



May 25, 2011

MEMBERS:

City of Lacey
City of Olympia
City of Rainier
City of Tenino
City of Tumwater
City of Yelm
Town of Bucoda
Thurston County
Intercity Transit
LOTT Clean Water Alliance
Thurston PUD
North Thurston Public Schools
Olympia School District
Confederated Tribes of the
Chehalis Reservation
Nisqually Indian Tribe

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS:

TCOMM9-1-1
Lacey Fire District #3
Puget Sound Regional Council
The Evergreen State College
Thurston Economic
Development Council
Timberland Regional Library

Mr. Victor M. Mendez, Administrator
Federal Highway Administration
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Mr. Mendez:

Reference: JBLM / I-5 Congestion Relief Action Plan

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) is pleased to submit this application for a *Transportation, Community and Systems Preservation* grant on behalf of our partners. The **JBLM / I-5 Congestion Relief Action Plan** responds to the needs of our regional partners by deploying strategies that make I-5 travel more reliable, more efficient, and safer.

TRPC is working with its partners at the local, state and federal levels to improve I-5 mobility and ensure that decisions regarding highway investments are closely coordinated with local and regional growth management objectives. As an active participant on numerous interchange and highway studies, we have come to appreciate the urgent need for low-cost, quick-turnaround strategies that increase overall system efficiency. We can move many more people than vehicles through this constrained corridor with the right mix of strategies that support transit, vanpools and carpools, making travel more reliable for all.

Increasing operational efficiency of the existing highway is a priority at many levels, as evidenced by the partners committed to this project. Our project team includes two agencies of the Washington State Department of Transportation (Olympic Region, and the Urban Planning Office), the City of Lakewood, and Pierce Transit's Commute Trip Reduction program office. We are pleased that the South Sound Military and Communities Partnership leadership team will serve as this project's advisory committee. Our Transportation Expert Panel worked together on Lakewood's I-5 alternatives analysis and on the JBLM Growth Coordination Plan, and includes representatives from all the adjacent communities along I-5 between Lacey and Lakewood, as well as JBLM, Federal Highway Administration, WSDOT, Pierce Transit, Intercity Transit, and Puget Sound Regional Council. This project has funding support from WSDOT, JBLM and TRPC, as well as in-kind support unaccounted for by the participation of the various panels.

Interstate 5 carries 80% of the traffic to and from Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM). Daily congestion in the vicinity of JB LM not only increases travel time for commuters, it impedes the ability of the military to fulfill its mission. Recurring congestion also imparts an economic impact on a trade-dependent state where reliable freight movement is key to a strong economy.

The impacts of this congestion are felt upstream and downstream from the Base. Approximately 65% of the northbound traffic on I-5 in the morning originates in the Olympia-Lacey-Tumwater metropolitan area of the Thurston region. While there is strong support for express transit and vanpool programs, there is currently no travel time incentive to switch from single-occupancy vehicles to one of these more efficient modes of travel. We don't have the luxury of waiting until the interstate system is rebuilt to promote better alternatives to driving alone. We must manage the existing highway capacity resource as efficiently as possible, which is the focus of this Action Plan.



Lon D. Wyrick
Executive Director

2424 Heritage Court SW
Suite A
Olympia, WA 98502-6031
360-956-7575
360-956-7815 Fax
www.trpc.org

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Supporting more efficient travel is not just good for I-5 mobility; it supports other important objectives:

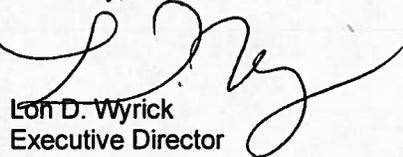
- Thurston Regional Planning Council and the Puget Sound Regional Planning Council are both working to meet the vehicle miles traveled reduction targets issued by Governor Gregoire in her Climate Change Initiative, which is supported by highway efficiency measures that encourage transit, vanpools and carpools.
- Washington State's adopted Highway Safety Plan 'Target Zero' initiative is supported by measures such as this that reduce per capita exposure to highway-related accident risk.
- Communities all along this corridor are working to implement State Growth Management policies that promote efficient development patterns and reduce the fiscal and environmental impacts associated with urban sprawl, efforts that the Action Plan will reinforce.
- As gas prices climb, the traveling public needs reliable alternatives to driving alone, alternatives that are supported by this Action Plan.

Highway studies indicate that well in excess of a billion dollars will be needed to reconstruct the existing highway and its interchanges between Lakewood and Lacey, and then on through our Olympia metropolitan area. This Congestion Relief Action Plan does not eliminate the need for this reconstruction – over half of the bridges and overpasses on this critical trade corridor were built prior to 1960, and much of the corridor has had no improvement since the 1970s. The Action Plan supports that longer-term strategy but provides much needed congestion relief in the interim by minimizing wasted capacity and increasing system efficiency.

Make no mistake. This Action Plan contains no 'silver bullet' to relieve congestion. It is instead a pragmatic package of quick-turnaround, low-cost investments coupled with policies that leverage existing programs and services to maximize efficiency of the existing infrastructure – 'silver buckshot' that together will make I-5 travel more reliable, more efficient, and less expensive.

I encourage your support of the **JBLM / I-5 Congestion Relief Action Plan**, and welcome the opportunity to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Lon D. Wyrick
Executive Director

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