CHAPTER 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Where is the Tukwila to Renton Project located?

The I-405, Tukwila to Renton Improvement Project (I-5 to SR 169 – Phase 2), referred to as the Tukwila to Renton Project, is in the Puget Sound region of Washington State on the south end of the Interstate 405 (I-405) corridor between I-5 and State Route 169 (SR 169), see Exhibit 1-1. This section of I-405 passes through the cities of Tukwila and Renton. This project extends 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.

Exhibit 1-1: Vicinity Map

What is the Tukwila to Renton Project?

The Tukwila to Renton Project is the second phase of the I-405 Corridor Program for this portion of I-405. The first phase is improvements built for the Renton Nickel Improvement Project. The Tukwila to Renton Project will:

- Add capacity to both I-405 and SR 167.
- Reconstruct 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 consisting of a new general-purpose direct-connector ramp from southbound I-405 to southbound SR 167, HOV direct-connector ramps from northbound SR 167 to northbound I-405 and from southbound I-405 to southbound SR 167, and a split-diamond interchange at Lind Avenue and Talbot Road with connecting frontage roads.
- Reconstruct the two local street accesses to Renton Hill.

This Environmental Assessment (EA) also considers two potential design options for rerouting traffic from the Houser Way bridge, which will be removed, to the Bronson Way bridge. One option routes traffic one-way northbound on Mill Avenue S and one-way southbound on Main Avenue S. The other option routes traffic in both directions on Main Avenue.

This EA considers the baseline conditions (preconstruction) to be 2014. At that point, all the improvements proposed for the

Renton Nickel Improvement Project are assumed to have been completed.

Why is WSDOT proposing to build this project?

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is proposing to construct the Tukwila to Renton Project, to relieve congestion. Relieving congestion will benefit the public by:

- Lowering the number of accidents thus improving safety.
- Increasing overall speeds through this section of freeway.
- Improving response times of emergency service vehicles using I-405.
- Improving access to and from I-405 and local circulation.

When will construction begin and how long will it take?

Construction of the entire Tukwila to Renton Project is expected to occur in intervals over several years as funding becomes available. For this reason, construction activity will not be constant for the entire study area and the duration of construction will vary depending on the improvement.

The first element WSDOT plans to construct is the SR 515 Interchange Project. WSDOT has obtained funding for this portion through the 2005 Transportation Partnership Account. This Tukwila to Renton Project element will construct a half-diamond interchange on I-405 at Talbot Road (SR 515). The remaining elements of the Tukwila to Renton Project are unfunded at this time. For more information on this funded element see Appendix D.

How will the project affect the environment?

The I-405 Team studied this project with a focus on 15 environmental topics. The findings from these studies are summarized below:

Air Quality. The Tukwila to Renton Project will not negatively affect regional air quality and will be in compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards and Mobile Source Air Toxic requirements. Dust and odors may be

present during construction, but these effects will be minor and temporary.

Cultural Resources. The Tukwila to Renton Project will not affect any archaeological or historic properties that are eligible or potentially eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP).

No new archaeological sites were found in areas that were tested. Full testing for archaeological resources will be completed under the Section 106 Programmatic Agreement[1] (Appendix C) once project funding is available and before construction begins.

WSDOT will follow an inadvertent discovery plan in case archaeological resources are discovered during excavation.

Cumulative Effects. No negative long-term cumulative effects are expected as a result of this project and others in the nearby area. Some minor temporary effects are expected for air quality, water resources, and aquatic resources during construction but mitigation measures used on all the evaluated projects will keep these effects to a minimum.

Economics. The Tukwila to Renton Project will not negatively affect the local or regional economy. The cities of Tukwila and Renton are expected to benefit from tax revenue generated by the construction of this project, and local businesses will benefit from faster freight movement. The project construction could also create approximately 10,000 direct and 6,400 indirect full-time jobs.

Ecosystems. The Tukwila to Renton Project was designed to avoid effects to ecosystems to the greatest extent practicable. In all cases where direct temporary or permanent effects on ecosystems are unavoidable, mitigation will be implemented in accordance with applicable local, state, and federal regulations to compensate for affected resources. Wetland effects are anticipated to be mitigated by debiting from the Springbrook Creek Wetland and Habitat Mitigation Bank. A portion of the stream and river mitigation for the Tukwila to Renton Project will be implemented through the Panther

[1] *The Programmatic Agreement is currently in draft form and is being circulated for signatures. The final signed agreement will be included in the Finding of No Significant Impact.*

Creek Watershed Rehabilitation Plan. In addition, other mitigation activities are anticipated to compensate for project effects that will occur in the Green River and Cedar River basins. This additional mitigation will be further developed in these areas once funding for future project phases has been identified.

The I-405 Team will conduct further evaluation of the seven fish passage barrier culverts within the study area. Retrofit or replacement of these barriers will be determined during the project's permitting phase.

Environmental Justice. The Tukwila to Renton Project will not have disproportionately high or adverse effects on minority or low-income people. Project effects, both positive and negative, will be experienced proportionately by both the general public and minority and low-income populations.

Geology and Soils. The project will have no adverse effect on geology or soils in the study area. The presence of some potential hazards, such as erosion, coal mine subsidence, and seismic hazards, will be prominent considerations during design and construction. Once construction is complete and the highway is in use, the project will have no further effect on geology and soils.

Hazardous Materials. Because WSDOT will comply with all applicable environmental rules and regulations, the I-405 Corridor Programmatic Commitments, and Record-of-Decision (ROD) during construction of the project, effects from hazardous materials are expected to be few, if any. However, despite measures to manage risks associated with hazardous materials, accidents could occur or unknown contaminants could be encountered. These materials could result in short-term contamination effects to the environment before clean up can begin. If unknown contaminated sites are discovered, they will be managed so that construction activities comply with state and federal environmental regulations.

Land Use. This project will not negatively affect land use patterns. The land to be acquired by the project represents a small fraction of Tukwila's and Renton's housing and commercial capacity and therefore is considered to be a negligible change in land use.

The project is not expected to have a substantial effect on either Tukwila's or Renton's policies, plans, and regulations.

The improvements anticipated in the Build Alternative support the design, land use, growth, transportation, and capital facilities policies of both jurisdictions.

Noise. The project will increase noise levels throughout the study area, primarily affecting residences in the Renton Hill and Talbot Hill neighborhoods. Fourteen noise barriers were evaluated for the project. Two of these barriers were found to be both reasonable and feasible for construction under the FHWA and WSDOT criteria for noise abatement. With these two noise barriers in place, noise effects from this project are greatly diminished though not entirely eliminated.

Draft Section 4(f) Evaluation. The Tukwila to Renton Project will not adversely affect any historic properties or recreational resources. Within the study area, 19 parks and 2 historic buildings are protected Section 4(f) resources. Of these, two are also Section 6(f) resources. The Tukwila to Renton Project will have direct uses at 5 of the 21 Section 4(f) resources in the study area. These effects will change some of the resource features but will not permanently interfere with the activities or purposes of the resources. All temporarily occupied trails and parks will be restored following construction.

Social Elements, Public Services, and Utilities. The acquisition of 16 commercial and 25 residential properties required by this project will affect some individuals. WSDOT will provide relocation assistance to residents and businesses in compliance with the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Act of 1970, as amended. In general, however, the project is not expected to affect community cohesion and will maintain or enhance livability for communities within the study area.

Public services will benefit from this project because response times for emergency services are expected to improve.

This project is not considered to negatively affect utilities. This is because even though the project overlaps with the current location of most utilities in the study area, WSDOT will work with the utility owners to either relocate the utilities or protect them in place where avoidance is not feasible through project design.

Transportation. This project will add capacity, increase travel speed an average of 20 miles per hour, and improve

operations on I-405. The reduced congestion is also expected to improve safety.

Visual Quality. The visual quality analysis shows that this project will moderately reduce the visual quality of the project area. Most of the visual effects vary depending upon the extent of development, the people exposed to the view, and the sensitivity of those people to a given viewpoint. With the project in place, 11 viewpoints show a decrease in visual quality and 1 viewpoint shows an increase in visual quality.

Water Resources. The Tukwila to Renton Project is expected to benefit water resources. This project will provide flow control and water quality treatment for more impervious areas than under existing conditions. Peak and base flow rates to streams and rivers will not be altered by the project. This additional treatment will have a beneficial effect on both surface water flow and water quality.

The project will not affect local floodplains because WSDOT will provide mitigation for any fill placed within the 100-year floodplain.

This project is not expected to affect the Cedar Valley Aquifer and its subunit, the Delta Aquifer, which is designated as a sole source aquifer requiring extra protection. Potential groundwater effects to aquifers, such as contamination from spills and reduced well capacity are expected to be avoided during construction by implementing the mitigation measures described in Chapter 6 of this EA.

What is the purpose of this Environmental Assessment?

The purpose of this EA is to provide information to the public about environmental effects anticipated from the Tukwila to Renton Project. This EA compares two alternatives: the Tukwila to Renton Project as the Build Alternative and a No Build Alternative. This document fulfills WSDOT's obligation under the National Environmental Policy Act to disclose project effects and mitigation. Following the public comment period, FHWA will publish a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) document. Upon final approval, the project will move into the construction phase. Construction of the entire Tukwila to Renton Project is expected to be spread over several years as funding becomes available. The first element

of the Tukwila to Renton Project that is proposed for construction is the SR 515 Interchange Project. This portion is funded through the 2005 Transportation Partnership Account (TPA). This project element will construct a half-diamond interchange on I-405 at Talbot Road (SR 515). Construction of this element is scheduled to begin in autumn of 2008. The remaining elements of the Tukwila to Renton Project are unfunded at this time.

How is this document organized?

Chapters 2 and 3 of this EA explain why this project is needed and provide a background into the alternatives developed as part of the I-405 Corridor Program. Chapter 4 provides a detailed description of what this project will build. Chapter 5 discusses the affected environment and the potential effects by individual topics. Chapter 6 presents the proposals for avoiding or minimizing effects identified in Chapter 5.

The appendices provide a summary of project benefits, a list of commitments for project mitigation, a discussion on construction staging, and all of the technical documents that contributed information to this EA.

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