

CHAPTER 1

Executive Summary

The I-405, SR 520 to SR 522 — Kirkland Nickel Project

commonly referred to as the Kirkland Nickel Project, is part of the overall I-405 Corridor Program. The Kirkland Nickel Project is the first of many projects from the program to be reviewed in an environmental document and the first planned for construction. For the reader's convenience, we will use the name "Kirkland Nickel Project" throughout this document.

Where is the Kirkland Nickel Project located?

The Kirkland Nickel Project is located along a 7.6-mile section of I-405 between SR 520 and SR 522 in the state of Washington. Beginning in Bellevue, the project passes north through Kirkland and a portion of unincorporated King County before ending in Bothell.

What is the Kirkland Nickel Project?

There are three basic construction elements to the Kirkland Nickel Project (Exhibit 1-1). They include:

- A new northbound general-purpose lane on I-405 from the NE 70th Street interchange to the NE 124th Street interchange;
- A new southbound general-purpose lane from just south of the SR 522 interchange to just north of the SR 520 interchange; and
- Reconfiguration of the interchange at NE 116th Street to improve traffic operations.

Other improvements will be made as part of the project, including changes at NE 85th Street and NE 116th Street; water quality treatment, detention, and conveyance system upgrades; architectural treatments that will enhance project appearance; and numerous measures to avoid or minimize effects to the environment. The project description is discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

Exhibit 1-1
Project Overview



The Kirkland Nickel Project is the first of three “nickel” projects being implemented by WSDOT to improve transportation conditions along I-405. Funding is being provided by the Washington State Legislature in the form of a 5-cents-per-gallon gas tax. The estimated cost to design and construct the Kirkland Nickel Project is \$164 million.

Why are we building this project?

The Kirkland Nickel Project is being built to improve personal and freight mobility and reduce foreseeable traffic congestion in a manner that is safe and reliable. It is one of three “nickel” projects that constitute the first step toward fulfillment of the I-405 Corridor Program. Overall, they are part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce congestion and improve mobility throughout the I-405 Corridor.

When will construction begin and how long will it take?

WSDOT will construct the project in two stages—the first will begin in 2005 and be completed in 2007; the second stage will begin in 2009 and be completed in 2011.

How will the project affect the built environment?

Based on the analysis conducted for this project, there will be no substantial effects to the built environment (elements of the built environment are analyzed in Chapter 5, Sections 5.1 through 5.7). The following discussion highlights findings of the analysis:

Traffic – Although future traffic volumes will increase, traffic congestion will be reduced and there will be fewer delays than if the project is not built.

Land Use Planning and Policies – No changes to current or future land use patterns are anticipated.

Community, Neighborhoods, and Businesses – There will be minor effects within the project area and most of these will be beneficial. Some 5.28 acres of vacant, residential, commercial, and public property will be converted to transportation-related use. Approximately 10.8 acres of undeveloped land will be acquired for wetlands mitigation and enhancement.

Environmental Justice – The project will not have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and/or low-income populations.

Parks, recreational, historic, cultural, and archaeological resources – The project will not affect any parks within the project area. Likewise, no historic, cultural, or archaeological resources will be affected.

Public Services and Utilities – The project will have positive benefits to public services by improving traffic flow. There will be no effect on utilities, which will be relocated prior to or during construction.

Visual Quality – Both roadway users and neighbors will experience minor changes in visual resources. The effect on freeway users will be low, and few neighbors will experience noticeable changes in visual quality.

How will the project affect the natural environment?

There will be no substantial effects to the natural environment (elements of the natural environment are analyzed in Chapter 5, Sections 5.8 through 5.14).

Noise – The Kirkland Nickel Project will create some temporary construction noise. After construction, noise walls will reduce noise levels to below WSDOT’s noise abatement criteria at locations meeting reasonability and feasibility criteria. No predicted noise levels will exceed 75 dBA.

Air Quality – The project will conform to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards and the Air Quality Maintenance Plans for ozone and carbon monoxide established for the Puget Sound region.

Water Resources – Using enhanced water quality treatment facilities for both new impervious surfaces and some currently untreated surfaces, the project will improve water quality in the project area. Temporary, minor effects on water quality will be caused by construction.

Wetlands – Approximately 1.6 acres in 14 wetlands will be filled. Some 7.2 acres of wetland mitigation will be provided on three sites to compensate for this loss.

Wildlife and Vegetation – Approximately 80 acres of upland vegetation will be removed. Because much of the affected vegetation is degraded and fragmented, the effects will be minor.

Fish, Aquatic Habitat, and Threatened and Endangered Fish Species – Most streams in the immediate project area are not

known to support anadromous¹ fish including threatened chinook salmon and bull trout; therefore, this project is not likely to affect them. Resident fish will be temporarily displaced in areas when in-water construction work occurs.

Generally, effects on fish habitat will be positive because of the enhanced water quality treatment of new pavement and the retrofitting of previously untreated pavement. Fish passage will be improved by the construction of a fish-friendly passage structure under I-405 at Forbes Creek.

Geology and Soils – Effects on geology and soils in the project area can be managed using standard construction techniques. Several design and construction elements have been incorporated into the project to address a potential landslide slope at the north end of the project.

Hazardous Materials and Wastes – There are 17 properties with recognized environmental conditions near the I-405 right of way. However, because quantities of hazardous materials are expected to be small and contaminants are localized, they are unlikely to affect the project.

Cumulative Effects – As a result of mitigation there will be a positive cumulative effect to wetlands. Loss of wetlands will be offset by compensatory mitigation resulting in more wetlands being created or enhanced than filled or permanently impacted.

The longer-term effects to fish, aquatic habitats, and surface waters will be generally positive because of the fish-friendly improvements at Forbes Creek to restore fish passage, and the enhanced water quality treatment for new pavements and the retrofitting of previously untreated pavements.

WSDOT has written this Environmental Assessment in a format that is different from many that you may have read in the past. We have tried to eliminate technical jargon and replace scientific and engineering terms with commonly used language. A glossary defining the technical terms used is included in Appendix A. We have also organized this document so that the affected environment, potential impacts, and proposed measures to avoid or minimize impacts are grouped together for individual topics in Chapter 5.

¹ Anadromous fish are fish such as salmon that return from saltwater to the rivers and streams where they were born in order to breed.