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The Growing Transit Communities Partnership is an advisory body of diverse public, private, and nonprofit agencies and organizations working together to promote successful transit communities. The Partnership is funded by a three-year grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities and is housed at the Puget Sound Regional Council. The Partnership has developed the Growing Transit Communities Strategy, an implementation plan to promote thriving and equitable transit communities in the central Puget Sound region.

The Existing Conditions Report

The Growing Transit Communities Existing Conditions Report presents background data and analysis on the current conditions within the transit corridor study areas that are the focus of the Sustainable Communities grant that has funded the work of the Growing Transit Communities Partnership. The report has several purposes. First, the data were the starting point for an 18-month task force process that culminated in the Growing Transit Communities Strategy for the central Puget Sound region. Task force members, including representatives from local government, other public agencies, non-profits, and regional and local community groups, provided feedback on early drafts of the Existing Conditions Report and helped to shape the final product. Second, data contained in the report was the foundation for developing the People + Place Implementation Typology that is a guiding framework for the Strategy. Third, analysis of existing conditions, particularly identified community needs and opportunities for supporting thriving equitable transit communities around high capacity transit, informed the many policy and programmatic recommendations in the Strategy. Finally, the report also establishes baseline conditions for future monitoring and further analysis.

Using this Document

The Existing Conditions Report contains six topical chapters: Demographics, Economy, Land Use, Housing, Transportation, and Policy Environment. The chapters have been released as separate documents. Each chapter opens with an introduction to the issue area, including a summary of major findings and a discussion of data sources and limitations. Data are reported, analyzed, compared, and contrasted with respect to several levels of geography. The area within a half-mile radius around each of 74 identified transit nodes located within the long-range light rail corridors comprised the study areas that are the basis for all further analysis. Study areas were grouped into corridors: North, East, and South respectively. Finally, the region as a whole provides key data benchmarks from which to measure how the study areas are currently similar to or different from the larger regional context.

Each report is written so that sections may be read independently from the others. This permits a reader to look only to their Corridor of interest without missing any relevant introductory material. Based on data at all levels, the document provides observations in each subsection and at the end of each chapter, with special attention to implications for social equity and housing affordability.
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INTRODUCTION

A focus on people, prosperity, and planet challenges the region to develop healthy and safe communities for all people, apply an environmental ethic..., conserve resources, and enhance natural and built environments.  VISION 2040

1. THE GROWING TRANSIT COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP

In the coming decades, the central Puget Sound region will make a once-in-a-lifetime investment in rapid transit. The region has a unique opportunity to leverage these transit investments by growing and strengthening communities around transit stations. To this end, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has partnered with other public, private and non-profit organizations to form the Growing Transit Communities Partnership. This consortium is leading the way towards equitable transit community development that meets the region’s growth management objectives while providing social, economic, and environmental benefits to all current and future residents and businesses. Guided by VISION 2040, the region’s plan for a more sustainable future, the Growing Transit Communities Partnership brings new voices to the table to better enable the creation of vibrant, diverse, and inclusive communities for all people.

Funded by a $5 million regional planning grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the Growing Transit Communities Partnership work program focuses on four areas:

Corridor Based Plan Implementation. Stakeholder task forces are leading corridor planning efforts for more than 70 study areas and other transit nodes along the region’s

What are equitable transit communities?

Equitable transit communities are mixed-use, transit-served neighborhoods that provide housing and transportation choices and greater social and economic opportunity for current and future residents. Although defined generally by the half-mile walking distances around high-capacity transit stations, they exist within the context of larger neighborhoods with existing residents and businesses.

These communities promote local community and economic development by providing housing types at a range of densities and affordability levels, commercial and retail spaces, community services and other amenities integrated into safe, walkable neighborhoods.

Successful equitable transit communities are created through inclusive planning and decision-making processes, resulting in development outcomes that accommodate future residential and employment growth, increase opportunity and mobility for existing communities, and enhance public health for socially and economically diverse populations.
### Growing Transit Communities Partnership Consortium Members (as of May 2012)

**Cities**
- Bellevue, Everett, Mountlake Terrace, Redmond, Seattle, Shoreline, and Tacoma

**Counties**
- King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties

**Transit Agencies**
- Sound Transit, King County Metro Transit, Community Transit

**Public Health & Human Services**
- Public Health of Seattle & King County,
- Snohomish County Human Services, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department

**Public Housing Authorities**
- King County Housing Authority, Pierce County Housing Authority, Seattle Housing Authority, Snohomish County Housing Authority, Tacoma Housing Authority

**Funding Institutions**
- Enterprise Community Partners, Impact Capital (LISC), Washington State Housing Finance Commission

**Non-Profit Developers**
- Affordable Housing Consortium of Tacoma-Pierce County, Bellwether Housing, Capital Hill Housing, Community Development Collaborative, Housing Consortium of Everett and Snohomish County, Housing Development Consortium Seattle-King County

**For-Profit Developers**
- Urban Land Institute—Seattle District Council

**Regional Groups**
- A Regional Coalition for Housing, Community Development Collaborative Equity Partnership, Puget Sound Regional Council, Quality Growth Alliance, Washington State Department of Commerce

**Educational Institutions**
- North Seattle Community College, UW-Runstad Center for Real Estate Studies

**Environmental & Transportation Advocates**
- Forterra, Futurewise, Seattle Transit Blog

**Housing & Community Advocates**
- Puget Sound SAGE, Homesight, Refugee and Immigrant Services Northwest, Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

Three long-range high-capacity transit corridors: These corridors extend South from Seattle to Tacoma; East from Seattle to Redmond; and North from Seattle to Everett. The corridor planning efforts are engaging stakeholders in more than twenty jurisdictions to develop: 1) this report on existing conditions; 2) a Growing Transit Communities Strategy for corridors and station areas and other transit nodes within them; and 3) specific work plans developed with local and regional jurisdictions and other parties that may include policies, regulations, tools, and investment priorities that promote equitable transit communities.

**Regional Equity Network.** The Network, supported by staff at Impact Capital, has developed a policy framework for incorporating equity into planning processes and community development outcomes. The Network is administering small equity grants to community organizations for outreach efforts, data collection and equipping people to engage fully in community building over the long-term. The Network is making efforts to involve underrepresented voices, such as low income families, communities of color, as well as organizations in community planning now and in the future.

**Affordable Housing Strategy.** The Affordable Housing Strategy includes policy development and research on new tools to support affordable housing around transit stations, including new financing and land acquisition mechanisms. A region-wide assessment of fair housing access and technical assistance to local jurisdictions on affordable housing policy development are two pieces of the affordable housing strategy.

**Innovative Projects and Tools.** Three demonstration projects are focusing on making equitable transit communities a reality. Projects in Tacoma's South Downtown and Seattle's Northgate areas are testing tools and serving as laboratories for the rest of the region. The University of Washington's Runstad Center is developing Decision Commons, a computer-based visioning tool to help illustrate real time social, environmental and economic impacts of different planning scenarios. Demonstration cases for Decision Commons are the Bellevue-Redmond Corridor and Tacoma South Downtown. A fourth targeted project has focused on identifying tools and partnerships to advance housing choice, improved connectivity, and jobs-housing balance in the East Corridor.

The Growing Transit Communities Partnership is governed by an Oversight Committee composed of representatives of Consortium member organizations and jurisdictions. Steering Committees for
Affordable Housing and the Equity Network provide direction on those respective program components and reflect the overarching programmatic emphasis on housing affordability and social equity. Corridor Task Forces—one each for the South, East and North corridors—are overseeing the development of Corridor Action Strategies, and include representatives of the affected jurisdictions and other community, business and nonprofit voices. Finally, technical working groups oversee the Demonstration Project work.

1.1. **DEFINING PROGRAM CORRIDORS AND STUDY AREAS**

While there are a number of current and planned high-capacity transit corridors in the region—including light rail, bus rapid transit, street car, commuter rail, and ferry—the primary focus for the Growing Transit Communities Partnership is the full build-out of the three regional light rail corridors envisioned in Transportation 2040 (T2040). These corridors extend south from Seattle to Tacoma, east from Seattle to downtown Redmond, and north from Seattle to Everett. No single corridor is fully-built out with Sound Transit Link light rail; rather each is in different stages of system planning, funding, and development. In addition, each corridor intersects other existing or future high-capacity transit investments, including King County Metro RapidRide and Community Transit Swift bus rapid transit, Tacoma and Seattle streetcars, Sound Transit Sounder commuter rail, as well as regional express and local bus service.

For the purposes of analysis and recommendations, the “Corridor” refers to the land within identified “study areas” along each long-range transit corridor, and does not include any land between or outside of each study area. The Growing Transit Communities Partnership has identified 74 “study areas” along the three corridors. These study areas comprise the half-mile radius around current and known and funded future Link light rail station areas, select bus rapid transit station areas within the corridors, and other major transit and activity nodes in portions of the corridors for which future light rail alignments are not yet defined. All existing and known and funded future Link light rail station areas are called “Light Rail Station Areas.” Other study areas, including select bus rapid transit station areas and activity nodes within future light rail expansion areas are called “Transit Node Study Areas.” Please see Figure 1 for a map of the 74 study areas.

The 74 study areas include four Central Link light rail stations located in Downtown Seattle: Westlake, University Street, Pioneer Square, and Chinatown/International District. Because the urban form and use intensity of these station areas are significantly different from those study areas in the remainder of the corridors, they are set apart in the Existing Conditions Report as “Downtown Seattle” and are not included in the Corridor specific analyses.

The remaining Central Link light rail stations are contained in the South Corridor, which includes 25 study areas from the Stadium Link Station in Seattle to the Theatre District Link Station in Tacoma. The East Corridor includes 14 study areas from the future Rainier Link Station in Seattle to Downtown Redmond. Finally, the North Corridor includes 31 study areas from the future Capitol Hill Link Station in Seattle to Everett Station. The detailed maps on the following pages depict the geography of the corridors and study areas.
FIGURE 1: CORRIDOR AND STUDY AREA MAP
FIGURE 2: SOUTH CORRIDOR STUDY AREA MAP
FIGURE 3: NORTH CORRIDOR STUDY AREA MAP
2. THE EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT

The Existing Conditions Report presents the current conditions related to the demographic, economic, land use, housing, transportation and policy and regulatory context in the study areas along with preliminary observations on implications for program goals. The data from the Existing Conditions Report will be the foundation for developing a typology of study areas and inform policy recommendations and implementation actions. The report also establishes baseline conditions for future monitoring and further analysis.

2.1. A NOTE ON GEOGRAPHY

In each chapter of this report, data are reported and discussed at several different levels of geography. “Region” refers to the four-county central Puget Sound region, which includes King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties. The regional data is used as a reference point for considering how the transit corridors compare with the broader metropolitan area. “Corridor” refers to the collection of light rail station areas and

Source: PSRC

FIGURE 4: EAST CORRIDOR STUDY AREA MAP
transit node study areas that are located within the three primary corridors. As noted, given the distinct characteristics of downtown Seattle and the fact that downtown Seattle is a functional part of each corridor, statistics for this area are reported separately in all tables that include corridor level statistics.

“Study area” refers generically to both light rail station areas and to transit node study areas. The study areas were delineated as a half mile radius around existing or planned transit facilities, which include light rail stations, bus rapid transit stations, park & ride express bus transfer points, and express bus stops. Due to close spacing of these facilities along many stretches of the corridors, the study areas overlap each other in many places. Where data for individual study areas are reported, these data relate to the entire half-mile radius, including overlaps. For this reason, summing the study area data for a corridor is not possible without double counting. Overlap also occurs where each of the corridors borders downtown Seattle. In this case, totals for the East, South, and North corridors are based on the entire area within the study areas in the corridor. Data reported for downtown Seattle reflects only those parts of the study areas around the four downtown light rail stations that do not overlap with the adjacent study areas of Capitol Hill, Rainier, or Stadium.

Finally, there are geographic differences related to source data. As noted in the documentation accompanying the data tables, and covered in more detail in the report appendices, the data included in this report are derived from a number of different sources that report data at different levels of geography. Examples include: address-matched point locations, parcels, Census blocks, and Census block groups. In each case, the data developed to describe the existing conditions utilize a set of source data reporting areas selected to most closely correspond to the half-mile circles. However, in many cases (e.g., Census block groups) the source data geographies do not align exactly with the study area boundaries.

2.2. USING THIS DOCUMENT

The Existing Conditions Report contains six topical chapters: Demographics, Economy, Land Use, Housing, Transportation, and Policy Environment. The chapters have been released as separate documents. Each chapter opens with an introduction to the issue area, including a summary of major findings and a discussion of data sources and limitations. Data are reported, analyzed, compared, and contrasted with respect to several levels of geography. The area within a half-mile radius around each of 74 identified transit nodes located within the long-range light rail corridors comprised the study areas that are the basis for all further analysis. Study areas were grouped into corridors: North, East, and South respectively. Finally, the region as a whole provides key data benchmarks from which to measure how the study areas are currently similar to or different from the larger regional context.

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The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) develops policies and coordinates decisions about regional growth, transportation and economic development planning within King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties. PSRC is composed of over 80 county, city, port, transit, tribal and state agencies serving the region. PSRC is home to the region’s federally designated Economic Development District, which includes representatives from private business, local governments, tribes, non-profit, labor and trade organizations.

PSRC works with local government, business and citizens to build a common vision for the region’s future, expressed through three connected major activities: VISION 2040, the region’s growth strategy and multi-county planning policies; Transportation 2040, the region’s long-range transportation plan; and Prosperity Partnership, which develops and advances the region’s economic strategy.

For more information, please visit http://www.psrc.org/.

The Growing Transit Communities Partnership is an advisory body of diverse public, private, and nonprofit agencies and organizations working together to promote successful transit communities in the central Puget Sound region. The Partnership is funded by a three-year grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities and is housed at the Puget Sound Regional Council.

For more information, please visit http://www.psrc.org/growth/growing-transit-communities/.

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