

Chapter 1. Introduction

State Route (SR) 302 is an east-west state highway located in eastern Mason County and northwestern Pierce County (see Figure 1-1). SR 302 provides a link for Key Peninsula communities between Gig Harbor / SR 16 / I-5 to the east and Mason County / SR 3 to the west. The roadway directly connects the communities of Belfair, Allyn, and Victor in Mason County with Purdy and Gig Harbor in Pierce County.

Safety and congestion issues have been identified on SR 302 over the past several years. In 2005, the Washington State Legislature directed the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to study and implement improvements to SR 302 to address congestion and safety issues on the highway.

What is the SR 302 Improvement Project?

The SR 302 Improvement Project (Project) refers to the actual physical improvements that will be made to SR 302, either through improvement of the existing alignment, and/or construction of new alignment sections. The limits and specific elements of the Project have not yet been defined, but will be established as part of the SR 302 Corridor Study.

What is the SR 302 Corridor Study?

The SR 302 Corridor Study (Study) was commissioned by the Washington State Legislature as part of the Transportation Partnership Funding Package (9.5 cent gas tax). The Study will meet the following key objectives:

- Analyze and document the existing and projected future safety and mobility conditions on the highway.
- Identify ways to improve the documented safety and mobility on SR 302.
- Identify the appropriate project limits and project alternatives that address safety and mobility issues, and meet the short-range and long-range transportation objectives of the surrounding community.
- Identify the associated environmental effects of viable Project alternatives that meet safety, mobility, and community objectives, through the development of an environmental document that complies with state and federal environmental policies.
- Identify a preferred Project alternative that minimizes environmental effects.
- Complete these objectives using a transparent process that engages the community from the outset.

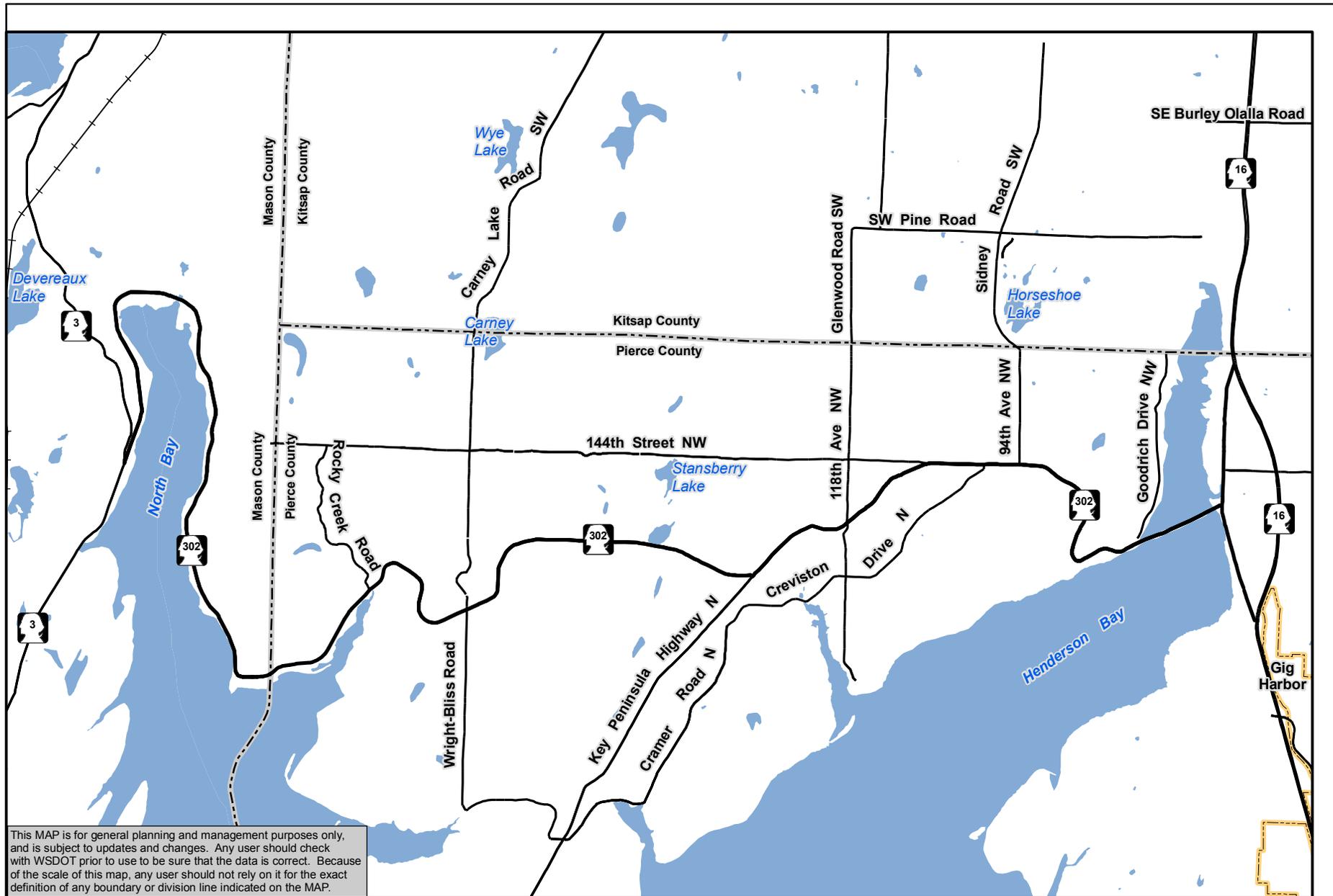
SR 302 Improvement Project (Project)

The SR 302 Improvement Project (Project) refers to the actual physical improvements that will be made to the highway, either through improvement of the existing alignment, and/or construction of new alignment sections. The limits of the Project have not yet been defined, but will be established as part of the SR 302 Corridor Study.

SR 302 Corridor Study (Study)

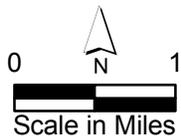
The current Study consists of:

- analyzing and documenting existing and projected future safety and mobility issues,
- identifying Project alternatives to address those issues,
- identifying associated environmental effects of Project alternatives,
- identifying a preferred Project alternative that minimizes effects, and
- completing these objectives using a transparent process that engages the community from the outset.



This MAP is for general planning and management purposes only, and is subject to updates and changes. Any user should check with WSDOT prior to use to be sure that the data is correct. Because of the scale of this map, any user should not rely on it for the exact definition of any boundary or division line indicated on the MAP.

DATE: February 29, 2008



- SR 302
- Other Major Road
- - - County Boundary
- + Railroad

Figure 1-1
Existing SR 302
 SR 302 Corridor Study

What is the Study Area?

The Study Area has been defined to encompass a broad range of alternative corridor locations between SR 3 and SR 16. It is bounded by SR 3 to the west, SR 16 to the east, the existing SR 302 corridor to the south, and Burley-Ollala Road (including the area projected westward of the existing road to SR 3) to the north. The problem definition and potential alternatives will be narrowed as more focused analysis is conducted for this Study. This could result in the Study Area size to also be narrowed.

What is the community's role in the Study?

WSDOT is committed to an open process that encourages two-way communication with interested parties, and engages community members in the decision-making process. The objectives for the Study recognize that improvement to SR 302 would benefit the community, but also that there is no easy solution and that the Project has the potential to negatively affect some people.

With complex projects such as transportation improvements, it can be difficult to gain unanimous support or consensus on a course of action. It is the goal of the Study to engage community members throughout the process, from initial definition of the problem through implementation of the final transportation solution.

The overall approach to the Study reflects four key principles:

- **Acknowledge that there is a problem to be solved** – this includes not only defining the problem but articulating what will happen if the problem is not solved.
- **Take responsibility for solving the problem** – identify a reasonable range of alternatives, analyze the potential effects of alternatives and, eventually, reach a decision about the best alternative for solving the problem.
- **Conduct appropriate analysis and decision making processes in a transparent way** – people need to have confidence that the analyses used to evaluate and select alternatives have been done correctly. They also need to understand the decision making process and ways they can participate in the process.
- **Evaluate project impacts from potentially affected parties' points of view** – a sincere effort to involve the public in transportation decisions means listening to people who are affected or have opinions, and considering their input in the decision making process.

(Bleiker and Bleiker 2000)

Stakeholder and community outreach will be an important and continuous element throughout the duration of the

Study Area

The Study Area is bounded by SR 3 to the west, SR 16 to the east, the existing SR 302 corridor to the south, and Burley-Ollala Road (including the area projected westward of the existing road to SR 3) to the north. The problem definition and potential alternatives will be narrowed as more focused analysis is conducted for this Study. This could result in the Study Area size to also be narrowed.

Key Study Principles

- Acknowledge that there is a problem to be solved.
- Take responsibility for solving the problem.
- Conduct appropriate analysis and decision making processes in a transparent way.
- Evaluate project impacts from potentially affected parties' points of view.

Study, and throughout design and construction of the Project.

What is the purpose of this Report?

This Existing Conditions and Problem Definition Report (Report) presents the results of the initial efforts of the Study, conducted from July through December 2007, which included the following activities:

- Initiate early outreach efforts to community members and other Project stakeholders, to solicit feedback on the problem definition, and to identify the community's perspective on potential solutions;
- Analyze and document existing and projected future traffic mobility and safety issues;
- Identify a broad range of corridor alternatives under consideration;
- Assess existing environmental conditions within the Study Area, and identify potential environmental issues and constraints that will need to be addressed in the environmental process;
- Share the results of the traffic and environmental assessments and the broad range of corridor alternatives with the community, and gather feedback on these elements prior to finalizing the problem definition, and narrowing the corridor alternatives.

What is the 1993 SR 302 Corridor Study, and how does it relate to this current effort?

Safety and mobility issues and potential solutions were first documented in the SR 302 Corridor Study (WSDOT 1993), referenced in this report as the 1993 Study, which analyzed conditions projected through 2013. In this preliminary study, WSDOT identified existing corridor characteristics, projected future conditions, conducted traffic and safety analysis, conducted preliminary environmental screening, and developed and assessed a number of corridor alternatives (Note, the corridors from the 1993 Study are presented in Chapter 4 of this report). The 1993 Study also incorporated considerable public involvement, including newsletters, public meetings, an open house, news releases, and meetings with civic groups (WSDOT 1993).

The 1993 Study provides a solid foundation from which this current Study was launched. As several years have passed since the initial study was completed, the current Study includes the following updates:

- Existing operational and safety conditions analysis is updated to reflect 2007 conditions.
- The long-range planning year is updated to 2030, which is consistent with current long-range planning requirements for highways, as established by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

Existing Conditions and Problem Definition Report (Report)

Presents the results of the initial efforts of the Study, conducted from July through December 2007, which included:

- Early community outreach
- Analysis of existing and projected future traffic congestion and safety issues
- Identification of a broad range of corridor alternatives
- Preliminary assessment of environmental conditions within the Study Area

1993 SR 302 Corridor Study (1993 Study)

The initial study that documented safety and mobility deficiencies on SR 302 and assessed potential solutions through the planning year of 2013.

- Community members and potential Project stakeholders have been re-engaged, and early outreach has been conducted to update community issues and priorities regarding SR 302.

The broad range of corridor alternatives presented in this Report includes the corridors that were defined in the 1993 Study. The environmental constraints information presented in this report is consistent with the environmental screening presented in the 1993 Study, but provides more detailed information about the environmental conditions and potential constraints within the potential corridors.

What does this Report include?

This Report includes the following elements:

- **Chapter 2. Public Involvement** – Describes the community outreach that has been conducted, including stakeholder interviews, public meetings, and a number of other methods used to communicate with community members about the Project; and summarizes the key findings from these early outreach efforts.
- **Chapter 3. Transportation Analysis** – Describes existing and projected 2030 traffic mobility and safety conditions, and provides an assessment of the origins and destinations of travelers on the most congested portion of the highway.
- **Chapter 4. Corridor Alternatives** – Describes the broad range of corridor alternatives that are under consideration.
- **Chapter 5. Environmental Constraints Assessment** – Identifies the built and natural environmental resources present within the alternative corridors, and identifies the existing conditions and primary issues and constraints associated with those resource areas.
- **Chapter 6. Conclusions** – Summarizes the key findings from the different elements of this Report, and describes the next steps in the Study.

