

SOUND TRANSIT

MOTION NO. M98-87

A motion of the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority accepting the findings of the HOV/TSM (High Occupancy Vehicle/Transportation System Management) Committee and directing Sound Transit to proceed with implementation of the HOV direct access program. The Board also directs that the project evaluation process recommended by the HOV/TSM Committee be applied to all projects to the extent possible.

Background:

Sound Move called for the implementation of a system of fourteen direct access ramps in the region to improve regional and local bus operations in terms of speed, access, and reliability. HOV access ramps were identified as the preferred investment for improving speed and reliability of regional express buses by eliminating the need to weave across general purpose lanes of traffic to reach HOV lanes.

Sound Move also required that "Before building individual HOV access ramps, the RTA will work with the state Department of Transportation, local transit operators, local jurisdictions, and citizen committees to assess each facility's location and function. This assessment will determine whether there are ways to achieve equivalent transit speed, reliability, and ridership at a lower cost or by making transportation system management improvements instead."

To respond to this requirement, an HOV/TSM Committee was formed, with representatives from ALT-TRANS (now the Transportation Choices Coalition), 1000 Friends of Washington, the Sierra Club, the League of Women Voters, the Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association, the Puget Sound Regional Council, the Washington State Department of Transportation, Community Transit, King County/Metro, Pierce Transit, and the Boeing Company. The Committee was formed in June 1998 and met monthly through November 1998 to evaluate the benefits of the implementation of the \$377 million HOV direct access program compared with similar investments in TSM and TDM.

Findings

The major finding of the Committee is that the system of HOV Access ramps performed best for improving transit speed and reliability, and that transportation demand management was more effective in increasing ridership. However, the Committee found that HOV access ramps should not be viewed as a substitute for TDM actions. More benefit is derived by using HOV access in combination with TDM and TSM actions than from implementing HOV Access alone.

Recommended Project Guidelines

The Committee recommends that the following guidelines be applied to individual HOV projects to ensure that maximum benefits are provided through process consistency:

- Establish purpose and need statements early in the environmental process
- Develop evaluation criteria appropriate for specific conditions, to be applied to alternatives in environmental analysis, examples of these are: travel time impacts (transit, HOV, auto); transit reliability; ridership; cost and effectiveness; safety; environmental impacts (air quality); land use; feasibility of implementation; support for the *Sound Move* service plan; impacts on total vehicle miles of travel; benefit to buildout scenario; and trip reduction.
- Define service plans for Sound Transit Regional Express and local operators

- Develop reasonable implementation alternatives--
 - ① Highest priority should be given to Regional Express bus service when determining the location and configuration of direct access ramp projects.
 - ② Since local transit connects riders to Regional Express service, local transit should be given a high priority in determining location, configuration, and design of direct access ramps.
 - ③ The design of direct access ramps should consider carpools and vanpools, depending upon the number of vanpools/carpools benefiting from the improvement with appropriate weight placed on cost and benefit.
- Develop TSM/TDM alternatives, using identified considerations
- Estimate impacts of the alternative
- Screen and evaluate alternatives
- Select and design the preferred alternative
- Make service changes at project completion
- Develop a monitoring plan

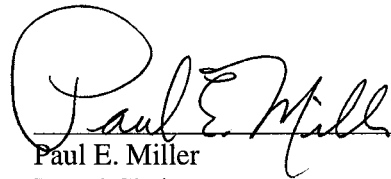
Other Recommendations for System Coherency

- Emphasize and support express service between centers identified in Vision 2020, using HOV Access investments as a tool to direct development and selectively encourage transit-supportive density.
- Pursue strategies that will consolidate facilities and services in urban centers.
- Pursue alternatives to ramp projects in locations where it is uncertain that regional or local transit operators would use the ramps or the volume of use is forecasted to be low.
- Begin actively planning Phase II and the interface between Regional Express and future rail expansion.
- Support and collaborate with other agencies on education, TDM studies and land-use issues, which enhance the value of the public investment in the access program.

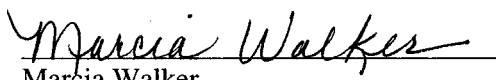
Motion:

It is hereby moved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority that Sound Transit accept the findings and recommendations of the HOV/TSM Committee and proceed with the implementation of the HOV Access program defined in *Sound Move*. In addition, the Board directs that the project evaluation process recommended by the HOV/TSM Committee be applied to all projects to the extent possible.

Approved by the Board of the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority at a regular meeting thereof on the 10th day of December 1998.


 Paul E. Miller
 Board Chair

ATTEST:


 Marcia Walker
 Board Administrator



November 19, 1998

TO: Board of Directors, Sound Transit

FROM: Dave Russell, Chair, HOV/TSM Committee

SUBJECT: Final Committee Report

This memo transmits a technical report comparing the High-Occupancy-Vehicle (HOV) Access Program outlined in *Sound Move* with alternative investments, and a consensus report of the HOV/TSM Committee.

Summary of HOV/TSM Committee findings and recommendations

The Committee bases its recommendations on the evaluation of the HOV direct access program and TSM (Transportation System Management) and TDM (Transportation Demand Management) alternatives that it has studied over the last five months. The Committee recommends that the Board and individual project committees strive for consistency and coherency by applying the following guidelines for HOV access project development:

- **The HOV Access Program is the preferred investment for improving speed and reliability.**

The Committee compared investing \$377 million in the HOV access projects described in *Sound Move* with equivalent expenditures on TSM or TDM. The evaluation included 15 criteria that compared system performance. HOV access ramps were found to be best for speed and reliability, however, the TDM approach was found to increase ridership.

The Committee also concluded that HOV access projects should not be viewed as a substitute for TDM actions nor should the HOV access projects overlook opportunities to integrate TSM improvements. The analysis may not adequately illustrate the benefits of TDM or TSM. More benefit would be derived by using HOV access in combination with TDM and TSM actions than from implementing HOV Access alone.

- **Individual HOV access project development should include processes and evaluation standards recommended in the technical report.** The Committee looked at representative HOV project investments at I-5 Ash Way and SR-525 at Swamp Creek. Again, it showed that HOV access performed satisfactorily. The analysis illustrated that project development should be approached carefully to ensure that the benefits of alternative investments are considered and that the capital projects will be used by transit operators.

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As each project undergoes environmental analysis, alternatives should include a comparison of: travel time impacts (transit, HOV, auto); transit reliability; ridership; cost and effectiveness; safety; environmental (air quality); land use; feasibility of implementation; support for *Sound Move* service plan; impacts on total Vehicle Miles of Travel; benefit to buildout scenario and trip reduction.

- **Emphasize and support express service between centers identified in Vision 2020.** HOV capital investments should be viewed as a means of creating transit markets and transit supportive land use densities. Conversely, care should be taken to ensure that capital investments are not made at locations not planned for greater density.
- **Pursue strategies that will consolidate facilities and services in urban centers.** Avoid unnecessary scattering of service points that slow express service and complicate other transit service.
- **Pursue alternatives to ramp projects in certain locations.** Examples include where it is uncertain that regional or local transit operators would use the ramps or the volume of use is forecasted to be low; other options such as flyer stops could provide acceptable access and quicker transit stops; and/or alternative opportunities exist to invest within the subarea for improved transit performance.

Finally, the Committee recommends that the Sound Transit Board:

- **Begin actively planning Phase II and the interface between Regional Express projects and future rail expansion.** The benefits of the planned HOV ramps in areas where rail will be extended should be reviewed; some advanced planning could improve investment decisions in Phase 1.
- **Support and collaborate with other public agencies on education, TDM studies, and land-use issues, which enhance the value of the public investment in the access program.**

Mission and membership

The Committee was appointed in June 1998 to review policy options available to the Board for the evaluation prescribed on page 26 of *Sound Move*:

“HOV access ramps are the preferred investment for improving speed and reliability of regional express buses by eliminating the need to weave across general-purpose lanes to reach HOV lanes. Before building individual access ramps, the RTA will work with the state Transportation Department, local transit operators, local jurisdictions and citizen committees to assess each facility’s location and function. This assessment will determine whether there are ways to achieve equivalent transit speed, reliability and ridership at a lower cost or by making transportation system management improvements instead.”

While Transportation System Management (TSM) alternatives are to be considered in the pre-engineering and environmental review process for individual ramps, a broader systems view is also needed. Former Board Chair Bob Drewel appointed me to chair a committee to carry out such a study. Nominations were solicited from various organizations and the following committee was formed:

Donna Ambrose	Greater Redmond Transportation Management Association
Tim Brakke	Community Transit
Ned Conroy	Puget Sound Regional Council; Kevin Murphy (alt.)
Elizabeth Davis	League of Women Voters; Stephanie Weber (alt.)

Kevin Desmond	Pierce Transit
Rob Fellows	Washington State Department of Transportation
Wilson Geegh	Sierra Club
Steve Gorcester	King County
Virginia Gunby	1000 Friends of Washington
Peter Hurley	ALT-TRANS (now The Transportation Choices Coalition); John McGarvey (alt.)
Rob McKenna	Sound Transit Board; King County Council
Dave Russell	Sound Transit Board and Committee Chair; Kirkland City Council
Mike Wasch	The Boeing Company

The Committee was supported by Chris Wellander and Kathy Leotta of Parsons Brinckerhoff, Scott Rutherford of the University of Washington, and Sound Transit staff.

Discussion overview, ramp review process

The Committee met on the following dates in 1998, to discuss the indicated topics:

July 8	Background, objectives of study, system versus project emphasis
August 13	TSM/TDM alternatives, inside vs. outside HOV lanes, HOV pre-design ramp study and <i>Sound Move</i> selections, system analysis
September 10	Project environmental review status, Regional Express bus service design, system analysis results
October 8	Case study analysis
November 12	Policy options, report review

The technical material in the attached report provided the basis for much of the committee's work.

A choice between a conventional project and a TSM program is normally made after the public has had an opportunity to comment as part of a formal environmental process. The system EIS for the 10-year regional transit plan, prepared in 1993, addressed HOV, TSM, and TDM. This was followed by a Major Investment Study in 1997. Both require project-level environmental processes for each capital project.

The Committee reviewed the status of three projects that have considerable environmental work completed (Interstate-90 Sunset Interchange, Interstate-405 Bellevue Downtown Direct Access, and State Route 525 at Swamp Creek). It was concluded that some alternative analysis had occurred, and that the processes were too far along to make significant process changes without jeopardizing schedule and investment.

Four projects are in the early stages of environmental analysis (I-405 Kirkland, Interstate-5 Lynnwood, I-5 Federal Way, and I-5 Silver Lake). The Committee felt that the established local advisory committees should proceed with the environmental work for these projects. The committees should incorporate the evaluation process studied by the HOV/TSM Committee to the maximum extent possible. The remaining six projects should go through a rigorous project development process described in the attached report.

Issues To Be Brought to the Board's Attention Without a Committee Recommendation

- Some Committee members believe that HOV Access projects proposed in Bellevue and Issaquah have not been adequately compared with TDM or TSM alternatives to determine whether equivalent alternatives exist. Environmental impact statements are being completed for those projects.
- Sound Transit has established Executive Advisory Committees for projects in Lynnwood, Mercer Island, Federal Way, and Kirkland in cooperation with the local jurisdictions to assist Sound Transit in environmental evaluation and public involvement. Regional organizations (i.e., Sierra Club, 1000 Friends, The Transportation Choices Coalition, formerly ALT-Trans) have not been given a seat on the committees; however, the Executive Advisory Committees accepted the League of Women Voters as a member on all but the Mercer Island committee. Some Committee members feel that the Executive Advisory Committees should be expanded to include additional regional organizations.
- Sound Transit's legal and practical role in participating or leading TDM activities should be reviewed by the Board. One view is that Sound Transit should be a participant in existing processes such as the PSRC TDM Strategy; another view is that Sound Transit's statutory authority ought to be widened and that funds should be allocated for significant TDM activities.