

## SUMMARY

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### *Project Purpose and Need*

The I-405 Corridor Program Final Environmental Impact Statement and Final Preliminary Section 4(f) Evaluation (August 2002) analyzed four build alternatives and the No Build Alternative. The alternatives analysis found that no other feasible and prudent alternative is more effective than the Preferred Alternative in minimizing potential harm to Section 4(f) resources.

This Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation is a follow on document to the I-405 Corridor Program and analyzes effects to Section 4(f) resources at the project level for the Tukwila to Renton project, which is a phase of the I-405 Corridor Program.

The I-405, Tukwila to Renton Improvement Project (I-5 to SR 169 – Phase 2), referred to as the Tukwila to Renton Project, is part of the overall I-405 Corridor Program designed to improve safety, reduce congestion, and add travel capacity.

### *Project Alternatives*

#### **Build Alternative**

The Tukwila to Renton Project would extend approximately four and one half miles along I-405, from I-5 to SR 169, and approximately two miles along SR 167, from I-405 to SW 43rd Street. The project would:

- Add capacity to both I-405 and SR 167.
- Replace bridges over the Green River and Cedar River and add one new bridge over the Green River.
- Improve the SR 181 and SR 169 interchanges.
- Reconstruct the SR 167 interchange.
- Replace the two local street accesses to Renton Hill.

#### **No Build Alternative**

The No Build Alternative assumes that the improvements associated with the Renton Nickel Improvement project are constructed and serve as the baseline condition. Only routine activities such as road maintenance, repair, and safety improvements would be expected to take place between 2014 and 2030. This alternative does not include improvements

that would increase roadway capacity or reduce congestion beyond baseline conditions. For these reasons, it does not satisfy the project's purpose to reduce congestion on I-405 between I-5 in Tukwila and SR 169 in Renton. The No Build Alternative has been analyzed in this evaluation as a comparison for the effects associated with the Build Alternative.

### ***Section 4(f) Resources***

Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 (49 USC 303) prohibits the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) from approving a transportation project that uses land from a significant public park; recreation area; wildlife or waterfowl refuge; or land of an historic site of nation, state, or local significance unless (1) there is no feasible and prudent alternative and (2) the project includes all possible planning to minimize harm to the property. For the Tukwila to Renton Project, this Section 4(f) Evaluation assessed Section 4(f) lands located within a quarter-mile of the proposed I-405 improvements between I-5 in Tukwila and SR 169 in Renton. The precedent for examining out 0.25 mile from the proposed improvements permits the identification of potential adverse effects resulting from the proposed project and was generally agreed upon in the *I-405 Corridor Program Final Preliminary Section 4(f) Evaluation*.

We evaluated effects on Section 4(f) resources based on guidance contained within the FHWA Section 4(f) Policy Paper issued March 1, 2005; Title 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Section 771.135 (Section 4(f)); and the WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual published in March 2006. The baseline conditions for this evaluation assume completion of the improvements that have already been environmentally cleared and permitted as part of the Renton Nickel Improvement Project.

There are 23 publicly-owned parks, two historic resources, and no waterfowl or wildlife refuges near the proposed Tukwila to Renton Project right-of-way. Of these, 19 parks and the two historic properties are protected Section 4(f) resources.

The Section 4(f) parks:

- Are publicly owned;
- Open and available for use by the public;

- Are used for public recreation activities as the major purpose; and
- Are considered to be of local or regionally significant.

The Section 4(f) historic sites are identified as properties of local, state, or national significance and are included on or are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

### ***Section 6(f) Resources***

Section 6(f) resources are defined as public outdoor recreational lands purchased or developed with financial assistance from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). Passed by Congress in 1965, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act (LWCFA) provides grants that pay up to half the acquisition and development cost of outdoor recreation sites and facilities. Section 6(f) of the LWCFA addresses transportation projects and prohibits the conversion of property acquired or developed with these grants to a non-recreational purpose without approval of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS). There are two Section 6(f) resources near the proposed Tukwila to Renton Project: the Duwamish-Green River Trail/Christensen Greenbelt and the Cedar River Trail – South Loop. These resources are also Section 4(f) resources.

### ***Recreation and Conservation Funding Board (RCFB) Investment Properties***

RCFB investment properties are defined as public outdoor recreational lands purchased or developed with financial assistance from the State. The Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) is a Washington state agency charged with implementing policies and programs and administering state and federal grant programs for recreation and habitat conservation. Within the study area, three RCFB investment properties were identified: the Duwamish-Green River Trail, the Cedar River Trail – South Loop, and the Cedar River Trail. The RCO must approve uses of RCFB properties protected under Section 4(f) if these properties benefitted from state and federal grant programs.

### ***Project Effects***

During development of the project, WSDOT strove to find reasonable options that avoid effects to the community and

the environment while improving driving conditions for motorists on I-405. As part of this process, WSDOT identified opportunities to avoid and minimize adverse effects to Section 4(f) resources. As a result of these efforts, Section 4(f) uses would occur at only five resources. These five resources include:

- Duwamish-Green River Trail Trailhead
- Cedar River Park
- Liberty Park
- Cedar River Trail
- Narco Property

Exhibits 4-3 and 4-4 illustrate the locations of these resources.

FHWA and WSDOT determined that there would be no constructive uses at any of the Section 4(f) resources.

Direct, temporary, and constructive uses as defined by Section 4(f) are discussed in the Introduction.

### ***Measures to Avoid or Minimize Effects***

To meet project objectives for improved operations on I-405, WSDOT studied numerous design alternatives wherever there would be a potential effect on a Section 4(f) resource.

#### **Duwamish-Green River Trail/Christensen Greenbelt**

WSDOT studied eleven avoidance and minimization alternatives for improving the SR 181 interchange, which included improving access from Tukwila Parkway to northbound I-405. No feasible and prudent alternatives exist to construct this connection without extending Tukwila Parkway east across the Green River. Because the Duwamish-Green River Trail/Christensen Greenbelt parallels the Green River, none of the alternatives studied are able to avoid this resource. Based on coordination with the RCO and the NPS, the protected Section 4(f) trail comprises a width of 14 feet. While no land would be permanently incorporated into the transportation facility, the trail's slope would be revised to ensure adequate clearance for the trail and continue to pass beneath the bridges as it does today. The trail and disturbed trail edges would be restored following construction pursuant to the *I-405 Context-Sensitive Solutions Master Plan*. FHWA and WSDOT determined this construction activity would result in

a temporary occupancy of the protected Section 4(f) resource. Constructive uses would not occur as a result of the proposed modifications to the trail. Currently five existing bridges cross over the trail within the study area. The proposed new bridge would be constructed adjacent to the existing bridges. Conditions experienced by the trail user would remain relatively unchanged with respect to noise, air quality, and visual quality.

### **Duwamish-Green River Trail Trailhead**

Land from the trailhead would be permanently incorporated into the proposed transportation facilities as a result of the construction of the Tukwila Parkway extension. The remaining portion of the site would be restored by replacing existing picnic tables, signs, trash receptacles, and landscaping. WSDOT also proposes to replace the displaced parking adjacent to the proposed stormwater detention site immediately west of the existing parking.

### **Interurban Trail**

WSDOT studied eleven avoidance and minimization alternatives for improving the SR 181 interchange, which included improving access from Tukwila Parkway to northbound I-405. No feasible and prudent alternatives exist to avoid the trail, because the trail currently runs under I-405 adjacent to support piers and next to SR 181. There is no additional right of way available to adjust the project alignment.

WSDOT coordinated with the City of Tukwila Parks Department during development of the Build Alternative. This coordination resulted in a design that proposes to realign the trail, creating a smoother-flowing route that would cross under I-405 parallel to the Union Pacific railroad. The realignment to replace the current indirect route would be done in conjunction with reconstruction of the I-405 bridges over the railroads. FHWA and WSDOT determined this construction activity would result in a temporary occupancy of the protected Section 4(f) resource. The Interurban Trail has always existed in the shadows of I-405. The proposed trail realignment would not alter its proximity to I-405. Constructive uses would not be triggered by the proposed construction. Conditions experienced by the trail user would remain relatively unchanged or slightly improved with respect

to noise, air quality, and visual quality. Currently, the trail crossing beneath I-405 is adjacent to SR 181. When it is realigned, the trail would be further from SR 181 and thus further from noise generated along SR 181.

### **James Nelsen House**

There would be no direct, temporary, or constructive uses of the James Nelsen House. Modeling demonstrated that noise levels would increase and begin to approach the NAC for residences, but would not reach a dBA level that would constitute a use. Air quality is expected to improve slightly as traffic from the adjacent freeway would operate more efficiently. Views from the James Nelsen House would be altered by the construction of the Tukwila Parkway Bridge. However, the current setting of the James Nelsen House is adjacent to the I-405/SR 181 interchange and within a commercially zoned area. The addition of the Tukwila Parkway extension and the acquisition of property would not substantially change the current views from the house.

During construction, fencing would be placed to establish the limits of construction and ensure there would be no encroachment near the historic structure. Retaining walls to minimize the footprint and avoid the historic structure are an integral component in the Tukwila Parkway design. Areas that would be disturbed by construction, including landscaping, would be restored in kind.

### **Veterans Memorial Park**

Two design options—Mill Avenue and Main Avenue—are proposed in the vicinity immediately adjacent to Veterans Memorial Park. Both options would involve changing traffic flow patterns on Main Avenue S and Mill Avenue S due to the proposed closure of Houser Way N east of Mill Avenue S. All parkland effects would be avoided with the construction of the Mill Avenue design option.

The Main Avenue design option would result in permanent acquisition of a portion of the Section 4(f) resource. The acquisition at Veterans Memorial Park would affect existing landscaping, but it would not affect the primary purpose of the park: the Memorial. Landscaping temporarily disturbed by the construction would be restored to recreate the character and design intent at the Memorial.

The results of the alternatives analysis demonstrate that the Mill Avenue design option would be both feasible and prudent and would avoid permanent direct use of Veterans Memorial Park. In recent discussions with the City of Renton, WSDOT has learned that the City plans to potentially develop a civic center campus in the vicinity of Mill and Main Avenues and may possibly relocate Veterans Memorial Park. These plans are currently conceptual and lack funding. However, when funding is secured for this portion of the I-405 Tukwila to Renton Project, WSDOT may update its Section 4(f) analysis to include the most current baseline condition. If at that point Veterans Memorial Park is relocated by the City from its current location, the Main Avenue design option may be reconsidered.

### **Cedar River Park, Liberty Park, Cedar River Trail, and the Narco Property**

WSDOT and the City of Renton worked together extensively over the period of several months to identify opportunities for avoidance and minimization of impacts to existing major recreational facilities at Liberty Park, Cedar River Park, Cedar River Trail, and the Narco property, while accommodating an improved (widened) I-405. The concept to integrate Liberty Park, Cedar River Park, and the Narco property into one large complex emerged from the collaborative process with full support from the City and WSDOT. This design scheme would redevelop both existing parks, realign the trail, develop the Narco site with sports fields, and acquire an additional property to develop baseball fields. Throughout the development of this design scheme, the City and WSDOT explored opportunities to avoid or minimize effects to the resources and arrived at a consensus on necessary and desirable park improvements, and which of these improvements would be considered mitigation for unavoidable effects as a result of the I-405 project, and which would be city-desired recreation improvements.

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