

# Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan: The Development of a Successful Interjurisdictional Road Improvement Implementation Plan

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Rapid suburban population and employment growth accompanied by increasing traffic congestion and general shrinkage of the traditional funding sources for road improvements is a common story across the country. This theme is being played out in south King County, south of Seattle, Washington. To get the road improvement implementation process moving, the Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan (GRVTAP) was developed. GRVTAP is a multijurisdictional implementation and financing plan for road improvement projects in the Green River Valley area. It was developed by the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG) in cooperation with the cities of Renton, Kent, Auburn, and Tukwila, King County, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). The GRVTAP effort included two steps, a valley-wide traffic analysis and the development of a unified multi-jurisdictional implementation and financing plan. The main purpose of the traffic analysis was to ensure that the various road improvement projects identified by the participating jurisdictions would work effectively with one another. Development of the implementation plan included a financial analysis to examine the availability of funding from all existing and potential sources. The Action Plan has been adopted by resolution by the councils of each of the participating jurisdictions. GRVTAP has also served as the catalyst for the formation of an organization of private sector interests whose stated purpose is to assist in the funding and implementation of valley road improvements.

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The Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan study area (Figure 1) has been one of the fastest growing parts of the Seattle, Washington, metropolitan area for the last 20 years. Before the mid-1960s, urban development in the Green River Valley, which forms the center of the study area, had been restricted by frequent flooding and ponding during the winter. As a result, the valley had remained largely rural and unincorporated despite its proximity to the highly industrialized Duwamish Valley in Seattle. Agriculture was the dominant form of land use, with truck farms and pasture for dairy cattle predominating. Urban uses were concentrated in the city of Renton along the shore of Lake Washington at the extreme north end of the valley, outside the flood-prone area. After a flood control dam and the first portion of a planned valley-wide

drainage system were completed, the cities of Renton, Tukwila, Kent, and Auburn moved quickly to annex most of the unincorporated land and zone a large share of it for employment uses.

The Green River Valley soon proved to be very attractive to developers. Lying between Seattle and Tacoma, the region offered thousands of acres of level land in large parcels with easy access to the marine port facilities of the ports of Seattle and Tacoma, Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, and two transcontinental rail lines. In contrast, large parcels of undeveloped land were hard to find and much higher priced in Seattle's Duwamish Valley, which is only a few miles to the north. By the early 1970s, two new Boeing plants, the state's biggest shopping center, a number of large distribution facilities, and several business and industrial parks had been constructed on sites scattered throughout the valley. Employment in the region rose from 35,000 in 1965 to 54,000 in 1970.

Although some residential development occurred on the valley floor, employment uses predominated. Home builders were much more active on the plateaus that flank the valley and form the eastern and western borders of the study area. During this period, many single-family and multiple-family residential developments were built in the unincorporated communities of Federal Way and Highline on the west and Soos Creek on the east. The development of the Soos Creek Plateau, in particular, had a large effect on roads in the study area. Because very few jobs were located in Soos Creek, most of its residents had to travel to or through the valley to get to work. This created a pattern of east-west travel across the Green River Valley that continues to be a major factor today.

Both residential and commercial developers benefited from the very active federal, state, and local road-building programs under way at the time. During the late 1960s, Interstate highways were constructed along the west edge of the Green River Valley and across its northern end. The state built one freeway up the middle of the valley and another across its southern end. In 1968 the state launched a \$100 million grant program for urban arterials across the state, a measure that was complemented by a voter-approved \$80 million county-wide program. Funds from these two programs played an important role in replacing the valley's rural roads with the beginnings of an urban arterial system and in constructing arterials in Highline, Federal Way, and Soos Creek. Property owners also

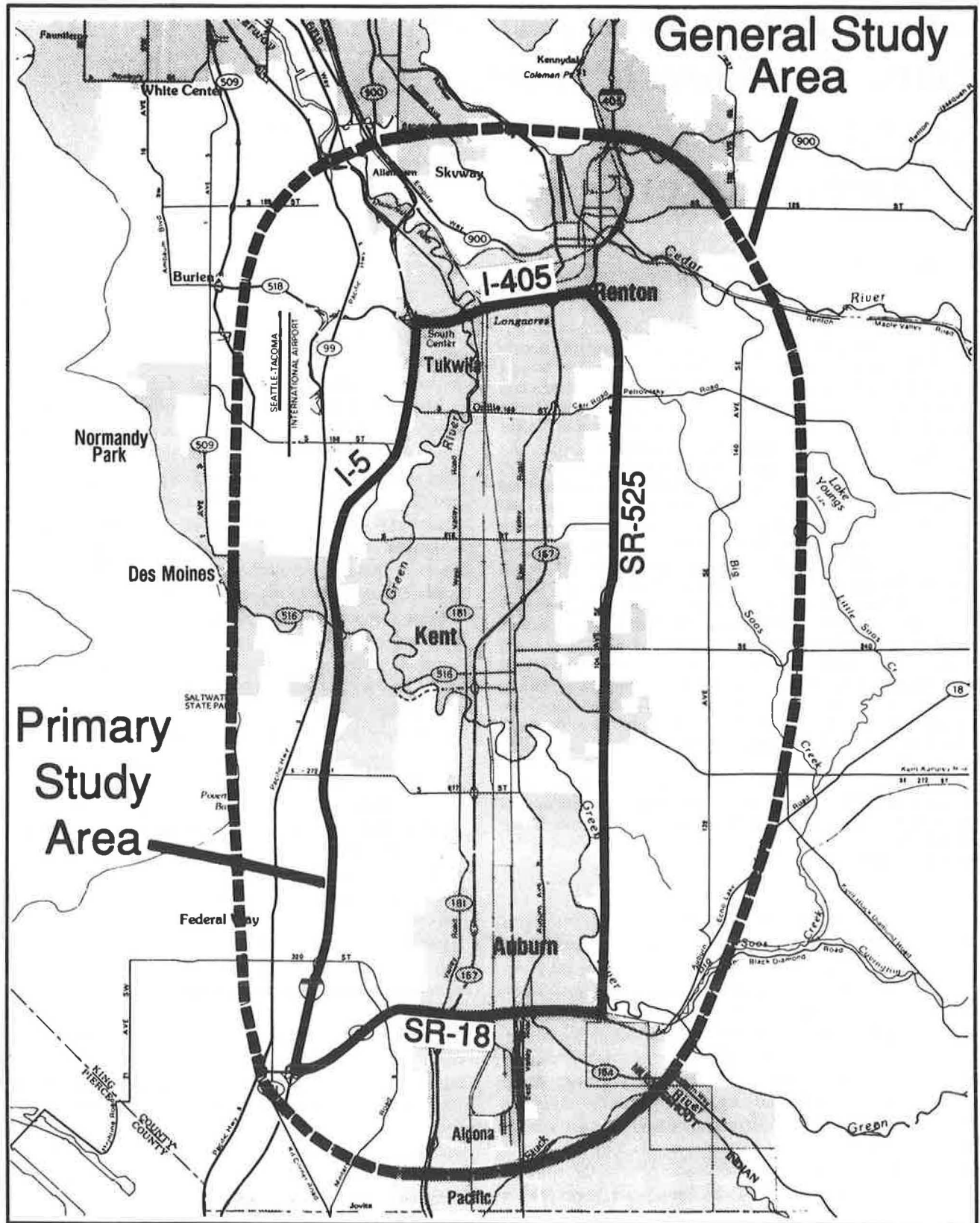


FIGURE 1 GRVTAP study area.

provided a share of the funding for many valley arterials through property assessments that were paid to local improvement districts.

The study area's growth rate slowed during the early and mid-1970s. The economy of the Seattle area was hit by a major recession after Boeing, the region's major employer, made big reductions in its work force. At the same time, the region's transportation policies were revised in response to increased environmental concerns and energy shortages. The authors of the new policies expected transit, ridesharing, and transportation system management techniques to meet most of the region's future transportation needs. Road and highway construction, especially in new corridors, was de-emphasized. The combination of the recession, new transportation policies, and competition from other public needs led to a dramatic decline in state and federal funding for projects in the study area and an increased dependence on local sources. This change in the funding picture was to have major consequences during the next phase of the study area's development.

The Seattle area's economy pulled out of its severe recession in 1977, led by improved sales at Boeing and a boom in service jobs. Since then, study area population and employment have been growing rapidly. Thousands of new homes have been built, and millions of square feet of office, warehouse, and retail space have been added. Forecasts indicate that the growth will continue through the end of the century.

Figures 2 and 3 show the 1980 and 2000 distribution of population and employment in the study area. Currently, there are about 385,000 people and some 185,000 jobs in the study area and the surrounding areas. Highline and Federal Way, on the west, account for half the study area population and have the highest densities, but these areas have relatively little vacant land for new residential development. The Soos Creek Plateau, on the other hand, accounts for only about a quarter of the study area population currently but is forecast to receive over half of the population growth because it still has large tracts of vacant land. By the end of the century, the population of the study area and the surrounding areas is expected to reach 480,000, and employment is forecast to grow to 260,000.

Almost two thirds of the employment in the study area is located in the Green River Valley, with most of the remaining jobs located in Highline and Federal Way. In the future, the valley is expected to continue to be the location for most new employment. Employment growth will be particularly heavy in the northern portion of the valley, in and around Tukwila, where employment is forecast to increase from 60,000 to 90,000.

Not surprisingly, the growing number of people and jobs has caused a large increase in traffic volumes and worsening congestion on the road system. This system was not designed to serve the volumes of traffic that exist even today, and its north-south orientation is not capable of serving the growing east-west travel patterns. Ten years ago, I-405, across the north end of the Green River Valley, was the only facility that was consistently congested during peak hours. Today, congestion occurs at many points on arterials and freeways in and around the Green River Valley, sometimes for several hours in the morning and evening. Transit has had some success in attracting commuters headed for high-density destinations, especially

downtown Seattle. However, most employment in the study area is located in relatively low-density clusters on sites that are frequently not easy to reach by a transit bus. As a consequence, transit ridership to most points in the study area is low, and the overwhelming majority of workers rely on their own automobiles to travel to and from work.

Despite the increasing congestion and the limited success in attracting the commuters to transit, relatively little has been done to add capacity to the road and freeway network since the early 1970s. The lack of east-west capacity is especially critical. Currently, the state has no plans for improvements in the valley beyond the addition of high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) lanes on the two Interstate highways. The four valley cities and King County have made plans for improvements, but these jurisdictions have lacked the funding needed to build more than a few major projects. They have also had difficulty coordinating and prioritizing the many planned improvements that involve more than a single valley jurisdiction.

The inability to move beyond the planning phase to implementation and the difficulty that the four valley cities and King County were having in presenting a united front in support of valley transportation improvements caused frustrated citizens, business leaders, and elected officials to call for a new approach. They wanted to integrate existing local plans, identify and prioritize projects of valley-wide concern, develop options for financing them, enhance the valley's collective political clout, and most of all, begin construction of the major projects. This environment gave birth to the Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan.

## GREEN RIVER VALLEY TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

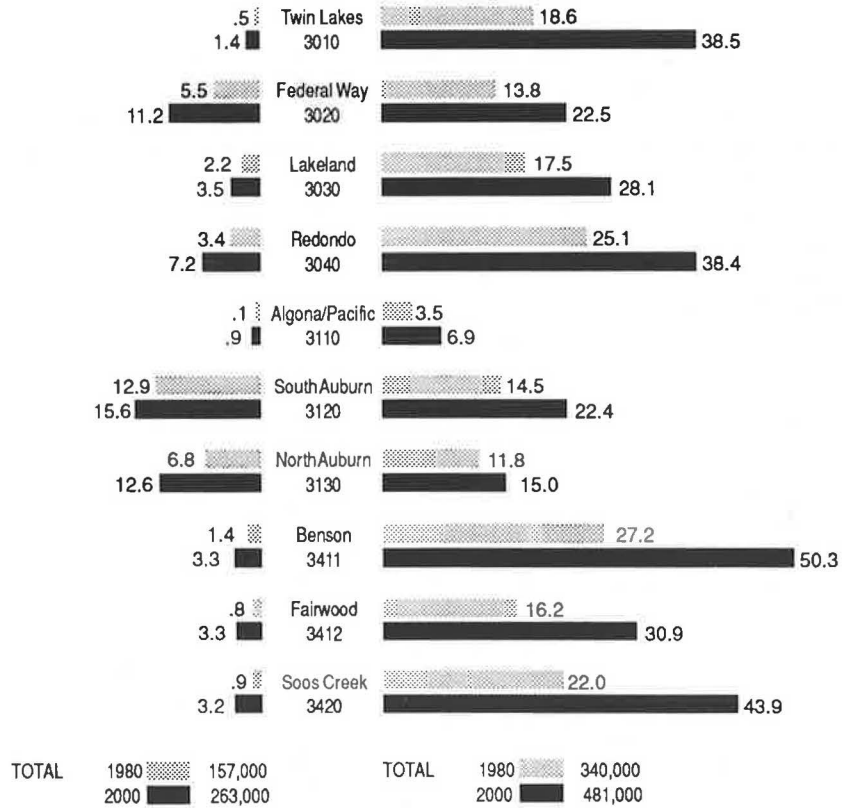
The Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan (GRVTAP) is a multijurisdictional implementation and financing plan for road improvement projects in the Green River Valley. Most of the road improvement projects included in GRVTAP have been identified over the past several years by the various Green River Valley jurisdictions, their consultants, the state, and other ad hoc groups, such as the South King County Roads Task Force.

The GRVTAP was developed by the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG) in cooperation with the cities of Renton, Kent, Auburn, and Tukwila, King County, and the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). Plan development was directed by the Valley Transportation Committee (VTC), whose membership includes elected officials and high-level staff from each of the participating jurisdictions and agencies. Policy oversight was also provided by PSCOG's King Subregional Council.

The GRVTAP effort included two steps, a valley-wide traffic analysis, and the development of a unified multijurisdictional implementation and financing plan, or "Action Plan." Numerous transportation studies and analyses focusing on various portions of the valley had been done in the past few years, and there was real antipathy toward the idea of doing "another study." However, no comprehensive analysis of the valley transportation system and all of the proposed road improvements had ever been done. The main purpose of the GRVTAP traffic analysis, then, was to ensure that the various road

EMPLOYMENT

POPULATION



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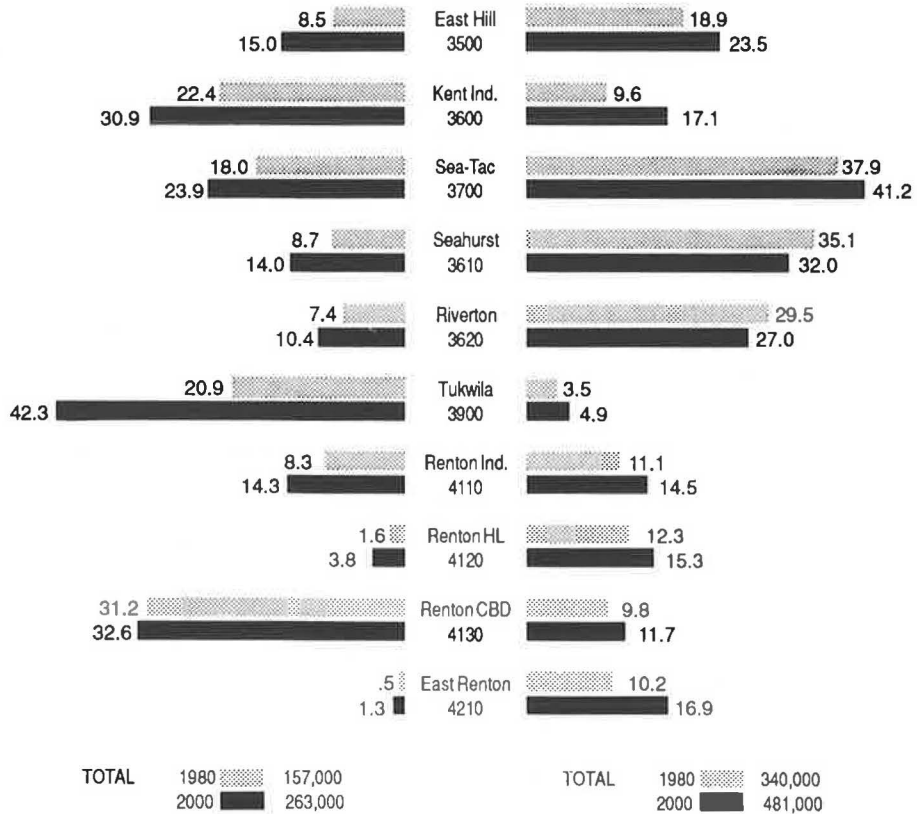


FIGURE 2 Population and employment (in thousands), 1980-2000.

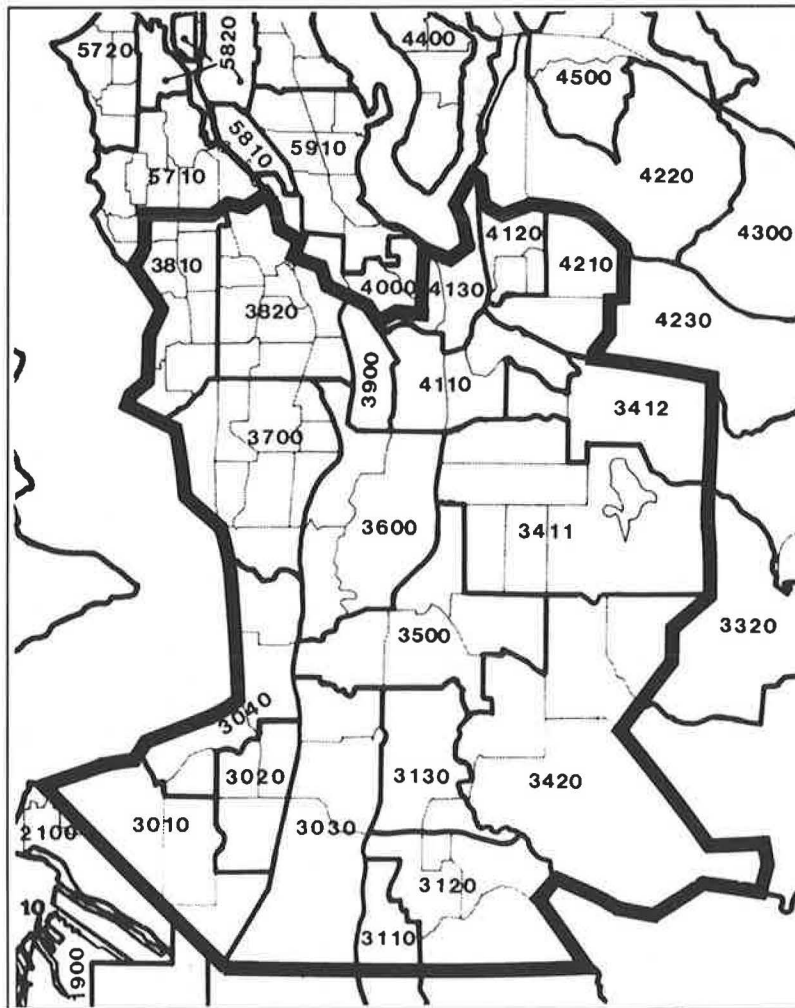


FIGURE 3 Forecast and analysis zones.

improvement projects identified by the participating jurisdictions would work effectively with one another.

Development of the implementation and financing plan included a detailed financial analysis, the purpose of which was to identify federal, state, local, public, and private funding sources and to evaluate the potential of each of these sources. A parallel activity was the categorization and prioritization of the identified road improvement projects. Project priorities were compared to funding availability so that funding shortfalls could be identified, and strategies for making up the shortfalls were developed. The project priorities and funding strategies form the Action Plan, which has two main elements, a prioritized program of road improvement projects and a set of recommendations that would expedite the funding and implementation of the projects.

#### GRVTAP Traffic Analysis

As the first step of the traffic analysis, VTC identified and agreed upon the alternative sets of road improvements to be analyzed. Important issues to be addressed were also identified. Travel patterns and traffic flows in the study area were evaluated by using PSCOG's regional employment, population, and transportation forecasting models. The traffic analysis resulted

in several main conclusions, for which concurrence was obtained from VTC and the King Subregional Council:

- Overall projected traffic flows will virtually flood all major arterials, freeways, and interchanges in and around the valley and on the west side of the Soos Creek Plateau north of Kent;
- The number of freeway interchanges serving north valley employment centers should be maximized to better handle the high proportion and heavy volume of traffic en route to and from the valley;
- All of the proposed cross-valley arterials are needed to carry traffic from the residential areas on the plateau to the employment centers in the valley (even if all are built, they will be overloaded);
- The density of the arterial grid serving the employment centers in the north half of the valley should be maximized (all of the proposed east-west and north-south arterial segments are needed, but even if all are built, there will still be congestion);
- Although the pressure exerted by future traffic volumes will not be as intense in Auburn as in the north half of the valley, all of the Auburn projects will be needed to handle traffic growth;

- To increase the passenger-carrying capacity of the valley road system, HOV improvements should be considered in the planning and design of all valley road projects; and
- Solutions to future traffic and transportation problems must be sought in land use management, as well as in road construction and in management of the transportation system.

### GRVTAP Project Prioritization

Each of the recommendations in the Action Plan relates directly or indirectly to all or part of a program of road improvement projects identified by the five Green River Valley jurisdictions through VTC. After compiling the list of projects and cost estimates for each, VTC prioritized the list. Projects were first grouped into two categories: those of valley-wide importance and those of localized impact and importance. The VTC then prioritized the projects of valley-wide importance (i.e., the "Valley Program") by determining which projects were highest priority, which were high priority, and which were "other" priority. Each jurisdiction prioritized its own local projects by using the same three priority levels. Total costs for the projects in each of the priority categories are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1 SUMMARY OF COST ESTIMATES

	Cost (\$ millions)
<b>Valley Program</b>	
Highest priority projects	163.9
High priority projects	112.4
Other projects	31.5
Total	307.8
<b>Local Projects</b>	
King County	6.6
Kent	5.1
Renton	13.3
Auburn	35.8
Tukwila	18.7
Total	79.5

After reviewing the financial analysis (next section), the VTC identified a list of extraordinary projects, so-called because these are priority projects whose implementation will require extraordinary interjurisdictional cooperation and extraordinary funding sources. The extraordinary projects are listed in Table 2. Table 2 also contains an initial estimate of the availability of public funds for each extraordinary project, as well as estimates of the private sector contributions that could be obtained given current local funding strategies.

### GRVTAP Financial Analysis

The implementation of the projects recommended in the Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan is dependent on the availability of adequate funding. Although other obstacles must also be overcome, the lack of funds has been the primary impediment to the implementation of the more costly of the Action Plan projects. The financial analysis identified potential

funding sources for the participating local governments, assessed the amount of funding potentially available from each during the implementation period (1987–2000), and provided a set of conclusions that served as the basis for the recommendations adopted by the VTC, the participating jurisdictions, and the King Subregional Council.

Four categories of funding sources—federal programs, state programs, city and county sources, and study area sources—were identified and assessed. The first two are sources of external funding, which traditionally have played important roles in funding projects in the study area. The last two are sources that are controlled by the local jurisdictions.

The federal programs most applicable to the Action Plan projects are the Federal Aid Urban System, Bridge Replacement, and Federal Aid Safety programs. The federal role in financing local projects has been declining and will probably continue to decline gradually, but grants from these three programs are expected to continue to be available. Federal grants for Action Plan projects should total between \$15 and \$20 million during the implementation period. Because of the nature of the prioritization systems used to award grants from these programs, the funds will probably be distributed among a large number of projects. Relatively little federal money will be available for the extraordinary projects.

The state's urban arterial program has been one of the most important sources of grants for projects in the study area during the last 20 years, but it is rapidly running out of funds. Other state programs have limited applicability to the Action Plan projects. The most promising of the other programs is the Public Works Trust, which makes low-interest loans for infrastructure improvements, including transportation. However, the loans are limited to no more than \$1 million for any single project; hence they cannot be expected to fund the extraordinary projects.

The state also shares a large portion of the gasoline tax with city and county governments. This is the most important single source of external funding, but because it is distributed monthly on a formula basis, it cannot be considered a major source of funding for the extraordinary projects. Instead, the valley cities are expected to use about half the \$24.7 million that they will receive over the implementation period for maintenance and operations. The remainder will be used primarily to fund many of the smaller capital projects. King County is expected to use the \$144.6 million that it will receive from the gasoline tax for maintenance and capital projects throughout the county, including the Action Plan area.

As the Action Plan was being developed, discussions were beginning in the state legislature on a possible increase in the motor fuel tax, new grant programs for local transportation projects, and a new form of special district—the "transportation benefit district"—to give local governments additional flexibility in making transportation improvements. The major purpose of the proposed new grant programs and the transportation benefit district was to support economic development with needed transportation improvements. The Action Plan noted that if the gasoline tax and new grant programs were approved, the prospects for receiving state funding for some of the extraordinary projects would increase dramatically. Passage of the transportation benefit district legislation would allow

**TABLE 2 EXTRAORDINARY PROJECTS: ESTIMATED COST, FUNDING AVAILABILITY, AND SHORTFALL THROUGH 2000**

PROJECT		Estimate of Shortfall (\$ million)		Estimate of Available Agency Funding	
		high (project cost)	min	Public	Private
<b>192/196 CORRIDOR</b>					
King	S 192/196, SR-515 - 140 SE	\$4.1	\$1.0	50%	25%
King	S 192/196, SR-167 - SR-515	\$4.9	\$2.5	25%	25%
Kent	S 192/196, W Valley - SR-167	\$19.3	\$7.7	10%	50%
Kent	S 196/200, Orillia - W Valley	\$4.0	\$1.6	10%	50%
Kent	S 200 Connector, Orillia - I-5	\$3.0	\$2.3	0%	25%
WSDOT	I-5/S 200 Conn/SR-509 interchange	[not available]			
<b>277 CORRIDOR</b>					
King	SE 277, SR-167 - Auburn Wy N	\$3.1	\$2.3	10%	15%
Auburn	SE 277, Auburn Wy N - Green River	\$3.2	\$1.4	30%	25%
King	SE 277 Ext, Green River - SR-18	\$14.3	\$10.7	10%	15%
Kent	SE 277 Ext, Green River - SR-516	\$8.5	\$3.4	10%	50%
WSDOT	SR-18/SE 277 Ext interchange	[not available]			
<b>W VALLEY/180 INTERSECTION</b>					
Kent	W Valley/S 180	\$0.6	\$0.2	10%	50%
Tukwila	W Valley/S 180	\$1.8	\$1.6	10%	
<b>224/228 CORRIDOR</b>					
Kent	S 228, Russell - Military	\$7.8	\$3.1	10%	50%
Kent	S 224, SR-515 - SR-167	\$7.8	\$3.1	10%	50%
<b>OAKESDALE</b>					
Renton	Oakesdale, SW 28 - SW 16	\$5.5	(\$0.0)	10%	90%
Renton	Oakesdale, SW 16 - Sunset	\$11.0	\$8.3	25%	
<b>STRANDER EXTENSION</b>					
Renton	SW 27, W Valley - SR-167	\$8.0	\$6.4	20%	
<b>SOUTHCENTER BLVD</b>					
Tukwila	Southcenter Blvd, T-Line - Grady	\$7.7	\$6.1	20%	
<b>PUGET-EDMONDS</b>					
Renton	SE Puget, Edmonds - SR-169	\$10.0	\$9.0		10%
Renton	SE Puget, Jones - Edmonds	\$1.0	\$0.9		10%
Renton	Edmonds, SR-169 - NE 3	\$4.0	\$3.6		10%
<b>FREEWAY INTERCHANGES</b>					
WSDOT	I-5/S 200 Conn/SR-509 (Kent)	\$10.0	\$0.0	100%	
WSDOT	SR-18/SE 277 Ext (King)	\$5.0	\$4.5		10%
WSDOT	I-405/SR-515 (Renton)	\$10.0	\$10.0		
WSDOT	SR-167/SW 43 (Renton)	\$5.0	\$0.0	100%	
WSDOT	SR-18/SR-164 (Auburn)	\$8.0	\$0.0	50%	50%
WSDOT	SR-18/S 312 (King)	\$6.0	\$0.0	100%	
WSDOT	I-5/S 178 (Tukwila)	\$10.0	\$10.0		
WSDOT	SR-167/SW 27 (Renton)	\$7.0	\$7.0		
WSDOT	SR-167/S 192 (Kent)	\$5.0	\$5.0		
Local Jurisdiction Total		\$129.4	\$75.2	13%	28%
WSDOT Total		\$66.0	\$36.5	38%	7%

formation of a district encompassing all or part of the Action Plan area to implement the Action Plan projects. This ruling could provide a mechanism for the Action Plan jurisdictions to forge a partnership among themselves, property owners, and citizens within the district boundaries for jointly funding some or all of the extraordinary projects.

The cities and King County can use and have in the past used local taxes and bond issues supported by voter-approved property tax levies to pay for transportation projects. In 1968 an \$80 million bond issue was approved by King County voters to provide urban arterial improvements throughout the county. Many of the projects funded by this bond issue were located in the study area. However, transportation projects face intense competition from a variety of other public needs for local taxes and bond revenues. This competition has kept the Action Plan

jurisdictions from financing more than a small fraction of their transportation projects with local revenues.

The final sources of funding that were assessed were those that could be raised within the study area itself, primarily through assessments and contributions from property owners. In theory, the Action Plan jurisdictions could form one or more districts within the study area and ask the residents and property owners within the districts to finance all or a portion of the Action Plan projects. In practice, they have found it difficult to gain the voluntary cooperation of the voters and property owners. Instead, the Action Plan jurisdictions have been using the power given them by the state's environmental laws to condition the approval of development permits on agreements by the property owner to mitigate the on-site and off-site transportation impacts of their proposed projects. To

obtain permits, property owners have been required to pay the entire cost of improvements that primarily will benefit their projects and to contribute to the cost of off-site improvements that will benefit other developments and the general public. The contributions generally take the form of a cash payment, which goes into a pool of funds, or an agreement not to protest the formation of an assessment district to accomplish the necessary mitigation improvements.

The conditioning of development permits on mitigation payments has been under way for only a couple of years, but it is already controversial. However, the lack of funds from external and local sources has caused the Action Plan jurisdictions to increasingly consider the developers as a source of funding for transportation improvements needed to accommodate growth. The share of funding that the developers are expected to provide varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction and from project to project, but for some major projects it is as high as 90 percent. The large share that is being sought from developers reflects the scarcity of funds available from external sources and local taxes and bonds. As the Action Plan was being developed, this source was the main one available for funding the extraordinary projects.

Several major conclusions can be drawn from the financial analysis. Federal grants can be expected to fund a portion of a number of the smaller Action Plan projects but will fund only a very small share of the cost of the extraordinary projects. Without new legislation, state grants and loans are likely to fund only a few of the Action Plan projects and only a very small share of the cost of the extraordinary projects.

The state legislature is considering an increase in the gasoline tax to fund new grant programs that would be especially focused on rapidly growing employment areas. If the legislation is passed, it would greatly increase the chance for funding some of the extraordinary projects. It is possible that state approval of the transportation benefit district legislation could also give the Action Plan jurisdictions, property owners, and citizens within the Action Plan area a potent new tool for funding the extraordinary projects.

In summary, existing external sources will be able to fund more than a small fraction of the extraordinary projects. An increase in the state gasoline tax, accompanied by new grant programs focused on the needs of areas like the Green River Valley, offer the most hope for providing external funds for the extraordinary projects.

Local taxes and bond issues are unlikely to provide a significant portion of the funding for the Action Plan projects. However, the Action Plan jurisdictions do have the capacity to fund a number of the extraordinary projects with voter-approved bonds if they choose. A minimum vote of 60 percent in favor would be required, and the bond proceeds would not be available for other competing public needs. The use of a bond issue sponsored by an Action Plan transportation benefit area may be a more appropriate means of obtaining bond funding for the extraordinary projects.

Property owners within the Action Plan area are currently being expected to make up the shortage of funding for the extraordinary projects. The availability of property owner contributions rests primarily on the ability of local governments to condition approval of development permits on the

mitigation of transportation impacts. Although local jurisdictions expect to fund up to 90 percent of the cost of the extraordinary projects with mitigation fees, their long-term prospects are uncertain, both legally and politically.

The Action Plan area jurisdictions must seek new tools like the transportation benefit district and new state grant program as a means of broadening the funding base for the extraordinary projects.

## RESULTS

The following recommendations were developed and endorsed by the Valley Transportation Committee as a whole. The recommendations fall into three main categories: (a) general recommendations, (b) recommended actions related to the legislative process, and (c) recommended actions related to specific projects and groups of projects. The recommendations listed below were intended to suggest a range of potential approaches and solutions to a range of technical and financial needs and problems.

### General Recommendations

First, King County and the cities of Kent, Renton, Auburn, and Tukwila should endorse GRVTAP, its project priority lists, and its traffic and financial findings and conclusions. Second, a "marketing strategy" aimed at publicizing, selling, and implementing the GRVTAP recommendations should be developed and put into action. Third, a permanent committee should be created to coordinate the planning, financing, and construction of valley transportation projects and to lobby for needed legislative changes. Because of the increasing dependence on private sector funding for transportation improvements, this group should include private sector representatives. Fourth, PSCOG and WSDOT should undertake a freeway operations study that will evaluate the ability of the freeway system and its interchanges to accommodate future traffic demand and will determine the operational feasibility of the various interchange improvement projects included in the GRVTAP. Finally, to maximize the passenger-carrying capacity of the road system, an assessment of the potential for HOV facilities should be included in the planning and design of all GRVTAP projects.

### Recommended Actions: Legislative

First, an increase in the State Motor Fuel Tax should be supported. Next, creation of a Multiagency Arterial Program (MAP) should be supported. The extraordinary projects would be used as the Green River Valley's list of MAP projects, and the legislature should be made aware of the need for funding for these projects. Third, the proposed transportation benefit district legislation and the creation of a transportation benefit district program funded by the motor fuel tax should be supported. Fourth, the designation of one of the cross-valley corridor projects as a state highway should be sought, as should state funding of construction. Fifth, if the "King County 2000" initiative (a regional capital improvement needs list developed by civic leaders) includes a proposal for a county-wide transportation bond issue, inclusion of the extraordinary projects among the projects to be funded should be ensured.



### Recommended Actions: Project-Related

First, local jurisdictions should work with WSDOT and PSCOG to have the proposed new freeway interchanges and interchange improvements put into the state's plan and funded. Second, because little of the nearly \$30 million shortfall in funding for interchange projects is likely to be made up through federal and state grants or local general taxes, efforts should be made to make up as much of the shortfall as possible with revenues raised from the properties within the valley. Third, because the GRVTAP traffic analysis indicates that a higher private share can be justified, Kent should consider the feasibility of increasing the share of costs borne by the private sector for the cross-valley arterials in Kent. Also, King County should consider methods for augmenting mitigation payments with additional private contributions for its segments of these corridors. Fourth, even with additional mitigation-derived private sector contributions, there will still be some significant funding shortfalls for Green River Valley projects. For this reason, consideration should be given to expanding the private role to include all properties, including those that are already developed. Possible techniques include city bond issues, formation of area-wide improvement districts, and the creation of a road service district or a transportation benefit district, that is, an RSD/TBD (if the TBD is approved by the legislature), for the Green River Valley as a whole.

Fifth, the use of city bond issues should be considered for funding valley program projects that are not physically in the valley. Bond funds should also be considered for supplementing private sector funds obtained through mitigation payments or through a Green River Valley RSD/TBD. Sixth, area-wide improvement districts, such as local improvement districts (LIDs), should be considered if a Green River Valley RSD/TBD is not created. Finally, because the segments of the southernmost cross-valley corridor east of the Green River are expensive and not well-suited to the private funding mechanisms discussed for the valley, consideration should be given to making them the top priorities of the valley jurisdictions (as a united group) for MAP and for King County 2000, in the event that either of those programs is created. Consideration should also be given to including areas adjacent to such segments in a Green River Valley RSD/TBD.

### PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

The Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan was completed in January 1987. During the following month, the Action Plan was endorsed by the councils of the cities of Renton, Tukwila, Kent, and Auburn, King County, and the King Subregional Council of the Puget Sound Council of Governments. WSDOT reviewed the projects recommended for the state system but asked that additional analysis of their impact on freeway traffic operations be conducted before the projects are added to the state transportation plan. Work on the requested "South King County Freeway Operations Study" began August 1987.

The Action Plan jurisdictions are anxious to start the extraordinary projects but continue to be hampered by a lack of funding. The state, for its part, also lacks the funds needed to

make the improvements to the state system that were recommended in the Action Plan. Nonetheless, the Action Plan has already had a number of positive effects.

With luck and perseverance, there is now a good chance that a large share of the Action Plan projects will be completed during the implementation period (i.e., by 2000). For example, although the proposed increase in the state gasoline tax failed during the last legislative session, conversations with state legislators indicated that there was a growing awareness of the need to provide funding for improvements in rapidly growing areas like the Green River Valley. The gasoline tax that failed would have created a new grant program for "multiagency arterial projects," with \$30-\$40 million in annual funding for at least the next 4 years. Most of the Action Plan's extraordinary projects probably would have been eligible for funding by this new program.

The proposed gasoline tax increase also included a state-wide list of specific projects that would have been funded if the gasoline tax had passed. The S-272/277 corridor, one of the three proposed cross-valley projects included in the Action Plan as an extraordinary project, was among those on the list. Also included on the list, but just outside the Action Plan area, were the completion of two state freeways and the construction of a very expensive new bridge on a major arterial. Although the three projects were outside the Action Plan area, they would have had a positive effect on its transportation system.

The state legislature did approve the creation of transportation benefit districts. The Action Plan jurisdictions can now form one or more districts for the purpose of implementing the Action Plan projects. The districts can fund projects by forming assessment districts, charging a fee to mitigate the impact of development on the transportation system, and asking voters within the district to approve tax-supported bonds and tax levies. However, the legislature did not approve a grant program to provide state funds to match those raised by the transportation benefit districts.

At the local level, the King County executive announced his strong support for the Action Plan. The county intends to examine its capital improvement program to see if the timing of the extraordinary projects can be advanced. The voters of Auburn approved a bond issue to pay for their share of the S-272/277 corridor project and other arterial improvements. Kent's mayor and council have also indicated support for moving ahead quickly with the Action Plan projects, especially S-272/277. The city is considering the potential for forming a transportation benefit district or proposing a city-wide bond issue. Tukwila has hired a consultant to detail the options available for financing their projects. Renton's officials are continuing to implement their mitigation payment system, which they expect to use as the source of much of the funding for their share of the extraordinary projects.

The involvement of the private sector has increased since the completion of the Action Plan. The Valley Area Transportation Alliance (VATA) was formed by a broad coalition of businesses with interests in the valley. Their purposes include working for the implementation of the Action Plan projects and ensuring that a fair and equitable approach to funding the projects is developed. In particular, the VATA members question the use of mitigation payments for more than a limited share of the cost

of needed improvements. They would prefer to see the funding burden shared by the state, the jurisdiction, all properties benefited, and developers. VATA intends to work hard during the next session of the state legislature to pass a gasoline tax increase that will provide substantial funding for Action Plan projects.

## CONCLUSIONS

In many ways, the Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan broke no new ground. It did not identify any previously unidentified road improvement projects, and it did not uncover or develop any new sources of funding. In short, it offered no miracle cure for traffic congestion or funding problems. In fact, some might consider the total valley-wide funding requirements and shortfalls—compiled for the first time by GRVTAP—to be downright demoralizing. However, the Green River Valley Transportation Action Plan may be a catalytic effort that appeared at exactly the right time and place. Traffic congestion in fast-growing suburban areas like the Green

River Valley is receiving increasing recognition as a serious threat to the economic well-being of the Seattle area and to the political careers of local and state elected officials. The Action Plan has provided a rallying point for the political and business leadership in the valley. It has shown them that they can agree among themselves on the projects that need to be undertaken and that a large share of the projects can be funded, provided that they are willing to make some hard decisions locally and that the state provides additional funding. Finally, it has given these leaders a unified, credible plan of action to take to the state legislature and their voters.

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