

A road is a tribute to space.  
Every stretch of road has  
meaning in itself and  
invites us to stop.

-- Milan Kundera

# Journeys

2006 Regional Transportation Planning Highlights

Volume 4

February 2007

## 2006 Notable Projects in the Thurston Region

**133rd Avenue and Minnesota  
Street Sidewalks Design**  
(accomplished through the Rural  
Community Support Program  
sponsored by TRPC and Thurston  
County) *City of Rainier*

**21st Avenue/RW Johnson Street  
Reconstruction** (Black Lake  
Boulevard to the railroad tracks)  
*City of Olympia*

**Advanced Communication  
System – Fleetwide** (radio,  
vehicle tracking, automated  
announcements and real time  
departure information) *Intercity  
Transit*

**Evergreen Parkway Transition**  
(improves vehicular, bicycle and  
pedestrian safety) *The Evergreen  
State College*

**Bald Hill Road Safety  
Improvements** (vicinity of Owl Hill  
Pit) *Thurston County*

**Tumwater Boulevard Capacity  
and Safety Improvements**  
- underway (I-5 to Capital  
Boulevard) *City of Tumwater*

**College Street Improvements**  
(Martin Way to 37th Avenue SE)  
*City of Lacey*

**TRPC**

Thurston Regional Planning Council

## TRPC Awards \$4.6 Million for Transportation Projects

On November 3, 2006, Thurston Regional Planning Council awarded \$4.6 million to transportation projects emphasizing safety, preservation and system efficiency. These regional [Surface Transportation Program](#) (STP) grants are provided through the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The projects include new street connections and trails, improvements to roadways, sidewalks and trails, and replacement vanpool vans.

## Rural and Tribal Transportation Program Success

In 2006, thanks to regional policymaker support, the Rural & Tribal Transportation Program (R/T) supplied over 46,000 passenger trips, 300,000 miles and 8,900 hours of service. This service, funded through state and federal grant funds, improves mobility for the region's most vulnerable residents. It consists of variable fixed route and on-demand service, focusing on the Nisqually Indian Tribe, the Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation and the rural communities of Rochester, Tenino, Bucoda, Rainier, and Yelm. Strong local partnerships, with TOGETHER!, Intercity Transit and members of the Thurston County Human Services Transportation Forum keep this important program operational. In 2006 the partners also created the draft Regional Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Plan and Prioritized Project List.



## New Commute Trip Reduction Law Targets Congestion

The Washington State Legislature unanimously adopted the Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act in 2006. Based on input from TRPC and other statewide partners, the new law focuses on the most congested areas of the state and the urban areas of those affected counties, and allows increased flexibility for local implementation. Since passage, TRPC helped to translate the legislation into rules, policy and procedures. TRPC, in its role as lead agency, will work with local jurisdictions to create local and regional plans, and continue to encourage integration of CTR into other planning efforts.

# Bridging the Gap

On February 19, 2007, local, regional and federal partners will gather to celebrate the grand opening of the Chehalis Western Trail I-5 Pedestrian Bridge. The first of three roadway crossings to be completed, this project [bridges the gap](#) between the northern and southern portions of this premier trail.

## 2007 Legislative Issues in Transportation

TRPC's [Legislative Issues](#) include implementing the Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act, preserving federal and state funding, improving services for people in rural communities and with special needs, enhancing local funding options, and supporting projects from Lacey to Grand Mound.

## Hensley Retires from TPB

Citizen representative Frank Hensley retired after 10 years service on the Transportation Policy Board. At the time of his appointment, policymakers noted Frank's "background, knowledge of transportation issues and excellent people, analytical and communication skills." He helped guide the region through a host of transportation studies. His public service continues with the State's Medical Quality Assurance Commission.

## TPB Adopts Updated By-Laws

The Transportation Policy Board (TPB) began updating its by-laws in 2006, in anticipation of recruiting additional citizen and business representatives. A workgroup of TRPC and TPB members considered the responsibilities of both the advisory board and its members, drafting a document in sync with TRPC operating rules. TPB adopted the revised by-laws in January 2007, and began scouting for 3 additional community representatives.

## From the Executive Director...

### Federal transportation funding is at a "Tipping Point."

Over the past several years, TRPC worked very hard to stay afoot of the political and fiscal twists and turns of the federal transportation bill reauthorization. It was one of the most difficult pieces of legislation congress and the administration had to accomplish in many years. With the reauthorization over two years late and then suffering the hit of over 6,000 earmarks and continued funding reductions through budget actions, the final bill has numerous technical and fiscal challenges. Congress is now realizing that many of the serious transportation issues they thought they had addressed in legislation are going unmet and they are now left with few resources to address this nation's long list of future transportation needs.

With the successful completion of the interstate system, congress is beginning to discuss the need to develop a new vision of the nation's transportation system and define what the new federal role will be. This creates an opportunity for leadership in all levels of government to rethink the role, structure, and authority of the federal government in state and metro transportation planning and projects.

At the regional level, because of national policy shifts, the current regional transportation processes we have successfully used for many years may also need to change. It will be critical for TRPC to understand its transforming role and become even more assertive in advancing our region's transportation issues nationally and at the state level.

Over the next few years, I am sure we will see a new transportation vision developed at the federal level, which in turn will initiate regional changes in our transportation planning process. Together with the efforts of all our regional partners, TRPC will strategically place itself to be even more successful in addressing our regional and local transportation issues.

Changing a well-established and working process is never an easy thing, but as Will Rogers said, **"Even if you're on the right track, you'll get run over if you're standing still."**



Lon D. Wyrick, Executive Director

# Thurston Region Commuter Study

During 2006, the Council prepared a draft study of commute patterns into and out of Thurston County. The study forecasts that commuting will double in the next 20 years to nearly 30,000 commuters coming into the Thurston Region (inbound) and 60,000 leaving the Thurston Region (outbound) each day. Outbound commuters will increasingly travel to Pierce and King Counties, while inbound commuters will travel from all directions into Thurston County. What does this mean for Thurston County? Outbound commuters' income represents \$1 billion of the region's \$8 billion economy. These residents are having a profound impact on housing and household incomes in Thurston County. The study will be available online, early in 2007.

## Passenger Rail Workgroup Completes Effort

In 2006, a workgroup of TRPC and TPB policy makers completed their task - appointed by Chair Jones to delve into the region's passenger [rail issues](#). The workgroup focused on light rail (serving the region's urban hubs), commuter rail (connecting Thurston commuters to jobs in central Puget Sound), and intercity rail (for business and leisure travel, especially between Seattle and Portland). They found that more focused planning and corridor identification should begin now, and recommended that the region conduct a high capacity transportation (HCT) study. The HCT study would evaluate road, rail, ferry, bus transit and park-and-ride opportunities, resulting in a regional investment vision. TRPC is pursuing funding for this major investment study.

## Corridor Studies

2006 saw the completion of the [Capitol Way](#) and [Boulevard Road](#) corridor studies, as well as the kick off and completion of the [Harrison Avenue/Mud Bay](#) study. Under contract with the City of Olympia, TRPC staff undertook the public visioning process to develop alternative concepts for improving safety and multi-modal mobility in these corridors. TRPC's role as facilitator allowed a variety of stakeholder ideas to come together to create workable preliminary designs for these corridors.

## Interchange Studies Underway

Three interchange studies are underway in the Thurston Region. Taken as a whole, these studies reflect the changing nature of urban Thurston County. The Tumwater Boulevard, Martin Way/Carpenter Road, and West Olympia studies will look at access to I-5 and US 101, as well as complementary and alternative local street improvements. A fourth study, being conducted by Lewis County, considers a new interchange on I-5 between Grand Mound Exit 88 and Harrison Avenue/Centralia Exit 82. The interchange, serving the growing industrial and residential needs of north Lewis County, could be located in either north Lewis or south Thurston counties.

## Contract Planning Continues

In addition to corridor and interchange studies, TRPC supplied contract services for the Nisqually Tribal Transportation Plan, the Tenino Parks Plan, the Olympia Street Standard Review, the East Olympia Downtown Development Plan and street improvements plan for the east downtown area, and an analysis of street maintenance ordinances for the City of Yelm. In 2007, Yelm's transportation plan and comprehensive plan chapter will be updated.

## Population and Employment Forecast

TRPC adopted updates to the [region's population and employment forecast](#), part of an interactive cycle of data collection, analysis, and forecasting that ripples through regional and local land use and transportation plans and models. This work forms the basis for a 2030 update to the regional transportation model.

## Transportation Modeling Improvements

In 2006, TRPC updated the [regional transportation model](#) to reflect actual 2005 traffic counts. The 2030 travel demand forecast development is also underway, based on TRPC's adopted population and employment forecast. The Region uses the model for planning, such as the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update, air quality conformity analysis, regional rail planning and the commuter study. In addition to the 2005 base year and 2030 forecast, the Council maintains a six-year forecast model to support local jurisdictions' short term planning. The regional transportation model also aids TRPC members and area businesses in concurrency reporting, interchange and corridor analysis, commute trip reduction (CTR) benefit analysis, and sub-area scenario study.

## 2006 Notable Projects in the Thurston Region

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**Boulevard Road Corridor Study**  
(conceptual corridor design improving safety and mobility) *City of Olympia*

**Dash Circulator Service**  
(provides frequent bus service between the State Capitol Campus, downtown Olympia and the Farmers Market) *Intercity Transit*

**Old Highway 99 & 93rd Avenue SE Intersection Realignment**  
*Thurston County*

**Capitol Way Corridor Study**  
(examines multi-modal transportation options and safety improvements) *City of Olympia*

**Littlerock Road Safety Improvements – underway**  
(Troster Road to 73rd Avenue) *City of Tumwater*

**Driftwood Rd NW-Overhulse Rd W Improvement Project**  
(realignment with new transit stops and sidewalks) *The Evergreen State College*

**Phase 3 Transit Service Restoration** (with a 13% increase in bus service hours, this final phase returns service to pre-2000 levels) *Intercity Transit*

**Martin Way East Resurfacing**  
(River Ridge Drive to Duterrow Road) *Thurston County*

**Lacey Woodland Trail Construction** (Chehalis Western Trail to Union Mills Road) *City of Lacey*

**TRPC**

Thurston Regional Planning Council

## Annual RTP Updates

TRPC's new update process for the [Regional Transportation Plan](#) (RTP) provides for annual amendments. This approach increases the Council's agility and responsiveness to the changing needs of the community. The process extends the forecast horizon and related analysis by a year, keeping the RTP in compliance with federal and state requirements.

In the last two annual amendments, TRPC added 4 new projects, updated 6 projects, added a definition of strategy corridors, expanded the work program priorities and added a new strategy corridor. The Council recently approved the third annual draft docket for public review. The proposed 2007 amendment includes 10 new projects, a new assessment area, and changes to an existing project and strategy corridor.

## PSRC Vision 2020 + 20 Comments

[Puget Sound Regional Council](#) (PSRC) is updating their regional long range plan, strategizing growth management and investments. TRPC, an associate member of PSRC, weighed in on the update – encouraging PSRC to explore their [vision and reality](#), as policy makers have done here.

## Washington Transportation Plan

In the fall of 2006, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) released the [Washington Transportation Plan](#). TRPC, with the state's other regional transportation planning organizations (RTPO's) worked with WSDOT to shape this \$29 billion, 20 year outlook.

**More Services** TRPC coordinates transportation program activities with our federal, state, and greater Puget Sound partners, harmonizing joint policy, legislation and program efforts. We also provide support and contract services for members and the public – concurrency reporting, internet and database tools development and maintenance, mapping, master planning, strategic planning, grants management, and traffic impact analysis support.

### Anticipated for 2007...

- Recruiting **additional community representatives** for TPB
- Developing **Commute Trip Reduction Plans** - regional, local, and growth & transportation efficiency center
- Facilitating Chehalis Western Trail **"Bridging the Gap"** projects for Martin Way and Pacific Avenue
- Researching regional **performance measures**
- Conducting the **Rainier Road Feasibility Study**
- Preparing **Tribal Transportation Plans**
- Completing the **Regional Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Plan**
- Conducting the **West Olympia Traffic Study**
- Completing the **Regional Trails Plan**
- Launching a **Regional High Capacity Transportation Planning effort**

# About TRPC

The Thurston Regional Planning Council – TRPC – is an intergovernmental board formed in 1967 to provide visionary leadership on regional plans, policies and issues. TRPC develops regional plans and policies for transportation, growth management, environmental quality, and other topics determined by the Council. TRPC provides data and analysis to support local and regional decision making, convenes local, state, tribal and federal policy makers to build community consensus on regional issues, and provides planning, historic preservation and technical services on a contractual basis.

## TRPC's Role in Transportation Planning

- As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and state designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO), the Regional Council ensures a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated approach to local, regional and state transportation planning.
- The Transportation Policy Board (TPB) advises the Regional Council on issues ranging from the development of a Regional Transportation Plan to allocating federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding. In addition to jurisdictions represented on the Regional Council, TPB has representation from the state legislature, state agencies, business, and citizens.
- TRPC's standing transportation programs – the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan (RTIP), Federal Functional Classification maintenance, Freight & Goods Transportation System (FGTS) updates, regional air quality conformance, regional Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding allocations, Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Architecture, and the Regional Transportation Plan – ensure regional compliance with state and federal requirements, enabling continued transportation funding from these sources.
- The regional transportation model and the regional population and employment (land use) forecast predict future conditions, supplying a variety of local and state data needs.
- Regional planning and programs address special needs transportation, commute trip reduction/ transportation demand management, the interdependence of transportation and land use, regional trails, performance measures, rail, transportation technology, and freight mobility.
- Contract transportation services aid local transportation planning, support regional coordination of services and information, and provide data for traffic impact analysis.

## Getting Involved

The best way to track transportation issues at TRPC is to subscribe to the Transportation Policy Board's agenda packets. This will keep you abreast of the issues being tackled at the regional level. Public attendance and comment are always welcome at TPB meetings.

The TPB's agenda packet is available by regular post, or a monthly email notification directs subscribers to the material on the TRPC website. Register for either service by calling TRPC at (360) 956-7575.

Additional information on TRPC's transportation plans and programs is available on our website – [www.trpc.org](http://www.trpc.org) – by following the program links for transportation.



# TRPC Staff

February 2007

## Members:

City of Lacey  
City of Olympia  
City of Rainier  
City of Tenino  
City of Tumwater  
City of Yelm  
Town of Bucoda  
Thurston County  
Intercity Transit  
LOTT Alliance  
Thurston County PUD No. 1  
Griffin School District  
North Thurston Public Schools  
Olympia School District  
Confederated Tribes of the  
Chehalis Reservation  
Nisqually Indian Tribe

## Associate Members:

Economic Development Council  
of Thurston County  
Puget Sound Regional Council  
Thurston Conservation District  
Timberland Regional Library

## Charter Member Emeritus:

The Evergreen State College

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