For Immediate Release
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CITIES CREATE ONLINE TOOL TO SAVE BUSINESSES TIME AND MONEY

Local license and tax portal will eliminate paperwork & reduce hassle

(SEATTLE) Five Puget Sound cities (Seattle, Tacoma, Bellevue, Everett and Bellingham) today announced they will jointly create an online portal to make it easier for businesses to obtain business licenses and to pay their local business and occupation (B&O) taxes.

Through the Multi-City Business License and Tax Portal, businesses will be able to create an online account and enter their sales information for all participating cities in one convenient place. The software will then calculate the tax due for each city and provide a way for the business to pay online.

Hundreds of Puget Sound companies conduct business in multiple cities. Today, they are required to be licensed in, to file B&O tax returns in, and to calculate and pay taxes for each city separately. Most cities do not offer business owners the ability to file and pay local taxes online. The new portal will make getting a business license and paying local B&O taxes easier and quicker than ever before.

The portal design will allow cities to add consumer-friendly features such as making utility tax payments or paying other local taxes in one place.

"It's all about making things easier. Our aim is to help local companies spend more time growing their business and less time filling out forms and figuring out their tax bill," said Bellevue Finance Director Jan Hawn.

"Our ultimate goal with the new portal is to simplify the license and tax payment process for businesses," said Seattle Finance Director Glen Lee. "Convenience to our customers will be our greatest measure of success."

A recent study by the partner cities found that businesses operating in multiple cities had to fill out the same information for each city. They faced different requirements to get a business license, time-consuming applications, a variety of B&O tax rates and different ways to make a payment.

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"This new business portal will create a more efficient environment for companies to do business in our region," said Tacoma Tax and License Manager Danielle Larson. "The site will save time and money when it comes to completing forms required to file and pay taxes."

More than 100,000 businesses are registered and pay local B&O taxes in the five partner cities. Of those, 14 percent do business in more than one of the cities and hundreds are licensed in all five. In fact, 90 percent of all local B&O taxes collected in Washington State are paid to the cities that will be partners in the new business portal.

The State of Washington is considering connecting all of its business and technical systems into one, seamless, system in the future. As cities build the local portal they will continue to work with the state in order to simplify licensing and tax payments for all Washington businesses.

Partner cities will finalize the technical requirements and will test their portal with business customers over the next 18 months. The city portal is scheduled to launch in the second quarter of 2014.

For more information, please visit the portal web site www.multicitybusinessportal.org.

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