Chapter 15 Parks and Recreation

1 What are our parks and recreational resources?

Many parks, open spaces, and recreational facilities exist throughout the four-county area, reflecting the diverse range of landforms, ecology, land use, and culture found in the region. These resources are in both private and public ownership, with public resources being operated by local and county jurisdictions and state and federal agencies. Open space is a broad term used to define different types of privately and publicly owned lands and may include environmentally critical areas such as steep slopes, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, lakes and streams, designated parks and trails, and natural resource lands such as agriculture and forest lands.

Recreational facilities are organized in these three categories:

- Local recreational facilities
- Major public lands
- Private facilities

Exhibit 15-1 lists each type of facility, including uses and jurisdictional authority.

Which elements of Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11-444 are addressed in this chapter?

This chapter addresses:

- Section (2)(b)(v) Recreation
- Section (2)(b)(vii) Agricultural crops
- Section (2)(d)(iv) Parks or other recreational facilities

Which environmentally critical areas are identified as open spaces?

- Steep slopes
- Wetlands
- Aquifer recharge areas
- Lakes
- Streams

Exhibit 15-1
Types of Recreational Facilities

Facility Type and Use	Jurisdiction
Local Recreational Facilities	
Local parks • General outdoor activities[1], sports, and water access • Visiting facilities such as zoos, aquariums, and arboretums	Towns, cities, counties
Trails and greenways • General outdoor activities[1] • Link parks and natural open spaces • Safe nonmotorized route	Local, state and federal agencies; nonprofits
Public school, college, and university campus facilities • General outdoor activities[1] • Athletic fields for use by the general public • Organized sport events	Public and educational institutions
Streets, roads, and highways • Sight-seeing and pleasure driving • Sidewalks and shoulders may be used for general outdoor activities[1]	Towns, cities, counties and the state
Major Public Lands	
National parks • Preservation of and public access to natural, historic, and cultural sites	U.S. Department of the Interior
National forest lands • Fishing, horseback riding, camping, hiking, boating, and swimming • Grazing, logging, and mining • Watershed protection, wilderness preservation, and wildlife observation	U.S. Department of Agriculture
National wildlife refuges • Wildlife conservation • Some recreational activities, such as hunting, fishing, and lodging	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
State parks • Preservation of natural and cultural resources • Recreational activities such as camping, picnicking, shoreline access, hiking, and boat launches	Washington Parks and Recreation Commission
State wildlife recreation lands • Hunting, fishing, and water access	Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
State trust lands • Timber and agricultural production	Washington Department of Natural Resources
Private Facilities	
Logging lands, recreational facilities, and sports clubs • Fishing, hunting, horseback riding, hiking, swimming, golf, skiing, team sports, and off-road vehicle use	Private companies, nonprofit organizations

1. General outdoor activities could include walking, jogging, bicycling, horseback riding, picnicking, and skating.

2 How are parks and other recreational resources governed?

Under the Washington State Growth Management Act, local comprehensive plans are required to have a parks element. Federally funded or approved transportation projects also require special consideration of potential direct or indirect impacts to parks. Projects that have adverse impacts or involve the use of parks, recreational resources, or wildlife refuges must comply with the requirements of Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act of 1966 and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965. If adverse effects or substantial use of a resource is needed for a project, the project can be approved only if it shows that there are no feasible and prudent alternatives to avoiding the impact.

What is a feasible and prudent alternative?

A feasible and prudent avoidance alternative avoids using Section 4(f) property and does not cause other severe problems of a magnitude that outweighs the importance of protecting the Section 4(f) property.

3 How many existing parks and recreational facilities are in the region?

To analyze the availability and nature of the region's locally owned parks and recreational resources, PSRC has compiled a Geographic Information System (GIS) database of the region's local parks and recreational facilities. The database was created by completing the following activities:

1. Identifying major public lands in the region using data from the Washington State Department of Natural Resources (DNR).
2. Surveying local jurisdictions to compile an inventory of parks and open space in local government ownership.
3. Locally owned facilities.

The results of the inventory showed that there are approximately 104,000 acres of locally owned and managed neighborhood, community, and regional parks and open spaces distributed in the four-county region. Locally owned facilities consist of a combination of community, neighborhood, and some regional facilities, depending on ownership, function, and size. For example, locally owned facilities include small

Existing recreational resources in the region

- Approximately 104,000 acres of locally owned recreational facilities
- Approximately 40 percent of the region's 6,300 square miles is designated major public land.

The central Puget Sound region has approximately 104,000 acres of locally owned parks and open spaces.

Source: Parametrix, Inc.

neighborhood parks owned by individual cities, as well as larger county-owned parks intended for wider regional use.

Major Public Lands

Approximately 2,500 square miles of major public lands exist within the region. This is 40 percent of the region's approximately 6,300 square miles. Major public lands are by definition regional in nature, and they are generally accessible to regional residents within a 1- to 2-hour drive.

Forested and wooded public lands provide scenic recreation areas.

Source: Parametrix, Inc.

4 What effects on parks and recreational facilities are common to all alternatives?

Long-term Effects

Exhibit 15-2 shows parks and open spaces, public lands, and regional nonmotorized networks within the four-county region that could be affected. The actual number of parks affected would be determined during future project-level planning and environmental review of specific projects.

Some significant unavoidable adverse effects on parks and recreational resources could occur under the plan alternatives.

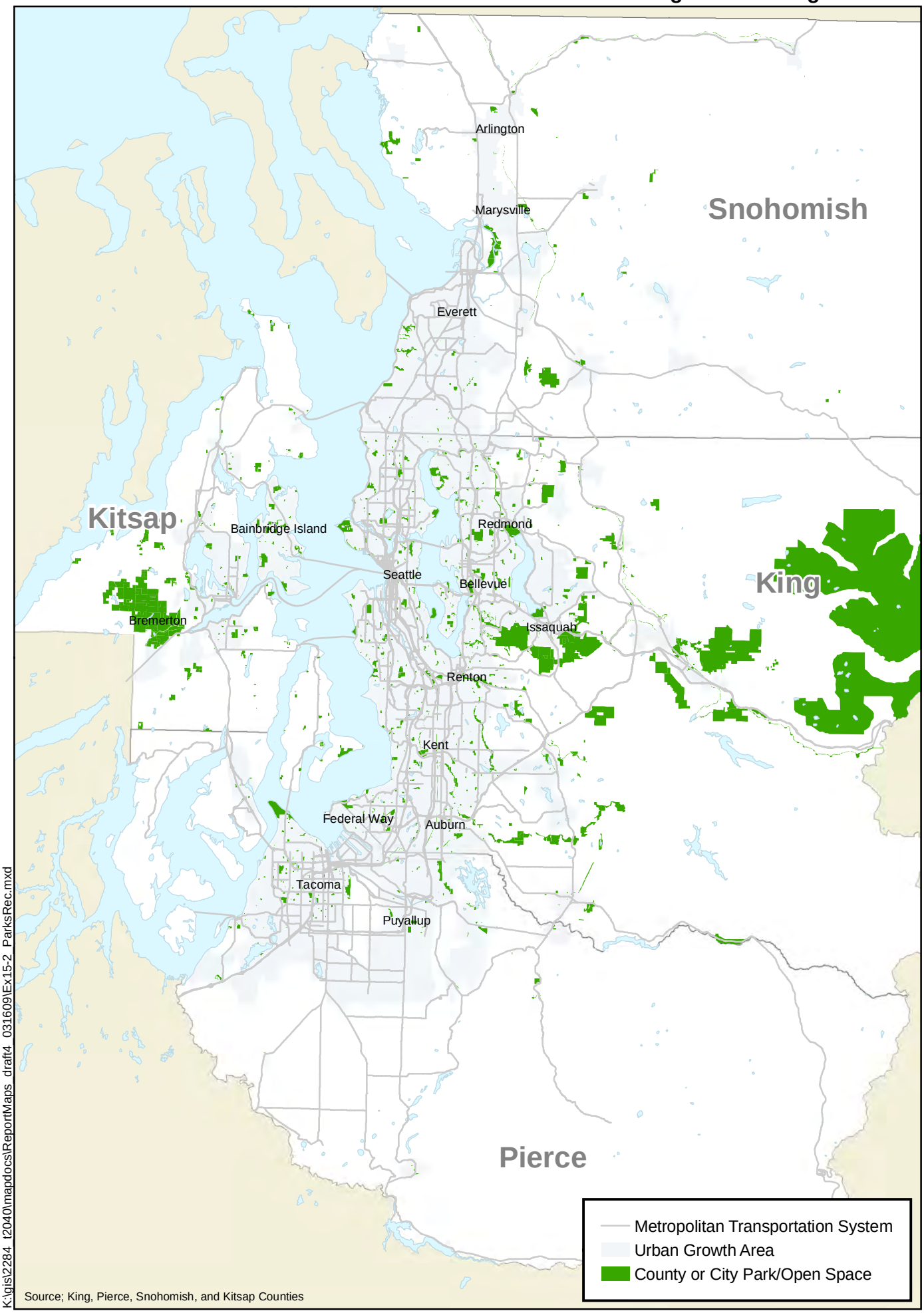
Adverse effects could include the following:

- If acquisition of parkland is required for specific transportation projects, the amount of available parkland may be reduced. Although parks and recreational facilities would typically be avoided, use of parklands or other direct impacts may occur, particularly when other physical constraints limit the location of infrastructure.
- Proximity effects could include noise disturbance, visual and aesthetic degradation, access restrictions, or increased traffic.
- Recreational facilities could be separated from neighborhoods by transportation infrastructure.
- There may be increased potential for overuse and subsequent damage to the character and quality of natural resource lands and other open spaces.

Some parkland may be acquired for transportation projects, although efforts would be made to avoid impacts where possible.

Source: Parametrix, Inc.

Exhibit 15-2. Parks and Recreational Resources in the Central Puget Sound Region



- New transportation facilities on parcels adjacent to designated agricultural and forest lands could induce pressure to convert natural resource lands to urban uses incompatible with their function as open space.

Positive effects could include the following:

- The improved transportation system could increase access to parks and recreational resources.
- Adding bicycle lanes, sidewalks, or trails along transportation rights of way could improve recreational opportunities by linking recreational areas and trail systems.

Construction Effects

Effects on parks and recreational resources during construction may be unavoidable and could be significant and adverse in some locations. Parks and recreational facilities in proximity to transportation projects can be affected in the following ways:

- Temporary trail closures
- Temporary restrictions on park use and access
- Increased traffic volumes adjacent to or in the vicinity of parks and recreational facilities
- Street closures and detours that make access difficult
- Increased noise, vibration from heavy equipment, dust, and soil on paved surfaces
- Construction equipment, stockpiled materials, construction lighting, demolition, clearing, dust, and general clutter would temporarily affect park access, public safety, and usability.
- In some cases, construction of new or expanded transportation corridors, stations, and access facilities could require use of parkland for staging areas or other construction activities.

Actual construction effects and the number of parks and recreational facilities affected would be determined during future project-level planning and environmental review of specific projects under each alternative.

Road rights of way may be used to link regional trails.

Source: Parametrix, Inc.

5 What effects on parks and recreational facilities are specific to individual alternatives?

The Baseline Alternative and Alternative 1 would have fewer effects on parks and recreational facilities because these alternatives would make more use of the existing roadway system and would have fewer expansions. Trails in and of themselves serve as recreational facilities, as well as transportation facilities. Alternatives with greatest emphasis on investment in trails would have more positive impacts on regional parks and open space. Alternative 1 and the Preferred Alternative have the least investment in trails; Alternatives 2, 3, and 4 have a moderate level of investment; and Alternative 5 has the highest level of investment.

The types of effects described in the response to Question 4 could occur under any of the proposed Transportation 2040 alternatives, including the Baseline Alternative. This question does not seek to identify specific effects to parks and recreational resources. Instead, it uses the amount of new transportation infrastructure contained in each alternative to compare the possible total effect to parks and recreational resources in the region.

As noted in the sidebar, this plan-level FEIS will not list the specific individual effects that could result from all of the projects contained in each Transportation 2040 alternative. In addition, it is not practicable to conduct a regionwide evaluation of the collective effect on the region's parks and recreational resources from all projects. Therefore, this plan-level FEIS does not contain a regionwide analysis of parks and recreational resources.

However, it is possible to provide an approximation of which alternatives could result in the greatest number of effects on parks and recreational resources. The Transportation 2040 alternatives contain varying levels of new transportation infrastructure (refer to Exhibit 15-3), and it is likely that the alternatives with the most new infrastructure would result in the most effects on parks and recreational resources.

Transportation 2040 Alternatives

Refer to Chapter 3: Plan Alternatives and Appendix A: Alternatives Technical Report for more details on the Transportation 2040 alternatives.

Why does this FEIS not list the specific environmental effects caused by each alternative?

Each of the Transportation 2040 alternatives contains hundreds of individual projects. If constructed in the future, these projects could affect the region's built and natural environments.

For some environmental disciplines, such as transportation or air quality, these projects could affect the environment in the vicinity of the project and also could collectively affect the regional environment. For these disciplines, this FEIS contains an analysis to evaluate the potential regional effects of these projects. The localized effects for these environmental disciplines will be identified in a future project-level environmental review.

For other environmental disciplines, such as parks and recreation, individual projects could affect the parks and recreation resources in their vicinity, but would not affect parks and recreation resources elsewhere in the region. Therefore, this FEIS does not contain a regionwide analysis for these disciplines. Future project-level environmental review will identify the specific localized effects on these environmental areas.

Exhibit 15-3[1]

Miles of New Infrastructure Included in Each Alternative

Facility Type	Base Year 2006	Baseline Alt	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Preferred Alt
Systemwide freeway and arterial lane miles	12,806	13,153	13,352	14,013	13,540	13,489	13,329	13,764
New freeway and arterial lane miles	-	348	546	1,208	735	683	523	958
Portion of new lane miles in new corridors	-	30	40	240	218	159	40	248
Light rail miles	2	55	55	82	55	82	82	86
New light rail miles		53	53	80	53	80	80	84
Commuter rail miles	74	82	82	82	82	82	128	128
New commuter rail miles	-	8	8	8	8	8	54	54
Total new miles of road and rail	-	409	607	1296	796	771	657	1096
Percent increase from 2006	-	3%	4%	9%	6%	5%	4%	7%
Nonmotorized facility miles	570	600	747	745	740	745	1058	1123
New nonmotorized facility miles	-	30	177	175	170	175	488	553

As shown in Exhibit 15-3, all of the alternatives contain similar amounts of new infrastructure, measured as a percentage of the total system (3 to 9 percent). Alternative 2 contains the most new miles of road and rail, while the Baseline Alternative contains the fewest. Of the action alternatives, Alternative 1 contains the fewest new miles of roads and rail. Therefore, Alternative 2 would likely result in the most effects on parks and recreational resources, and the Baseline Alternative would likely result in the fewest. Among the action alternatives, Alternative 1 would likely result in the fewest effects on parks and recreational resources. The number of effects resulting from Alternatives 3, 4, and 5 would likely fall between the overall number of effects expected for Alternatives 1 and 2.

What is the difference between plan-level and project-level environmental review?

This FEIS is a non-project (rather than a project-level) EIS. Accordingly, alternatives are defined and environmental effects are evaluated at a relatively broad level. More detailed project-specific environmental review will be developed as appropriate in the future for projects identified in the Transportation 2040 plan that are selected for implementation by their sponsors: Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Sound Transit, etc.

[1] This exhibit has changed since the Draft EIS (DEIS).

The Preferred Alternative includes the second-greatest number of new miles of roads and rail. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative would likely result in the second-greatest number of effects on parks and recreation resources. However, most of the new miles of roads and rail would be built along existing transportation corridors. New transportation facilities constructed in existing transportation corridors are less likely to negatively affect parks and recreation resources than those built in new corridors. Conversely, the Preferred Alternative adds the most miles of new freeway and arterial lane miles (248) in new corridors. Therefore, effects on parks and recreation resources from the Preferred Alternative in new corridors would likely be higher than other alternatives.

The Preferred Alternative includes the greatest number of miles of nonmotorized facilities, which include bicycle and recreation trails. Projects that expand and enhance nonmotorized travel often result in positive effects on parks and recreation resources by providing more opportunities to access existing parks and to use the new facilities for recreation.

The comparisons presented above are intended to approximate the number of effects expected from each alternative and do not identify specific effects to parks and recreational resources. Future project-level environmental review will identify these effects.

Changes to the Proximity Analysis

The method used to assess proximity impacts to parks and recreational resources in the FEIS has been modified from that used in the DEIS. The DEIS listed the number of resources within 100 feet of projects whereas the FEIS lists the number of projects that go directly through a resource. This change was made to be consistent with the method used to assess proximity impacts in Chapter 10: Ecosystems and Endangered Species Act Issues.

Potential Proximity Effects

To assess potential impacts to parks and open spaces, the FEIS used the parks and open space spatial database created by PSRC, and overlaid the location of projects within each alternative.

Exhibit 15-4 shows the number of projects that may potentially affect parks or open spaces—either positively or negatively—under each alternative, based on future transportation projects that would be adjacent to or potentially within a park's footprint.

The GIS data shown in Exhibit 15-4 indicate that the Preferred Alternative would likely result in the most effects on parks and recreational resources, and the Baseline Alternative would likely result in the fewest. Among the action alternatives, Alternative 1 would likely result in the fewest effects on parks and recreational resources. Nonmotorized projects are not likely to result in negative effects on park and recreational resources.

What are the limitations of the proximity analysis?

The purpose of the proximity analysis was to identify relative potential for impacts among alternatives, not to identify absolute numbers of potential impacts. As these projects are implemented, the actual number of impacts would be far less than shown, since the projects would be designed to avoid these impacts.

Exhibit 15-4
Projects in the Vicinity of Parks and Open Spaces

Project Type	Baseline Alt	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Alt 4	Alt 5	Preferred Alt
Transit, roadway, and ferry related projects	8	14	37	21	19	24	42
Nonmotorized projects	7	29	36	35	36	91	83*

*Alternative 5 included many small bike concepts in urban centers throughout the region. During review of the DEIS alternatives, it was discovered that many of these concepts were already built, others were unable to find a sponsor, and others were deleted for other reasons. Concurrently, a smaller number of long nonmotorized projects were added to the Preferred Alternative that weren't in Alternative 5. This explains why the total nonmotorized mileage increased for the Preferred Alternative relative to Alternative 5, but the number of project proximity impacts decreased.

6 What cumulative effects on parks and recreational resources could occur if the Transportation 2040 actions coincide with other planned actions?

Demand for and use of most parks and recreational facilities will continue to increase in proportion to the growth in the region. Cities and towns in the region have adopted comprehensive plans for protecting existing recreational facilities. These plans recommend developing new parks in proportion to population growth and providing services appropriate to community needs. Population growth and continuing development would increase demand for and use of existing parks and recreational facilities, as well as demand for use of functional open spaces, such as areas designated as rural, agricultural, or forest land. Unrelated development throughout the plan area could result in cumulative effects to adjacent or nearby parks and recreational facilities. Access to parks and recreational facilities would increase under the action alternatives, and under the Baseline Alternative to a lesser extent. On the other hand, development of transportation

What are cumulative effects?

Cumulative effects address the impact on the environment, which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

projects throughout the project area could result in potential impacts to parks (including use of parklands, or noise, visual, and traffic impacts), which could affect parks and recreational facilities.

Increased accessibility to rural residential and other parcels adjacent to designated agricultural and forest lands could increase land values, and possibly create pressure to convert adjacent natural resource lands to rural residential, commercial, or urban uses. However, all of the action alternatives focus the majority of transportation improvements into existing urban areas, with little capacity expansion outside the designated urban growth area. Consequently, accessibility to these areas would not be greatly improved.

While the potential for conversion and loss of open space exists, analysis of a change in development activity on rural parcels adjacent to designated natural resource lands (refer to Chapter 5: Land Use, Population, Employment, and Housing for more information) does not indicate a disproportionately large change in development activity compared to rates of change if no additional capacity or accessibility is provided, as in the Baseline Alternative. Therefore, none of the Transportation 2040 alternatives would result in additional cumulative effects on parks and recreational resources.

7 How can the effects to parks and recreational resources be mitigated?

Appropriate mitigation measures for impacts under any of the nonproject alternatives would be determined in consultation with the lead agency, relevant local governments and resource owners, and the public during project-level review. Potential mitigation measures may include the following:

- Move alignments to eliminate or minimize effects from transportation facilities.
- Provide landscaping or other treatments to minimize visual or aesthetic effects, buffer transportation facilities from parks and natural resource areas, and replace disturbed areas.

Landscaping the project areas may mitigate some of the impacts to open spaces.

Source: Parametrix, Inc.

- Install noise barriers to reduce noise effects.
- Use shielding lights on structures to reduce glare.
- Consider the local context, character, style, access needs, and architecture when designing projects.
- Find comparable alternatives to recreational facilities that have been acquired for transit projects.
- Provide compensation or replacement parks and recreational resources to offset the use of resources for transportation projects.
- Incorporate bikeways, sidewalks, trails, and other amenities within transportation projects.
- Consider opportunities to increase park or recreational development opportunities by making available remaining portions of parcels acquired for project rights of way when they are no longer needed for transportation uses after construction.
- Ensure "no net loss" in pedestrian and bicycle safety and mobility as larger state-funded road projects are constructed (e.g., projects that increase roadway width or projects that may cross trails).
- Evaluate underutilized land areas associated with transportation rights of way for potential recreational uses (e.g., City of Seattle I-5 Colonnade Park).

8 Are there any significant unavoidable adverse impacts to parks and recreational facilities?

Some significant unavoidable adverse effects on parks and recreational resources could occur under the Baseline Alternative and action alternatives. Effects on parks and recreational resources during construction may also be unavoidable and could be significant and adverse in some locations. Such effects may include the following:

- Temporary or permanent loss of park and recreational resources

- Loss of designated agricultural and natural resource lands due to increased accessibility and conversion to other uses
- Increased residential and commercial activity on rural parcels adjacent to designated agricultural and natural resource lands, with accompanying change in rural character
- Visual or aesthetic changes to a resource or its setting