

“The Interstate System will never be finished because America will never be finished.”  
-Francis C. Turner

# Journeys

2011 Regional Transportation Planning Highlights

Volume 9

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## 2011 Notable Projects in the Thurston Region

**New Annual Bus Ridership Record** (4.5 million boardings in 2011, a 4.5% increase over 2010 and 82% increase since 2002) *Intercity Transit*

**Yelm Highway Improvements** (Henderson Blvd. to Rich Rd. Construction nearly complete of four lane configuration with roundabouts, noise walls and other improvements.) *Thurston County and City of Olympia*

**I-5 - Exit 111 - Lacey Vicinity Noise Barrier** (I-5 from the vicinity of 14th Ave./Thompson Pl. and Queets Dr. Noise barriers of varying heights were built along I-5 to reduce the noise level in the surrounding neighborhood) *WSDOT*

**Harrison Avenue** (Yauger Way to Woodbury Crossing. Widening and multimodal street improvements.) *City of Olympia*

**Yelm to Tenino Trail Trailhead** (Trail extended to Tenino Depot Museum and official trailhead installed.) *Thurston County and Tenino*

**Little Rock Road Phase 2** (Odegard Road to Trospen Road. Roadway reconstruction with bicycle paths, sidewalks and street lights.) *City of Tumwater*

**Yelm Avenue Sidewalks** (Railroad Ave to Solberg St. Constructed new sidewalks with ADA improvements.) *City of Yelm*

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## TRPC Awards Grants

TRPC awarded regional [Surface Transportation Program \(STP\)](#) and [Enhancements](#) grants totaling more than \$12 million funding the following projects:



- Boys & Girls Club – Increasing Safety & Expanding Access Project
- Bucoda – 3rd & Nenant Street Intersection Repair & ADA Ramps
- Intercity Transit – Bus Stop Enhancements for Safety & Accessibility
- Intercity Transit – Olympia Transit Center Expansion
- Lacey – Hogum Bay Road & Willamette Drive Improvements
- Olympia – Boulevard Road & 22nd Avenue Roundabout
- Olympia – Olympia Woodland Trail Phase IV Feasibility Analysis
- Olympia Safe Streets – Bicycle Commuter Guide & County Bike Map Update/Reprint
- Port of Olympia – New Market Pedestrian Enhancements
- Rainier – Centre Street Resurfacing Project
- Tenino – Tenino Street Project
- Thurston County – Bald Hills Road Upgrade: Smith Prairie Road to Owl Pit
- Thurston County – Chehalis Western Trail Phase 3: Pacific Avenue
- Thurston County – Rich Road Upgrade: Deschutes River to 87th Avenue
- Thurston County – Rich Road Upgrade Phase 2: 87th Avenue to Normandy Street
- Tumwater – Capitol Boulevard “M” Street to Capitol Boulevard Bridge
- Woodland Trails Greenway Association – Plant 1,000 Trees along Shared Use Trails
- Woodland Trail Greenway Association – Print Trail Maps for Kiosks & Pamphlets
- WSDOT – US 101/SR 8 Technical Traffic Operations Analysis
- Yelm – Yelm Avenue Sidewalk Improvements

### Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds

The Surface Transportation Program (STP) provides federal funding for a wide array of transportation needs. TRPC, in its role as Metropolitan Planning Organization, programs a regional allocation of those funds onto priority transportation projects. TRPC prioritizes multi-modal safety, preservation and efficiency when selecting projects to fund.

These grants leverage local, state and other federal funding in completing this extensive list of projects.

### Enhancements Funded

Transportation Enhancements is a set-aside within the federal Surface Transportation Program, and TRPC receives a regional allocation to distribute. These grants are intended to strengthen the cultural, aesthetic and environmental aspects of the intermodal transportation system.

**Transit Service Improvement**  
(Added 3.1% increase in local service hours) *Intercity Transit*

**Howanut Road Realignment**  
(Willamette Creek bridge to Black River bridge. Design phase to improve 1.1 miles of road on the Chehalis Reservation) *Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation*

**School Speed Limit Zone Flashing Beacons** (Used two Washington Traffic Safety Commission grants for school speed limit zone flashing beacons on Harrison Ave. for Garfield Elementary School and on Morse-Merryman Rd. for Margaret McKenney Elementary School.) *Olympia School District and City of Olympia*

**I-5 - Grand Mound to Maytown Stage Two - Replace Interchange** (Grand Mound Interchange and US 12, rebuilds interchange; replaces bridges, widens ramps and improves ramp intersections resulting in a typical "diamond" interchange configuration- Under Construction completion scheduled summer 2012) *WSDOT*

**Reservation Rd./SR-510/Yelm Hwy Joint Safety Study** (Leading to WSDOT project for improvements to both intersections) *Nisqually Indian Tribe and Thurston County*

**Vail Road Improvements** (Bald Hills Rd. to 38th Ave. SE. Construction almost complete on shoulder widening with horizontal and vertical alignment improvements.) *Thurston County*

**Henderson Boulevard at Carlyon Avenue** (Constructed pedestrian crossing island to address safety concerns for students traveling to and from Washington Middle School, Pioneer Elementary School, and Olympia High School.) *City of Olympia*

**Vanpooling Grows** (Added 32 new commuter vanpool groups for a total of 202 vanpools.) *Intercity Transit*

## Focus on I-5

Thurston and Pierce County partners are shining the spotlight on I-5 as the bottleneck between Lacey and Lakewood becomes even more congested. A plethora of agencies are working together on short- and long-term improvements to make this stretch of highway more efficient.

### Corridor & Interchange Analysis

TRPC's [I-5 Origin and Destination study](#) documented the influence on I-5 congestion of peak period commuter traffic crossing the Nisqually River and other strategic locations. Coupled with transportation analysis from the [South Sound Military and Communities Partnership](#) (SSMCP), these studies made the case for federal and state aid to address the Lacey-to-Lakewood chokepoints. TRPC received a federal Transportation, Community and System Preservation (TCSP) grant to develop an I-5 Congestion Relief Action Plan with our WSDOT partners and in conjunction with Pierce Transit.

The Transportation Policy Board (TPB) considered high capacity transportation alternatives in a five part series of interviews with road, rail and bus agency executives. TRPC and TPB policy makers met with Pierce County representatives to the Sound Transit board to explore potential service connections to the Thurston Region. As a result, Intercity Transit's Mike Harbour, TRPC's Lon Wyrick and Sound Transit's Ric Ilgenfritz co-authored a white paper on issues surrounding rail and bus connections.

Federal requirements for interchange analysis are intensive, comprehensive and take a long time to complete. It is unusual for

### Mah's Service Recognized



At their December 2011 meeting, TPB recognized outgoing Olympia Mayor Doug Mah for his decade of service to TPB, including several years as chair. Mayor Mah was instrumental in initiating the Vision Reality Task Force, and the subsequent Urban Corridors Task Force, changing how the community approaches development along its high traffic thoroughfares.

## From the Executive Director...

Revenues are down. Budgets are tight. Recognizing this strained economic environment we have all been dealing with for the past three years, the TRPC and TPB have remained committed to taking aggressive regional actions. Yes, all our members have become more efficient in their agencies' budgets and operations, but they have also joined together, as Council and Policy Board members, to establish aggressive regional goals and work programs which benefit our region's many transportation needs.

Throughout last year, TRPC and TPB worked very hard to position our region to take advantage of new program and funding opportunities. This work has moved many of the region's transportation regional priorities forward. This hard work is paying off as the "Focus on I-5" article (above) shows. TRPC's consistent leadership and support for improving I-5 in the South Sound helped create a coalition which in attracting federal and state funding for the needed projects.

Through the aggressive actions of our regional leaders, these projects are having positive impacts on our region's transportation challenges and are establishing the necessary planning base for continued improvements in the region's transportation network.

-- Lon D. Wyrick, Executive Director

three such studies to be closely spaced along a corridor, as they are between Lacey and Lakewood, reflecting the challenging circumstances on I-5 in this area. The three analyses span seven interchanges, three in Thurston County: I-5/US 101, I-5/Martin Way and I-5/Martin Road. Local, state and federal agency staffs are working collaboratively to stitch together these studies into a cohesive part of the corridor analysis.

### Physical Improvements

Well in excess of \$20 million in leveraged investments (including federal and state funds) are being used for physical improvements to increase I-5 efficiency between Lacey and Lakewood. Joint Base Lewis McChord (JBLM) opened a new south gate which made a marked improvement on I-5. Soon WSDOT will turn on ramp meters for I-5 interchanges in north Thurston County to better regulate the flow of traffic. WSDOT recently received a TIGER III grant to make a host of changes along I-5 in Thurston and Pierce counties. The Department of Defense (DOD) provided grant funds to the City of Lakewood to improve access to the Madigan medical facility, with activities concentrated around Berkeley Street. Intercity Transit and Pierce Transit are taking advantage of a State Legislature set aside to purchase vanpool vehicles specifically to serve JBLM.

### Partnerships

Federal, state, regional and local agencies are teaming to tackle I-5's Nisqually bottleneck. The list of partners is extensive and brings together a wide array of agencies and interests unused to working together. It's an acronym soup of teamwork.

## Commute Trip Reduction Programs Expand

2011 was a busy year for promoting [commute trip reduction \(CTR\)](#) in Thurston County, and 2012 will continue that trend. The program expanded in several key areas, leveraging direct grants from five different programs, and building on other resources like sustainable development funding.

### State Agencies in Thurston County

To enhance the State leadership role in CTR, the State Legislature made all state agency locations in Thurston County's urban growth areas (UGAs) affected worksites. In 2011, this added 130 new worksites, doubling the size of the base CTR program and adding many small worksites. With the state government reorganization, consolidation and relocation during 2011, it was a challenging year to identify all the affected worksites, then train their coordinators, survey employees and provide information to workers, requiring substantial one-on-one technical support. But it was a great time to talk to workers about commute choices as their worksite locations changed.

### CTR Program Efficiencies

As the lead agency for CTR, TRPC replaced the full day ETC orientation training with a new half day introductory session and follow up skill building topics at the regular ETC networking sessions. TRPC also consolidated communications and information sharing with the ETCs into a monthly newsletter, which includes articles by partners WSDOT and Intercity Transit.

### Inter-regional Collaboration Essential

TRPC's [I-5 Origin and Destination study](#) highlights a need for closer coordination between CTR programs in Thurston and Pierce counties. The two regions exchange many thousands of workers everyday – commuters who create and endure significant congestion. Cost-effective CTR programs hold the promise of increasing efficiency along I-5 without adding new lanes, managing both the supply and demand sides of this transportation equation.

### Commute Smart Awards 2011



City of Tumwater \* Employer Champion, Affected Worksite



Annette Gavette, Department of Licensing \* ETC Champion, Affected Worksite



70th Avenue Path (Littlerock Rd. to Kirsop Rd. New non-motorized path.)  
*City of Tumwater*

Vanpool Fleet Updated (46 vans replaced)  
*Intercity Transit*

I-5/Vicinity of Joint Base Lewis McChord - Install Ramp Meters (Install three ramp meters in the northbound direction of I-5; one each, at Marvin Rd., Nisqually, and Mounts Rd. interchanges. The project also adds three cameras; one each, at Marvin Rd., Mounts Rd., and the weigh station.)  
*WSDOT*

Boulevard Road at 22nd Avenue (Received two grants (STP and TIB) for the construction of a roundabout. Construction scheduled for 2014.)  
*City of Olympia*

Rich Road Improvements (Deschutes River to 87th Ave SE. Design completed, construction underway in 2012 including shoulder widening, curve straightening and replacement of a culvert with a bridge at Spurgeon Creek.)  
*Thurston County*

Olympia Express Bus Service Maintained (When Pierce Transit withdrew service, Intercity Transit added 5 new trips and 2 back-up trips to accommodate 950 boardings each weekday.)  
*Intercity Transit*

Nisqually Reservation New Frontage Road (Design underway, construction beginning mid-2012 for a facility connecting government and retail services, a new housing complex and four existing dead-end cul-de-sacs.)  
*Nisqually Indian Tribe*

Tumwater Valley Trail, Phase 1 (Tumwater Municipal Golf Course to "T" St. Preliminary Design)  
*City of Tumwater*

Garfield Elementary School Safe Routes to School Grant (For education/encouragement and enforcement programs.)  
*City of Olympia, Intercity Transit, TRPC and the Olympia School District*

Delphi Road Improvements (US 101 to McLane Creek. Design underway for shoulder widening, curve alignment, and roadside safety features.)  
*Thurston County*



### CTR Promotions through Partnerships

Successful incentive programs like *Rideshare Online*, *Wheel Options* and the *Bicycle Commuter Contest* continued and expanded in 2011. During national *Telework Week*, TRPC launched a *Thurston Here to There* telework promotion, including a challenge from Lon Wyrick to agency directors and policy makers to integrate telework into their workplaces – resulting in a pilot telework program at WSDOT and expansion of Thurston County’s telework program.

### A South County Focus

A federal grant, targeting small communities, is boosting CTR activities in Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, Tumwater and Yelm. We’re targeting small businesses and residents with surveys and outreach efforts. Creative options are being explored, like establishing rural telework support sites and using existing parking lots for park-and-ride. The Capital Boulevard corridor in Tumwater is one of the CTR emphasis areas in this program, leveraging other grants activities such as the old brewery re-visioning work and the federal sustainable communities challenge looking at economic development opportunities in the area.

### ThurstonHereToThere.org



This new website will help people who live in and around Thurston County try alternative ways to travel in our community – like biking, walking, riding the bus and teleworking. Plus it provides handy tools like trip calculators and maps. Explore transportation as it relates to persons with disabilities, recreation, health benefits and much more.



### Schools Program Continues Expansion

Four new schools are adopting the [Walk-and-Roll program](#). We’ve created walk route maps for all Tumwater and Yelm schools, and completed a countywide sidewalk inventory. Students and parents receive a monthly flyer. Policy makers and the public are considering how to sustain public education as our community grows. Extensive collaboration makes it all possible.

## Legislative Focus

During the 2012 short session of the State Legislature, TRPC is pursuing [two key legislative issues](#): 1) funding to develop an I-5/US 101 Corridor Action Plan coordinating efforts between Lakewood and Tumwater, and 2) clarifying the Transportation Benefit District legislation to streamline the process and encourage a fuller range of regional partnership. Both issues reflect TRPC’s drive to leverage existing funding and partnerships to the fullest extent.

The state’s Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) have collaborated to bring the Legislature an [illustrative list of unfunded project needs](#). Project information is provided through an easy-to-use web-based program.

# 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, climate change, 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.

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



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January 2012

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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 Clean Water Alliance  
Thurston PUD  
North Thurston Public Schools  
Olympia School District  
Confederated Tribes of the  
Chehalis Reservation  
Nisqually Indian Tribe

## Associate Members:

TCOMM9-1-1  
Lacey Fire District #3  
Puget Sound Regional Council  
The Evergreen State College  
Thurston Economic  
Development Council  
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