IV. Transportation

A. Transportation Overview

RCW 36.70A.070(6) Growth Management Act fundamentally changes the way that comprehensive planning will be done within the State of Washington. The Act places special emphasis on transportation making it unlawful to approve development for which the approving jurisdiction cannot demonstrate the availability of facilities, strategies and services which are needed to accommodate the growth in traffic at the adopted level-of-service within six years. Future development activity will be constrained by a jurisdiction’s ability to finance and provide transportation improvements or strategies. This fact has some very significant implications for all jurisdictions which are dependent upon the region’s transportation systems because:

1. Projected traffic growth on the freeway and arterial system within the region greatly exceeds the foreseeable collective ability to finance and construct the improvements needed to retain historical levels-of-service.

2. Maintaining the current level of personal mobility by single-occupant vehicles will be a costly public investment that will negatively impact the regional quality of life, create severe impacts to sensitive areas, degrade environmental quality, and increase energy use and the consumption of land.

3. Development within any one jurisdiction can be severely impacted by decisions and actions beyond that jurisdiction’s control:
   - Washington State Department of Transportation may be unable to program improvements concurrent with a jurisdiction’s approval of a development permit.
   - METRO may not be able to respond to transit levels-of-service adopted by local jurisdictions.
   - A jurisdiction may adopt level-of-service standards for arterials within its jurisdiction and decline to accept improvements necessary to mitigate transportation impacts from a proposed development in an adjoining jurisdiction.
   - Cumulative growth throughout the region will cause traffic growth on the existing network and may thereby exhaust the capacity for local jurisdictions to approve development.

In light of these financial constraints and potential dangers, it will be necessary to undertake a dramatically different approach for both transportation planning and land use planning than has been done in the past. This is necessary if the region is to avoid haphazard denials of development permits following the July 1994 deadline for implementing ordinances. In order to limit sprawl, create the desired urban form, and provide some measure of predictability for landowners and developers, the region’s scarce resources for transportation capacity improvements must be used prudently to focus on areas where zoning and densities support a multi-modal transportation system. System capacity investments should be targeted first to those areas
where the existing land use and transportation system provides some hope of achieving the desired multi-modal level-of-service within six years.

B. Transportation Policies

FW-18 The land use pattern shall be supported by a balanced transportation system, which provides for a variety of mobility options, including 1) a high-capacity transit system that links the Urban Centers; 2) a system of bus and other transit modes that links Centers, provides circulation within the Centers, and links to the non-center Urban Areas; 3) a high-occupancy vehicle system that links Urban Centers; and 4) non-motorized travel options.

FW-19 The County and cities should work cooperatively with the Puget Sound Regional Council, the State, and other relevant agencies to finance and develop a balanced transportation system that enhances regional mobility and reinforces the Countywide vision for managing growth. The Vision 2040 Regional Growth Strategy shall be recognized as the framework for creating a regional system of Centers linked by high-capacity transit and an interconnected system of freeway high-occupancy vehicle lanes, and supported by a system of bus and other transit options.

FW-20 In recognition of the fact that King County is the regional freight distribution hub and a major international trade gateway, and that freight transportation is one of the state’s most important basic sector economic activities, goods mobility by all modes shall be included as a component of comprehensive plans.

T-1 The Countywide transportation system shall promote the mobility of people and goods and shall be a multi-modal system based on regional priorities consistent with adopted land use plans. The transportation system shall include the following:

a. An aggressive transit system, including high-capacity transit;
b. High-occupancy vehicle facilities;
c. Freight railroad networks;
d. Marine transportation facilities and navigable waterways;
e. Airports;
f. Transportation Demand Management actions;
g. Non-motorized facilities; and
h. Freeways, highways, and arterials.

T-2 King County, its cities, adjacent counties, METRO, and the Washington State Department of Transportation shall support the continuous, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council pursuant to its Metropolitan Planning Organization designation. The primary forum for the development of regional transportation systems plans and strategies shall be the Puget Sound Regional Council, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization.
T-3  The annual update and approval of the six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) by the Puget Sound Regional Council should be the primary tool for prioritizing regional transportation improvements and programming regional transportation revenues.

T-4  The Growth Management Planning Council or its successor shall have the ongoing responsibility for the following:

a. Developing and maintaining coordinated level-of-service standards and a concurrency system for Countywide transit routes and arterial streets, including state facilities;

b. Developing regionally consistent policies for implementing Countywide Transportation Demand Management actions and the Commute Trip Reduction Act including, but not limited to, parking policies, with an examination of price as a determinant of demand; and

c. Developing and recommending transportation financing strategies, including recommendations for prioritizing capacity improvements eligible to receive federal funds available to the region under the Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

1. **High Capacity Transit/Regional Transit Project (HCT/RTP)**

T-5  Each Urban Center will be providing for a minimum of 15,000 jobs and should be served by high-capacity transit. Each Manufacturing Center containing a minimum of 15,000 jobs and having sufficient employment densities to support high-capacity transit should be served by high-capacity transit. All jurisdictions that would be served by high-capacity transit shall plan for needed high-capacity transit rights-of-way, stations and station supportive transportation facilities and land uses in their comprehensive plans. The land use and transportation elements of comprehensive plans shall incorporate a component to reflect future improvement needs for high-capacity transit. Interim regional transit service should be provided to Centers until the Center is served by high-capacity transit. If voters do not approve high-capacity transit local option taxes, jurisdictions shall address this implication in the reassessment phase.

T-6  Washington State Department of Transportation should assign a high priority to completion of the core high-occupancy vehicle lanes in the central Puget Sound region. King County, its cities, and METRO Council representatives on the Transportation Policy and Executive Boards of the Puget Sound Regional Council shall make completion of this system a high priority in programming the federal funds available to the region.

2. **Non-motorized Transportation**

T-7  The transportation element of Comprehensive Plans shall include pedestrian and bicycle travel as part of the transportation system and be developed on a coordinated,
regional basis. The bicycle and pedestrian element shall be a part of the funding component of the capital improvement program.

3. **Freeways/Highways/Arterials**

   **T-8** In order to maintain regional mobility, a balanced multi-modal transportation system shall be planned that includes freeway, highway and arterial improvements by making existing roads more efficient. These improvements should help alleviate existing traffic congestion problems, enhance high-occupancy vehicle and transit operations, and provide access to new desired growth areas, as identified in adopted land use plans. General capacity improvements promoting only single-occupant vehicle traffic shall be a lower priority. Transportation plans should consider the following mobility options/needs:

   a. Arterial high-occupancy vehicle treatments;
   b. Driveway access management for principal arterials within the Urban Growth Area; and
   c. Improvements needed for access to Manufacturing and Industrial Centers, marine and air terminals.

   **FW-21** Infrastructure planning and financing shall be coordinated among jurisdictions to direct and prioritize Countywide facility improvements to implement the Countywide vision and land use plans.

   **FW-22** Where appropriate, King County and its cities shall adopt a clear definition of level-of-service and concurrency requirements and establish a consistent process for implementing concurrency, including accountability for impacts for adjacent jurisdictions.

   **FW-23** Each jurisdiction shall identify the facilities needed to ensure that services are provided consistent with the community’s adopted service levels. Timelines for the construction of the needed facilities shall be identified.

4. **Transportation Level-of-Service (LOS)**

   **T-9** Level-of-service standards shall be used as a “tool” to evaluate concurrency for long-range transportation planning, development review and programming of transportation investments.

   **T-10** Each local jurisdiction shall establish mode-split goals for non-single-occupancy vehicle travel to all significant employment centers to reflect that center’s contribution to the solution of the region’s transportation problem. Mode-split goals will vary according to development densities, access to transit service and other alternative travel modes and levels of congestion. Comprehensive plans shall demonstrate what transportation system improvements, demand management and land use strategies will
be implemented to achieve these mode-split goals. These local goals shall be coordinated to achieve County and regional goals.

T-11 Elements to be considered in the level-of-service standard are mobility options that encourage the use of transit, other high-occupancy vehicles, demand management actions, access to transit, and non-motorized modes of travel. These standards shall be consistent with the requirements of the Commute Trip Reduction Act.

T-12 Mode split goals and measures of mobility for transit, ridesharing and non-motorized travel shall be established by local jurisdictions and METRO.

T-13 Level-of-service standards shall vary by differing levels of development patterns and growth management objectives. Lower arterial standards, tolerating more congestion, shall be established for Urban Centers. Transit level-of-service standards may focus on higher service levels in and between Centers and decrease as population and employment densities decrease.

T-14 In support of countywide growth management objectives, prioritize transit service throughout the county to areas where existing housing and employment densities support transit ridership and to Urban Centers and other areas planned for housing and employment densities that will support transit ridership. In allocating transit service, strive to meet the mobility needs of transit-dependent populations and provide at least a basic level of service to all urban areas of the county.

5. Reassessment

T-15 Local governments shall work together to reassess regional land use and transportation elements if transportation adequacy and concurrency cannot be met. Should funding fall short for transportation improvements or strategies needed to accommodate growth, the following actions should be considered:

a. Adjust land use and level-of-service standards to better achieve mobility and the regional vision;

b. Make full use of all feasible local option transportation revenues authorized but not yet implemented; and

c. Work with Washington State Department of Transportation, METRO, and the private sector to seek additional State transportation revenues and local options to make system improvements necessary to accommodate projected employment and population growth.

6. Financing

T-16 Transportation elements of Comprehensive Plans shall reflect the preservation and maintenance of transportation facilities as a high priority to avoid costly replacements and to meet public safety objectives in a cost-effective manner.
T-17  Developer impact fees shall be structured to ensure that new development contributes its fair share of the resources needed to mitigate the impact on the transportation system. Adjoining jurisdictions shall execute interlocal agreements for impact fees which recognize that traffic generated in one jurisdiction contributes to the need to make transportation improvements across jurisdictional boundaries. Impact fees shall not be assessed to cure that portion of the improvement attributable to correcting existing deficiencies.

T-18  Existing local option transportation funding shall be applied within King County as follows:

a. Employee tax base—reserved for city street utility development;
b. Commercial parking tax—defer action, pending development of a regional Transportation Demand Management strategy;
c. High-occupancy vehicle acceleration financing—defer until after high-capacity transit vote; and
d. Local option gas tax—consider as potential source to address transportation “concurrency” needs of County and cities only after vote on high-capacity transit.

T-19  Regional revenues (such as Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act funds) which provide discretion should be used to address regional mobility projects and strategies, including such strategies as creating Centers or enhancing transit/high-occupancy vehicle single-occupancy vehicle mode-split.

7. State Transportation Role

T-20  Consistent with the Countywide vision, local governments shall coordinate with the State on land use and transportation systems and strategies which affect State facilities and programs.

T-21  State capital improvement decisions and policy actions shall be consistent with regional and Countywide goals and plans. The State shall ensure its transportation capital improvement decisions and programs support the adopted land use plans and transportation actions.

T-22  The State and local governments shall use the same capital programming and budgeting time frame that all local governments and the County use, a minimum of six years, for making capital decisions and for concurrency management.

8. Siting Regional and Countywide Transportation Facilities

T-23  King County, the cities, the Puget Sound Regional Council, the State, METRO, and other transportation providers shall identify significant regional and/or Countywide land acquisition needs for transportation and establish a process for prioritizing and siting the location of transportation facilities.