

SR 167 - 8th Street E Vicinity to 15th Street SW Vicinity Northbound HOT Lane Project

Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Technical Memorandum

What is the Project and why is it needed?

The SR 167 – 8th Street E Vicinity to 15th Street SW Vicinity Northbound HOT Lane Project will be referred to as the Project throughout the rest of this technical memorandum.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) plans to widen the State Route (SR) 167 roadway to construct a new northbound high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane from the vicinity of 8th Street E in Pacific (MP 10.2) in Pierce County, Washington to the vicinity of 15th Street SW in Auburn (MP 14.26), King County, Washington (Exhibit 1). The construction of the HOT lane will require widening the roadway to the outside of the existing pavement between 6th Avenue N in Algona and 5th Avenue SW in Pacific. The rest of the Project will be widened to the median. Ramp meters will be installed at the northbound on-ramps at the SR 167 interchanges with 8th Street E and Ellingson Road. All of the proposed widening work will occur within WSDOT right-of-way.

SR 167 is an important thoroughfare for cars, trucks, and transit in the Green River Valley. The additional capacity that the Project will provide to SR 167 will relieve congestion and improve safety for commuters traveling northbound.

What is the purpose of this technical memorandum?

This report was prepared as part of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) which requires all actions sponsored or those with potential federal funding, permits, or approvals from a federal agency to consider the environmental effects of the proposed action. The Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires a similar evaluation of the environmental effects of proposed actions for state and local projects. The Project is required to comply with both NEPA and SEPA, which includes a review of potential effects and possible mitigation measures.

What other studies were used as part of this evaluation?

This technical memorandum makes use of a prior Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Report developed for the SR 167 – 8th Street E Vic. to S 277th Street Vic. Southbound HOT Lane Project (WSDOT 2008a). The current Project is entirely within the study area evaluated by the WSDOT 2008 report and the proposed elements of the two projects are nearly identical.

Also, a prior Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Report was developed for the SR 167 - HOT Lanes Pilot Project (Perteet 2007). That report reviewed how people use SR 167 and the effects that the HOT Lanes Pilot Project may have on the corridor's

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communities. It found that the proposal does not result in high or disproportionate adverse effects on low-income or minority populations.

The findings of the WSDOT 2008 report and Perteet 2007 report are generally applicable to the current Project. The rest of this technical memorandum briefly describes the findings for the current Project.

How has the Project been designed to minimize potential impacts on social and economic elements, and environmental justice populations?

WSDOT has designed the Project in such a way that no right of way acquisitions will be needed. All construction is within existing WSDOT right of way. There are no direct wetland or stream impacts. There are stream buffer impacts, but these are minimal and the Project mitigates for them as discussed in the Ecosystems Technical Report (WSDOT 2009).

All emergency and health services will have access to the facility during construction. Lane closures will be needed, but traffic control plans will be developed in accordance with WSDOT policies to provide the general public with access to SR 167. After construction is complete, the Project will result in improved access through less congestion and more reliable travel times.

All populations, regardless of demographics will benefit from reduced congestion and more reliable travel times as a result of the Project.

What are the potential environmental justice effects and what mitigation is proposed?

The potential environmental justice effects include construction and noise effects. Construction will affect all populations equally. The proposed Project will not require any displacements or property acquisitions. It will not change community cohesion. Neither construction nor operation of the proposed Project will affect any businesses that provide unique services to minority and/or low-income populations, are owned by minorities, or employ large numbers of minorities.

Noise effects from the operation of the facility should not be significantly different from current operation. A noise wall built in the area during the previous SR 167 – 8th Street E Vic. to S 277th Street Vic Southbound HOT Lane Project will mitigate noise where widening will be done to the outside. The noise wall begins at the on-ramp from Ellingson Road and ends at 6th Avenue N. with a break for the 1st Avenue N. overpass. Since the remaining widening will be done to the inside, there is no unmitigated noise as part of the project. Detailed information on noise can be found in the “Traffic Noise Analysis Technical Report”.

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Will the proposed Project have any disproportionately adverse effects due to equity on environmental justice populations?

The only effect of the proposed Project on the nearby neighborhoods is noise. However, those effects will be mitigated with the noise wall. There are no other adverse effects within the study area that could be felt differently or to a greater degree by low-income or minority populations.

After examining effects on the users of the facility as well as feedback from outreach and the focus groups done for the SR 167 HOT lane Pilot Project, we concluded that there was no disproportionate adverse effect on minority or low-income users of the facility.

Since it is concluded that there are no disproportionately high adverse effects, no other mitigation other than the standard construction mitigation for dust and noise is planned.

In addition, WSDOT evaluated if the Project disproportionately affects local tribes or tribal lands in accordance to tribal treaty rights. The construction and operation of the Project is not expected to reduce the net population of fish within the study area. The Project is also not expected to change or alter access to tribal fishing grounds. WSDOT will continue to consult directly with the tribes throughout the environmental process. More information on the Project's impacts to fish species and habitat is in the Ecosystem Technical Report (WSDOT 2009).

Will the proposed Project have any effects within the study area on social and economic elements?

Since the only effect of the proposed Project on the nearby neighborhoods is noise, and those effects will be mitigated, there will be no adverse effects within the study area. The Project will also mitigate noise for many existing noise effects on sensitive receptors in the study area. Traffic modeling indicates that the proposed Project will improve travel times throughout the corridor, which will allow study area residents and businesses to reach their destinations more quickly and efficiently. This will reduce travel costs for businesses and allow residents to save time and access social services and businesses more easily.

What are the conclusions?

The Project has been designed to avoid or mitigate all potential effects of the Project on social and economic elements and environmental justice populations. As part of our effort to avoid or mitigate for effects, WSDOT plans to open two "Good to Go," customer centers in King County as soon as 2010, (as part of the SR 520 Variable Tolling Project). This would improve access to the facility for people who need to make cash transactions compared to only having a customer service center in Gig Harbor as we do today. As a result, the project will have no disproportionate adverse affects due to equity

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on environmental justice populations or any adverse affects to social and economic elements.

References:

Pertec Inc., **Social, Economic and Environmental Justice Technical Report**. SR167-HOT Lanes Pilot Project, Washington State Department of Transportation, 2007.

WSDOT, **Social, Economic and Environmental Justice Technical Report**. SR167- 8th Street E Vic. to S 277th Street Vic. Southbound HOT Lane, Washington State Department of Transportation, 2008.

WSDOT, **Ecosystem Technical Report**. SR 167 – 8th Street E Vicinity to 15th Street SW Vicinity Northbound HOT Lane, Washington State Department of Transportation, 2009.