Growing Transit Communities: A Corridor Action Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region will help local communities make the most of major new transit investments that will be built over the next 20 years. The goal is to provide all people the choice to live in affordable, vibrant, healthy and safe communities, where they can conveniently walk or take a train or a bus to work, and have good access to services, shopping and other activities.

Promoting social equity and meaningful community engagement is essential to achieve the goals of Growing Transit Communities. A Regional Equity Network will bring together community organizations and advocates for social equity as well as cities, housing authorities, counties, public health agencies, affordable housing advocates, educational institutions and development interests. The Regional Equity Network is being organized by Impact Capital, a community development financial institution.

Goals of the Regional Equity Network are to:

• Ensure a social equity framework is used in all aspects of Growing Transit Communities through interaction with project committees, task forces and work groups, and community engagement.

• Link community and equity organizations in the three major transit corridors.

• Increase the capacity of underrepresented communities to effectively engage in planning and policy-making processes.

• Implement and change policy to promote equitable outcomes.

Social Equity Framework

A social equity framework:

• Ensures that current residents, businesses and other community members benefit as their communities change and grow, rather than being displaced to areas that offer fewer opportunities.

• Seeks to ensure that new growth and development creates housing choices affordable to socially and economically diverse populations, opportunities for community businesses and institutions to thrive, and employment opportunities that pay a living wage.

• Empowers communities and builds local capacity to actively participate in planning and policy making processes.
Tasks undertaken by the Regional Equity Network include:

- Form and support a regional Equity Network. Identify and recruit stakeholders to participate on Growing Transit Communities Steering Committees, Corridor Task Forces and Working Groups.

- Work with community groups in corridors and station areas to define equitable development needs. Build capacity of local community leaders to participate in Corridor Action Strategy processes.

- Administer a small grants program that provides resources to community organizations to organize and engage diverse communities throughout the region, to participate on task forces and committees, and to increase capacity to engage in transportation and land use planning. Four cycles of funding will be available (Fall 2011 – Spring 2013).

- Develop training sessions for grantees to build capacity and understanding of land use and transportation planning and permitting processes. Create peer-learning and other knowledge-sharing opportunities.

What is Impact Capital?

Impact Capital is a community development financial institution that makes strategic investments in nonprofit organizations, tribal entities, and housing authorities to spur community development, including affordable housing, art and cultural centers, community facilities, and vibrant commercial districts throughout Washington. Impact Capital works to transform distressed communities and neighborhoods into healthy places to live, work, do business, and raise families.

For more information:
Please visit impactcapital.org or contact Heidi Hall at 206-658-2619 or heidi@impactcapital.org

To get a picture of where and which transit stations the Growing Transit Communities program will be focusing efforts, please visit: http://www.psrc.org/growth/growing-transit-communities

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