

1. Background

Northgate Transformation

Northgate's future is a vital urban center providing new jobs, housing, open spaces and valued public places surrounded by healthy single-family neighborhoods. A suburban, low-density, auto-oriented landscape will be transformed to a more walkable, bikeable, transit-oriented place where people live, work, shop, play, and go to school.

Realizing this vision requires a simultaneous transformation of both the urban form and transportation choices. This Northgate Comprehensive Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP) is a blueprint to guide public and private transportation investments through 2030. These investments will make better land use and transportation choices possible, helping to transform the urban center and linking it to healthy surrounding neighborhoods and the region.

Northgate's current auto-oriented land use was defined in the middle of the 20th century by the building of Northgate Mall, innovative during post-World War II years as a retail auto-destination for the Seattle area. Then, in 1965, Interstate 5 was built, providing a greater automotive linkage between Northgate and the region. During the following decades, commercial development surrounding the mall continued in this low-density suburban form.

By the late 1980s, the communities surrounding Northgate had identified a need for a new vision and direction, responding to the pressures of increased traffic and a desire for a more pedestrian-oriented urban center. In 1990, the Washington Growth Management Act provided the policy direction for Northgate to be designated as an Urban Center and to transform its land use character and transportation system.

For more than a decade, Northgate has been locked in community controversy and indecision about how to realize this vision. In December 2003, Seattle embraced a strategy for action with the passage of new legislation.

Today, Northgate sees progress toward its vision with a new Northgate Civic Center and a wave of public and private redevelopment investment. The Northgate Urban Center holds magnificent promise with a revitalized commercial center, new

housing that will bring thousands of Northgate residents, more pedestrian-oriented streets, stronger connections to North Seattle Community College, new parks and open spaces, and the hope for a future light rail connection.

Policy Context

The CTIP was developed within the context of the land use and transportation planning and implementation policies described below. These include a number of recommended projects and programs listed and mapped in **Appendix 1-1**. **Figure 1-1** illustrates the project vicinity, and **Figure 1-2** shows the CTIP study area boundaries and Northgate Urban Center boundaries. The CTIP's recommendations focus on four main goals:

- Move people safely and efficiently
- Reduce drive-alone travel
- Support new housing and economic development
- Protect neighborhoods

Figure 1-1. CTIP Project Vicinity

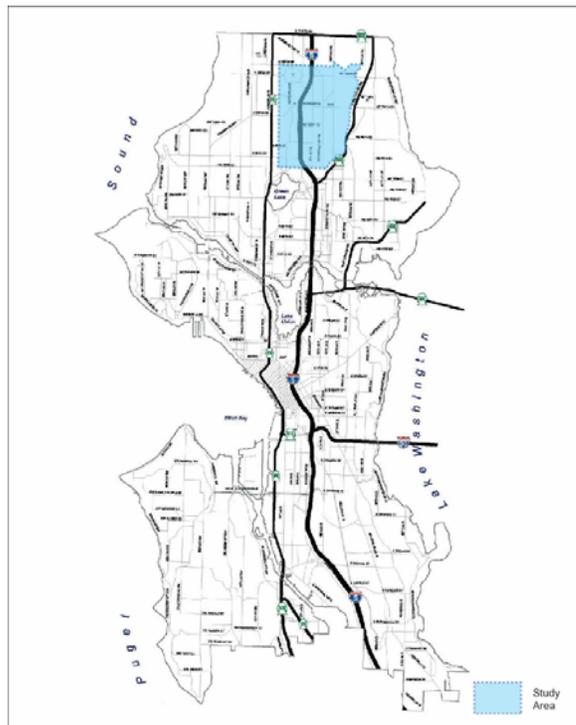
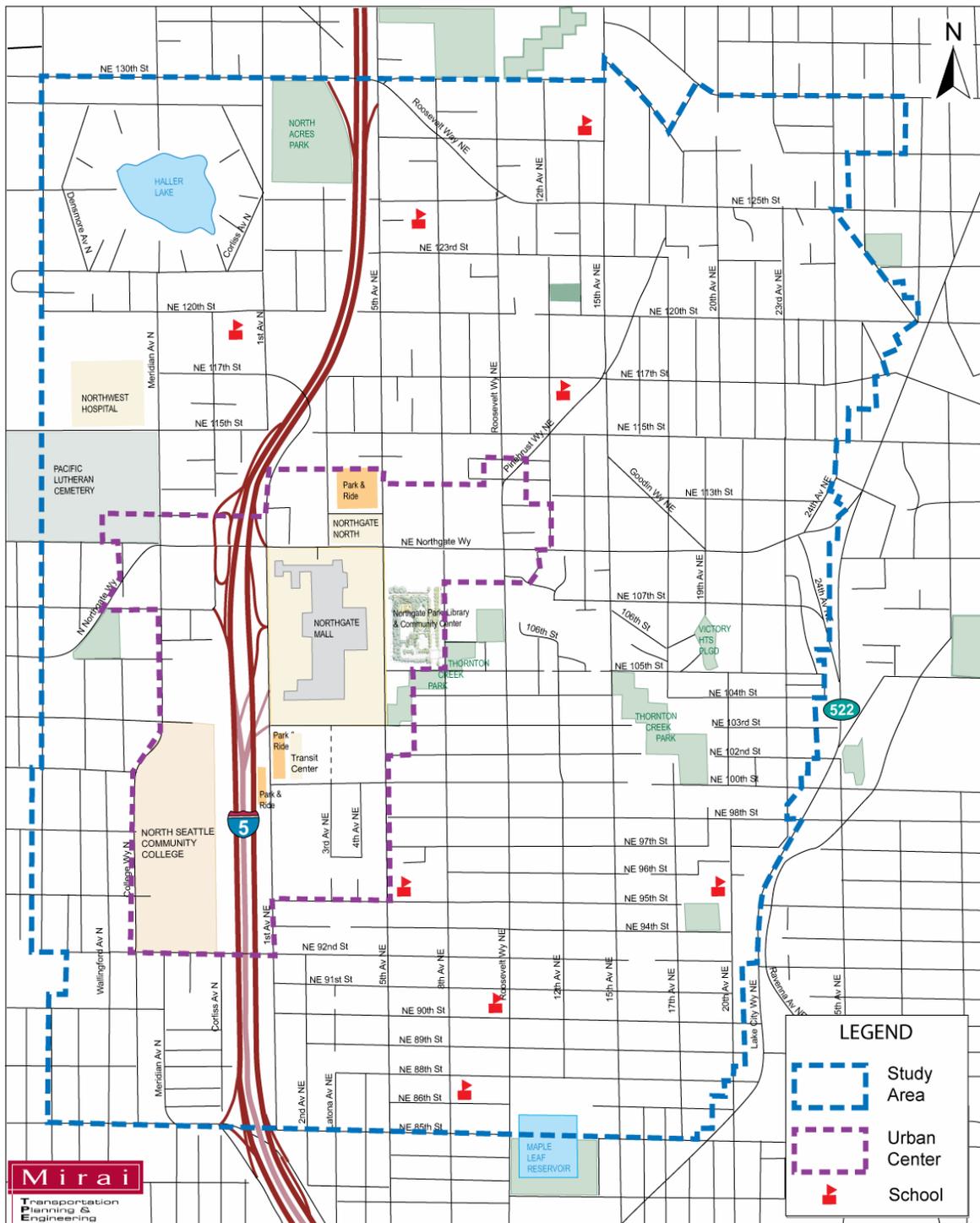


Figure 1-2. CTIP Study Area Boundaries and Northgate Urban Center



Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (1993) and Plan Review and Evaluation (2000)

The Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan (NACP) was completed in 1993 after a two-year planning process. The NACP contained policies and implementation guidelines reflecting the community's vision for the Northgate area. In June 2000, the City's Strategic Planning Office published a review and evaluation of the NACP to help prioritize next steps.

Northgate Action Agenda

Seattle Mayor Greg Nickels initiated a Northgate Action Agenda in

March 2003, calling for a package of economic, community, and environmental benefits to begin to revitalize Northgate. The Agenda encouraged new public and private investment to create housing and jobs at Northgate, obtain new open space for the City, enhance the Thornton Creek Watershed, improve transportation choices, and develop the CTIP.



Through voter-approved levies, plans were already under way for a new park, library, and community center. The first phase of the 5th Avenue NE streetscape project was funded to provide wider sidewalks and a better pedestrian environment. In December 2003, the Mayor and City Council improved development regulations for the area and set the policy direction to realize the Northgate vision.

Seattle City Council Resolutions

The City Council adopted Resolution 30641 (see **Appendix 1-2**), providing a framework for actions to encourage progress toward the NACP vision and Resolution 30642, directing the Seattle Department of Transportation to develop a Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan (CTIP).

Based on the City Council resolutions, the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) developed a CTIP work program. The City Council, with the endorsement of the Northgate Stakeholders Group, approved the work program in September 2004, leading to creation of this plan.

Resolution 30641, adopted on December 8, 2003, called for creation of the CTIP with the following provisions:

- facilitate public and private investment in Northgate area transportation projects and services
- build upon prior transportation work
- balance all modes of transportation
- produce a list of improvements to address existing and future transportation needs
- assist property owners in meeting environmental review requirements
- include public and agency involvement
- pursue public and private cost sharing agreements for CTIP development



Resolution 30642, also adopted on December 8, 2003, provided the framework for a broad set of actions to implement the established NACP vision, to “transform a thriving, but underutilized, auto-oriented office/retail area into a vital, mixed-use center of concentrated development surrounded by healthy single-family neighborhoods.” Key provisions for the CTIP’s transportation planning and traffic analysis included the following:

- facilitate public and private investment
- identify coordinated transportation investments that best reflect the long-term goals of the Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan, especially
- reducing traffic related impacts on arterials
- protecting neighborhood streets
- providing pedestrian improvements and connections, including safety improvements for seniors

Resolution 30642 also established the Northgate Stakeholders Group, a broadly representative body of community and business representatives advising the City on the development of this CTIP and other important Northgate issues.

Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Toward a Sustainable Seattle

The City Council adopted the Seattle Comprehensive Plan in 1994 and significantly updated it in 2004. A key feature of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan is the urban village strategy that strengthens the relationship between the city’s land uses and available

transportation infrastructure. Northgate is one of six designated Urban Centers (others are Downtown, Capitol Hill/First Hill, Uptown/Seattle Center, South Lake Union, and the University District). Within Urban Centers, transportation investments are directed to (1) provide more opportunities for transit, walking, and biking and (2) link pedestrian-oriented activity centers.

The 2004 update incorporated goals and policies from the NACP into the Neighborhood Planning Element. (See **Table 1-1** for the Seattle Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood Planning Element transportation goals and policies for Northgate and **Appendix 1-3** for the entire list of Northgate goals and policies in the Neighborhood Planning Element.) These policies and implementation guidelines helped formulate and frame the CTIP recommendations.

Table 1-1. Seattle Comprehensive Plan Neighborhood Element Transportation Policies for Northgate

Seattle Comprehensive Plan Transportation Goals
Goal NG-G6: An economically viable commercial core with improved alternative means of access, good vehicular and pedestrian circulation, and an enhanced, interesting environment that attracts customers, visitors, and employers.
Goal NG-G7: Medium- to high-density residential and employment uses are concentrated within a 10-minute walk of the transit center, reducing the number and length of vehicle trips and making travel by foot and bicycle more attractive.
Seattle Comprehensive Plan Transportation Policies
Policy NG-P9: The efficiency of the transportation system shall be maximized by accommodating more person trips rather than more vehicle trips.
Policy NG-P10: Enhance transit service and facilities to make it a more attractive travel mode for persons living and working in the Northgate area.
Policy NG-P11: Increase pedestrian circulation with an improved street level environment by creating pedestrian connections that are safe, interesting, and pleasant.
Policy NG-P12: Manage parking supply, location, and demand to discourage the use of single-occupant vehicles, and to improve short-term parking accessibility for retail customers, patients, and visitors, without undermining transit or HOV usage, or detracting from the creation of an attractive pedestrian environment.
Policy NG-P13: Reduce the impact of increases in traffic volume by minimizing conflicts with local access streets, and improving traffic flow, circulation, and safety without increasing vehicular capacity.
Policy NG-P14: Development of a high-capacity transit station shall be designed to minimize impacts on surrounding neighborhoods by emphasizing non-motorized access, transit-supportive land uses, and an attractive pedestrian environment at and near the station.

Northgate Open Space & Pedestrian Connections Draft Plan (2004)



Intersection of Northgate Way and 1st Avenue looking west

The Seattle Planning Commission initiated the Northgate Open Space and Pedestrian Connections Plan in March 2004, building on earlier workshops from the NACP that focused on town center concepts, the South Lot, and 5th Avenue NE as a pedestrian corridor. The following recommendations from the Northgate Open Space and Pedestrian Connections Plan were developed contemporaneously with the first stages of the CTIP, with the intent that they would guide the CTIP:

1. The City and in particular the Seattle Department of Transportation must make pedestrians as high a priority as vehicles in framing and carrying out the CTIP. If this is not a clear foundation for the CTIP, the community and City will lose the opportunity to really change Northgate from an auto-oriented to a pedestrian-oriented community.
2. The CTIP should make a strong statement about creating a pedestrian-friendly environment—not about which mode is most important, but rather elevating the pedestrian mode as an important means of mobility throughout this developing Urban Center. CTIP efforts should involve carrying out a detailed analysis of pedestrian movements in the key subareas of Northgate—NE quadrant (North of NE Northgate Way from I-5 to Roosevelt Avenue NE); SE quadrant (South of NE Northgate Way from 5th to 15th Avenues NE); west of I-5; and the crossovers of I-5 (NE 92nd Street and NE Northgate Way).
3. The CTIP analysis should consider alleys, parking lots, spaces between buildings, and the riparian corridor along I-5 as opportunities for pedestrian pathways.

Sound Move

Adopted by voters in 1996, Sound Move is Sound Transit's regional transit plan for the urban portions of King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties. Funding constraints precluded completing the



Conceptual Drawing of the Future Northgate Transit Center at NE 103rd

Northgate extension in Phase 1, but in October 2005, the Sound Transit Board issued a draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) to the 2003 North Link draft SEIS that identifies a preferred route to Northgate. The North Link light rail project anticipates the northern terminus to occur next to the Northgate Transit Center on the southwest side of the Northgate Mall. In addition, preliminary engineering to extend light rail service from Northgate to the King County line remains a candidate project at this time for "ST 2," the regional plan for the next set of investments.

Six-Year Transit Development Plan for 2002–2007, King County Metro (2002)

King County Metro's Six Year Transit Development Plan establishes near-term operating and capital plans transit service in King County. Subject to available revenue, Urban Centers and activity centers will receive higher bus service levels, as will jurisdictions that aggressively implement transit-friendly land use strategies. The Plan sets out a range of criteria to qualify for additional service, including promoting higher-density development and strong ridership demand. Capital improvements that will enhance speed and reliability will be directed to corridors with the highest bus and passenger volumes with an emphasis on finding effective, low-cost solutions.

Seattle Transit Plan (2005)

The City of Seattle's Transit Plan identifies a long-term (2030) vision of Seattle's future transit network. The Plan is the basis for transit strategies in the City's Transportation Strategic Plan, which was adopted in August 2005. The Transit Plan identifies Seattle's regional high-capacity and intermediate-capacity transit corridors as well as key multimodal hubs and transportation centers. The

Plan incorporates six main elements:

- the Urban Village Transit Network, including associated funding needs
- major transfer points - multimodal hubs and transportation centers
- criteria for evaluating technologies
- transit street classifications
- transit quality of service measures
- transit priority treatment tools

The City identified an “Urban Village Transit Network” (UVTN) to carry the highest concentration of the city’s transit trips, supported by local circulation and UVTN feeder service in a “secondary transit network.” The UVTN consists of all transit lines (regardless of mode or operating agency) that operate every 15 minutes all day for at least 18 hours every day in two directions. For example, the North Link Light Rail line is considered part of the UVTN in Northgate. UVTN performance standards will be incorporated into the Transportation Strategic Plan’s chapter on performance measures and play an important role in the City’s new Right-of-Way Improvement Manual.

Many arterials in the study area are anticipated to be part of the UVTN. Streets include the following:

- Northgate Way
- Roosevelt Way NE/Pinehurst Way NE/15th Avenue NE north of Northgate Way
- 1st Avenue NE between Northgate Way and NE 92nd Street
- NE 103rd Street between 1st Avenue NE and 5th Avenue NE
- 5th Avenue NE south of NE 103rd Street
- N 92nd Street between Wallingford Avenue and 1st Avenue NE
- Wallingford Avenue N/Campus Way N/Meridian Avenue N south of N 115th Street
- N 115th Street west of Meridian Avenue N

Transportation Strategic Plan (2005)

The Transportation Strategic Plan (TSP) is the Seattle Department of Transportation’s 20-year work plan. It describes the actions that SDOT will take over the next 20 years to establish the goals and policies in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The TSP defines day-to-day operational and long-term transportation strategies and the projects, programs, and services to implement them. It also includes SDOT’s financial plan and defines a process for determining funding priorities.

The TSP establishes a multi-step process to prioritize discretionary programs and projects. Projects that rate highly through the evaluation process are considered the top candidates when seeking additional transportation funds. Evaluation criteria to rank a program or project high, medium or low priority are as follows:

- Safety
- Preserving and maintaining infrastructure
- Cost effectiveness or cost avoidance
- Mobility improvement.
- Economic development.
- Comprehensive Plan/Urban Village land use strategy
- Improving the environment

Potential programs and projects are further evaluated to determine their readiness for implementation. Four criteria are used to make this determination:

- Funding availability
- Interagency coordination
- Geographic balance
- Constituent balance

Public Involvement

Northgate Stakeholders Group and CTIP Subcommittee

City Council Resolution 30642 directed the formation of a stakeholders group to advise the City on future planning and strategies for implementing the Northgate vision. The 22-member Northgate Stakeholders Group (and 22 alternates) is broadly representative of community and business interests, as shown in **Table 1-2** below (see **Appendix 1-4** for a list of representatives). The Stakeholders have provided important input to the development of this Coordinated Transportation Investment Plan.



The CTIP Subcommittee of the Stakeholders Group provided input on the CTIP's planning assumptions, methodologies, performance measures, evaluation criteria, preliminary improvement concepts, project prioritization and draft recommendations. The subcommittee made recommendations as part of that group's formal Northgate Stakeholder advice memos to the City Council (see **Appendix 1-5** for the advice memos).

The City will continue to provide information and involve the Northgate community as public improvements and private development projects go forward.

Table 1-2. Northgate Stakeholders Group Representation

Northgate Stakeholders Group	
King County Metro	Northwest Hospital
Simon Properties	Owners of Three or More Acres
Maple Leaf Community Council	Senior Housing
Licton Springs Community Council	Renters/Condominium Owners
Haller Lake Community Club	Multi-family Housing Developers
Pinehurst Community Council	Businesses Inside the Mall
Victory Heights Community Council	Businesses Outside the Mall
Northgate Chamber of Commerce	Youth
Thornton Creek Alliance	Labor
Thornton Creek Legal Defense Fund	At-large (two seats)
North Seattle Community College	

Community Outreach



The Northgate Stakeholders Group sponsored quarterly Northgate Community Forums to keep the public informed of the Northgate-area progress and to solicit comments and feedback. Representatives of the CTIP subcommittee participated in each of these well-attended forums. In addition, city staff met with a number of organizations and community groups throughout the planning process, including the Northgate Chamber of Commerce, North Seattle

Community College, Northwest District Council, Northeast District Council, North District Council, North District Stewardship Committee, Maple Leaf Community Council, and the Northgate Mosque.

Two project newsletters were mailed to 1,800 addresses and delivered to schools, service centers, community centers, and libraries (see **Appendix 1-6**). A third Newsletter is planned upon project completion. In addition, the city maintained an active Web site for the project, including a discussion board and resource library.

Agency Coordination

Staff from other agencies (King County Metro, the Washington State Department of Transportation, and Sound Transit) and affected departments within the City participated in a Technical Advisory Group for the project (see **Appendix 1-7** for membership). In addition, project staff provided several briefings to and received comments from the Seattle Planning Commission, the Pedestrian Advisory Board, and the Bicycle Advisory Board.

Future Involvement of Public Agencies and Developers

Other government agencies and private property owners provided information about their future development plans to help the CTIP address long-term land use and transportation conditions and needs. Also, three transportation agencies that play important roles in Northgate's transportation system provided technical planning support.

The CTIP forecasts of future development were informed by the involvement of these affected agencies and property owners. With more detailed forecasts, the CTIP became a more comprehensive planning document. The CTIP and its Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) identify impacts and possible mitigation, which will help transportation agencies and affected developers plan their projects and transportation mitigation. Developers will be able to adopt the EIS to satisfy, in part, the City's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requirements, although project-level information will need to be disclosed and analyzed as part of the Master Use Permit and SEPA processes.

King County, North Seattle Community College, Sound Transit, Washington State Department of Transportation, Kauri Investments, and Mullally Development Company contributed funds toward the Northgate CTIP to support the analysis of future development. Lorig Associates and Wallace Development Company contributed transportation analyses for their projects that were prepared by Mirai and incorporated into the CTIP analysis.