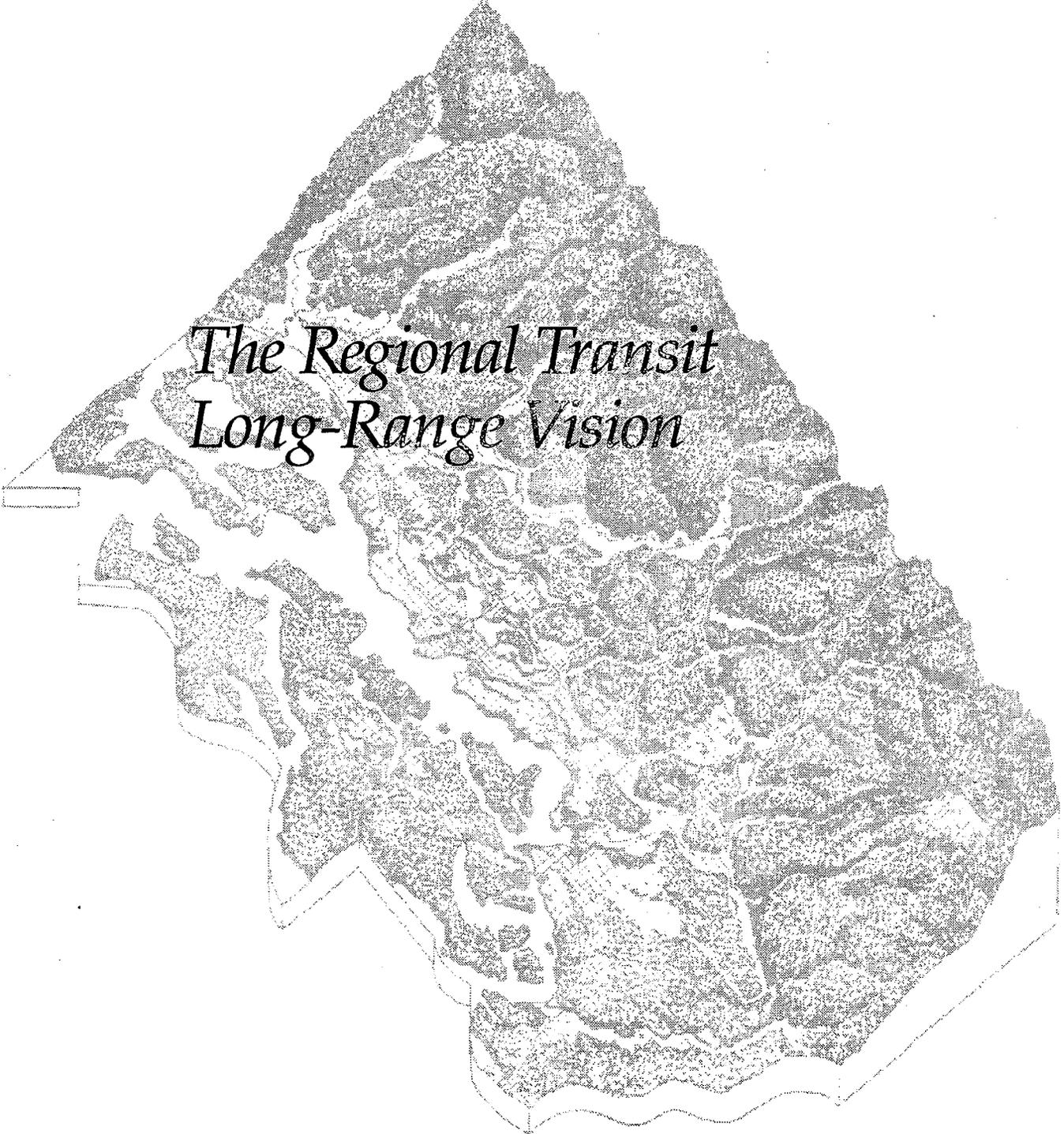




Regional Transit Authority



*The Regional Transit  
Long-Range Vision*

RTA  
1996  
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As adopted May 31, 1996



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# Introduction

If you've lived in the Central Puget Sound region for any length of time, you've probably used the phrase, "I remember when..." many times when talking about how the region has grown and changed over the years. And with another 1.4 million people living here in another 25 years, you'll probably be using that phrase quite a few more times.

Our region's growth is the by-product of a strong, healthy and competitive economy in a region often cited as one of the most livable in the country. Unfortunately, growth and growing pains go hand-in-hand. In addition to being one of the most livable places in the country, the Puget Sound region also has some of the worst traffic. Some of the physical attributes of our region that make it such a desirable place to live — the water, hills and mountains — also create natural barriers to expanding our transportation system. One of the toughest challenges ahead of us is keeping our economy — and the growing number of people in the Puget Sound region — moving over the next quarter of a century.

## **The Regional Transit Authority**

The region has both local and regional transportation needs. Local transit agencies focus on local needs. But until 1993, there was no single agency with the responsibility — or with the authority — to deal with regional public transit needs. It was then that the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (RTA) was created to take on the challenge of regional mobility and develop and deliver a high-capacity transportation (HCT) system to the citizens of urban King, Pierce and Snohomish counties as part of the region's overall long-range transportation plan.

High-capacity transportation simply refers to a transit system that carries large numbers of people faster and more frequently than a basic, conventional local transit system. To do this, the type of transit used in the system (express buses, rail or both) usually need to run in their own rights-of-way, separated from general traffic (and general traffic jams).

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## The plan and the vision

Building on years of intensive planning and public involvement, the RTA has crafted a new proposal for an HCT system: *Sound Move — the Ten-Year Regional Transit System Plan*. It is the “System Plan” the RTA is required by state law to prepare. *Sound Move* can only be implemented if voters approve an increase in local taxes to fund the system.

*Sound Move* implements the first phase of the RTA’s Regional Transit Long-Range Vision described in this document. Think of the long-range vision as the map for reaching the region’s transportation goals. The long-range vision describes an HCT system that will be included as the HCT component of any state and regional long-range transportation plans. The long-range vision provides the long-range goals, policies and strategies that guide development of the regional transit system during each implementation phase.

## Long-range vision goals and objectives

The long-range vision’s goals and objectives are:

### Goals

- Provide a public transportation system that ensures long-term mobility for the citizens of the Puget Sound region for generations to come.
  - Provide reliable, convenient and safe public transportation services throughout the region and create an integrated system of transit services and fares.
- Preserve communities and open space
  - Support communities’ ability to develop — consistent with state and regional laws and growth management policies — in ways that keep our neighborhoods livable and protect our natural resources and open space.
- Contribute to the region’s economic vitality
  - Increase access to jobs, education and other community resources; enhance the region’s ability to move goods and services.
- Preserve our environment
  - Conserve land and energy resources, and control air pollution.

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## **Objectives**

- Keep the region moving
  - Increase the percentage of people using public transportation throughout the region for all trips, not just trips to work.
  - Increase the percentage of people using transit for their trips to work and the percentage using transit to reach major regional employment centers.
  - Increase public transportation ridership at a rate faster than the population is growing.
  - Reduce the average time it takes to make a trip by transit.
  - Increase transit speeds and improve the reliability of transit service.
  - Make it easier to use transit to reach jobs, schools, medical facilities, recreation and shopping throughout the region.
  - Support ridesharing, vanpooling and other commute trip reduction programs that complement the regional transit system.
- Offer cost-effective and efficient transportation solutions
  - Offer the most efficient and effective services and facilities possible within available resources.
- Create a regional transit system that provides social, economic and environmental benefits
  - Help limit urban sprawl, maintain open space and protect natural resources.
  - Support creation of communities that are easy to reach and use on foot, by bicycle, on transit and by people with disabilities.
  - Increase transportation options that use less energy, consume less land resources and produce less pollution.
- Develop equitable transportation solutions
  - Offer transit services that benefit subareas within the region in proportion to the revenues they generate.
- Create a financially feasible system
  - Develop a system that is affordable to build, run and use.
- Offer regional services that work well with other transportation services
  - Work with local public transportation providers and the state Transportation Department to coordinate services and develop a single-fare structure.

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### **The regional transit vision**

State law charges the RTA with planning, building and operating a high-capacity transportation (HCT) system for the Central Puget Sound region. The RTA's vision for the region's HCT system — and an essential tool for the region's healthy growth — is a combined rail and regional express bus system.

That vision is to expand the capacity of our region's major transportation corridors by adding new high-capacity transportation services and facilities. In addition to increasing the people-carrying capacity of the region's most heavily used transportation corridors, the system would also support growth management policies, limit sprawl and provide the mobility needed for a vital economy.

The long-range vision includes a mix of transportation improvements — high-occupancy-vehicle expressway, regional express bus routes, commuter rail and light rail. The vision includes community "gateways" — connections in urban and suburban areas for communities to connect to the rest of the region. The long-range vision also includes the supporting services and facilities needed to put such a system in place.

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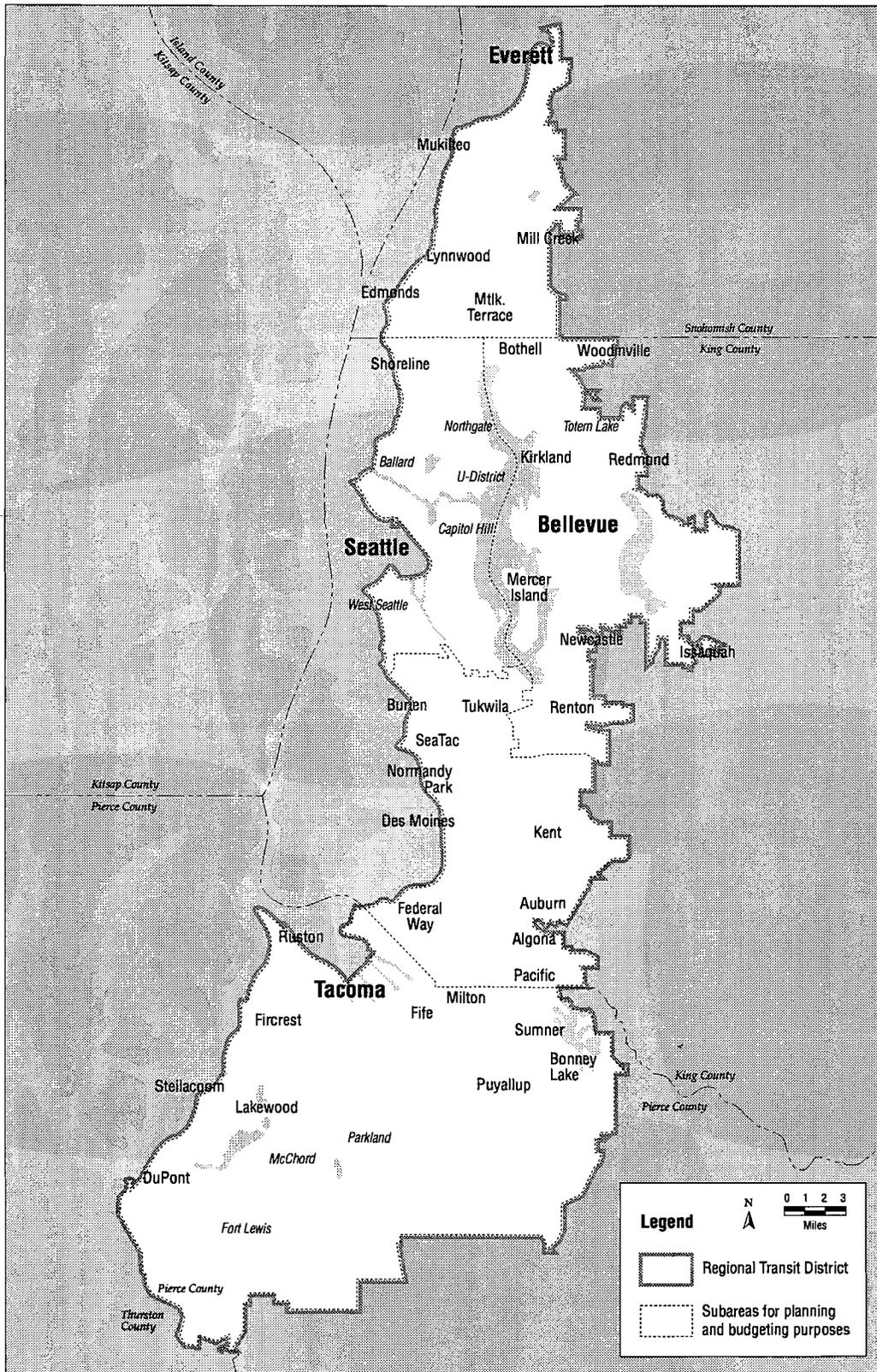
### **Environmental analysis for the regional transit system**

In March, 1993, the RTA issued a final environmental impact statement for the regional transit system plan. The final EIS defined and evaluated different technologies, route alignments and areas served in order to determine the benefits and impacts of different transit systems.

The RTA Board's decision-making process relies in part on the final EIS. The regional transit system described in this long-range vision reflects the program defined in the final EIS. Decisions that fall outside of the scope of the final EIS will require additional environmental analysis.

All capital projects covered by this long-range vision will be subject to a full environmental review meeting state and federal requirements. Such project-level environmental review, including extensive public involvement, must be completed before project construction and implementation.

Long-range vision development has been guided by legislation in place at the time the document was adopted. Regional and statewide transportation and growth management plans also played a major role in how this vision was developed. The RTA will continue to use current legislative policies to monitor the development of the transit system.



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# The Regional Transit District

The RTA District boundary is shown on the RTA District map. It defines the service area as required by state law. The RTA District currently includes the most congested “urban” areas of King, Pierce and Snohomish counties.

The RTA District boundary lines generally follow the urban growth boundaries created by each county in accordance with the state Growth Management Act. The urban growth boundaries guide how and where growth will take place in each county. The RTA District boundary was adjusted in some places in consideration of voter precinct boundaries, city limit lines, and geography.

The RTA boundary:

- shows the area where high-capacity transportation (HCT) services will be added to our transportation system
- establishes representation on the RTA Board as prescribed by state law
- shows the area in which local taxes authorized by voters to help finance the Regional Transit System will be collected
- demonstrates how regional services and facilities can support growth management goals and adopted land-use plans.

For planning and budgeting purposes the RTA has divided the district into five geographic subareas. The system components in *Sound Move* address unique needs in each of these areas. The local tax revenues generated in each of these areas will be spent on the investments that benefit those areas.

## Annexing new areas and extending RTA services

### Annexations

According to state law, after voters within the district boundaries have approved a ballot proposition authorizing local taxes to support the ten-year system plan, the RTA Board may approve resolutions calling for elections to annex areas outside, but adjacent to, the RTA District. An annexation may require adoption of a revised long-range vision.

The following legal requirements are required to annex areas into the RTA:

- **Board membership** — If the RTA District changes, a change in the make-up of the RTA Board membership may be required. Board membership must be “representative” of the proportion of the population from each county that falls within the RTA District.
- **Areas that may be annexed** — Areas that would benefit from RTA services may be annexed into the RTA District. Services or projects proposed must be consistent with the central Puget Sound region’s Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
- **Adoption by RTA Board and City/County councils** — The RTA Board may call for annexation elections after consulting with any affected transit agencies and with the approval of the legislative authority of the city or town (if the area is incorporated) or with the approval of the area’s county council (if it is unincorporated).

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- **Tax vote by area citizens** —Citizens in areas to be annexed are permitted to vote on annexation and imposition of taxes at rates already imposed within the RTA District boundaries.

Because the RTA encourages areas to annex into the district as early as possible to expand access to regional transit system benefits, the authority will include the following policies in annexation agreements:

- the RTA will not attempt to recover the capital costs from annexed areas of facilities put in place before the annexations
- the RTA commits that, when annexed, the taxes from areas joining the RTA District will be used only for specific facilities and services for up to 5 years as described in an interlocal agreement with that area. After 5 years, the tax revenues from an annexing area would be combined with funds from the appropriate subarea.

### ***Extending RTA services beyond district boundaries***

The RTA will commit to extending new services beyond its boundaries to make connections to significant regional destinations contingent on agreements with local government agencies. Such service extensions would be implemented at a mutually agreeable cost.

This option would permit areas outside of the RTA District to function as part of the regional system. Extending RTA services outside of its district would require agreements with the affected local transit agency or other appropriate government agencies.

The RTA will enter into agreements with agencies beyond the district boundary to integrate fares. This will allow flexible transfers between various transit operators and prevent citizens who live outside the district from being penalized for making regional trips via transit instead of an automobile.

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# The Regional Transit System

## A network of services

The goal of the long-range vision is to improve the way we, as a region, move. In turn, the vision aims at maintaining our region's economic strength locally and globally. It looks to creating a comprehensive, regional high-capacity travel network. Whether people are traveling to work, school, recreational opportunities or shopping, the goal is to provide more options — dependable alternatives for getting around in our communities and the region.

One of the most important features of the long-range vision is creation of a network of frequent, convenient and dependable services that can be used with a single ticket (see the Regional Transit System Long-Range Vision map). The services within that network are tailored to the unique needs of the diverse subareas within our region.

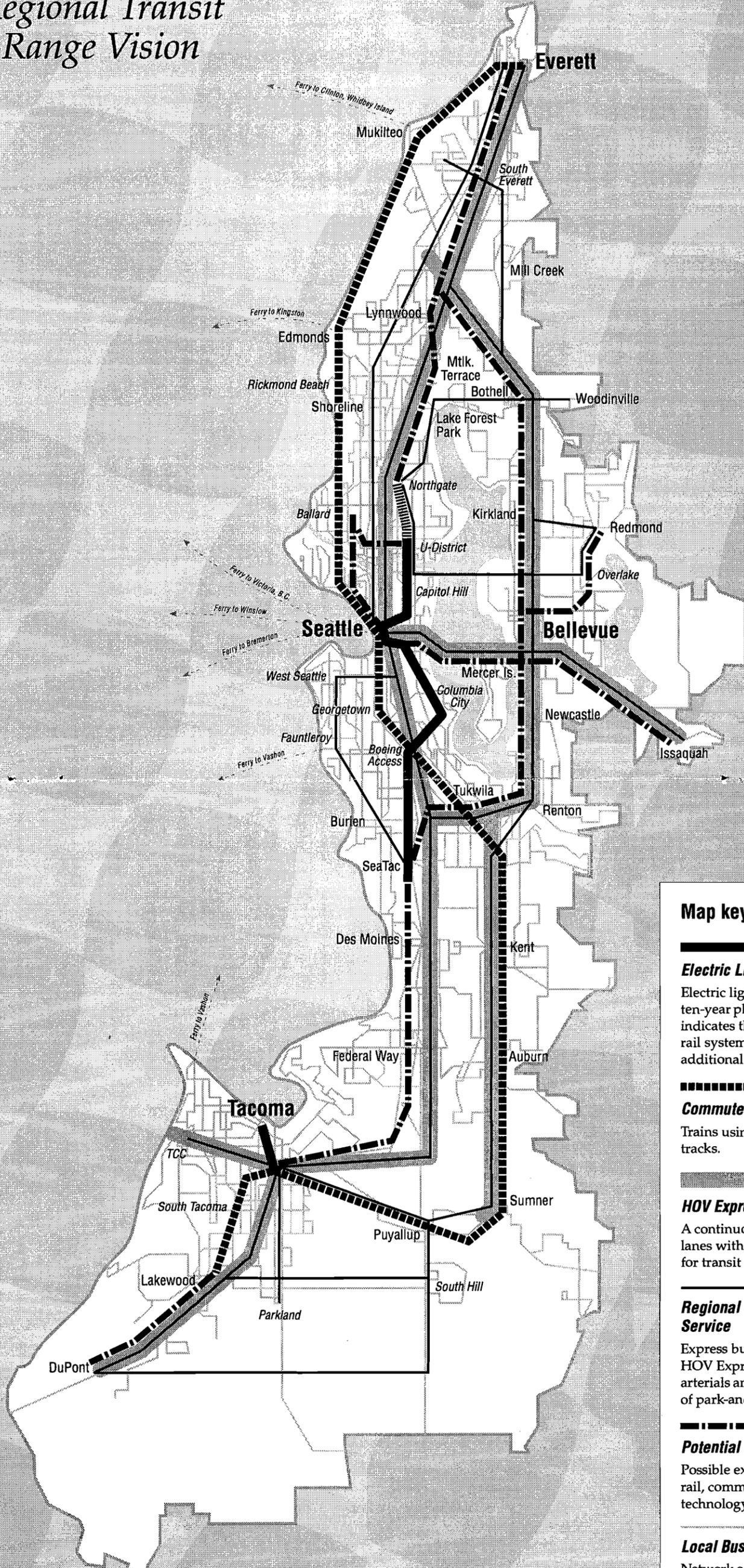
In developing a comprehensive transportation plan, planners look at the main travel corridors or routes that people use to go from one point in the region to another. For example, Interstate 405 is a major north-south travel corridor in the region. The long-range vision expands on existing travel corridors and creates new high-capacity transportation corridors linking our economic centers and communities.

The regional transit system will be the tie that binds the region together, connecting the communities of the Central Puget Sound region in a way that supports local land-use plans, joins economic centers and expands local transit services. By providing direct connections to many destinations, the long-range vision will help reorient local services to meet more community needs.

The long-range vision will be brought into focus in several phases:

- **Phase I (*Sound Move*)** — do more with what we have; build on existing facilities and begin building new high-capacity travel corridors.
- **Future phases** — expand and complete the high-capacity travel corridors; balance the blend of transportation services offered within the regional transit network and increase the service and hours of operation.

# The Regional Transit Long-Range Vision



### Map key:

**Electric Light-Rail Service**

Electric light-rail trains in first ten-year plan. Dashed line indicates the portion of the light-rail system that will be built if additional funding is secured.

**Commuter Rail Service**

Trains using existing railroad tracks.

**HOV Expressway**

A continuous system of HOV lanes with special access ramps for transit and carpools.

**Regional Express Bus Service**

Express bus routes using the HOV Expressway, major arterials and expanded system of park-and-ride lots.

**Potential Rail Extensions**

Possible extensions of light rail, commuter rail or other technology.

**Local Bus Service**

Network of bus routes provided by local transit agencies.

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### **Building blocks of the long-range vision**

The regional transit system includes regional services such as HOV Expressways, regional express buses, commuter rail, light rail that are integrated with local services such as local bus, carpools and vanpools. The regional system also includes community connections (transit stations, park-and-ride lots, transit centers and rail stations).

Although rail may be the future phase technology used in some corridors where additional HCT investments are envisioned beyond *Sound Move*, other HCT components of the regional transit system (HOV Expressway, regional bus service, additional community connections) may be expanded as well. Final decisions about the best mix of technologies in future phases will be made based on performance of *Sound Move* investments, public votes, evolving technologies, environmental analysis, actual population and employment growth, changing development trends and future transportation priorities of the RTA District's subareas.

### ***High-occupancy-vehicle Expressway***

The long-range vision includes completing an HOV Expressway made up of all of the core HOV lanes planned by the state Transportation Department and RTA-funded direct access ramps.

The HOV Expressway will be developed through a partnership between the RTA and the state Transportation Department. It expands and improves upon a network that the region has already begun, creating a permanent part of our regional transit system. The HOV Expressway includes the state's program to fill the gaps and extend the existing HOV-lane system to create a continuous inside-lane HOV network. The RTA will fund special access ramps to make it easier for transit and carpools to reach and use the HOV Expressway. Traffic flow will also improve in general purpose lanes since buses and carpools will no longer have to weave through several lanes of traffic to reach the HOV lanes.

The HOV Expressways create new links between suburban centers serving our region's fastest growing areas with fast efficient transportation options. A single HOV lane carries the same number of people as three general traffic lanes.

The RTA Board views completion of the state's freeway HOV lane "core system" in the Puget Sound region as an important priority. However, the RTA assumes the state will complete construction of the core HOV lane system in accordance with its freeway HOV policy.

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If the state does not fulfill its funding obligation, the RTA Board will conduct an open and public process to determine whether RTA funding is available (e.g. from savings realized in other program elements) and should be used to help complete the core HOV lane system.

### ***Regional Express Buses***

The long-range vision includes a regional network of express buses operating on freeways and major arterials. Many of the new regional express bus routes will take advantage of the improved speed and reliability the HOV Expressway will offer. The new high-speed regional express bus routes will offer frequent, two-way service throughout the day in the region's most congested corridors. The regional express buses will run every 15 minutes in major corridors during rush hours and every 15-30 minutes at other times. The regional express buses will serve major regional centers and destinations and provide connections to other transportation components of the regional transit system.

The RTA does not propose directly operating any bus services in the region. Bus services proposed by the RTA would be provided primarily through interlocal agreements or grants with the local transit agencies within the RTA District.

### ***Commuter rail***

The long-range vision includes two-way commuter rail service on existing tracks all-day and everyday between Lakewood, Tacoma, Seattle and Everett. Commuter rail will offer a fast, dependable and easy-to-use commute option, linking major destinations in Snohomish, Pierce and King counties.

Commuter rail builds on a railroad network already in place, increasing the transportation system's people-moving capacity. By making track and signal improvements necessary for commuter rail, the RTA improves the capacity of those lines for other passenger and freight trains as well. Commuter rail will share several stations with Amtrak and the state's expanded intercity rail service between Portland and Vancouver, B.C., creating opportunities for interstate as well as local connections.

The RTA will develop a partnership with the Union Pacific and Burlington Northern railroads; the ports of Seattle, Tacoma and Everett; and the state Transportation Department to implement the commuter rail system. Track and signal improvements, grade separation at major crossings and improvements required to operate commuter rail and the state's intercity rail program will also benefit freight train traffic and support our region's economic growth.

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### **Electric light-rail**

The long-range vision includes electric light-rail lines linking the four major regional centers — Everett, Seattle, Tacoma and Bellevue. Electric light rail is a cost-effective way to serve the core of the regional system where transit ridership is the highest (a two-way light rail line can carry the same number of people as 12 freeway lanes). This new transportation link provides a stepping stone for expansion well into the next century.

*Sound Move* includes a light-rail line between the University District, Capitol Hill, First Hill, downtown Seattle, the Rainier Valley area and SeaTac (S. 200th Street). If additional funding is available, the RTA will also extend the light-rail line to Roosevelt and Northgate during the *Sound Move* ten-year implementation period. *Sound Move* also includes light-rail service connecting downtown Tacoma with the regional transit terminal near the Tacoma Dome.

### **Future HCT corridors**

Factors that will determine what additional HCT investments will be made in future phases — including future rail extensions — include evolving technologies, environmental analysis, actual population growth and employment, changing development trends and future transportation priorities of the RTA District's subareas.

Before additional light-rail segments are considered, *Sound Move* lines must be substantially completed and voters must approve funding for any additional capital investments beyond Phase I. Possible light-rail line extensions already covered by environmental studies include:

- North University District to downtown Everett
- SeaTac (S. 200th Street) south to Fort Lewis/DuPont
- I-405 between 164th S.W. (Swamp Creek) and Sea-Tac Airport
- I-90 between downtown Seattle and Issaquah
- Downtown Seattle to downtown Bellevue and downtown Redmond
- Downtown Seattle to Ballard to the University District

HCT improvements not listed above would need appropriate environmental review before being included in the long-range vision.

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***Gateways to the region — community connections***

Combined, new regional high-capacity transportation corridors and services will link our economic centers and provide new connections for local communities. The long-range vision includes creating many new “gateways” from communities to the region and from the region to communities. Those gateways include transit stations, park-and-ride lots, transit centers and rail stations that create community connections where people can reach their destination on foot, by bicycle, or by accessing other transportation services.

New park-and-ride lot capacity improvements will be prioritized at locations where HOV direct access and regional bus service increases demand and where no surplus capacity exists. Criteria used to guide park-and-ride lot investments include: HOV direct access, adequate regional and/or local bus service levels and achieving standards for current and projected use.

The community connections will, of course, also be readily accessible by all types of public transit. The RTA will work with local public transit agencies and local jurisdictions to make it easier for transit to reach and use the community gateways with improvements such as integrated signal systems and automated vehicle identification systems.

The RTA is also committed to supporting other, non-motorized means of transportation such as bicycles. The long-range vision provides space for bicycles on buses and trains as well as safe bicycle storage at transit stations. The vision also includes, where practical, improvements for safe bicycle travel as part of HOV improvements and within rail corridors.

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## *Working together – a coordinated system of services*

By coordinating with local transit and other transportation services, the long-range vision will make it convenient and easy to move around the region. Crucial to the vision and the entire regional transportation system are the mechanisms that make different transportation components work together to create an efficient network connecting the entire region. These mechanisms include:

- coordinating local and regional transit schedules, tying services together and creating important regionwide connections
- building transit centers, park-and-ride lots and stations where different types of transportation come together to make connections simple and efficient
- developing a uniform pass or ticket that can be used on local buses, regional express buses and trains, making transfers easy.

### **Facilities that fit with the community they serve**

The long-range vision will create a regional transit system that is easy to reach and use by everyone including pedestrians, bicyclists, people with disabilities and other public transportation customers.

The RTA will work with local public transportation agencies, communities and local governments to place and design transit facilities that fit with local community plans. This will include making improvements within one-half mile of each station for safe, easy transit, pedestrian and bicycle access.

Transit facility designs will be flexible, allowing each station to reflect and fit into the community it serves while providing standard features for transit customers such as:

- security and safety design standards
- consistent route and schedule information
- easy-to-read and consistent signs
- pedestrian-friendly design and full access for people with disabilities
- bicycle access and secure storage
- transit-friendly access to allow smooth transfers from one type of public transportation to another (i.e. bus to rail, or bus to bus).
- convenient taxi access

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## **Encouraging policies that support transit**

The RTA's long-range vision includes encouraging local jurisdictions, agencies and private developers to develop policies and services that encourage and support transit and transit facilities. This could include:

- Encouraging pedestrian-oriented communities, especially along major arterials in areas with mixed residential and commercial developments easily served by transit.
- Launching joint efforts among the RTA, local transit agencies, jurisdictions and communities to combine frequent, reliable transit service with improvements for pedestrians.
- Looking for opportunities between private developers and local jurisdictions to jointly develop and run peplemover, shuttle or circulator systems that would expand the scope of transit station service areas.

## **Coordinated routes and schedules**

Simple and coordinated connections are necessary between all parts of the regional transportation network — buses, rail, ferries, carpools, vanpools, shuttles, circulators, intercity rail lines, taxis, airports, bicycles and pedestrians. These simple and coordinated connections can be achieved by sharing stations, simplifying transfer policies and using common fare structures.

An important part of integrating these services is providing stations or transit centers where many transportation services come together, making transfers and connections convenient and expanding the scope of the entire transportation system.

## **A one-ticket ride**

Since high-capacity transit is just one part of the overall regional transportation system, it is important that it work well with services already being provided or planned at the local and statewide level. One way to make sure HCT provides a smooth connection with other services in the region is to develop a uniform, single-ticket fare system among local and regional transit providers. This will allow customers to use a single ticket or pass to travel on any and all of the types of transit within the region (i.e. local bus, regional bus, light rail, commuter rail and ferries). The RTA will work with public transportation providers in the region to develop an integrated fare policy for the entire public transit service network.

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## **Transportation Demand Management (TDM)**

Achieving the full benefits of the long-range vision will require extensive efforts by local, regional and statewide agencies and the private sector to promote using public transportation and other options that reduce the number of miles traveled in single-occupant vehicles.

The RTA will cooperate with other public transportation agencies working with employers and local jurisdictions to match high quality transit services with economic incentives to use transit and promote ridesharing and other options to reduce drive-alone commute trips.

## **Innovation fund**

Since we live in an age of continual change, the long-range vision provides flexibility to consider new ideas, services and technology innovations.

The RTA will evaluate and fund innovative ways to provide transit service, reduce dependency on single-occupancy vehicles, improve public transportation's cost-effectiveness, and better respond to customer needs. The RTA will evaluate technological innovations (alternative fuels and propulsion systems, quieter equipment, lighter vehicles, energy efficient engines, and ways to improve passenger comfort) and ways to reduce impacts on the environment. The RTA will also explore incentives and programs to encourage people to use regional transit more.

The RTA will work with the community and the private sector to take part in a demonstration of personal rapid transit (PRT) or other technologies. PRT is an experimental type of automated transit consisting of small cars running on a guideway carrying two to six passengers per car. The demonstration could show how PRT or other new technologies could be appropriate investments in future transit system phases.

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## *Bringing the vision into focus*

### **Regional relationships**

The long-range vision will be implemented in phases. In addition to the RTA, many different local jurisdictions and agencies will be responsible for putting portions of the regional transportation system in place. The next planning and development stages will require integration of the system and land-use development at the regional, local and community levels. The public and private sectors played an important role in developing the long-range vision and will continue to be important during each phase of system implementation.

The long-range vision recommends the following general responsibilities for putting the regional transit system in place:

- **Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and County Growth Management Act (GMA) Plans** — The PSRC's Regional Transportation Plan and the GMA plans of counties taking part in the RTA should be amended to reflect the adopted regional transit system long-range vision. The PSRC and each participating County GMA program should assure that programming to fund major transportation service and facility decisions is consistent with regional and local transportation, growth management and land-use plans.
- **Local jurisdictions** — Local jurisdictions should develop land-use and transportation plans and regulations that support regional and county plans and the long-range vision. Jurisdictions should also develop processes for timely approval of transit facilities and Transportation Systems Management (TSM) capital projects to support interim bus service expansion and long-term HCT service within the respective jurisdictions.
- **Public transit agencies** — Local transit agencies will provide community and local bus services integrated with the regional transit system. These agencies should plan, design, build, own and operate local bus facilities.
- **Washington State Department of Transportation** — The state Transportation Department's primary responsibility is to plan, design, build and operate the state core freeway HOV system, including freeway to freeway HOV connections, and connections to the ferry system. The RTA may help fund selected parts of the HOV system within the RTA District. The state Transportation Department is also responsible for intercity rail and freight mobility in the region.

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- **The RTA** — The RTA will obtain funding to put in place the long-range vision and coordinate its development with other transportation investments to improve mobility in the region (including intercity rail and freight movement improvements). Funding will include a local tax increase proposal for voter approval as necessary to fund improvements within the RTA District. The RTA will impose and collect voter approved local-option taxes and allocate funds for elements of the plan. The RTA will also be responsible for implementing the regional rail system component and financing the regional express bus system and portions of the HOV Expressway system. Implementing the RTA's capital and service programs will support growth management strategies and plans that complement the regional transit system.

### **Right-of-way preservation**

The RTA will develop a right-of-way preservation program in each participating county to set aside sites for potential rail or regional express bus stations, route alignments, operating facilities and other facilities needed for the long-range system. Right-of-way will either be optioned, bought or preserved by using local land-use zoning and permitting when allowed by law.

The RTA will work with the state Transportation Department and other responsible agencies while developing projects to pinpoint areas where right-of-way is limited and many different transportation improvements are proposed. Regional transit proposals in these corridors will require careful design and coordination to accommodate the RTA's plans along with other proposed transportation improvements.

Property for stations will be acquired in ways consistent with local jurisdictions' comprehensive plans. In some cases, the RTA will work with local transit operators to acquire property that will be used for interim bus services and facilities that may be converted to rail. When appropriate, the RTA will jointly fund interim facilities with local transit operators, the state, local jurisdictions and local businesses.

The RTA will work with local transit operators to evaluate bus service that mirrors rail service patterns to sites purchased in advance that eventually may be served by rail. The RTA will help local transit agencies design transit facilities and infrastructure to allow for expanded bus service or conversion to rail service.

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## **Reviewing and updating the long-range vision**

The long-range vision will be updated with each development phase of the RTA's system plan.

Each development phase will describe:

- projects to be funded
- how projects contribute to putting the long-range vision in place and meeting system goals and objectives
- how projects conform with the long-range vision
- a public and local jurisdiction involvement program
- a budget and financing plan including an equity review
- how the plan is consistent with local and regional transportation and growth management plans
- significant changes from previous plans.

In preparing and updating the system plan, the RTA will look at the status of growth management and land-use plans; air quality goals and conditions; status of the state's commute trip reduction objectives; overall transportation system coordination and any new conditions or regulations.

Before adopting each system plan, the RTA will evaluate estimated costs, ridership, and system level social, economic and environmental impacts. This information will be made available to the public for use in the decision making process.

The RTA will also publish a summary of the public involvement process and a summary of public comments and how they shaped the plan being considered.

Each system plan will also contain a financial plan including a description of how the tax revenues will be distributed to pay for different transit components. This assessment will also include operating and maintenance costs for the entire system once it is complete.

The RTA may enlist the help of an expert review panel, a technical advisory committee and/or a citizens advisory committee to review successive system plans and long-range vision developments. This information and feedback would be used by the RTA Board to help make decisions regarding plan changes.

State law requires that "major decisions" of the RTA require a favorable vote of two-thirds of the entire RTA Board. Major decisions include:

- adopting or amending the long-range vision
- making system plan implementation decisions
- adopting annual budgets
- authorizing annexations
- changing the composition of the board
- selecting an executive director.

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## Long-range vision funding

### RTA taxing authority

State law allows the RTA to ask voters in the Central Puget Sound region to increase their local taxes to pay for a regional transit system. The law allows the RTA to ask voters within the RTA District for up to a 9/10 of one percent sales tax, 8/10 of one percent motor vehicle excise (license tab) tax, and an employer tax of \$2 per employee. The law also allows the RTA to issue outstanding municipal bonds equal to up to 1.5 percent of the assessed property value within the RTA District.

The financial plan assumes the local funding for *Sound Move* at a much lower level than state law allows. Funds will come from a 4/10 of one percent increase in sales tax and a 3/10 of one percent increase in the license tab tax to be collected within the RTA District. Funding of *Sound Move* also includes about \$1,052 million in long-term bonds. The RTA is asking voters for less than 40 percent of its local taxing authority and bonding capacity to fund *Sound Move*.

The financial policies adopted for *Sound Move* require that any second phase capital program which continues local taxes for financing will require voter approval within the RTA District. If voters decide not to extend the system, the RTA will roll back the tax rate to a level sufficient to pay off the outstanding bonds and operate and maintain the investments made as part of *Sound Move*.

### Future financial capacity

In planning for future transit system phases, the RTA will revisit the funding sources and assumptions developed for *Sound Move* to determine whether they are applicable to future phases.

A cash flow model — consistent with the financial capacity analysis for *Sound Move* — will be used to determine the financial feasibility for each subsequent phase. This analysis will examine possible financing methods and identify appropriate funding levels from available revenue sources.

## **The Regional Transit Long-Range Vision**

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Information presented in the long-  
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