SECTION 4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

What are the land use patterns in the study area?

Land uses within the study area are not expected to change dramatically between existing conditions and the baseline conditions. Because of this, land uses under existing conditions are used as the baseline conditions for this project.

Baseline land use patterns within the study area consist primarily of residential, commercial, industrial, and vacant, land uses (see pie chart in Exhibit 4-1). The "other" land use category shown on Exhibit 4-1 includes public parks, and institutional uses such as schools and hospitals, and utilities.

The study area includes the Tukwila and Renton Urban Centers. The Tukwila Urban Center is an area that transitioned from farming uses to a retail shopping and service center starting in the 1960s. This Urban Center has no residential land use within the study area. The portion of the Renton Urban Center in the study area, Downtown Renton, was platted and developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries and therefore has a greater mix of uses than the remaining study area.

What is the difference between baseline conditions and existing conditions?

Baseline Conditions:

Conditions existing after the Renton Nickel Improvement Project has been constructed but before construction of the Tukwila to Renton Project.

Existing Conditions:

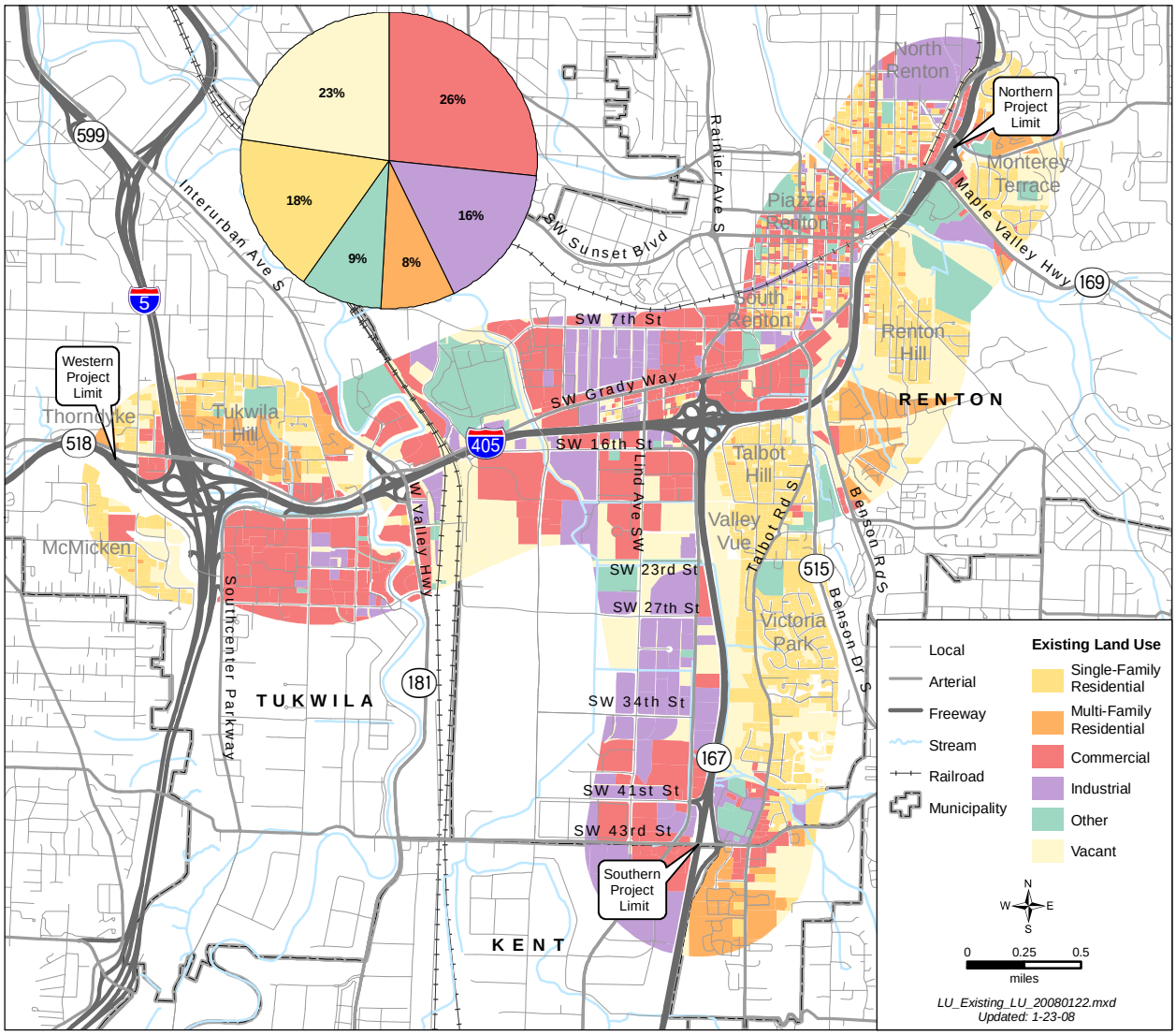
Conditions existing before construction of either the Renton Nickel Improvement Project or the Tukwila to Renton Project.

Residential Uses

Residential uses make up approximately 26 percent of the study area. Generally, single-family residential neighborhoods characterize most of the residential area, with some multi-family areas that separate the single-family neighborhoods from commercial and industrial areas.

The Tukwila Comprehensive Plan identifies residential neighborhoods within the study area as McMicken, Thorndyke, and Tukwila Hill (see Exhibit 4-1).[6] Tukwila does not have an official neighborhood recognition program.

Exhibit 4-1: Land Use and Neighborhoods in the Study Area



Tukwila Hill is a mixed residential area northeast of the I-5/I-405 interchange composed of single-family neighborhoods, with a large multi-family component located between a single-family neighborhood and I-405.

[6] *Tukwila Comprehensive Plan. Updated December 5, 2005, Figure 10, page 73.*

McMicken and Thorndyke neighborhoods contain small single-family areas located southwest and northwest of the I-5/I-405 interchange within the Tukwila portion of the study area.

Renton has eight officially recognized neighborhoods within the study area:

- North Renton
- Monterey Terrace
- Piazza Renton (Downtown Renton)
- Renton Hill
- South Renton
- Talbot Hill
- Valley Vue
- Victoria Park

Neighborhoods west and north of I-405 in Renton include North Renton, Piazza Renton (or Downtown Renton), and South Renton. These neighborhoods tend to be older and were originally platted and developed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sidewalks, on-street parking, and the remnants of an alley network characterize these neighborhoods, which are experiencing a great deal of redevelopment and are intermixed with small retail shops, restaurants, service businesses, and light manufacturing uses.

In particular, the Piazza Renton and South Renton neighborhoods are experiencing redevelopment characterized by mixed-use development with residential uses in flats, townhouses, semi-attached, and duplex dwelling units. Recent redevelopment tends to be rental apartments, but condominium construction has also occurred in recent years.

Downtown Renton

Neighborhoods located east and south of I-405 and along SR 167 include Monterey Terrace, Renton Hill, Talbot Hill, Valley Vue, and Victoria Park. These tend to be well-established, suburban, single-family neighborhoods. With the exception of Renton Hill these areas are generally newer neighborhoods than those found west and north of I-405.

The Renton portion of the study area located east and south of I-405 and along SR 167 also includes some predominantly multi-family areas that separate the predominantly

single-family neighborhoods mentioned above. The residential areas east and south of I-405 and along SR 167 tend to be separated from commercial and industrial areas by the hills they occupy and by the freeways (I-405 and SR 167).

Commercial and Industrial

Commercial and industrial uses comprise approximately 42 percent of the land within the study area. These uses tend to occur south of I-405 between I-5 and SR 167, and north of I-405 between Interurban Avenue South and Rainier Avenue South.

Large buildings and associated surface parking lots that surround the buildings characterize commercial and industrial areas. Westfield Shoppingtown Mall (formerly known as Southcenter) and nearby retail development dominate Tukwila's portion of the study area. The Green River area at the Renton-Tukwila border comprises a mixture of service and retail commercial and light industrial uses.

West of SR 167, Renton has a mixture of newer office buildings, light industrial, and warehouse development. Automobile dealerships and large-scale retail uses characterize the area near the I-405/SR 167 interchange. The downtown Renton area contains a mix of commercial uses including small-scale retailers, restaurants, and service businesses associated with the small-lot development patterns of the early 20th century. North of the Cedar River, in the northern portion of the study area, auto-oriented retail uses and services are mixed in with some large industrial parcels at the northern edge of the study area.

Vacant Land

The vacant land category includes vacant, underutilized and redevelopable lands and comprises approximately 23 percent of the study area and are scattered throughout it. These areas offer the greatest opportunity for growth and development within the study area. More than half of the vacant land is zoned residential, including a portion that is zoned mixed-use residential. Market forces are creating demand for development of vacant land in the study area. We expect vacant land to decrease over time as new development occurs. For example, some new housing has been constructed on the hills west of the I-405/I-5 interchange in Tukwila, and several

new apartments and condominiums have been proposed or are in the process of development in the Renton portion of the study area, particularly in the downtown area. A 21-lot residential development was recently proposed on vacant land adjoining I-405 in the Renton Hill neighborhood (Defoor Preliminary Plat).

Other Category

The "Other" land use category consists of several institutional and governmental land use types that are not easily classified. Types of uses include public parks, utilities, hospitals, schools, and park-and-ride lots. This category comprises approximately nine percent of the study area. This use tends to be spread throughout the corridor with concentrations at the City of Renton parks near the Cedar River and at the King County Metro sewage treatment plant located west of Springbrook Creek.

Where are the future redevelopment areas in the study area?

The comprehensive plans prepared by the cities of Tukwila and Renton identify four areas where future redevelopment will focus.

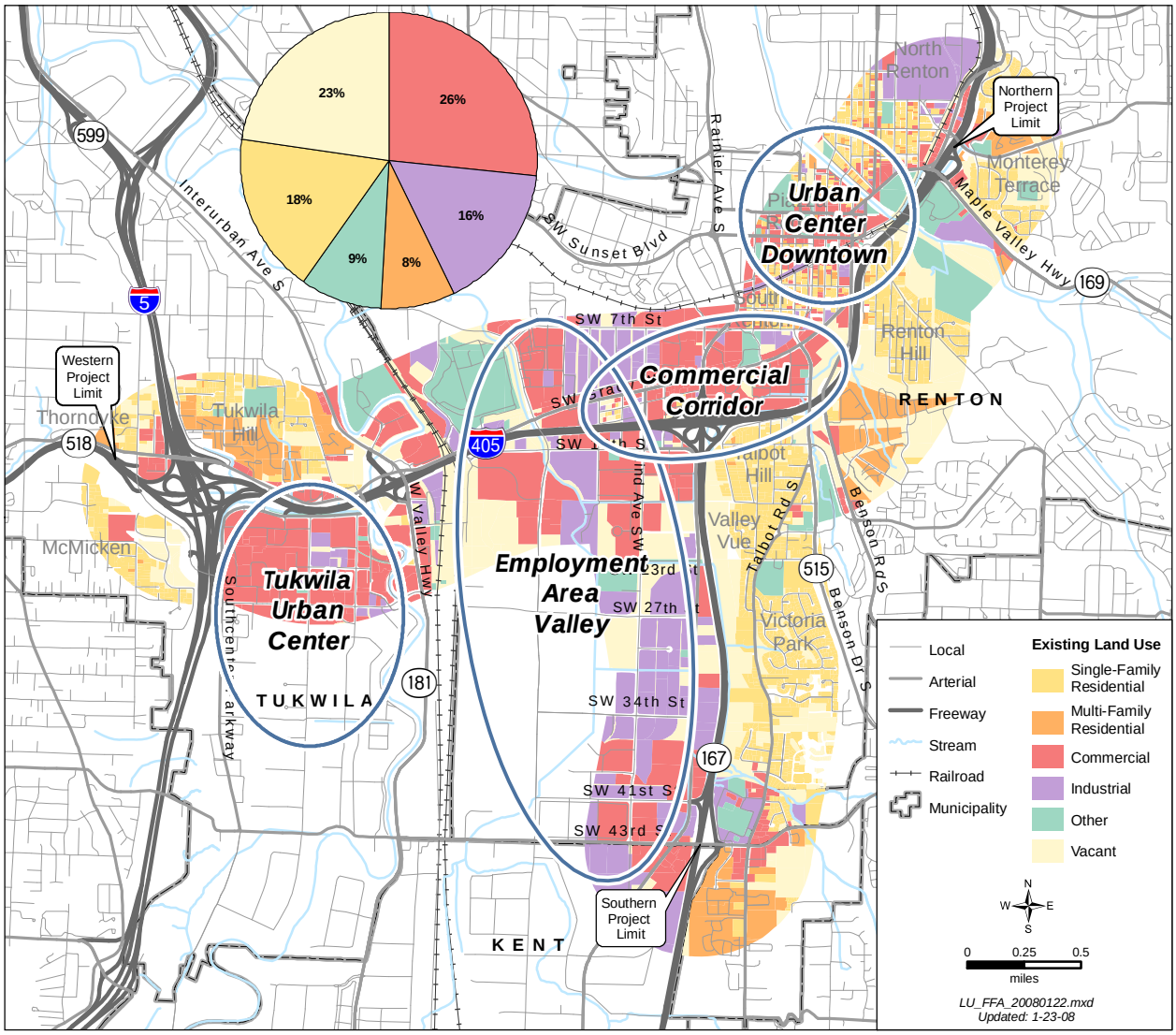
As shown in Exhibit 4-2, Tukwila has one future redevelopment area called the Tukwila Urban Center. The City intends for this area to become a high-density with regional employment and recreational opportunities. Renton has identified three redevelopment areas within the study area: the Employment Area Valley, the Commercial Corridor, and the Urban Center Downtown. Each area has a unique vision and goal for future redevelopment.

Tukwila Urban Center

The existing Tukwila Urban Center is an economically vibrant, motor-vehicle-oriented area. It encompasses intensely developed areas such as the Westfield Shoppingtown Mall and Andover Industrial Park.

For the Tukwila Urban Center, the City of Tukwila foresees a high-density area with regional employment, areas of high

Exhibit 4-2: Future Focus Areas in the Study Area



quality housing nearby to water amenities such as Tukwila Pond Park, the Sounder/Amtrak station, and shopping and recreational opportunities for residents, business people, and visitors.

Retail uses dominate the Tukwila Urban Center and provide regional comparison shopping, major discount shopping, entertainment, and a full range of professional services. While continuing to serve the region as a major shopping, office, and light industrial area, the Tukwila Urban Center will encourage development of housing around Tukwila Pond and the Green

River. The City anticipates redevelopment of warehouses, industrial, and retail uses along these amenity areas, and the City is considering changes in zoning and development regulations to allow this redevelopment through a subarea planning process.

Employment Area Valley

A mix of land uses characterizes the Employment Area Valley. This area's mix of land uses includes industrial, high technology, office, and retail commercial activities, which lead to economic growth and a stronger employment base for the City of Renton.

The Employment Area Valley designation allows this area formerly dominated by traditional industrial and warehouse uses to transition to more intensive retail and office uses. This designation allows that transition without making the industrial and warehousing uses nonconforming or restricting their ability to expand, and is therefore a flexible designation responding to market forces. Since enactment of this designation in the late 1990s, many companies are choosing to locate in the Employment Area Valley because of good access along I-405 and SR 167 and because of the area's proximity to downtown Renton, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, and I-5.

Office building in Renton's Employment Area Valley

Commercial Corridor

Concentrated commercial activity, primarily along arterial streets, characterizes the Commercial Corridor designation. This designation provides both necessary goods and services for daily living and easy access to nearby neighborhoods, as well as goods and services for a subregional market in an area that accommodates large traffic volumes.

The City of Renton policies and objectives for the Commercial Corridor foresee the corridor evolving from a linear commercial business district to a business area that uses more efficient building and parking lot design, coordinated access, amenities, and boulevard treatment such as landscaped medians. To achieve this change, Commercial Corridor areas may include designated districts with concentrations of special uses such as the Auto Mall, features such as transit stops, and a combination of businesses that create a focal point of pedestrian activity and visual interest.

Locations along principal arterials with high volume traffic characterize Commercial Corridor areas. The land use intensity levels in these areas will increase over time with development of vacant space, increases in land value making redevelopment feasible, and efficient land use.

Urban Center Downtown

The City of Renton envisions the Urban Center Downtown as a vibrant city core. This core will provide arts, entertainment, regional employment opportunities, recreation, and quality urban residential neighborhoods; and it will be the dynamic heart of a growing regional city. Renton's Urban Center Downtown will provide additional capacity for new housing that will allow the City to accommodate its share of planned regional growth. This additional residential population will help to balance the City's large employment population.

Downtown Renton Parking Garage

Renton expects that the Urban Center Downtown will redevelop to provide neighborhood, citywide, and subregional services and mixed-use residential development. Urban Center Downtown residential development will consist primarily of urban scale mixed-use projects. In combination with the expected mixed uses (e.g., retail, office, residential and service uses), the Urban Center Downtown will support transit and transit-oriented development. In the surrounding neighborhoods, the City anticipates townhouses and multi-family residential developments being constructed on lots in largely developed areas.

What Transportation Systems serve the land use in the study area?

Within the study area, I-405 fulfills an important transportation need as the primary regional thoroughfare for residents, businesses, and industries in Renton and Tukwila as well as the dominant north-south corridor east of I-5 as shown in Exhibit 4-3. I-405 connects to I-5 in Tukwila to the south and in Snohomish County to the north. I-405 provides convenient access from the study area to Eastside cities located along the corridor to the north, as well as to Sea-Tac airport and Seattle via connections to SR 518 and I-5 in Tukwila.

Other highways that tie the study area together are SR 518, SR 181, SR 167, SR 515, and SR 169. With the exception of SR 518 and SR 181, these highways converge in central Renton

within a 0.5-mile radius of each other. This proximity results in a complex traffic flow as regional and local trips interact within a relatively short distance.

"Principal arterials" are streets and highways that connect major intra-city activity centers and have primarily high traffic volumes that travel at relatively fast vehicle speeds. The purpose of these arterials place little emphasis on local land use access.

Exhibit 4-3 shows the major transportation routes within the study area. Principal arterials within the Tukwila portion of the study area include Interurban Avenue South, SR 181, Southcenter Boulevard, Tukwila Parkway, and Southcenter Parkway. The principal arterials within Renton portion of the study area include Oakesdale Avenue SW and SW 43rd Street in the Employment Area Valley; Grady Way in the Commercial Corridor; and S 2nd Street, S 3rd Street, and SW Sunset Boulevard in Renton's Urban Center Downtown. These arterials, with numerous other arterial streets, link commercial, industrial, and residential neighborhoods to the freeways and state highways.

What comprehensive plan and zoning requirements are the cities required to meet?

Comprehensive plans provide overall policy and planning guidance; development regulations such as zoning implement this guidance. State law considers SMPs a part of local governments' comprehensive plans and development regulations. A summary of requirements or features of comprehensive plans, zoning regulations, and SMPs follows.

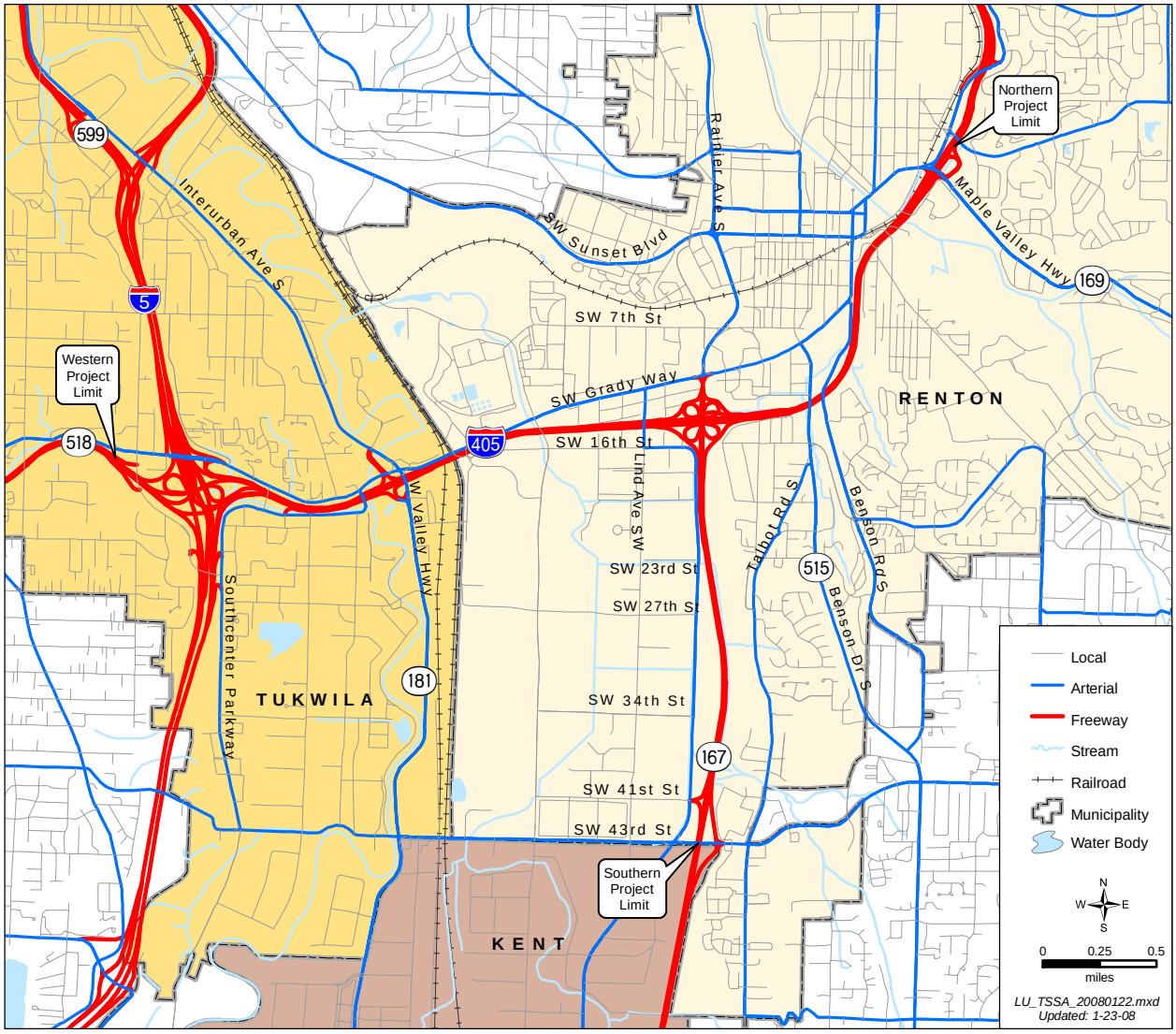
What are Shoreline Master Programs?

Local shoreline master programs (SMPs) regulate new development and uses of shoreline along larger streams/rivers with flows of at least 20 cubic feet per second, lakes over 20 acres, and marine waterfronts. SMPs are required by the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (codified in RCW 90.58), and typically contain shoreline policies, shoreline use environments or "zones," and shoreline regulations.

Comprehensive Plans and the Growth Management Act

A comprehensive plan provides the vision, goals, and policies of the community in written and map form. These plans direct the allocation of resources and guide the preparation of rules and regulations for plan implementation.

Exhibit 4-3: Transportation Systems in the Study Area



The Washington State GMA[7] requires and guides the preparation and amendment of local comprehensive plans. The GMA contains 13 goals addressing the following subjects:

- Urban growth
- Reducing sprawl
- Transportation
- Housing

---

[7] *Washington State Legislature, Office of the Code Reviser. January 2005. Revised Code of Washington RCW 36.70A.*

- Economic development
- Property rights
- Permits
- Natural resource industries
- Open space and recreation
- Environment
- Citizen participation and coordination
- Public facilities and services
- Historic preservation

Local comprehensive plans must respond to state GMA goals with the following required elements: land use; housing; transportation; capital facilities; utilities; parks and recreation; and economic development.

For the proposed Tukwila to Renton Project, the most relevant GMA goal relates to transportation. The GMA states that the transportation goal purpose is to encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

To respond to this goal, transportation elements must include inventories, analyses, and policies. GMA also identifies several other planning requirements applicable to roads and highways.

Specifically, GMA requires adoption of concurrency regulations, ensuring that transportation strategies or improvements are in place at the time of development or within six years to meet local LOS requirements. Local LOS requirements do not apply to "Highways of Statewide Significance," which include I-405 and SR 167. For Highways of Statewide Significance, local jurisdictions will evaluate the effects of land use on the state facility. Local LOS standards and methodologies may differ from state LOS standards regarding local streets. Both the cities of Tukwila and Renton have LOS standards and methodologies that differ from each other and differ with the state standards and methodologies.

GMA requires local comprehensive plans to address processes for identifying "essential public facilities." No local plans or regulations may preclude the siting of such facilities.

What is level of service?

Level of service (LOS) is a measure of system operating performance for roadways, transit, non-motorized, and other transportation modes. For example, roadway measures of level of service often assign criteria based on volume-to-capacity ratios [from 2003–2022 Washington State Highway System Plan, February 2002].

LOS is rated with a grading system of A through F with A being the best performance and F being the most congested.

Highways of Statewide Significance are one type of essential public facility as defined by state law. These facilities consist of those that are typically difficult to site (e.g., airports, jails, inpatient facilities). Both I-405 and SR 167 are considered Highways of Statewide Significance.

How are transportation project reviews coordinated among jurisdictions?

The Growth Management Act requires jurisdictions to coordinate their permitting and environmental review for major transportation projects. RCW 36.70A.420 outlines legislative intent for this coordination, while RCW 36.70A.430 includes a mechanism for coordinated multi-jurisdictional review and approval of such transportation projects.

Further, GMA encourages local governments to coordinate their permitting and environmental review processes for transportation projects.[8]

This discipline report does not include an overall review of the Corridor Program's consistency with GMA, because the completed I-405 Corridor Program EIS addressed this topic in 2002.[9] This discipline report focuses on local government plans that are required to be consistent with GMA. The GMA discussion above provides a context to help interpret local government comprehensive plans and regulations reviewed in this report.

Zoning

Zoning is a law adopted by local government to protect the public health, safety, and welfare by defining compatible and incompatible uses; establishing the density and intensity of development for adequate light, air, and infrastructure; and defining or maintaining the character of established districts.

Zoning divides the regulated land into several classifications or zones to identify the following types of regulations for each zone: allowable uses, structure size, and structure locations on a lot. One or more letters define different zones within a jurisdiction (e.g., Tukwila Urban Center – TUC, Commercial Arterial – CA). The classification codes appear on a map that applies to all parcels and lots in the defined district. Zoning codes typically address roadways and other transportation facilities such as park-and-ride lots. The Washington Administrative Code[10] requires zoning to be consistent with each jurisdiction's respective comprehensive plan, particularly the future land use map.

---

[8] *Washington State Legislature, Office of the Code Reviser. January 2005. Revised Code of Washington (RCW 36.70A.420).*

[9] *Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) et al. 2002. I-405 Corridor Program NEPA/SEPA Final Environmental Impact Statement.*

[10] *Washington State Legislature, Office of the Code Reviser. July 20, 2005. Washington Administrative Code (WAC 365-195-800).*

Shoreline Master Programs

The State Shoreline Management Act requires a SMP for streams with flows greater than 20 cubic feet per second (cfs) and lakes greater than 20 acres in size. The Green and Cedar rivers and Springbrook Creek are subject to SMPs. Gilliam, Panther, and other named and unnamed creeks in the study area are not subject to SMPs, because each has a flow less than 20 cfs; however, activities in proximity to the creeks are subject to critical area regulations.

The shoreline jurisdiction includes the land area within 200 feet of its ordinary high water mark (OHWM), associated wetlands, and, in some cases, associated floodplains.

An SMP is both a policy and regulatory document and is considered to be part of a jurisdiction's GMA Comprehensive Plan and implementing development regulations. In addition to expressing policies, the SMP governs uses and activities within the shoreline jurisdiction. Its policies and regulations address circulation, conservation, and other topics relevant to the Tukwila to Renton Project.

What does ordinary high water mark (OHWM) mean?

An "ordinary high water mark" is a location where the vegetation and soil show the effects of the water. According to the Washington State Shoreline Management Act (RCW 90.58), the ordinary high water mark is found by examining the bed and banks of tidal waters, streams, and lakes and determining where the presence and action of waters are so common and usual, and so long continued in all ordinary years, that the soil and vegetation have a character distinct from that of the abutting upland. Where the ordinary high water mark cannot be found, it is the line of mean high water—the highest that the water gets in an average year, but not the highest it gets during extreme flooding.

This page intentionally blank.