

## Policies for a Statewide Transportation System

To support the achievement of the policy goals WSDOT shall:

- Maintain an inventory of the condition of structures and corridors in most urgent need of retrofit or rehabilitation
- Develop long-term financing tools for ongoing maintenance and preservation of the transportation system
- Balance system safety and convenience through all phases of a project to accommodate all users of the transportation system to safely, reliably, and efficiently provide mobility to people and goods
- ***Develop strategies to gradually reduce the per capita vehicle miles traveled based on consideration of a range of reduction methods***
- Consider efficiency tools, including high-occupancy vehicle and high-occupancy toll lanes, corridor-specific and systemwide pricing strategies, active traffic management, commute trip reduction, and other demand management tools
- Promote integrated multimodal planning
- Consider engineers and architects to design environmentally sustainable, context-sensitive transportation systems (SSB 5412-Sec. 6.)

In what ways does TRPC – as the MPO and RTPO – promote strategies to gradually reduce the per capita vehicles miles traveled based on consideration of a range of reduction methods?

First, it should be noted that the last three bullets under the above responsibilities all contribute to achieving the goals of the fourth bullet. If it seems like there is overlap between VMT reduction strategies and these other objectives in the discussion that follows, that is why.

Following are some of the activities and strategies that TRPC has undertaken or is pursuing in order to reduce per capita VMT in the Thurston region:

- The first post-GMA Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) laid the framework for local land use plans under development. That framework – which is reflected in the adopted County-wide Planning Policies and evident in the regional population and employment forecast targets – directs that growth be concentrated in urban areas, especially in core activity centers and along designated high-density corridors. At the same time, land use intensity and density in rural areas should be minimized. This guidance shaped the adopted local land use plans that are in place today.
- Goals, policies, and recommendations in the current long-range Regional Transportation Plan fully support the goal of reducing per capita VMT through a combination of transportation policy and investment, land use policy and inter-governmental coordination and collaboration.
- Coordinated regional transportation policies concerning street standards, multi-modal facilities, and level of service have resulted in local transportation policies and standards that increase travel options for people, reduce distances traveled, and support compact, dense, well-designed communities.
- TRPC has been an active participant in the region's Commute Trip Reduction program from its inception. In that capacity TRPC supported measures to reduce SOV commute trips, including parking management policies, flexible work schedules, support facilities for non-motorized commuters, increased carpool and vanpool opportunities, and education and communication programs. Some support for those activities comes from the base regional transportation planning program. For the last two years TRPC has been responsible for overseeing the region's CTR program and has just recently completed a regional CTR plan that is integrated with local plans.
- Since 2000 TRPC has made "safety, preservation, and system efficiency" its funding priorities for the allocation of regional Surface Transportation Program funds. TRPC does not use those funds to add general purpose travel lanes.
- In 2006 TRPC conducted a regional commuter study to evaluate in detail the inbound / outbound commute patterns of Thurston County residents and employees. This work was done as a follow-up measure to the 2005 Vision Reality Task Force project, which identified an unintended surge

in the share of people living in Thurston County but working in Pierce or King Counties. The commuter study was used by the Passenger Rail Workgroup for part of its analysis.

- TRPC convened a Passenger Rail Workgroup in 2006 to assess the preliminary feasibility of adding commuter rail service between Thurston County and central Puget Sound. Workgroup analysis indicated that commuter rail service may be more of a near-term consideration for this region than previously thought. Additional coordination is currently underway with Sound Transit and supplementary funds are being solicited to conduct a more intensive pre-design analysis.
- TRPC is actively seeking funds to conduct a comprehensive regional park-and-ride analysis and implementation strategy.
- TRPC conducted a Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center (GTEC) analysis for four urban activity centers in the Thurston region. Results of that analysis were used by the City of Olympia to secure a state grant to implement a GTEC in downtown Olympia. TRPC is working with Olympia on the components of that implementation strategy and will participate in the program.
- TRPC actively supports – financially and politically – the regional trail system, recognizing its benefit not just for recreational travel purposes but as a fundamental component of the region's transportation system. Leadership on the "Bridging the Gap" project has resulted in funding for two of the three bridges needed to connect the north and south segments of the Chehalis-Western Trail which, when completed will connect to the Lacey-Olympia Woodland Trail and the I-5 Bike Trail. This comprehensive urban network provides safe and convenient non-motorized connections between dense urban neighborhoods and employment centers, retail and service activities, and civic opportunities, and is already heavily used despite the gaps in connectivity. TRPC has just adopted (12.7.07) its first comprehensive regional trails plan that will extend system connectivity throughout the urban area with connections to every rural community.
- TRPC regularly conducts corridor studies that engage citizens, businesses and government in evaluating transportation system needs in a way that is sensitive to the unique context of each corridor and neighborhood and which result in project recommendations that maximize access and multi-modal travel options with infrastructure design that complements the surrounding land uses while meeting current and future travel needs.
- TRPC has sponsored two regional policy maker forums to better understand the market dynamics between the central Puget Sound and the Thurston region. Highway access, capacity, and constraints elsewhere on the highway system contribute to this dynamic which is resulting in an increased share of outbound commuters headed to jobs in Pierce and Thurston Counties. Understanding those market dynamics is recognized as an important step in developing strategies for minimizing the transportation impact if not actually reversing the trend. TRPC policy makers are also commenting on PSRC long-range growth strategies with an eye towards reducing the central Puget Sound jobs-housing imbalance that is contributing to bedroom-community growth patterns in Thurston County.
- TRPC has developed education and outreach programs targeted towards high school students as a means of increasing awareness about alternatives to driving.
- TRPC is pursuing a corridor technology investment that includes a Transit Signal Priority element for Intercity Transit. This is intended to increase transit's operational efficiency and service performance, both of which are critical for attracting more people out of personal vehicles and onto transit.