

Appendix J

Accomplishments

In 2004, the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) adopted the *2025 Guiding Our Future Regional Transportation Plan*. Both the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO) and the American Planning Association/Planning Association of Washington (APA/PAW) immediately recognized and awarded the plan for its forward thinking.

In *Guiding Our Future*, regional policy makers laid out a series of emphasis areas to address over the next decade. Their foresight and commitment abundantly benefited the region.

Vision Test

Ten years into the Growth Management Act, regional policy makers asked if the community was developing the way local comprehensive plans envisioned. Were vibrant cities and healthy suburban neighborhoods growing in the urban areas? Was the pastoral character of rural areas being sustained? Was the creation of local family-wage jobs keeping pace with population growth?

The Vision Reality Task Force identified disconnects between the vision for regional growth and marketplace realities. Urban

residential development occurred at lower densities, and rural residential development at higher densities than expected. The share of residential growth in urban areas didn't increase as planned, and very little mixed use development occurred in urban areas. The share of workers commuting into or out of the

Ad Hoc and Advisory Committees

- Vision Reality Task Force
- Passenger Rail Work Group
- Population and Employment Advisory Committee
- Urban Corridors Task Force
- Bicycle Advisory Committee
- Trails Advisory Committee
- Transportation Model Peer-to-Peer Advisory Group
- Smart Corridors Work Group
- Human Services Transportation Forum
- Sustainable Thurston Task Force and Topic Panels
- Urban Growth Management (UGM) Subcommittee

region continued to increase relative to those who lived and worked in the region.

The Vision Reality Task Force findings spurred a cascade of follow up work to understand and shift growth patterns. Forums explored the *Vision Reality* conclusions, *Understanding Residential Growth*, and *Commercial Investment Needs and Trends*. We assessed commuter trends, which in turn impacted the regional population and employment forecast. This body of work led to the Urban Corridors Task Force investigation of ways to focus future growth in urban centers and along urban corridors where public services can be provided more robustly and sustainably.

Beyond Driving Alone

TRPC began a new role in 2005, administering the regional Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) program on behalf of Thurston County, Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater – jurisdictions affected by the state CTR law. The program aims to reduce drive alone trips, vehicle miles traveled, carbon emissions, and congestion. Large employers and state agencies in the region are required to provide worksite commute trip reduction programs for their employees. TRPC supports those programs with training, promotions, printed and online resources, individualized assistance, and surveying. The program has substantially expanded, with support from Intercity Transit and other partners, despite stagnant state funding.

TRPC supports regional and local CTR planning, provides the Thurston Commutes and Thurston Here-to-There websites, produced *The Bottom Line on Telework for Thurston County Public Sector Employees*, and encourages establishment of telework programs. The regional CTR program now reaches 190 affected worksites. Statewide, between 2007 and 2012, CTR-affected employees reduced their annual greenhouse gas emissions by an estimated 72,000 metric tons ... the amount of carbon sequestered annually by 59,000 acres of forest.

Thurston Here-to-There

The [Thurston Here-to-There](#) traveler information site provides a wide array of information on alternatives to solo driving. Development was funded through a federal grant – to promote energy conservation – that also explored how to improve access to travel options for the people who live, work, play, and go to school in Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, and Yelm. Additional benefits: reduced congestion, greenhouse gas emissions, vehicle miles traveled, and transportation costs, with improved safety, enhanced sense of community, emphasis on active transportation (countering childhood obesity), and planning for future needs.

Regional policy makers continued to look at other modes of transportation. The Passenger Rail Work Group identified options, actions, and obstacles for future rail expansion in the region. Forums addressing *Active by Design* and *Why Can't Kids Walk & Bike to School?* looked at the role of transportation as healthy exercise – a traditional role of the transportation system that waned with the popularity of automobiles. This led to the *Healthy Kids – Safe Streets Action Plan* and the Walk N Roll program, encouraging students to walk, bike, and ride the bus to school. The regional *Bike Map* was updated several times since 2004, providing a resource showing trails, bike lanes, paths, restrooms, bike shops, and other handy services. The online version provides even more information, supported by a smart phone app.

The *Regional Trails Plan* laid out a comprehensive evaluation of a Class I trail

system, establishing priorities for future development. Working collaboratively, we completed the backbones of the regional trail network – the Chehalis Western Trail, the Woodland Trail, the Yelm-to-Tenino Trail, and Bridging the Gap (a series of 3 pedestrian bridges crossing Martin Way, I-5, and Pacific Avenue). Conceptual design work is underway for three more facilities – the Olympia Woodland Trail Phases 3 & 4, the Deschutes Valley Trail, and the Gate-Belmore Trail. The local trail association is also involved, coordinating with local agencies in further improving the existing trails with maps, kiosks, trailhead design, and signs.

Recovery

The role of transit looms large in the RTP and in local transportation plans. Intercity Transit faced severe service cutbacks with the passage of Initiative 695 in 1999, a roll back of motor vehicle excise taxes. The transit agency reduced its service area and the amount of service it provided. Working hard, and with voter support in the north urban area, by 2006 Intercity Transit restored urban bus service to pre-2000 levels within its reduced service area boundary. Ridership skyrocketed, especially during the economic downturn beginning in 2008, with new ridership





records reached in several years. This revived demand for transit increased vanpool ridership, prompted new express service routes, established the Dash circulator service, and resulted in the Hawks Prairie Park and Ride and expansion of the Martin Way Park and Ride. At the same time, Intercity Transit greened the fleet (using biodiesel and hybrid buses), and improved efficiency and access (with an electronic fare system, route scheduling and run cutting software, advanced communication systems, automated passenger counters, and real time bus location information).

TRPC began the Rural & Tribal (RT) Transportation Program to fill a remaining gap in bus service in southern and eastern Thurston County, outside the Intercity Transit service area. Collaboration among local communities, tribes, and TRPC makes this critical service viable today. TRPC also prepared and maintains

the regional Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Plan. The plan identifies the needs and gaps in providing service to those facing transportation barriers because of age, language, physical ability, or income. The plan provides solutions and prioritizes projects to help secure transportation grants. The Human Services Transportation Forum gives critical insights and direction that shapes the plan. The Forum also identified projects they could collaboratively implement to more efficiently and cost-effectively provide their individual agency transportation services.

Focus

Three key themes became increasingly important in the last decade: corridors and communities; the interwoven ties of land use, transportation, and economic development; and the need to flourish sustainably.

Corridor and District Studies

TRPC prepared corridor studies and supported study efforts for:

- West Bay Drive
- Boulevard Road
- Capitol Way
- Harrison Avenue/Mud Bay
- Capitol Boulevard
- Brewery District
- Martin Way
- Woodland District
- Main Street 507

The Urban Corridors Task Force concentrated on understanding background conditions along the region's key urban corridors, barriers to achieving adopted land use visions, and potential opportunities for addressing those barriers. Task Force members looked at the relationship between transportation and land use in these corridors and worked to understand the market factors influencing the viability of infill and redevelopment projects. This spurred and supported corridor redevelopment projects in Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater.

In the *Main Street 507* study, Rainier and Tenino defined ways to better balance the roles of State Route 507 as a highway and a pedestrian-oriented Main Street in their communities. Initiatives such as STEDI (South

Thurston Economic Development Initiative) and Bountiful Byway add focus to growing business and agriculture in the more rural communities and corridors. *The Grand Mound 10-Year Development Plan*, prepared by the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation, creates a land use, economic development, and transportation vision for the community.

Contract Planning

TRPC worked, under contract, with cities, tribes and the state to support their local transportation planning:

- Draft Nisqually Tribal Transportation Plan
- Chehalis Reservation Transportation Plan
- Olympia Street Standard Review
- East Olympia Downtown Development Plan
- Yelm Transportation Plan
- Capitol Campus Study

In the past decade, Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater all began interchange studies along the I-5 and US 101 corridors. The focus on interchanges expanded to look at the I-5 system in Thurston and Pierce Counties. The South Sound Military & Communities Partnership brought local, regional, state, and federal interests together to address I-5 congestion from Lacey to Lakewood. This focus is extending south to the I-5/US 101 interchange and

Tumwater’s interchanges, recognizing the connection between growing south sound congestion and its impacts on the greater Puget Sound economic engine. The collaboration continues to implement short-term actions to relieve building congestion, while planning long-term enhancements to address future growth.

I-5 and US 101 Investments

- I-5/Grand Mound to Maytown Widening
- I-5/SR 12 (Grand Mound) Interchange Retrofit
- I-5 Origin and Destination Study
- I-5 Congestion Relief Action Plan
- I-5 Technology (such as traffic information and ramp metering)
- I-5/JBLM Corridor Feasibility Plan
- JBLM Gate Improvements
- Thurston Interchange Studies (Tumwater Boulevard, West Olympia, Marvin Road, and Martin Way)

TRPC’s transportation data investments are playing a key role in these corridor efforts. The regional transportation model is used by local agencies, the state, surrounding counties, and JBLM to assess potential projects. Model improvements made by these agencies are then rolled into the regional model, strengthening our shared planning information. TRPC invested in data collection to keep the regional model

current – including the *South County Traffic Survey*, *I-5 Origin and Destination Study*, and the *2013 South Sound Travel Study*. TRPC’s new model will fully incorporate this data. The update provides enhanced tools to support decision-making.

Sustainability – the Foundation and the Future

Creating Places, Preserving Spaces – A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region underpins all these efforts. Adopted in 2013, the Sustainable Thurston Plan identifies how we must address the triple bottom line – economic, environment, and social – to achieve sustainability. The plan emphasizes how systems inter-relate (like transportation, community health, public safety, and housing), and how decisions in one area may greatly impact another. *The Sustainable Thurston Plan* sets forth priority goals, targets, and action steps so the decisions we make today keep our community vibrant and healthy in the future. How we build, manage, and maintain the transportation system will play a key role in achieving our sustainability priorities.

Where’s the Money?

TRPC receives federal funding to program for regional priorities. Since 2004, TRPC awarded \$41 million in federal funds to support those priorities. Most of this funding — about \$55 million — is directed to safety, preservation, and efficiency projects. TRPC set these priorities

in 1992 when the region received the first allocation of federal funding to distribute, and continues to prioritize taking care of the transportation system.

TRPC also receives smaller amounts of federal funding that must be targeted to specific areas. For example, Transportation Alternatives funding was for non-roadway purposes. TRPC typically awards these funds to sidewalk, bike lane, and trail projects. Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds must be used for projects that help mitigate particulate matter PM10. Transportation sources include vehicle tailpipe emissions, road dust, and tire and brake wear. TRPC's primary CMAQ awards so far are for the Smart Corridors demonstration project, installing smarter signal equipment and transit signal priority technology to help reduce unneeded stops and idling at signals. Historically, federal transportation legislation determines the amount and distribution of these funds.

Transportation Benefit Districts

Washington State established a new option for local governments to raise revenue. Cities and counties may create Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs) to fund local priorities. Olympia, Tumwater, and Thurston County have established districts. Other jurisdictions are considering this funding option.

All these federal sources, however, make up a relatively small part of the overall transportation funding spent in the TRPC region. The federal share is typically less than 25 percent of projects programmed in Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs), but this varies year to year. State and local funds comprise the majority of funding for projects listed in TIPs. Programmatic activities, like general preservation and maintenance, are not listed in TIPs, but represent another large portion of the expense of owning and operating the transportation system that are typically paid out of state and local coffers.

More Projects

In 2004, the Thurston region's transportation system was still recovering from the 2001 Nisqually earthquake. Reconstruction and expansion have improved the efficiency and safety of the system. The list below includes some of the major transportation projects completed since 2004 – those not already referenced in the discussion above. This is not a comprehensive list, but rather a sampling of projects.

- 4th Avenue Olympia Yashiro Friendship Bridge
- Littlerock Road Salmon Creek Bridge
- Deschutes Parkway Reconstruction (I-5 to 5th Avenue)
- Yelm Highway (Henderson Boulevard to Ruddell Road)
- SR 510 Yelm Loop Phase 1 (Mud Run Road to Cullens Road)
- Mullen Road Extension (College Street to Ruddell Road)

- Tumwater Boulevard Improvements (I-5 to Capitol Boulevard)
- Capitol Boulevard (M Street to Deschutes River Bridge)
- Carpenter Road (Pacific Avenue to Martin Way)
- Howanut Road (Black River Bridge to Willamette Creek Bridge)
- Harrison Avenue (Yauger Way to Woodbury Crossing)
- Littlerock Road (73rd Avenue to Trooper Road)
- New Frontage Road (Nisqually Reservation)
- North Street (Cleveland Avenue to Hawthorne Place)
- 18th Avenue (Hoffman Road to Fones Road)
- Gateway Main Street Phase 2 (Lacey)
- Independence Road Chehalis River Flood Mitigation
- Carpenter Road Widening (Woodland Trail and south)
- Yelm Avenue Improvements (Cullens Road to 93rd Avenue)
- Killion Road Improvements (Yelm Avenue to the future SR 510 Yelm Loop)
- Coates Road Improvements (Crystal Springs Road to Cullens Road)
- Evergreen Parkway Modernization (adding bicycle and pedestrian improvements)
- Puget Sound Regional Catastrophic Disaster Coordination Plan – Transportation Recovery Annex
- Thurston County Systemic Safety Analysis
- LED street lights and traffic lights installed in many communities

Communication and Outreach

TRPC closely collaborates with our communities on transportation issues. During the last 10 years, we've honed those skills and tried new technologies.

Online and paper surveys reached the general public, statistically valid samples, and special populations. In the Sustainable Thurston planning and other projects we employed social, print, and broadcast media, online blogs, and public comment tools.

The Rural & Tribal Transportation program is promoted through posters, contests, flyers, *Rider Guides*, transportation fairs, and door-to-door conversations. Meeting strategies focus on going to other people's tables rather than expecting they will come to ours. TRPC improved access to our information for those with special needs or low English proficiency through online translators and best practices to support readability, usability, and access.

The Transportation Budget Calculator, deployed as part of this plan update, asked community members to compare their transportation desires with budget realities. People commented on how that tool helped them understand the choices and challenges we face in building and maintaining a multimodal transportation system.