

We make the road.  
Others will make the  
journey.

--Victor Hugo

# Journeys

2005 Regional Transportation Planning Highlights

Volume 3

February 2006

## 2005 Notable Projects in the Thurston Region

**Audible Pedestrian Signals** (at 7 intersections in Lacey) *Capital City Council of the Blind and City of Lacey*

**Pacific Avenue/Kinwood Road SE Signalization & Channelization** *Thurston County*

**Award – Evergreen Parkway Modernization** (selected as 2005 Outstanding Bicycle and Pedestrian Project by WSDOT) *The Evergreen State College*

**25<sup>th</sup> Avenue Improvements** (grade, gravel and chip seal adjacent to new residential area) *Nisqually Indian Tribe and Thurston County*

**Pavement Management – Least Cost Strategy Program** (Goal: All paved streets in fair or better condition within 15 years) *City of Olympia*

**Yelm Highway Capacity & Safety Reconstruction** (College Street to Ruddell Road) *City of Lacey*

**Henderson Boulevard/Old Highway 99 Signalization & Widening** *City of Tumwater*

**Draft Chehalis Reservation Transportation Plan Update** *Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and TRPC*

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## Vision/Reality Project & Regional Land Use – Transportation Forum

In March 2005, the Vision/Reality Task Force of elected officials from throughout the region completed their analysis of the relationship between adopted land use visions and implementation reality in the Thurston region. The group documented five areas of disconnect where development was not playing out as expected, and evaluated the contributing factors. The workgroup found:

- Urban residential development is taking place at lower-than-expected densities.
- Little mixed use development is happening in cities.
- Rural residential development is taking place at higher-than-expected densities.
- The share of development locating in urban areas is lower than expected.
- The share of residents commuting outside the region for employment is increasing.

In November, the Regional Council sponsored a Land Use – Transportation Forum to discuss these findings with a wider group of policy makers and to explore the changing relationship of the Thurston region to central Puget Sound. From this forum, policy makers asked for better information on the demographic and market characteristics underlying the disconnects they discovered. Armed with a better understanding of the changing land use, transportation and economic relationships with central Puget Sound, policy makers will be better able to address and shape the future of our community.

## Transportation Enhancements Funding Awards

Reauthorization of the federal transportation legislation – SAFETEA-LU – provided a new round of funding for Transportation Enhancement projects. These grants finance an array of non-road-capacity projects, such as bicycle and pedestrian facilities, abandoned rail corridor preservation, scenic and historic facilities and preservation, landscaping and beautification, and environmental mitigation.

In 2005, the Regional Council was responsible for selecting \$1.19 million in regional grant awards (subject to state approval) and nominating projects for consideration in a statewide competitive award process. Under the regional portion, TRPC proposes to fund:

- Percival Creek Highway Runoff Mitigation Project (WSDOT)
- Bus Stop Enhancements for Safety/Accessibility (Intercity Transit)
- Deschutes Parkway Sidewalk and Bike Project (Tumwater)
- Lacey/Olympia Woodland Trail (Lacey and Olympia)

*Continued on Page 4*

# Commute Trip Reduction Program

In July 2005, TRPC assumed the lead agency role for the region's Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program. In partnership with Intercity Transit and other partners and jurisdictional staff, TRPC administers the program on behalf of the affected jurisdictions – Olympia, Lacey, Tumwater, and Thurston County. This role includes conducting a survey every two years of affected worksites, reviewing annual compliance reports, and providing technical assistance and tools.

During the first six months, TRPC staff were active in creating networking opportunities for employee transportation coordinators, providing basic training, and analyzing survey results. In the next six months, staff will review the overall accomplishments, supply basic and specialized training, help modify on-site programs, meet with worksite management teams to review results, and present survey and redesign information to regional policymakers.

TRPC policy makers and staff also represented the region on the State's CTR Task Force. The Task Force recently released recommendations to the legislature to further improve the rate of return on the State's investment in CTR – focusing on worksites within the State's most congested urban growth areas, increasing coordination of land use and transportation, and expanding the role of Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) like TRPC.

## CTR Worksites, Employees & Trip Reduction

### In 2005...

- Thurston County had 98 CTR worksites representing 24,457 workers. Of these, 36 worksites voluntarily participated in the program.
- Over 800 trips per day were reduced at Thurston County's CTR affected worksites.

## From the **Executive Director...**

**2005** was a very active, confusing, yet productive year for this Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and our many groups and committees. Along with the various local and regional issues being addressed by the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC), we had the ongoing "thrill" of following, supporting, and decoding the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), as it worked its way through Congress.

Years late in final Congressional approval, SAFETEA-LU continues to carry many of the good programs that have benefited this region's transportation projects and programs over the past several years. This new transportation bill continues to emphasize and support the concept of regional transportation planning and expand the role MPOs play in many new areas. Congress, with a little prodding, also included some additional funding for MPOs to assist them in implementing these new requirements and programs.

Also included in the reauthorization bill were those earmarks (or specific-district projects congressional representatives place in the bill) we hear so much about. These earmark requests take funding away from the overall bill and are always subject to criticism. Earmarks are viewed as a "bad thing," especially by those who aren't getting any, but viewed by the recipients as important for project development. This region received four federal earmarks: the Chehalis Western Trail, Yelm Loop, the Intercity Transit Bus Replacement, and the Port of Olympia Marine Terminal Infrastructure. That would make the earmarks in SAFETEA-LU a "good thing" for this region!

This MPO is continuing to define its role and authority under SAFETEA-LU and is committed to implementing it in the most effective and efficient manner for our members. We look forward to another active and successful year.



Lon D. Wyrick, Executive Director

# South County Traffic Survey

In May, cameras at nine locations along SR 507, SR 510 and Rainier Road collected license plate data to increase understanding of travel patterns in the southern part of the region. Additional data analysis is underway, however, preliminary results point to notable findings.

The 2025 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identified pronounced northbound flows from the south county to the urban core during the morning peak commute period and reverse southbound flows in the evening peak period. The traffic survey showed this north/south pattern was most pronounced on Rainier Road. In contrast, the east-west flows on SR 507 appear balanced throughout the day.

Two-thirds of the morning outbound traffic to Pierce County originated in Yelm and south Thurston County. A significant amount of traffic is also using Reservation Road (near the SR 510/Yelm Highway monitoring station) to reach I-5. About 15% of the morning traffic here comes from Pierce County.

While the survey focused on the communities of south Thurston and Pierce Counties, license plate registration showed wide geographic distribution. In part because of the influence of military base personnel who come from all over the United States, some license plate registration may not correspond with trip origin – an issue to be addressed in the analysis.

A complete report on the survey and its results is expected in spring 2006.

## Tribal Transportation Planning

In 2005, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation contracted with TRPC to update the Chehalis Reservation Transportation Plan. The draft plan provides information on the reservation profile, existing transportation infrastructure, circulation data and an analysis of transportation needs.

The plan touches on a wide range of topics – tribal history and government, land use and tribal values, roadway and amenity inventory, transit, rail, traffic patterns, accident data, and safety and capacity needs. Short and long term transportation improvements are listed. Funding resources and barriers to tribal participation in regional and state funding processes are reviewed.

Tribal review and approval of the draft Chehalis Reservation Transportation Plan is scheduled for 2006.

TRPC and Nisqually Indian Tribe staff are also discussing TRPC's support in preparing a Nisqually Reservation Long Range Transportation Plan in 2006.

## Special Recognition

The **Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO)** appointed Executive Director Lon Wyrick to their Board of Directors. AMPO's mission is to advocate on transportation issues for its metropolitan planning organization members.

The **American Planning Association/Planning Association of Washington** recognized the Vision/Reality Task Force Project in their 2005 awards. The project was honored in the emerging technologies category and presented at a statewide gathering held in June.

The partnership between TRPC and its member Tribes was recognized in **FHWA's tribal transportation case studies** conducted in 2005. Highlighting effective practices for partnering with Native American Tribal governments in statewide and metropolitan transportation planning, the case studies examined innovative cooperation on long range transportation plans, regional and corridor coordination, and transportation improvement plans (TIPs).

## 2005 Notable Projects in the Thurston Region

Continued from Page 1

**Lilly Road NE Roadway Improvements** (26<sup>th</sup> Avenue to South Bay Road) *Thurston County*

**Nisqually Pathway** (650-foot path) *Nisqually Indian Tribe with support from WSDOT and TRPC*

**Neighborhood Traffic Management Program** (Expedited implementation of 7 year schedule to 2-3 years) *City of Olympia*

**Ruddell Road/22<sup>nd</sup> Avenue Intersection Safety Improvements** *City of Lacey*

**Little Rock Road Widening - Design & Right-of-Way Acquisition** (Trosper Road to 73<sup>rd</sup> Avenue) *City of Tumwater*

**Nisqually Indian Tribe Comprehensive Plan Development** (underway with support from a new GIS program) *Nisqually Indian Tribe*

**Pedestrian Crossing Improvement Program** (Removing pedestrian barriers on major corridors. Example: Capitol Blvd at O'Farrell Ave crossing island) *City of Olympia*



# Passenger Rail Workgroup

TRPC appointed a team of Transportation Policy Board (TPB) and Regional Council (TRPC) members to assess the region's passenger rail opportunities – intercity, commuter, local and tourist rail services. Part of the developing Regional Rail Plan, the workgroup will recommend policy and program measures to address the short and long term needs of the region.

The Passenger Rail Workgroup began their deliberations in October 2005 under the guidance of Chair Graeme Sackrison. They are gathering information on existing and potential opportunities, coordinating with railroad companies, service providers and interest groups, and reviewing the region's rail infrastructure.

In 2006, the workgroup will investigate commuter patterns and delve into the policy considerations for establishing passenger rail services in the region. A report to the TPB and TRPC with the workgroup's findings is expected in fall 2006.

## Transportation Enhancements Funding Awards

Continued from Page 1

Four projects were entered for statewide competition:

- Chehalis Western Trail "Bridging the Gap" (TRPC)
- Sand Man Restoration & Historic Site (Sand Man Foundation)
- Yelm Prairie Line Trail Project (Yelm)
- Tumwater Valley Urban Trail Project (Tumwater)

Final award decisions on the regional and statewide competitive projects will be made in 2006.

**More Services** TRPC's transportation program activities are coordinated with our federal, state, and greater Puget Sound partners, harmonizing joint policy, legislation and program efforts. We also provide support and contract services for members and the public – concurrency reporting, internet and database tools development and maintenance, mapping, master planning, strategic planning, grants management, and traffic impact analysis support.

### Anticipated for 2006 ...

- Constructing the **Chehalis Western Trail I-5 Pedestrian Bridge**.
- Completing the **South Thurston County License Plate Survey Report**.
- Continuing **Commute Trip Reduction Program Support**.
- Conducting **Sub-Area, Rural Roads and Corridor Studies** in Rainier, Tenino and Olympia.
- Completing a **Commuter Study** of regional travel trends.
- Implementing **Modeling Improvements and Support**.
- Reporting **Passenger Rail Workgroup Findings**.
- Completing the **Regional Trails Plan**.
- Continuing **Coordination with Surrounding Counties and Inter-regional Data Sharing** in modeling, forecasting, planning, project management and legislative initiatives.

# About TRPC

The Thurston Regional Planning Council – TRPC – is an intergovernmental board formed in 1967 to provide visionary leadership on regional plans, policies and issues. TRPC develops regional plans and policies for transportation, growth management, environmental quality, and other topics determined by the Council. TRPC provides data and analysis to support local and regional decision making, convenes local, state, tribal and federal policy makers to build community consensus on regional issues, and provides planning, historic preservation and technical services on a contractual basis.

## TRPC's Role in Transportation Planning

- As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and state designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO), the Regional Council ensures a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated approach to local, regional and state transportation planning.
- The Transportation Policy Board (TPB) advises the Regional Council on issues ranging from the development of a Regional Transportation Plan to allocating federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding. In addition to jurisdictions represented on the Regional Council, TPB has representation from the state legislature, state agencies, business, and citizens.
- TRPC's standing transportation programs – the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP), Federal Functional Classification maintenance, Freight & Goods Transportation System (FGTS) updates, regional air quality conformance, regional Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding allocations, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture, and the Regional Transportation Plan – ensure regional compliance with state and federal requirements, enabling continued transportation funding from these sources.
- The regional transportation model and the regional population and employment (land use) forecast predict future conditions, supplying a variety of local and state data needs.
- Regional planning and programs address special needs transportation, commute trip reduction/ transportation demand management, the interdependence of transportation and land use, regional trails, performance measures, rail, transportation technology, and freight mobility.
- Contract transportation services aid local transportation planning, support regional coordination of services and information, and provide data for traffic impact analysis.

## Getting Involved

The best way to track transportation issues at TRPC is to subscribe to the Transportation Policy Board's agenda packets. This will keep you abreast of the issues being tackled at the regional level. Public attendance and comment are always welcome at TPB meetings.

The TPB's agenda packet is available by regular post, or a monthly email notification directs subscribers to the material on the TRPC website. Register for either service by calling TRPC at (360) 956-7575.

Additional information on TRPC's transportation plans and programs is available on our website – [www.trpc.org](http://www.trpc.org) – by following the program links for transportation.

The logo for the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) features the letters "TRPC" in a large, bold, serif font. The letters are filled with a yellow-to-gold gradient and have a subtle drop shadow effect.

Thurston Regional Planning Council

# TRPC Transportation Staff Directory

February 2006

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- Finance
- Air Quality Conformity
- Vision/Reality Task Force
- West Olympia Access Study
- Washington Transportation Plan (WTP)
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Bridging the Gap: Chehalis-Western Trail
- Transportation Policy Board (TPB) Support
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)/Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) Program Administration

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- South County Traffic Survey
- Transportation Data Requests
- Census Transportation Information
- Concurrency & Impact Fee Analysis
- Transportation Modeling & Analysis
- Commute Trip Reduction – Modeling
- Corridor Studies and Traffic Simulation

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- Rail Planning
- Annual Report
- Freight Mobility
- Commuter Study
- Incident Management Planning
- Transportation Technology (ITS)
- Fiber & Wireless Communications
- Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP)

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- Economic Trends
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- Population & Employment Forecast
- Growth Trends & the Growth Management Act (GMA)

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- Rural Transportation
- Boulevard Road Corridor Study
- Harrison Avenue Corridor Study
- State & Federal Legislative Activities
- Transit & Regional Park-n-Ride Issues
- STEPS/Active Community Environments
- Coordinated & Special Needs Transportation
- Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)/Transportation Demand Management (TDM)
- Human Services Transportation Forum/Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT)

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- Regional Trails Planning
- Transportation Data Requests
- Performance Measures Analysis
- Federal Functional Classification
- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Support
- Local Comprehensive Plan Amendment Review
- Freight & Goods Transportation System (FGTS) Update
- Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funding Allocation

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- Buildable Lands Analysis
- Capitol Way Corridor Study
- Land Cover & Impervious Surface
- Vision/Reality Task Force – Data Analysis
- Population & Employment Forecast
- Small Area Population & Dwelling Unit Annual Estimates

**Holly Gilbert**, Senior Planner

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- Rural Planning
- Buildable Lands Analysis
- Regional Benchmarks Report
- Population & Employment Forecast
- Chehalis Reservation Transportation Plan
- Regional Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program

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