Testimony by

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US House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, Subcommittee on Highways and Transit

September 18, 2008

Chairman DeFazio, Representative Duncan and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your invitation to testify on the topic of transportation planning and thank you for holding this hearing on this important topic as you prepare for the reauthorization of federal surface transportation programs.

For the record, my name is Charlie Howard. I am the Transportation Planning Director for the Puget Sound Regional Council, a Metropolitan Planning Organization, which is based in Seattle but serves a large and thriving region from the highest peaks in the Cascade mountains to the Puget Sound lowlands - where most of the people of our region live and work.

On behalf of the Puget Sound Regional Council, I would like to thank the membership of this Subcommittee for your leadership to quickly restore revenues to the Highway Trust Fund. As you know, the continued flow of those funds is critical to most efficiently building infrastructure and other means to move people and goods safely and more efficiently in our region and elsewhere, and to continuing to sustain family wage jobs in tight times. In Puget Sound, we are grateful for your leadership.

Transportation planning is my profession. I am before the Subcommittee in my role at the Puget Sound Regional Council. My professional experience includes early days at the Federal Highway Administration in Alaska and Washington State. I am also past Director of Transportation Planning for the State of Washington, and I engage in the work of the Transportation Research Board and the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations on the national level.

Puget Sound Background

The central Puget Sound region is composed of four counties in Washington State which include the Seattle/Tacoma/Everett/Bremerton/Bellevue urbanized region. The region is currently home to about 3.5 million people, employment is about 2 million. The region covers roughly 6300 square miles, with vast wilderness, working forests, farmlands, significant waterways, as well as growing cities and towns.

The Puget Sound Regional Council serves the people of King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties, 82 cities and towns, four port districts, and 8 tribal nations — all of whom are joined by state and federal partners, transit agencies, major businesses and civic interests, and neighbors to the north and south and the people of the region — to plan regionally.

Regional transportation planning performed by PSRC reflects the diversity of ways people and goods move within and through the region. This includes attention to safety and preservation, and the efficiency and expansion of the highway and arterial backbone of the system; the operations of state and local ferry systems which include the largest ferry system in the nation; growth in transit systems that are currently experiencing record ridership; generally providing more transportation choices of all types, keeping freight moving within and through a region that is a global gateway and manufacturing center; and securing safe and reliable air transportation to meet growing demand within a regional hub serving many states.

An overview of the Puget Sound Regional Council's organizational structure and major focus areas is provided as **Attachment 1 (PSRC Basics)**. It describes our basic state and federal mandates, how we are organized, and funded. The PSRC has multiple duties under state and federal laws, which focus on ***regional*** land use, transportation and economic development planning.

A major theme is all of the planning of the Regional Council is better integrating land use, environmental, transportation and economic development planning.

As former EPA Administrator William Ruckleshaus, who currently leads efforts in our region to restore the health of the waters of Puget Sound, recently observed: the challenges confronting our region are integrated, and "so too, must be the solutions."

We plan with the understanding that our region's overall prosperity is directly linked to our ability to better meet the transportation needs of a growing population, and growing in ways that respect and sustain the region's outstanding natural environment.

The people of our region have consistently placed high priority addressing traffic congestion, providing more transportation choices, and assuring sustained economic and environmental vitality.

Federal Planning Support

Federal planning programs and policies are fundamentally important to our work. Seventy-four percent of the funding to support planning by PSRC comes from federal planning and research grants. Twenty percent of our support comes from dues paid by local sources. Six percent comes from state grants.

Federal planning funding assures that the region meets the requirements of federal planning laws and policies. But they provide much value beyond that.

Federal planning funds support data development critical to policymaking and planning across the board. Federally funded planning, performed by PSRC, often serves as an important foundation for transportation planning at the state and local levels, in addition to regional planning.

In our region, you can observe the bottom line overall investment outcomes of that federal planning investment: while the overall percentage of federal investment in all transportation has declined over the past 15 or so years, local, state and regional investment in transportation investment is up. My point: federal planning funds directed to this MPO have been foundational to investment decisions that have produced more local and state transportation revenue to meet growing transportation needs. The recent investment history in transportation is described in **Attachment 2 (Investment History)**. What is missing from that data is a reflection of substantial new state fuel tax revenue and additional local transit funding approved by voters post-2005.

In the past decade or so, voters in our region have supported additional state and local transportation investment. Confidence in the overall direction of planning is one underpinning of that support, and in our region, the bulk of resources to support regional planning come from federal sources.

Growth Drives Planning in Central Puget Sound

Growth — past, present and future — is the primary driving force in planning in central Puget Sound. Between 1970 and 2000, the region grew by more than 1.3 million people. Today the region's population is growing at more than twice the national average. By 2040, the region is expected to be home to more than 1.4 million more people and 1.1 million more jobs. That's roughly the equivalent of the Portland Metropolitan area moving into Puget Sound over the next three decades. We also know the make-up of that population will change, we expect our population to age as we grow, impacting travel needs in the future. Overall regional travel demand is expected to grow 55 % by 2040.

Transportation investment has not always kept pace with regional growth. Commuters in the region feel the effects of investments lagging growth each working day. Businesses see the impacts in their bottom lines.

So part of the challenge in transportation planning is to catch up, and also keep up, and get ready for the future.

My testimony will focus on planning integration involving key areas we understand the Subcommittee has interest in: linkages between land use and transportation planning, freight mobility, and approaches to performance based planning.

Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning are Linked at PSRC

Regional planning in central Puget Sound and the state of Washington is founded on comprehensive planning performed by local jurisdictions, cities and counties. The region's growth strategy, VISION 2040, is based on local plans but defines regional interests.

VISION 2040 set the regional stage for how population and employment growth expected through 2040 can be accommodated while protecting our region's natural environment, improving the quality of life, and expanding our economy. It includes an environmental framework, policies to guide local land use plans and the implementation of transportation and other infrastructure programs.

VISION 2040 also sets the framework for development and implementation of the region's federally mandated Metropolitan Transportation Plan ensuring that the regional transportation plan is built on a land use strategy. **Attachment 3 (Regional Growth Strategy — Vision 2040)** describes the region's adopted growth strategy, which supports better jobs/housing balance and more centered population and employment growth.

Project selection for portions of federal Surface Transportation Program, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds administered by the Federal Highway Administration and federal transit funding administered by the Federal Transit Administration, happens at PSRC.

Jurisdictions seeking federal funds via PSRC must have transportation components of comprehensive plans consistent with VISION 2040.

Policy frameworks for project selection are based on policies in VISION 2040, the regional economic strategy, and priorities identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Attachment 4 (Congestion Benefits of Regional Growth Strategy) shows an analysis of how implementing policies contained in VISION 2040 have the potential to move the region better as we grow.

Freight Mobility

Freight is critical to the economic health of the Puget Sound region. The Ports of Seattle and Tacoma combined is the third largest port hub in the nation. These ports serve over $70 billion of imports and exports per year, acting as a gateway to the inland Northwest, the Midwest, and the rest of the nation. **Attachment 5 (The National Gateway Ports of Tacoma and Seattle)** highlights the importance of the Puget Sound ports to the nation's freight system.

In our region, 1 in 3 jobs are tied to trade — but not all of this trade is through the ports. Software and airplanes, both made in our region, are shipped around the world.

The focus of our planning for freight is comprehensive, and addresses three key components: transportation to support our national gateway; freight needed to support our industries; and freight needed to support people's lives — groceries, fuel, and other goods.

Our national gateway needs investments to keep our ports competitive, ensure adequate rail capacity to ship freight, and improvements to speed shipments through our local areas, while minimizing the negative impacts to our local communities. Our gateway interests go way beyond our boundaries. Freight rail capacity constraints in Washington State or further east affect the ability of our ports to effectively serve the nation.

Our planning work engages private shippers, businesses, truckers and railroads, host communities and others to work together to identify the most important freight investments and get them funded. Our FAST Partnership has successfully built 9 projects, leveraging a total investment of $568 million, to help move freight through our region. Many of these projects have successfully matched federal contributions with local, state and private funding to make improvements which benefit our region, and the nation.

Performance Based Planning

With the thought that what gets measured gets managed, the Puget Sound region is taking a new approach in the development of our Metropolitan Transportation Plan. This approach identifies key performance objectives and measures that will help focus our plan, focus our investments, and provide accountability as our plan is implemented. I will mention three examples, among dozens of others:

System preservation is a basic performance element — built off of pavement, bridge, transit and other asset management systems at the state and local levels. Keeping our system in a good state of repair becomes a basic building block of our plan.

The safety of the transportation system is another key performance area. The State of Washington has adopted a safety plan known as Target Zero — proposing a performance objective of zero deaths and disabling injuries on the transportation system by 2030. Our regional plan has embraced this performance objective, and will propose and support strategies and investments to achieve target

zero in our region. **Attachment 6 (Washington's Target Zero Safety Goal)** describes the safety improvement objective for Washington State and the region.

For day to day commuters and freight haulers, growing travel times mean more time away from families, less productivity, and increased costs. Our plan will measure travel times and reliability to ensure that the investments we make will help improve the lives and economies of the region's residents and shippers. **Attachment 7 (Travel Time Measurement)** highlights a key mobility measurement for our region.

Emerging issues for our planning include climate change, energy usage, personal health and a wide range of environmental concerns from the health of Puget Sound to meeting new air quality standards.

Metropolitan Mobility

As we move forward nationally to determine the future of the federal transportation program, I'd like to close by emphasizing the importance of mobility in our metropolitan regions to the ability to compete globally, and the important role that metropolitan planning organizations can play in meeting our nation's transportation challenges.

Metropolitan areas are leaders of the nation's and state's economy. Nationally, metropolitan areas (those areas above 50,000 population) account for 85% of US population, and more than 85% of employment, income and production of goods and services. In Washington, the 11 metropolitan areas represent 74% of the state's population, with the three large metropolitan regions of Central Puget Sound, Spokane, and Vancouver alone representing 62% of the state's population.

The continued growth of our regions' (and therefore our state) economy, and the ability to compete effectively with Shanghai, Bangalore, Dublin, or other regions across the globe, depends on a strong national transportation network, and metropolitan transportation systems that work effectively to move people and goods. Whether it's a Boeing Airplane worker getting to her shift, truck parts being delivered to Paccar to meet the just-in-time assembly schedule, or the ability of bio-technology workers to meet and collaborate, adequate transportation is key.

Our region takes seriously its role under current federal programs to direct the federal highway and federal transit funding we receive for priority projects, many of which leverage state, regional, local or private investments. But we recognize that we must do much more and continuously make planning and mobility outcomes better. We stand ready to help the nation deliver a much larger metropolitan mobility program that, together with state, regional and local funding, can truly begin to meet the transit and roadway investments needed to keep our people and goods moving, and our economy strong.

Thanks again for this opportunity. We look forward to more questions and stand ready to assist in any way as you proceed with the important and complex work of reauthorization of federal transportation programs and policies.

Attachment 1: PSRC Basics
Attachment 2: Investment History
Attachment 3: Regional Growth Strategy — Vision 2040
Attachment 4: Congestion Benefits of Regional Growth Strategy
Attachment 5: The National Gateway Ports of Tacoma and Seattle
Attachment 6: Washington's Target Zero Safety Goal
Attachment 7: Travel Time Measurement

Attachment 1 – PSRC Basics

Puget Sound Regional Council

Getting ready for the future

The mission of the Puget Sound Regional Council is to play a key regional role in keeping central Puget Sound thriving as we grow. PSRC is committed to creating a great future for the region through planning for regional transportation, land use and economic development, under authority embodied in state and federal laws.

Working together

At PSRC, central Puget Sound counties (King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap), cities and towns, ports, tribes, transit agencies, and the state work together to develop policies and make decisions about regional issues.

Regional decisions informed by solid research and collaboration

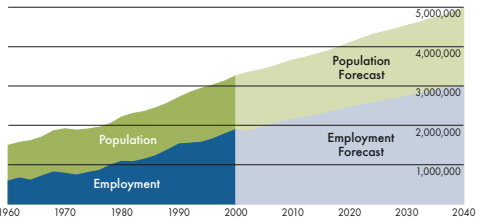
PSRC works with local government, business and citizens to build a common vision for the region's future, expressed through three connected major activities: VISION 2040, the region's growth strategy; Destination 2030, the region's comprehensive long-range transportation plan; and Prosperity Partnership, which develops and advances the region's economic strategy.

VISION 2040 is the region's strategy for addressing anticipated growth of population and employment through 2040. VISION 2040 describes how and where we can grow while also supporting the well-being of people and communities, economic prosperity and a healthy environment.

Destination 2030 is the region's long-range transportation plan. PSRC is now updating the plan, extending it to 2040 and evaluating ways to keep the region moving as the population grows.

Prosperity Partnership, via the PSRC's Economic Development Board, has convened over 250 public and private groups to develop and advance a regional economic strategy to enhance the region's economic vitality.

STAY CONNECTED: *Find out about PSRC activities online at psrc.org. Or subscribe to the monthly Regional VIEW newsletter by calling 206-464-7090.*



PSRC Data: PSRC is a rich data resource for the entire region – providing the data tools required to plan for the long term and inform decisions made every day. PSRC forecasts, shown above, anticipate the region will have 1.4 million more residents and 1.1 million more jobs by 2040 (based on year 2000 totals).

PSRC Funding: PSRC distributes about $160 million in federal transportation funds each year. One example, shown above: SR 99 projects funded by PSRC are helping ease traffic and transit flow and improve safety along this key state highway.

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Puget Sound Regional Council

Regional Leadership

Deputy Mayor Sue Singer
City of Auburn
PSRC President

Mayor Ray Stephanson
City of Everett
PSRC Vice President and
Chair, Operations Committee

Councilmember John Chelminiak
City of Bellevue
Chair, Economic Development District

Deputy Mayor Mike Lonergan
City of Tacoma
Chair, Growth Management
Policy Board

Councilmember Julia Patterson
King County
Chair, Transportation Policy Board

Bob Drewel
PSRC Executive Director

EXECUTIVE BOARD

Deputy Mayor Sue Singer
City of Auburn, Other Cities in King County
President – PSRC

Mayor Ray Stephanson
City of Everett
Vice President and Chair, Operations Committee – PSRC

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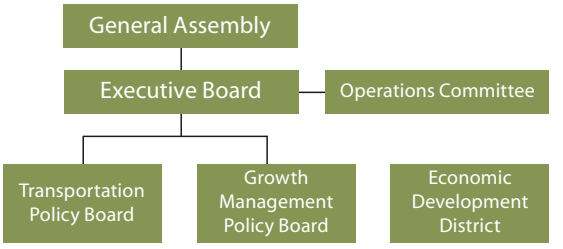
Mayor Linda Bird, *City of University Place – Other Cities in Pierce County*
Commissioner Josh Brown, *Kitsap County*
Councilmember Shawn Bunney, *Pierce County*
Councilmember Mary-Alyce Burleigh, *City of Kirkland – Other Cities in King County*
Councilmember Richard Conlin, *City of Seattle*
Mayor Suzette Cooke, *City of Kent*
Commissioner Patricia Davis, *Port of Seattle*
Councilmember Jan Drago, *City of Seattle*
Secretary Paula Hammond, *WA State Dept. of Transportation*
Councilmember Ron Hansen, *City of Shoreline – Other Cities in King County*
Councilmember Bruce Harrell, *City of Seattle*
Councilmember Linda Kochmar, *City of Federal Way*
Mayor Darlene Kordonowy, *City of Bainbridge Island – Other Cities in Kitsap County*
Executive John Ladenburg, *Pierce County*
Mayor Denis Law, *City of Renton*
Councilmember Mike Lonergan, *City of Tacoma*
Commissioner Bill Mahan, *Port of Bremerton*
Mayor Joe Marine, *City of Mukilteo – Other Cities in Snohomish County*
Commissioner Richard P. Marzano, *Port of Tacoma*
Councilmember Richard McIver, *City of Seattle*
Councilmember Sally Nelson, *City of Burien – Other Cities in King County*
Mayor Greg Nickels, *City of Seattle*
Commissioner Connie Niva, *Port of Everett*
Councilmember Phil Noble, *City of Bellevue*
Commissioner Dan O'Neal – *WA State Transp. Commission*
Councilmember Julia Patterson, *King County*
Councilmember Sonny Putter, *City of Newcastle – Other Cities in King County*
Executive Aaron Reardon, *Snohomish County*
Executive Ron Sims, *King County*
Councilmember Dave Somers, *Snohomish County*

PSRC Leadership and Organization

PSRC is governed by a General Assembly and an Executive Board. Each member of PSRC is a voting member of the **General Assembly**, which meets at least annually to vote on major decisions, establish the budget, and elect new officers. The **Executive Board** is chaired by the PSRC President, meets monthly, and serves as the governing board. Both the General Assembly and Executive Board use weighted votes based on population to make decisions.

The **Transportation Policy Board** and **Growth Management Policy Board** include representatives of PSRC's member jurisdictions, tribes, regional business, labor, civic, and environmental groups, as well as voting members representing each caucus of the state Legislature. These boards make recommendations on key transportation and growth management issues to the Executive Board.



PSRC also supports the work of the region's **Economic Development District**, governed by a board composed of public and private members that meets quarterly to coordinate regional economic development planning.

Budget and Funding Sources

The two-year budget (July 1, 2007 to June 30, 2009) for PSRC is $23.7 million. The agency receives 74 percent of its revenue from federal grants, 6 percent from state grants, and the remaining 20 percent from dues paid by PSRC members and from other local sources.

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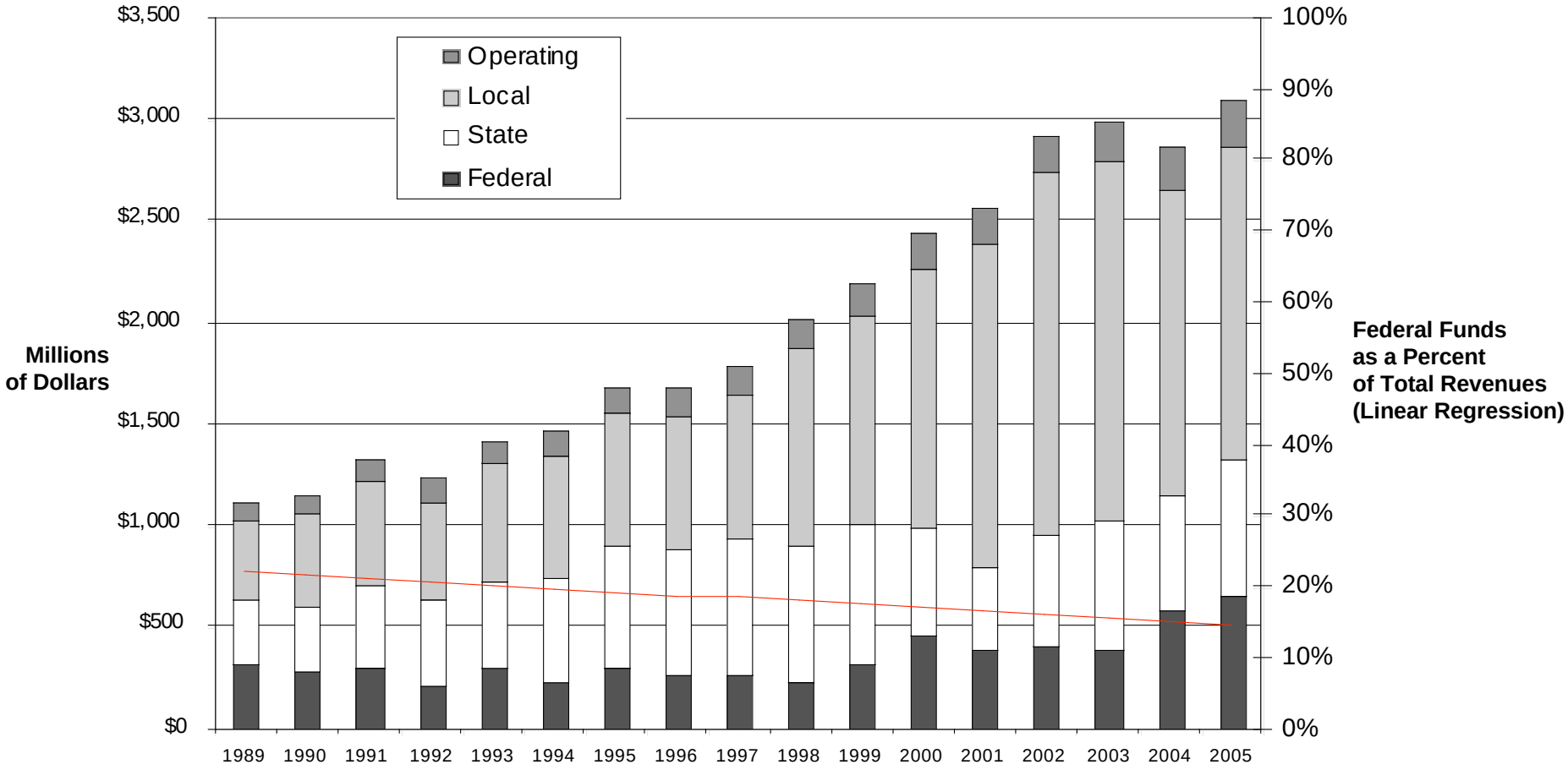
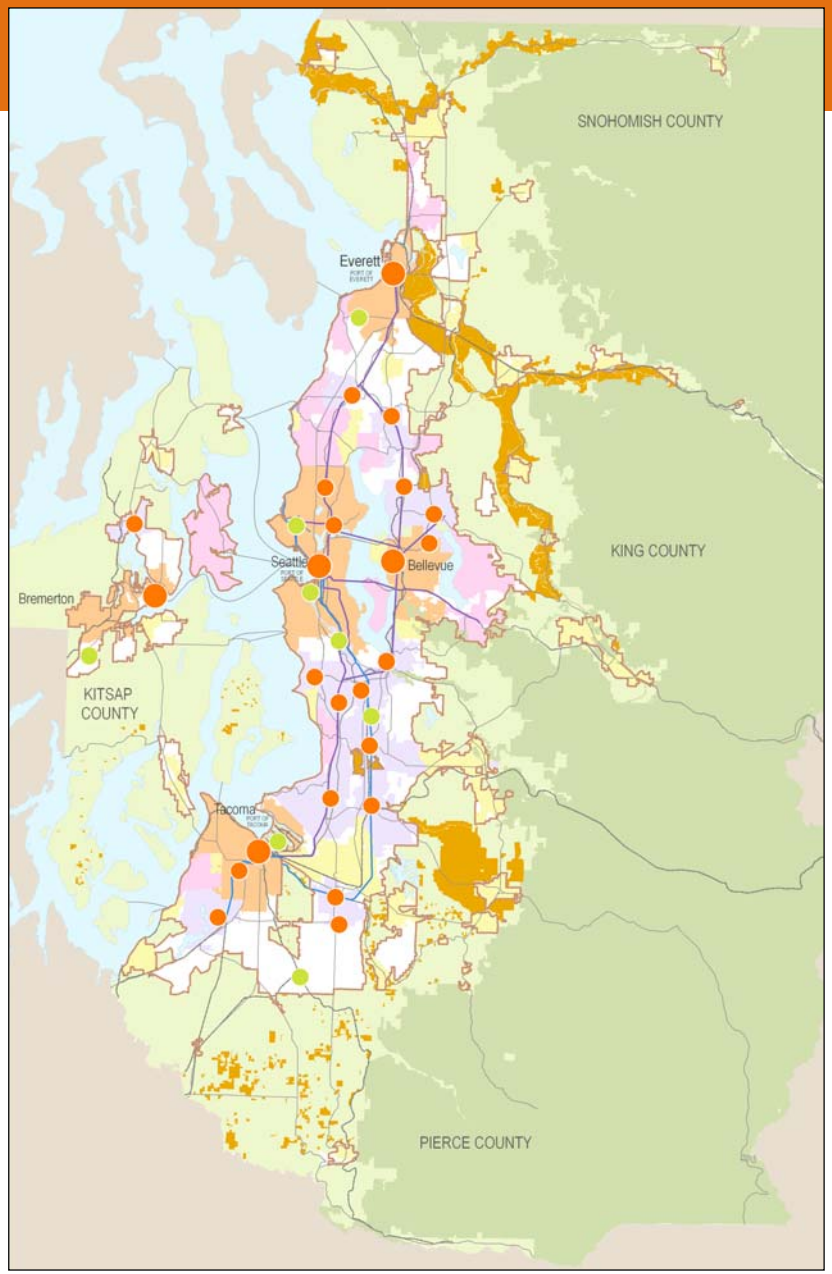
Attachment 2: Investment History

Transportation Revenue Sources for All Regional Uses*, 1989-2005



* City, County, Transit Operators, State Ferries, and Highways

Attachment 3: Regional Growth Strategy — VISION 2040

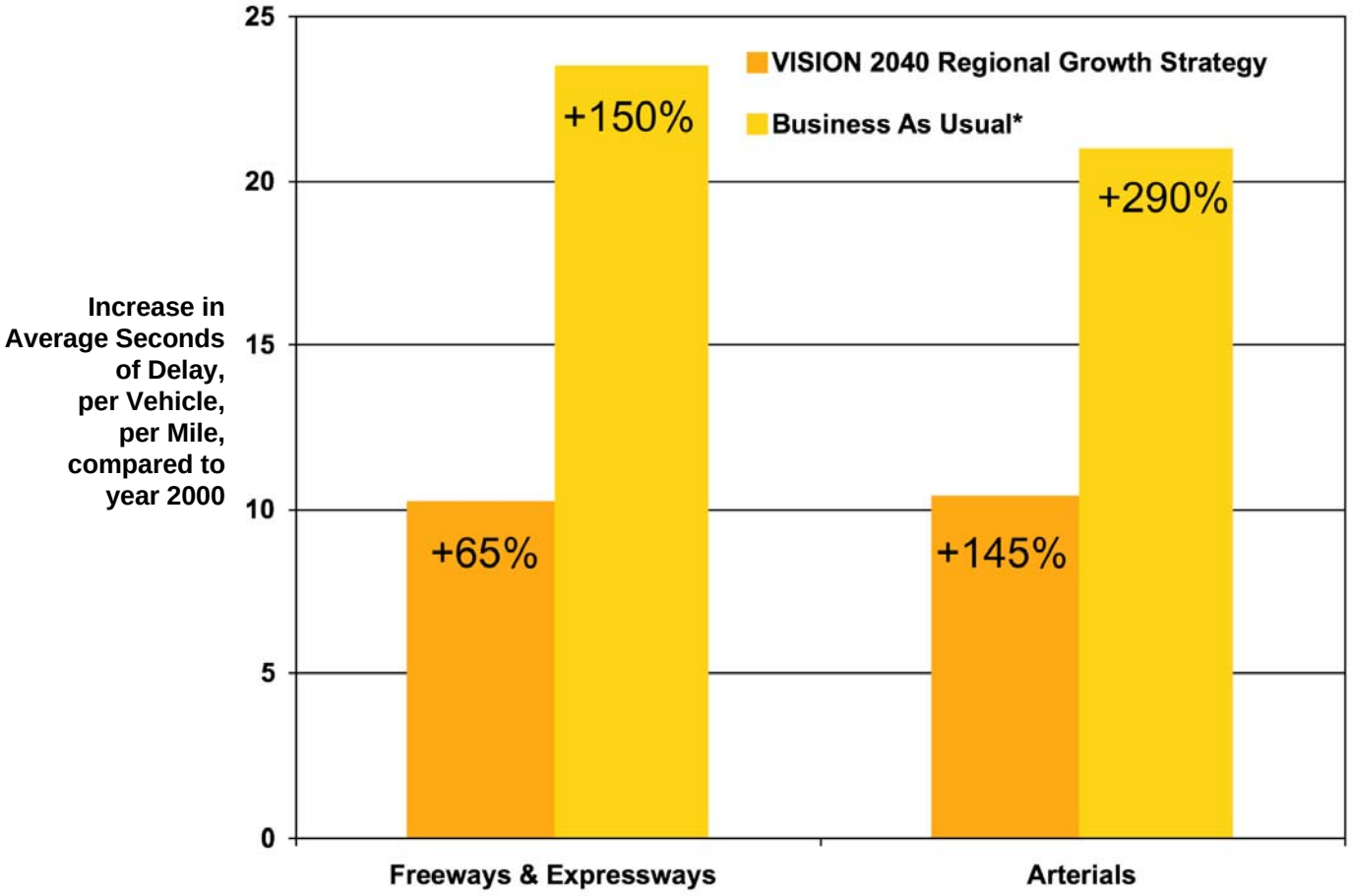


PSRC

Attachment 4: Congestion Benefits of Regional Growth Strategy

Land Use Matters: Forecasts – Change from 2000 to 2040

a concentrated growth pattern and better jobs/housing balance reduces overall freeway and arterial congestion



Source:
PSRC, VISION 2040 EIS

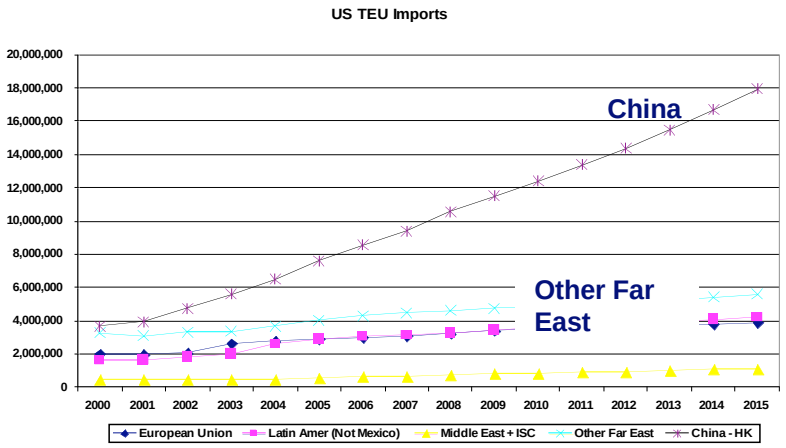
*Growth Targets
Extended Alternative

Attachment 5: The National Gateway Ports of Tacoma and Seattle

Washington as a Global Gateway: Central Puget Sound Ports of Tacoma and Seattle

- **Combined 3rd largest container port in nation**
- **Projected 73% increase in containers by 2025**
- **$56.7 B in Imports (2007)**
- **$15.3 B in Exports (2007)**
- **Serves Chicago and other eastern US destinations**

China dominates US trade growth:



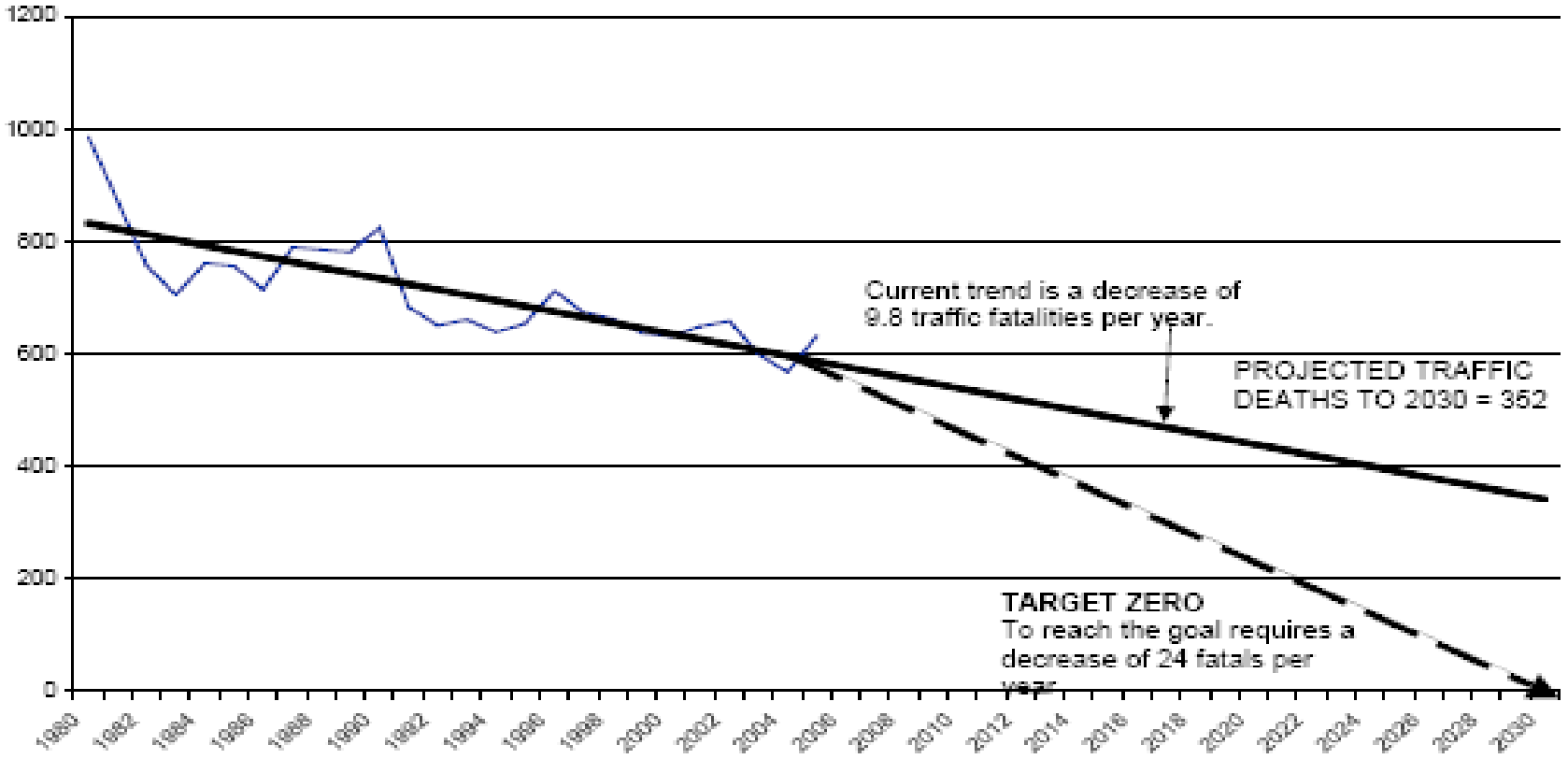
Attachment 6: Washington's Target Zero Safety Goal

Regional Performance Measures: Zero Deaths and Disabling Injuries

Traffic Deaths WA 1980-2005 — Projected to 2030

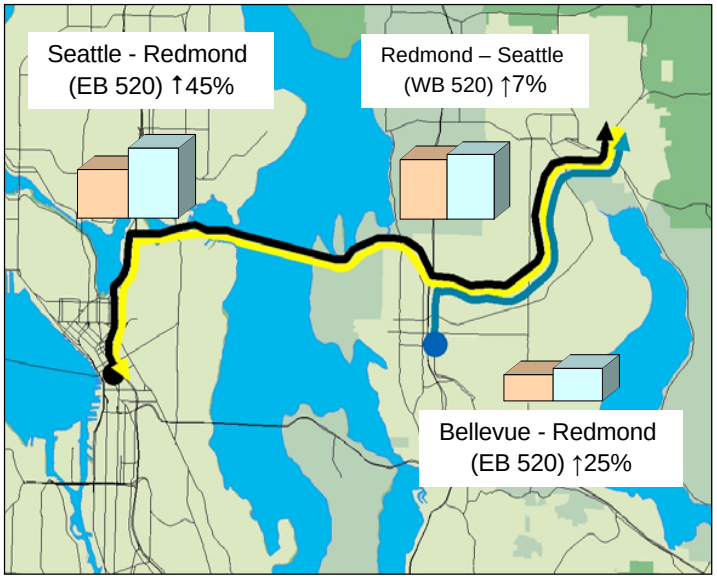
(preliminary data for 2005, Source: FARS)

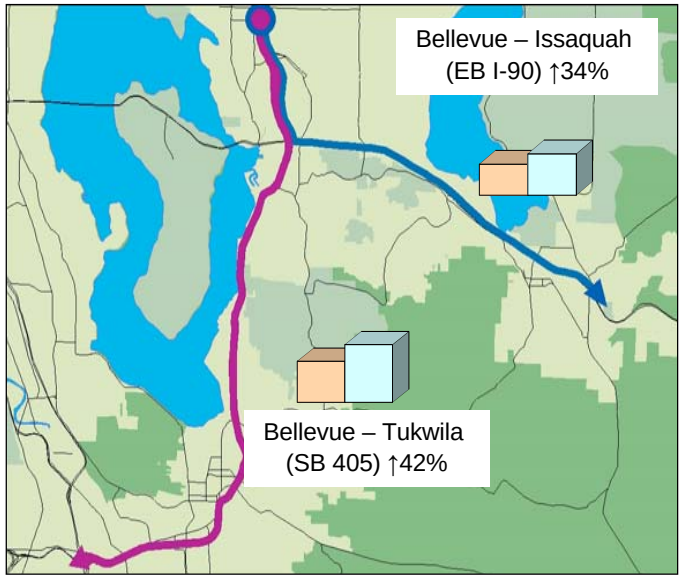
Prepared by WTSC, April 2006

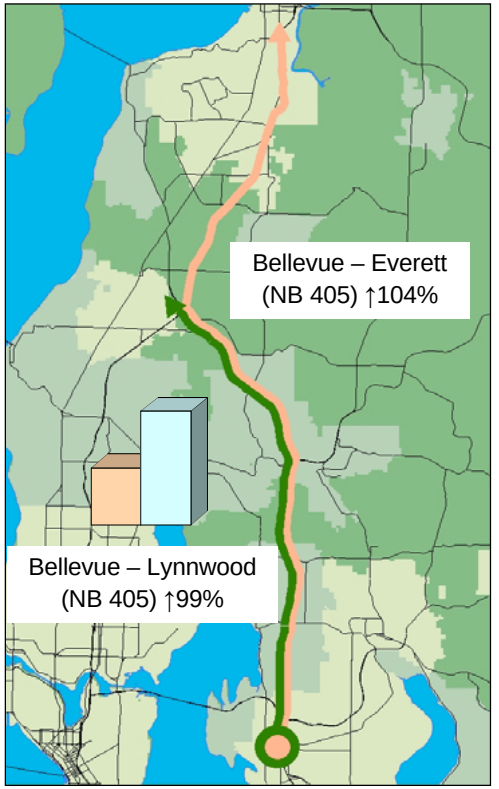


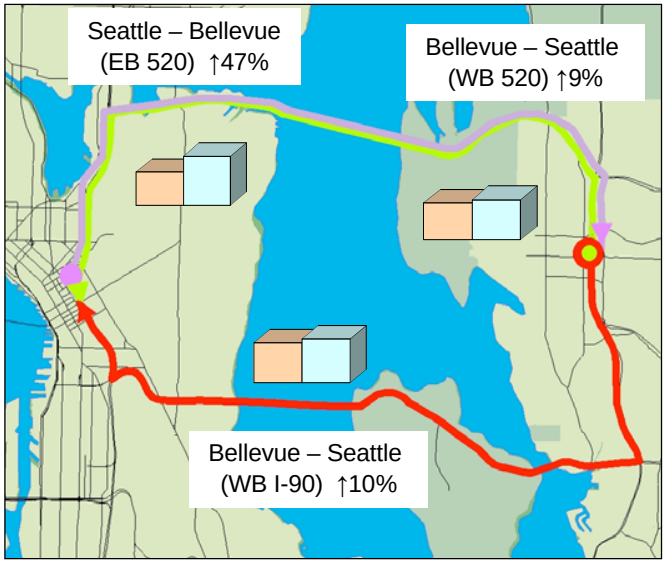
Attachment 7: Travel Time Measurement

Regional Performance Measures: Commute and Freight Delivery Travel Times (with no new investment)









	2006 Observed (minutes)	2040 Forecasted (minutes)
Seattle to Redmond	**30**	**43**
Redmond to Seattle	**37**	**40**
Bellevue to Redmond	**15**	**19**
Seattle to Bellevue via SR-520	**21**	**31**
Bellevue to Seattle via SR-520	**26**	**28**
Bellevue to Seattle via I-90	**28**	**31**
Bellevue to Issaquah	**19**	**25**
Bellevue to Tukwila	**33**	**47**
Bellevue to Lynnwood	**32**	**64**
Bellevue to Everett	**44**	**90**

= 2006 Observed Travel Times

= 2040 Forecasted Travel Times

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