehensive sewerage plan. The Renton Treatment Plant was dedicated in his honor in July 1965.



Seattle Times Photo

CHARLES V. (TOM) GIBBS

A University of Washington engineering graduate, Gibbs worked for the state Pollution Control Commission before joining Metro. After his resignation in 1974, Gibbs joined CH2M Hill, an engineering firm, and in 1995 was an executive vice president in charge of water-quality programs.



Roy Montgomery Photo

FRED E. LANGE

A veteran California engineer hired by Miller, he succeeded Miller and served until his retirement in March 1967. He died in 1984.



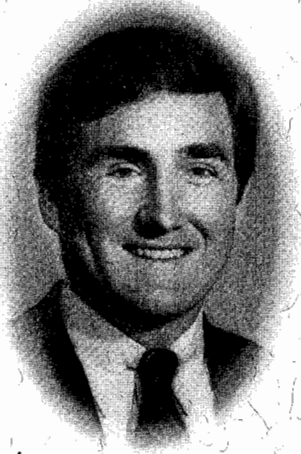
RICHARD PAGE

A former deputy mayor of Seattle, Page moved up from a Metro administrative staff position to succeed Gibbs. He was the first director who was not an engineer. He left Metro in 1976 to become administrator of the Urban Mass Transportation Administration. Later he was director of the Washington, D.C., transit authority. In 1995 he was a Seattle businessman.



NEIL PETERSON

An administrator of the state Department of Social and Health Services, Peterson assumed the director's post in 1977. He resigned in 1984 on his marriage to Tracy Duiker, then Metro's finance director. He managed development of a rail transit system in Los Angeles after leaving Metro, and in 1995 was a businessman with interests in California and Seattle.



RICHARD K. SANDAAS

He was the only Metro Councilmember to become executive director. After leaving the council, he worked in Metro's technical services division and eventually became division director. He was appointed executive director on Gibbs' resignation. He exercised an early retirement option in 1993, and in 1995 was with CH2M Hill in Bellevue.



ALAN GIBBS

Also an administrator of the state Department of Social and Health Services, Gibbs succeeded Peterson. He resigned in February 1989, the result of a controversy over the proposed use of South African granite in the Seattle bus tunnel. In 1995 he was on the staff of Rutgers University in New York.



CAROLYN PURNELL

Head of Metro's legal staff, Purnell succeeded Sandaas. She encouraged program innovations to increase customer service and improve operating efficiencies and devoted much of her term to guiding Metro's merger with King County. For more than a year, Purnell served as one of three deputy county executives during the start-up of Executive Gary Locke's administration. She resigned in August 1995 as Metro executive director to go into private consulting.



*Metro
Milestone*

March 14, 1995

A Regional
Transit Authority
rail proposal is
defeated by
voters.

Ned Ahrens Photo



Metro's leadership team in 1994: Front row, from left, Suzanne Elshult, Human Resources director; Carolyn Purnell, executive director; Paul Toliver, Transit director; Mary Peterson, transit/transition manager. Back row, from left, Daryl Grigsby, Water Pollution Control director; Mary Solomon, Executive assistant; Jean Baker, Finance director; Kevin Raymond, chief counsel; Bonnie Mattson, administrative coordinator; Carin Weiss, deputy director; Mareatha Counts, corporate communications program manager; Vic Oblas, Technical Services director.



Leza Photography

With the consolidation of Metro and King County, a 13-member Metropolitan King County Council was formed as the legislative branch of county government. Sitting on the council in 1995 were, from left, Ron Sims, Bruce Laing, Jane Hague, Larry Phillips, Greg Nickels, Cynthia Sullivan, Kent Pullen (council chair), Louise Miller (vice chair), Brian Derdowski, Pete von Reichbauer, Christopher Vance, Maggi Gimia and Larry Gossett.

Metro Milestone

Jan. 1, 1996

The Metropolitan Services Department merges with other King County departments.

Metro Council chairs

C. CAREY DONWORTH

A member of the citizens' group that planned and lobbied for the creation of Metro, he was elected first chair of the Metro Council Oct. 6, 1958. A labor relations consultant in private life and a Seattle resident, Donworth served until 1980. In 1995 he continued to work as a consultant.



PENNY PEABODY

Peabody defeated Zimmerman for chair of the council in 1990. A Mercer Island resident, she joined Metro in 1971 as a public information officer and served in a number of staff positions, including a term as acting executive director, leaving the staff in 1980. She resigned as chair in 1992 for health reasons, but has been active on a number of civic boards and in a family business.



Brant Photographers

DR. GARY ZIMMERMAN

A former Bellevue City councilmember and an educator, Zimmerman succeeded Donworth and chaired the council until 1990. In 1995 he was provost and chief executive officer of Antioch University in Seattle.



TOM KRAFT

A former Bellevue City councilmember, he became Metro's last chairman and served through the council's final meeting in December 1993. In 1995, he was a legislative aide to King County Councilmember Bruce Laing.



Ned Ahrens Photo

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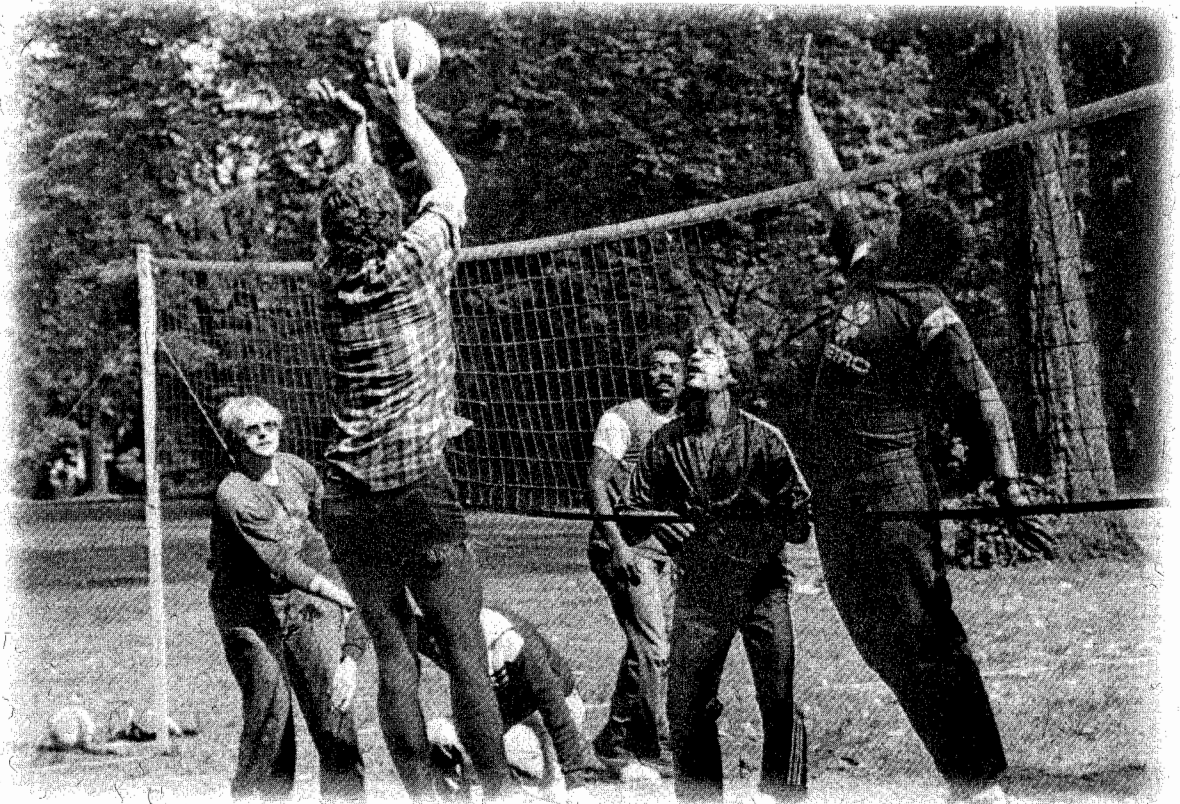
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Employees participate in a competitive game of volleyball at the annual Metro Employees Recreational Activities Association picnic at Lincoln Park.

Don't forget that Metro:

- ❖ **Promised to clean up Lake Washington in 10 years, but did it in nine.**
- ❖ **Ended sewage pollution in the Duwamish River and Elliott Bay and significantly reduced combined-sewer overflows throughout the Seattle area.**
- ❖ **Combined two failing transit systems into a robust, award-winning regional bus operation.**
- ❖ **Became noted for its skilled construction management and for pioneering use of value engineering.**
- ❖ **Built the extremely complex Renton effluent transfer system on time and under budget; the project included the deepest marine outfall in the world.**
- ❖ **Beat the odds and unexpected problems and completed the downtown bus tunnel on schedule, with some segments finished ahead of schedule.**
- ❖ **Faced enormous complications yet had the promised secondary-treatment system at West Point on line before a court-established deadline and within budget.**
- ❖ **Was directed by an unusual and effective federated Metro Council and was created, nurtured, encouraged and critiqued by thousands of caring citizens.**

"I think we put one of the best products on the street in the country. We have the awards that acknowledge that. I hope our customers know we've always tried to respond to what they want."

Bob Sokol, North Base supervisor



"Metro was an interesting experiment when it was created as a municipal corporation. It was the only one that tried that form of government. In being successful at cleaning up Lake Washington and in the innovative quality of its transit system, Metro was a great laboratory for the rest of the country."

Gary Zimmerman, Metro Council chairman for 10 years



"Metro was willing to take risks, to explore new ways. It was not just a standard engineering textbook approach."

Dave Galvin, hazardous waste program manager



"Through the cultural-change process, we tried to create an environment where all people had the opportunity to contribute to their fullest potential. We wanted to recognize that our diversity made us stronger."

Anita Dias, cultural change project manager



From the beginning, through Metro's assumption of public transit responsibilities in 1973 and until the very end, the ethic was there:

"Do better than promised."

It guided Metro and its staff for more than 35 years. It built a waste-treatment system and a mass-transit system, both among the best in the nation.



It instilled a sense of self confidence, a spirit of determination and a commitment to quality that led to the deeply felt belief that Metro could do anything—and do it right.

