

Pierce County Transit Oriented Development Opportunities Report

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Resulting from the 2020 legislature, WSDOT was directed to identify a pilot park and ride with future public-private partnership development potential in Pierce county.

ESHB 2322 Sec. 214(6): FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION—PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS— PROGRAM K

(4) Building on the information and experience gained from the transit oriented development project at the Kingsgate park and ride, the department must identify a pilot park and ride with future public-private partnership development potential in Pierce county and report back to the transportation committees of the legislature by June 30, 2021, with a proposal for moving forward with a pilot project.

Based on this direction provided by the legislature, the department is providing a brief outline of the considerations and opportunities that have been identified regarding the potential for a transit oriented development pilot opportunity in the Pierce County region, utilizing existing WSDOT owned park and rides.

Transit Oriented Development

Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) is a place of relatively high density that includes a mix of residential, employment, shopping, and civic uses designed to encourage multi-modal access to the transit station area. WSDOT, working with the legislature, should continue to pursue opportunities to actively identify appropriate sites and promote TOD as a tool to support economic development, to promote transit ridership, and to maximize the efficient use of transportation infrastructure. While TOD has been a widely understood planning and real estate development concept nationally, it can be an important part of the department’s strategy to address traffic congestion, environmental issues, and sprawl.

WSDOT-owned real estate surrounding transit stations may be utilized to support TOD. The department is interested in leveraging its investments in infrastructure and real estate to promote TOD. Where the department owns land that can help achieve TOD outcomes, the department can more directly partner with local jurisdictions and prospective developers to help design, build and finance mixed-use development at existing park and ride sites.

The department is also interested in capitalizing on opportunities to partner with the private sector to achieve TOD. Our plan would generally convey property through long-term ground leases, to development partners. When initiating new projects, WSDOT’s focus would be on pre-development planning, to ensure properties are ready for development. However, the department will need adequate resources to evaluate existing land uses and physical characteristics, the perspective of surrounding communities, regulations, market strength and other issues related to proposed sites.

Pierce County

Specific to Pierce County, WSDOT currently owns seven park and rides in the area. Based on our experience with the Kingsgate TOD Pilot project, we assume¹ only the Lakewood site might be suitable to host a TOD. Further analysis would be needed in order to qualify the site more formally as appropriate for TOD.

¹ For purposes of this analysis, mathematically we assume one acre provides parking capacity for at least 62 vehicle.

The SR-512 Lakewood site (SE side of S. Tacoma Way and SR 512) is assumed to be approximately 8-acres and currently has parking capacity for 493 vehicles. In comparison, the Kingsgate park and ride is an approximate 8-acre site with current capacity for 502 vehicles. The remaining six WSDOT owned Pierce County park and rides do not compare in size to either the Lakewood or Kingsgate sites. The compositional mix of a TOD is dependent on a number of factors. The characteristics important to determining what an actual TOD project might look like include, but are not limited to, available ground and air space, zoning regulations, community needs, etc.... In the Pierce County region, there are 24 identified park and rides, that offer additional opportunities for TOD. The table below provides a list of the seven WSDOT owned park and rides.

Table 1:

City	Name	Location
Lakewood	SR 512 Lakewood	SE side of S Tacoma Way and SR 512
Purdy	North Purdy/Purdy Crescent	144th St NW and Purdy Dr
	South Purdy	SR 16 and Goodnough NW
Tacoma	South Tacoma - East I North Side	S 56th St and S Alaska St, NW corner
	South Tacoma - East II South Side	S 56th St and S Alaska St, SW corner
	Center Street Park and Ride	SR 16 and Center St
	South Tacoma West	S 56th St and Tacoma Mall Blvd

Conclusion

To date, the department and its partners have expended at least \$500,000.00 in public funds to develop the Kingsgate TOD pilot. The funding has provided resources necessary to produce a feasibility study and then to leverage the findings from the study to prepare for an eventual solicitation leading to the construction of a TOD in the coming years. There would be no potential for a TOD project on this site without the investment of public resources.

Once constructed, the Kingsgate TOD pilot is expected to provide increased parking capacity. Through our work with Sound Transit, we intend to consolidate the existing 502 WSDOT surface parking slots in to two parking structures with increased capacity for at least 902 vehicles (a net gain of 400 addition spaces. Further, at least 400-600 new multi-family housing units – a majority (51%) designated as affordable housing are planned along with some space for retail and leisure (ie., green space) activities.

To better understand the potential for TOD in the Pierce County area, it is assumed a similar investment would be necessary. The department does not feel that there is enough information or analysis at this time to recommend a pilot project in Pierce County.

Recommendations

The department encourages the legislature to consider furthering its efforts in authorizing the identification of opportunities to utilize state-owned real estate assets that could result in successful Transit Oriented Developments throughout the state. The goals for these joint development opportunities should focus on:

- Increasing Transit Ridership
- Providing the department the opportunity to develop new revenue sources for transportation and/or attract private investment in infrastructure
- Supporting economic development
- Promoting efficient use of transportation infrastructure and land use resources

Further, we encourage the legislature to broaden its expectations from a specific area to include the State as a whole. For instance, assuming a baseline of 8-acres to be suitable for TOD, WSDOT owns at least 28 sites in three metropolitan regions (Seattle, Vancouver, and Spokane) where TOD might be suitable. The consideration of these sites could result in a great deal of economic and social benefits for the state as a whole. The legislature should authorize adequate resources to allow the department to establish a formal TOD program to pursue these opportunities. A formal program would allow the State to be more proactive in pursuing these opportunities.