

Chapter 4. Other Related Transportation Projects and Programs

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Chapter 4. Other Related **Transportation Projects and Programs**

This chapter identifies the impacts of related projects and programs on the University Area Transportation Study, including the U.W. Transportation Management Plan, Washington State Department of Transportation Trans-Lake Study, and Sound Transit plans for the study area.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

The U.W. Transportation Management Plan (TMP) is among the top programs of its kind in the nation. The University first developed the TMP in 1983 to provide options for University staff, faculty, and students to encourage people not to drive to work or school alone. The goal was to reduce the number of vehicle trips to and from the U.W. From 1989 to 1998, the University's single occupant vehicle mode share dropped from 33% to 28%, even with a growing student population.

The U-PASS program has proved to be one of the most effective components of the TMP. The U-PASS program has two main features: enhance alternatives to single occupancy travel and manage transportation demand by altering the relative price of transportation options to limit vehicle trip growth. The U-PASS program provides a flexible package of transportation benefits offered through a pass that allows U.W. students, faculty, and staff to choose from a variety of commuting options at a greatly reduced price. The program includes nine features: increased transit service, shuttle service, carpools, vanpools, ridematch, bicycles, reimbursed ride home, commuter tickets, and merchant discounts. Individuals may use any combination of these features to satisfy their varying daily transportation needs. Because the participation rate is high and parking revenue covers a portion of the costs, the price of the pass to the user is extremely low.

The University aggressively markets its TMP to raise awareness of alternatives to driving alone to campus. The administration also has established policies to promote telecommuting, flextime, and

compressed work weeks, to reduce peak period travel, to direct growth to off-peak quarters (summer), to develop on-campus or nearby campus housing, and to encourage surrounding employers to implement similar TMP strategies in coordination with the City of Seattle.

Finally, the University has established an extensive program of monitoring, evaluating, and reporting transportation conditions. These include vehicle counts, “on-street” surveying of vehicle operators, telephone surveys of students, staff and faculty about commuting behaviors, bicycle rack utilization, and other ad hoc surveys. Many of these reports are posted on the University's web site.

The *U.W. Master Plan Transportation Technical Report* (October 2000) describes the University's recommended TMP improvements by mode:

Pedestrian – provide connectivity and more pedestrian friendly facilities. Coordinate with the City to identify improvements to the local pedestrian network. Designate and improve priority pedestrian commuting corridors. Increase pedestrian safety through the use of better lighting and innovative roadway designs. Increase marketing of walking as an alternative mode.

Bicycle – provide connectivity and more bicycle friendly facilities as the key to promoting bicycle use for faculty, staff and students. Create additional secured covered bike lockers and shower facilities on campus. Implement a bicycle/pedestrian safety program with measurable goals. Subsidize bicycle sales/leases to increase ownership. Coordinate with the City to enhance corridors for bicycles. Develop Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) solutions. Increase marketing of the bicycle mode on campus.

Transit – implement U-PASS, a cooperative program between Metro, Community Transit, and Sound Transit. Allow students to ride anytime, anywhere for \$33 a quarter (\$46.50 faculty and staff) on these three providers (except for commuter rail, for which only a portion of fare is paid) or to park free if they carpool or vanpool to campus. Provide a “night ride” shuttle that operates in three different zones surrounding the campus. Include strategies to incorporate light rail subsidies into the U-PASS program; advocate evening service; provide transit subsidies for medical center patients and visitors to the campus; and advocate for advanced transit traveler information (kiosks) to relate “real-time” bus locations and times. The light rail subsidy has become a longer range issue, as recent Sound Transit board actions have deferred the north light rail

segment that would have linked the University to downtown Seattle and eventually to Northgate and Snohomish County.

Carpools and Vanpools – build awareness and participation in carpooling and vanpooling to help maintain and build upon the existing carpool/vanpool mode split by students, faculty, and staff. Employ two major strategies: develop "intelligent carpool/vanpool" technology (ITS software); and target marketing efforts to promote carpool and vanpool use.

Commuter Parking – reduce parking demand, in turn reducing dependency on single occupant vehicles on campus, by increasing the cost of parking (increase to be greater than the cost of living); instituting graduated parking pricing; and using unique marketing programs such as "just once a week". The General Physical Development Plan established a cap on the number of campus parking stalls, and as a result, the number of commuter parking spaces available for the UW has remained fairly constant over the past ten years.

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON MASTER PLAN TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS (2000)

In 2000, a supplemental transportation technical report to the U.W.'s *Seattle Campus Master Plan 2002 – 2012* analyzed the transportation impacts of the UW's projected growth, as shown in **Table 4-1**.

Table 4-1. Projected Growth in University Population

Population	1999 FTE	1999 Head-count	2012 FTE	2012 Head-count	Increased FTE	Increased Head-count
Students	33,800	35,062	36-37,800	39,182	3-4,000	4,120
Faculty/Staff	20,800	20,463	26,000	25,463	5,000	5,000
Total	54,600	55,525	62-63,700	64,645	8-9,000	9,120

Source: U.W. Master Plan 2002-2012

The report finds that actions to reduce travel demands will be necessary to offset growth in the University population that would otherwise result in additional vehicle trips to and from the campus.

Such actions could include increasing parking costs or providing more financial incentives to use non-single occupant driving. The Seattle metropolitan area is also expected to increase in population, which will also add traffic on the street network in the study area.

The report also suggests specific facility improvements on and surrounding the UW campus for pedestrians, bicycles, transit, high occupancy vehicles, and parking. It has not been determined at this time how the City and the University of Washington (and other partners) will be responsible for implementing the recommended improvements or how they will be financed.

TRANS-LAKE WASHINGTON PROJECT

In 1997, the State Transportation Commission authorized the Trans-Lake Washington Study to identify a set of “reasonable and feasible solutions” to improve mobility across and around Lake Washington. In July 1999, the members of the Trans-Lake Study Committee recommended that WSDOT and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) prepare an Environmental Impact Statement. The Study Committee has concluded that no single action, by itself, will provide an adequate response to the transportation problems. Several actions will be needed that together will provide additional capacity, improve the reliability of the transportation system, reduce demand for highway travel, and reduce impacts of transportation facilities on neighborhoods and the environment.

The Trans-Lake Washington project identified eight “multi-modal” alternatives in Spring 2001:

1. No Action
2. SR 520 Safety and Preservation: Replace and realign the floating bridge and seismically deficient structures, add bicycle/pedestrian facilities and implement aggressive measures to manage transportation demand.
3. SR 520 HOV: Add one high capacity vehicle (HOV) lane each direction, plus non-motorized, transportation demand management, safety and preservation projects from option 2.
4. SR 520 HOV and General Purpose (GP): Add one HOV and one GP lane each direction, plus plus non-motorized, transportation demand management, safety and preservation projects from option 2.

5. SR 520 HOV and SR 520 High Capacity Transit (HCT): Add one HOV lane each direction and fixed guideway transit on SR 520, plus non-motorized, transportation demand management, safety and preservation projects from option 2.
6. SR 520 HOV, GP, and HCT: Add one HOV and one GP lane each direction, plus fixed guideway transit and non-motorized, transportation demand management, safety and preservation projects from option 2.
7. SR 520 HOV with Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Connections: Add one HOV lane each direction, shared by BRT, with BRT connections, plus non-motorized, transportation demand management, safety and preservation projects from option 2.
8. SR 520 HOV with BRT connections and GP: Add one HOV lane and one GP lane each direction with BRT connections, plus non-motorized, transportation demand management, safety and preservation projects from option 2.

The current overall project cost is estimated at \$6.1 billion. The State Legislature has appropriated \$1.5 million to continue planning and environmental work in the 2001-2003 fiscal year. An added \$58 million is needed to complete the design work to be able to start construction in 2005.

Any of the action alternatives (Alternatives 3 through 8) would impact the transportation system in the UATS study area. The UATS assumes that the any major investment to expand the capacity of SR 520 would not take place before 2010, and full completion of the SR 520 projects would be sometime beyond 2010.

SOUND TRANSIT REGIONAL TRANSIT SYSTEM PLAN

Sound Move, a 10-Year Regional Transit System Plan approved by voters in 1996, supports multi-modal solutions to the region's traffic problems. *Sound Move* will expand existing travel corridors and create new high-capacity transportation (HCT) corridors linking urban centers and communities. The transportation modes include regional express bus, commuter rail, and light rail as multi-modal solutions to the region's traffic problems.

Central Link Light Rail Project

Sound Transit is evaluating alternative light rail routes from the downtown transit tunnel through the University District to Northgate and preparing a supplemental environmental impact statement in 2002-03. **Figure 4-1** shows the following four potential routes that cross the Ship Canal and also the stations proposed for the University area.

- High Level Bridge option along I-5 Ship Canal Bridge;
- A tunnel under University Bridge and Campus Parkway;
- Portage Bay Tunnel with two stations (the locally preferred alternative); and
- Montlake Tunnel with a station at the Rainer Vista area on Pacific Place NE.

A light rail segment between downtown Seattle and the University District has been projected to have the highest ridership of any segment within Sound Transit's System Plan.

At its November 29, 2001 meeting, the Sound Transit Board scaled back its original plan to build the first segment of the 24-mile light rail system from the NE 45th Street station in the University District to the SeaTac airport. The Board adopted a revised plan to construct and operate a 14-mile segment from downtown Seattle to Tukwila (South 154th Street). The current timing for an extension of the initial segment to the University area and beyond remains uncertain.

The UATS assumed that the University Link from downtown Seattle to NE 45th Street would not be completed prior to the UATS planning horizon of 2010, thereby somewhat reducing the number of projected transit users within the study area.

The Puget Sound Regional Council's travel forecasting model indicates that, among those entering the study area for work or school, about 900 more persons will use transit with light rail than without. Of those leaving the study area, about 1,100 additional persons would use transit if light rail were available than if it were not.

Although this is a significant decrease in potential transit riders, increased traffic congestion in the study area would be relatively slight. The main reason for this is that existing transit service between downtown Seattle and the University District is very good and can be expected to continue in the future. With or without light rail, the study area will continue to have high numbers of transit riders.

Finally, the extension of the light rail to Northgate is also uncertain. In the meantime, Metro and Community Transit's bus systems will continue to provide transit service to the UATS study area from the north end of Seattle, the City of Shoreline and Snohomish County.

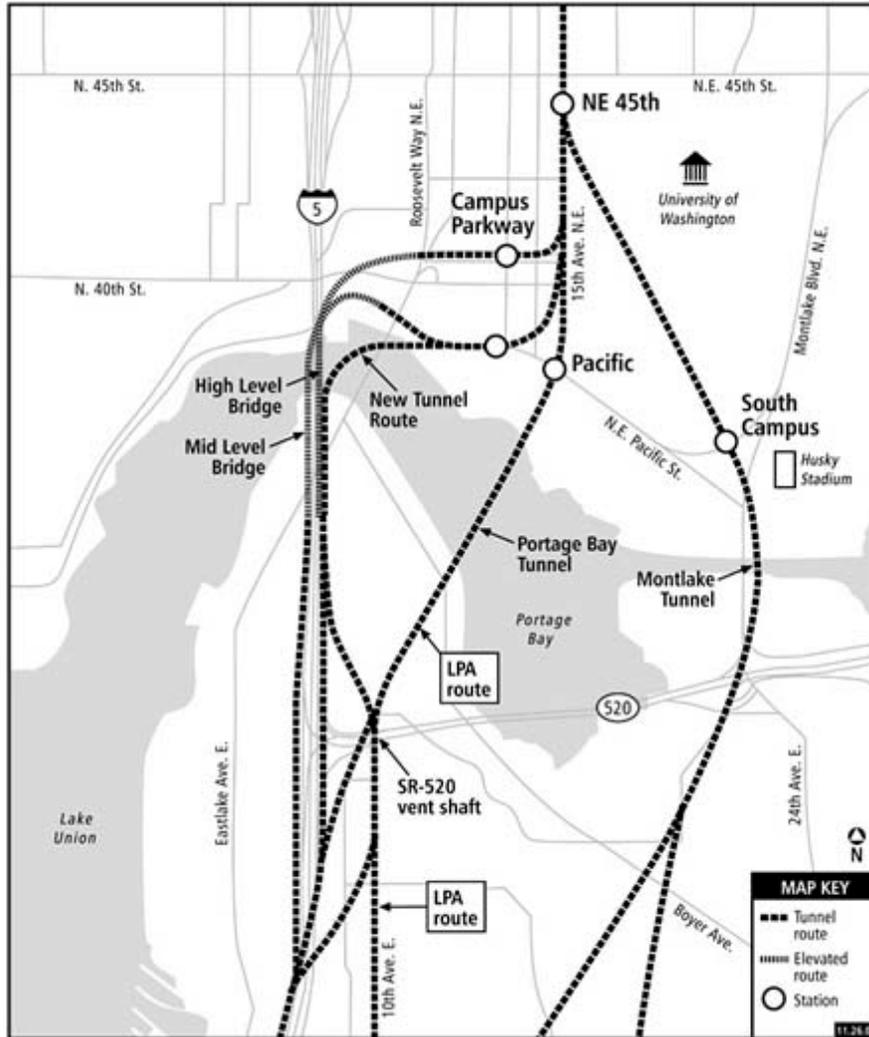
LOCAL TRANSIT PROVIDERS' PLANS

King County Metro is in the process of developing its Six-Year Plan for the period 2001-2007. Included in the appendix of the plan is a "sample network" of specific services that could be changed to improve the system in the next six years. These improvements would provide service in the greater University District. Many are frequency or time-span improvements, although there is also some restructuring of routes.

While the specific "sample network" items included in the draft appendix are not to be adopted as part of the Plan, they illustrate one way in which the Six-Year Plan strategies could be used to modify service in order to reach Plan goals and accomplish Plan objectives. At this time, the Executive has not yet transmitted the Plan to the King County Council, and the specific contents of the Plan and the appendix are in flux and not yet available for public review.

Community Transit is also currently in the process of developing a new Six-Year Plan. At this writing, the planning process has just begun and there is no concrete information regarding the future of University commuter services. However, the early stages of plan development indicate that analysis should be made of the viability of current services, as well as exploring the demand for additional services or services to new markets, including direct service to the University area. The study could indicate a need for restructuring of existing services, adding new trips to currently operated routes and/or implementing new direct routes from areas currently not served.

Figure 4-1. Potential Sound Transit Light Rail Routes



Source: Sound Transit, December 2001; Ship Canal Crossing/ University District Map of Potential Routes