

Chapter 3. Policies, Plans and Recently Completed Projects

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER 3. POLICIES, PLANS AND RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS</u>	I
<u>CHAPTER 3. POLICIES, PLANS AND RECENTLY COMPLETED PROJECTS</u>	1
<u>STATE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL POLICIES</u>	1
<u>WASHINGTON STATE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)</u>	1
<u>VISION 2020</u>	2
<u>DESTINATION 2030</u>	3
<u>SEATTLE’S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: TOWARD A SUSTAINABLE SEATTLE</u>	3
<u>TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIC PLAN (TSP)</u>	4
<u>UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY URBAN CENTER PLAN (1997-1998)</u>	5
<u>PAST TRANSPORTATION PLANS</u>	6
<u>UNIVERSITY DISTRICT TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM (1985-1988)</u>	6
<u>MONTLAKE/PACIFIC CIRCULATION STUDY (1992)</u>	7
<u>RECENTLY COMPLETED, CURRENT AND NEAR-FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS</u>	8
<u>NE 50TH STREET RECONSTRUCTION</u>	8
<u>11TH AND 12TH AVENUES NE RESURFACING</u>	9
<u>FLEX CAR</u>	9
<u>U-DISTRICT "ACCESS PACKAGE" FOR SMALL BUSINESSES</u>	9
<u>UNIVERSITY AREA SIGNAL CONTROLLER UPGRADES AND COORDINATION</u>	9
<u>SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENTS AT THE INTERSECTION OF MONTLAKE AND PACIFIC STREET</u>	10
<u>"THE AVE" PROJECT</u>	10
<u>27TH AVENUE NE CONNECTION TO BURKE-GILMAN TRAIL</u>	10
<u>BROOKLYN AREA RESIDENTIAL PARKING ZONE</u>	10
<u>BLAKELEY AREA RESIDENTIAL PARKING ZONE</u>	11
<u>REVISIONS TO THE CITY’S TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM REGULATIONS</u>	11
<u>MONTLAKE/SR-520 BIKE STATION</u>	11

Chapter 3. Policies, Plans and Recently Completed Projects

This chapter reviews plans and policies that could impact the study area or limit the potential range of actions. The plans reviewed fall into three categories:

- Statewide, regional and local policies;
- Past transportation plans in the University area; and
- Recently completed, current and near-future improvements.

This chapter also lists recently completed transportation improvements, and those programmed by the City to be completed in the near future.

STATE, REGIONAL, AND LOCAL POLICIES

The policy direction embodied in state, regional and local plans encourages concentration of the central Puget Sound area's future growth into centers connected by multi-modal transportation systems. A major emphasis in these policies is to make investments in a transportation system that serves all travel modes, actively encouraging the use of alternatives to the automobile. Another policy theme is a focus on managing demand and managing the transportation system to maximize the efficiency of the system. This includes using a variety of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Transportation System Management (TSM) strategies, as well as completing critical links in the system.

Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA)

Public policy to protect the environment and quality of life in the State of Washington has evolved over the last 30 years in response to increased growth and on-going development. Passage of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the Shoreline Management Act constituted the first major steps in 1971. In 1990, the Washington Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA) to mandate local comprehensive planning in heavily populated and high growth areas of the state.

The GMA establishes broad goals, such as managing urban growth, protecting agricultural lands, reducing sprawl, and encouraging multi-modal transportation systems. The overall goals of the GMA

encourage affected jurisdictions, including Seattle, to keep pace with land development by making public road and transit improvements to help meet the expected transportation demand. The GMA (subsequently amended between 1991 and 1998) requires local governments to develop and adopt growth management policies, plans, and regulations. The Act mandates consistency between adjacent jurisdictions' plans. As a result, countywide planning policies have been developed in each county to establish a general framework for planning, and to assist in making the plans consistent with one another.

The Growth Management Act requires that facility improvements or transportation management strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are in place at the time of (i.e. “concurrent with”) development, or that a financial commitment is in place to complete the improvements or strategies within six years. To comply with the GMA, cities and counties have adopted transportation concurrency policies as part of their comprehensive plans. The policies are intended to ensure that the transportation element of the comprehensive plan is consistent with the land use element as required by the GMA.

Within the transportation concurrency policies, cities and counties have adopted level of service standards (LOS) for transportation facilities, which may include intersections, broad transportation corridors, or both. If a proposed development causes the LOS standard to be exceeded, the jurisdiction may require the developer to construct an improvement or implement a transportation strategy to bring traffic levels back within the adopted performance standard. One LOS measure, called screenline analysis, groups together key arterials within a particular transportation network, so as to measure the operating conditions of a transportation corridor. Another LOS measure tracks intersection operations in terms of volume relative to capacity.

Vision 2020

In 1990, the Puget Sound Council of Governments (the predecessor agency to the Puget Sound Regional Council) adopted Vision 2020 as the growth management and transportation strategy for King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties. It combines a public commitment to growth management with identification of the transportation investments and programs and economic strategy necessary to support that vision.

Framework Policy (RT-8) describes a transportation system that emphasizes accessibility, includes a variety of mobility options, and enables the efficient movement of people, goods, and freight, and information. Future growth will be located within defined urban

growth areas, creating compact urban communities and centers of activity. Locally identified urban centers will be the focal points of activities within urban areas and will serve as hubs for a regional public transportation network. Urban centers are intended to be pedestrian-oriented communities with direct access to regional high-capacity transit.

The City of Seattle has five designated urban centers: the University District, First Hill/Capitol Hill, Seattle Center, Northgate, and Downtown Seattle. The boundaries of the University District, as one of the designated urban centers, extend from I-5 to Montlake Boulevard, including University Village and 36th Avenue NE, and from the U.W. medical center north to the vicinity of NE 50th and NE 55th Streets.

Destination 2030

Destination 2030 updates the 1995 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the transportation element of Vision 2020. The plan emphasizes an integrated multi-modal transportation system and describes the regionally significant modal components of that system. It also serves as a focus for required state and regional transportation system performance monitoring, particularly for the federally mandated congestion management system (CMS).

Destination 2030 supports a balanced multi-modal transportation system that provides options to users, but the plan recognizes that capacity enhancements are needed to improve mobility on the region's roadways. Under Destination 2030, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are expected to increase by 45%, and population is expected to increase by 50% over the next 30 years. To address this growth, the plan calls for an aggressive program of transportation investments. If those investments are made, the projected growth can be accommodated with relatively minor impacts---a two percent increase in congestion (PM peak) in 2030.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan: Toward a Sustainable Seattle

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1994, is the City's 20-year vision of how Seattle will grow in ways that sustain its citizen's values. The Comprehensive Plan makes basic policy choices and provides a flexible framework for adapting to actual conditions over time. It meets the requirements of the Growth Management Act and includes a transportation element with the following goals:

- **Environmental stewardship.** Improve environmental quality by reducing air, water and noise pollution and promote an energy-efficient transportation system.

- **Changing and managing travel demand and travel behavior.** Provide a range of viable transportation alternatives and reduce use of private cars.
- **Land use and transportation.** Ensure that land use and transportation decisions, strategies and investments are coordinated, complementary, and support the urban village strategy.
- **Use of streets.** Make the best use of the existing street capacity and support a shift towards transit, carpools and vanpools, bicycling and walking.
- **Level of service.** Use level of service standards as a gauge to judge the performance of the arterial and transit system.
- **Parking.** Provide enough parking to sustain the economic viability of commercial areas while discouraging commuting by single occupant vehicles.
- **Pedestrians and bicycles.** Increase walking and bicycling by creating safe and convenient environments.

This study used the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan as its foundation for creating project evaluation criteria. The recommended transportation improvements and strategies are intended to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies. Those ideas judged not supportive of the Plan goals and policies were not included in Chapter 10's recommended project list.

Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP)

The City adopted the Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) in 1998 as a guide for managing the City's transportation system and for implementing the vision of the Comprehensive Plan. The TSP assessed the transportation problem as follows:

"Unfortunately, Seattle's transportation system is struggling.

Traffic growth is overwhelming our streets, both in Seattle and throughout our entire region. Over the last twenty years, vehicle miles traveled in the region has grown four times as fast as population. This traffic is not only frustrating, it is unhealthy and expensive. Pollution and congestion are taking an increasingly severe toll on the environment, neighborhoods, the economy, and our daily lives.

Meanwhile, we have a growing backlog of maintenance problems. Older streets are filled with potholes. Drawbridges are wearing out. Sidewalks are buckling.

Not surprisingly, people are demanding that the City take care of these problems. We do not, however, have the necessary resources. The City of Seattle has a major transportation funding problem."

The City's Transportation Strategic Plan (adopted in 1998) states that the City of Seattle has a major transportation funding shortfall. The City's 2001 transportation revenues were \$81.5 million. Seattle Transportation's list of unfunded projects and programs currently includes approximately \$135 million per year in major maintenance, safety, and mobility projects and programs.

Given this funding assessment, the TSP focuses on several key areas, such as operations and maintenance, providing viable alternatives to driving alone, and ensuring that neighborhoods remain people-friendly places to live and work.

University Community Urban Center Plan (1997-1998)

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan establishes guidelines for neighborhoods to develop their own plans to allow growth in ways that provide for a neighborhood's unique character, needs, and livability.

Since early 1995, neighborhoods throughout Seattle have been engaged in efforts to plan for their communities' growth over the next twenty years. These neighborhood-planning efforts represent an innovative, grass-roots approach to growth management that supports neighborhood residents, business owners, and other community members in planning for their own future.

The University Community Urban Center Plan was completed in August 1998 by the University Community Urban Center Association, in conjunction with the City of Seattle's Neighborhood Planning Office. It establishes the following vision statement:

- The University Community will be an inviting and welcoming, people-oriented urban community meeting the social, educational, residential, and commercial needs of a diverse array of people in an environmentally pleasing setting. The University Community will build on its current strengths and assets and proceed in a new direction to accomplish its Vision of the future.
- The University Community will offer a wide range of quality housing options to meet the needs of its diverse and growing population while retaining a sense of neighborhood and community.

- The University Community will be a vital and progressive economic area an integral part of the city and the region, acknowledging the role of the University of Washington in our regional economy and recognizing the Community's diverse needs as well as those of the City.

- The University Community will be a hub of efficient, environmentally sound multi-modal transportation serving the needs of residents, students, customers, and visitors.
- The University Community will seek an active partnership with the University of Washington as a catalyst for positive change involved in both residential and business concerns.

The UCUC Plan Summary recommends the integration of transportation modes into an efficient, balanced system. Recommended implementation actions include the following:

- Emphasize comfortable, safe, attractive pedestrian and bicycle access throughout the center.
- Facilitate increased bus service while minimizing negative impacts.
- Take advantage of Sound Transit connections and facilitate intermodal connections.
- Work with King County Metro to create efficient, minimal-impact bus circulation.
- Conduct an urban center-wide arterial corridor analysis to assess capacity, establish priorities, and determine funding for an integrated multi-modal University Community Urban Center transportation plan.
- Explore local shuttle transportation options.
- Carefully manage parking to ensure adequate supply to support uses while working to limit dependence on parking and the impacts of large parking facilities.

PAST TRANSPORTATION PLANS

A number of previous transportation plans have focused on access to and from the University area.

University District Transportation Program (1985-1988)

This Seattle Engineering Department and Metro initiated this study in 1985. The existing conditions report for the period 1982-84 found traffic congestion to be the major transportation problem in the study area. It identified NE 45th Street and Montlake Boulevard NE as the key corridors experiencing congestion, with NE Pacific Street also experiencing noteworthy congestion at times. It also listed other areas where traffic congestion is a problem.

The report noted that the street system within the study area faces unique problems. Access is constrained by the limited capacity of bridges and underpasses that provide the primary access routes to the

University District from all directions. The demands of through traffic, combined with locally generated traffic, place a heavy burden on the street system.

The existing conditions report also found that several streets in the area had average travel speeds of two to five miles per hour, congestion, excessive delay, and generally poor traffic operations. Streets with very slow travel speeds included NE 7th Street, NE 45th Street, NE Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard. In the study area, transit buses were directly affected by congestion, leading to unpredictable schedule performance and higher operating costs. Transit operating speeds on NE 45th Street from 15th Avenue NE to Roosevelt Way ranged from two to five miles per hour.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) listing a set of preferred alternatives was issued in December 1987. It recommended implementation of a concept called the “15th Avenue Northeast transit spine”, which would shift all of the transit routes to 15th Avenue NE from University Way, and provide HOV and bus-only lanes on NE Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard. The public responded negatively to the DEIS regarding the 15th Avenue NE transit spine concept.

The City and Metro modified the proposed action by dropping the 15th Avenue transit spine concept. The HOV/bus lane recommendations on NE Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard were retained.

Montlake/Pacific Circulation Study (1992)

This study was prepared in 1992 in response to the U.W.’s 2001 campus building expansion plan, which called for construction of over 2.2 million square feet (net) of new additional floor area.

It analyzed impacts of the expansion on three primary corridors:

- Brooklyn Avenue NE from NE 41st Street to NE Boat Street;
- NE Pacific Street from NE Boat Street to Montlake Boulevard;
and
- Montlake Boulevard from NE 45th Street to NE Pacific Street.

The study analyzed levels of service with projected 2001 volumes and found that all intersections would operate adequately on those corridors except at Brooklyn Avenue and NE Pacific Street. It recommended intersection improvements on NE Pacific Street between 15th Avenue NE and Brooklyn Avenue NE.

The study stated that one of the most significant impacts to circulation in the Montlake Boulevard and Pacific Street corridors was congestion on SR 520 and the ramp meter on the eastbound on-ramp. Queuing from the ramp meter extended back from the 1,500 foot-long ramp onto Montlake Boulevard, triggering surface street congestion. The volume of recurring queuing in the PM peak hour was driven by the lack of capacity to store traffic on the ramp meter approaches. More vehicles cannot be discharged onto SR 520, since it is regularly congested beyond the ramp meter terminal. Montlake Avenue cannot absorb the back-up due to the restricted Montlake Bridge capacity. Absent any alternative, freeway-destined traffic is therefore stored on surface streets. The study recommended that WSDOT widen the SR 520 eastbound on-ramp to store vehicles.

The study also described the results of the HOV lane extension alternative analysis on NE Pacific Street and Montlake Boulevard. It concluded that:

- > There is some merit in considering the extension of the NE Pacific Street HOV lane in a future study.
- > No consideration should be given to the HOV lane extension on Montlake Boulevard.

RECENTLY COMPLETED, CURRENT AND NEAR-FUTURE IMPROVEMENTS

The City has recently completed significant transportation improvements in the UATS study area. Several other improvements are currently underway or planned for implementation in the near future. Recently completed, current and near-future improvements are briefly summarized below. These improvements were not evaluated and prioritized with potential improvements listed in this study.

NE 50th Street Reconstruction

Substantially completed in 2001, this project included:

- > Reconstruction of NE 50th Street from Roosevelt Way NE to 16th Avenue NE, including new concrete curbs, gutters, sidewalk;
- > Resurfacing of NE 50th Street from 7th Avenue NE to Roosevelt Way NE, and from 16th Avenue NE to 20th Avenue NE, including landscaping improvements and sidewalk repairs;
- > Improvements to other street elements on NE 50th Street from Roosevelt Way NE to 16th Avenue NE including street lighting, traffic signals, and drainage;

- Installation of underground power and light utilities previously located on overhead wires;
- Installation of "pedestrian half-bulbs" on the east side of Roosevelt and the west side of 11th Avenue NE at NE 50th Street;
- Installation of decorative brick edges in the curbs on NE 50th Street at the intersections from Roosevelt Way NE to 15th Avenue NE (the corners of NE 50th Street and University Way NE will be done as part of a later construction project on University Way); and,
- Installation of a decorative fence, gate, and archway at the University Heights Center on NE 50th Street and University Way NE.

11th and 12th Avenues NE Resurfacing

In 2001, the City resurfaced 11th Avenue NE from NE 41st Street to NE Ravenna Boulevard; 12th Avenue NE north of Ravenna Boulevard was resurfaced in 2000.

Flex Car

In 2001, the City's FlexCar program expanded to the University District. FlexCar provides an innovative approach to transportation: car-sharing. Shaped after a successful European model, FlexCar provides the freedom and mobility of a car without the complications of ownership. Individuals and business members use FlexCars for their transportation needs, paying only for the time the car is used. Five cars are currently available for use in the University District.

U-District "Access Package" for Small Businesses

In 2001, the City joined with the Greater University Chamber of Commerce and University District Parking Associates to implement the U-District "Access Package" for small businesses. The program includes a revitalized parking validation program in the district, with new and improved signage for parking lots and participating merchants. The City and Chamber are also teaming up to offer discount transit tickets, FlexCar membership, and Home Free Guarantee to participating businesses.

University Area Signal Controller Upgrades and Coordination

The project includes installation of new traffic signal controllers at 48 intersections in the area bounded by NE 50th Street, NE Pacific Street, 15th Avenue NE, and I-5. Traffic signals will better manage traffic during peak demand times. Portions of this project were

completed in 2001 with the reconstruction of NE 50th Street, and other improvements are scheduled for the first half of 2002. Also as part of this project, the City constructed a new signalized intersection at NE 42nd Street and Roosevelt Way NE to reduce transit delays at this intersection.

Sidewalk Improvements at the Intersection of Montlake and Pacific Street

As part of the construction of the U.W. Medical Center Ambulatory Care Center, the U.W. is completing improvements to the adjoining sidewalk at Montlake Boulevard and NE Pacific Street. Improvements include widening and reconstruction of the sidewalk, and relocation of the bus stop and shelter to better serve transit riders and reduce conflicts with bicyclists and pedestrians. Construction is underway and will be completed in 2002.

"The Ave" Project

In 2001, the City secured funding and completed much of the design for a reconstruction of University Avenue ("the Ave"); the project is scheduled for construction in 2002-2003. The project includes a complete reconstruction of University Avenue from Campus Parkway to NE 50th Street. Bus stop "bulbs" will extend the sidewalk into the street area in particular spots along the curb. The bulbs will allow buses to load and drop off passengers without leaving the travel lane of the street. This system will eliminate the delay that buses now experience when they must wait to re-enter the mainstream of traffic. The project will widen sidewalks, upgrade street lighting, other fixtures (such as bike racks), landscaping, and intersection treatments, and add various urban design and art enhancements.

27th Avenue NE Connection to Burke-Gilman Trail

As part of the Blakely Crescent Park project, the City will improve the 27th Avenue NE street-end connecting Blakely and the neighborhoods north of Blakely to the Burke-Gilman trail. Construction is planned for 2002.

Brooklyn Area Residential Parking Zone

With funding from the U.W., the City was able to complete a new study of the proposed Brooklyn Residential Parking Zone (RPZ) area to verify that the area does qualify for an RPZ. The RPZ should be implemented in 2002.

Blakeley Area Residential Parking Zone

The area northeast of the U.W. and the University Village is under consideration for a Residential Parking Zone. The RPZ should be implemented in 2002.

Revisions to the City's Transportation Management Program Regulations

The Seattle Land Use Code and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) regulations require that transportation management programs (TMP) be prepared for major institutions (universities, colleges, hospitals) and other land uses that are found to have adverse traffic and parking impacts. The Director's Rule (2-94: Transportation Management Plans), jointly prepared by the Department of Design, Construction and Land Use (DCLU) and Seattle Transportation, is being updated in 2001-2002. Already, staff has created a template to be a tool for standardizing TMPs and for putting the full array of plan elements in front of DCLU planning review staff.

Montlake/SR-520 Bike Station

The northeast corner of the SR 520 flyer stop currently accommodates bicycle racks and eight lockers for bicyclists. The City, King County Metro and WSDOT have received a federal transportation grant to address bicycle parking here, although the grant has not yet been "obligated" (bound by contract). Expanded parking, increased security, and a structure providing cover may be feasible, although not a long-term solution, given the TransLake project.