

## Draft SCA 2027 Proposed Sewer Rate Response Letter

Metropolitan King County Council  
516 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave.  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chair Sarah Perry and King County Councilmembers,

On behalf of the Sound Cities Association (SCA), I am writing regarding Proposed Ordinance [X] 2027 Proposed Sewer Rate and Capacity Charge. SCA is deeply concerned about the affordability of the sewer rates proposed for 2027 and forecasted in the near-term. Ratepayers are facing the compounding impacts of multiple years of double-digit sewer rate increases and sharp rate increases from other utilities. This trend is unsustainable. We request that WTD continue its Sewer Rate and Capital Work Plan including third-party review and multi-year rate options, incorporate a longer-range financial outlook, provide transparent reporting on system health and policy alignment, and clearly articulate the steps taken to identify and achieve cost savings.

We are aware of the 2027 proposed monthly sewer rate of \$70.65, a 12.75% increase over the current monthly sewer rate of \$62.66. Currently, monthly sewer rates are projected to double by 2033 and triple over the course of the forecasting period. These increases only account for the regional portion of the sewer rate, as cities and sewer districts levy their own rate increases to fund their local systems, further adding to ratepayer burden. In light of this, we encourage WTD to more holistically incorporate an understanding of the significant impact of rates on people living in the County. Sharp wholesale rate increases mean cities need to more acutely track their own ability to increase rates to address local system needs. We request that rate examinations not be siloed, such that increases to other utilities' rates, especially by the County, are factored into future sewer rate proposals.

We are committed to the health of Puget Sound and the people living around it. We understand the importance of maintaining dependable infrastructure to ensure the system continues to protect public and environmental health and acknowledge that rate increases may be necessary to do so. However, rate increases must be balanced with ratepayer needs.

To address these concerns, we support the recommendations proposed in letters by the Metropolitan Water Pollution Abatement Advisory Committee (MWPAAC) and Regional Water Quality Committee (RWQC). We therefore request WTD:

- Continue the work on the Sewer Rate and Capital Work Plan, including third-party capital program review and work towards multi-year rate options.
- Ensure future rate conversations include a focus on a longer-range view beyond the current 10- to 20-year window.
- Continue to consider and present information on the needs of the system and whether rates have kept up with those needs.
- Articulate steps WTD has taken to find savings across its categories of expenditure and the communicate the amount of those savings.
- Provide clear reporting on how WTD has aligned with its adopted policies. While we appreciate the inclusion of multiple rate scenarios in this year's process, exact policy levers available to affect sewer rates remain unclear, as does how policy choices made thus far have contributed to rate growth.
- Work with the RWQC to determine policies regarding rate affordability for future cycles.
- Collaborate with regulators to develop a data-informed regulatory approach to achieve meaningful environmental outcomes. Alternative pathways for regulatory capital projects should also provide relief from the stacking of expensive projects.

Thank you for your increased transparency during this year's sewer rate development process and for your continued partnership. We look forward to continuing to collaborate on ways to address the growing affordability crisis for our ratepayers.

Sincerely,

[SCA Board of Directors]

Cc: Girmay Zahilay, King County Executive

John Taylor, Director, Department of Natural Resources and Parks

Kamuron Gurol, Director, Wastewater Treatment Division

Sharman Herrin, Government Relations, Wastewater Treatment Division

Regional Water Quality Committee Members