November 1, 2019

Mr. Josh Brown
Executive Director
Puget Sound Regional Council
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104-1035

Re: Pierce County Growth Targets

Dear Mr. Brown:

The Draft Vision 2050 Regional Growth Strategy incorporates a range of population growth targets for each of the regional geographies within Pierce County. As noted in the Draft Vision document, additional countywide discussion was needed prior to finalizing the targets. To this end, representatives from the City of Tacoma and Pierce County have met and have developed a proposal that is supported by both jurisdictions to resolve this issue.

This joint recommendation is two-fold: 1) the modification of the areas associated with the High Capacity Transit Communities (HCTC) and Urban Unincorporated geographies, and 2) the redistribution of population growth targets between the Core City, HCTC, Urban Unincorporated, and Rural Areas geographies. The details of our recommendation and background information justifying it are provided in the attachment to this letter.

Pierce County can agree to the low end of the growth target for the Rural Areas geography as it will be documented that these targets are aspirational. Counties have various challenges in limiting growth on existing vacant properties in the rural areas without violating land owners’ property rights. To mitigate these property concerns, it would be beneficial to add a policy and action step that supports the establishment of a regional funding source which would be used to acquire conservation easements within rural areas.

Tacoma and Pierce County ask that the region’s stakeholders acknowledge Pierce County’s local circumstance and accept this recommendation. We, like the rest of the region, want a meaningful and achievable coordinated regional growth plan for the Puget Sound area.

Sincerely,

Douglas G. Richardson
Chair, Pierce County Council

Ryan Mello
Council Member, City of Tacoma
City of Tacoma & Pierce County

Joint Recommendation

Pierce County Growth Targets

BACKGROUND

Regional Growth Strategy
The Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) is the component of Vision 2050 that sets numerical guidance for future population and employment growth within the 4-county region. The RGS within the Draft Vision 2050 categorizes cities and sub-areas of counties in 9 distinct geographies. Within Pierce County the Draft Vision 2050 identifies the following distribution of population growth:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Growth Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Cities</td>
<td>134,000 - 137,000</td>
<td>37% - 38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Cities</td>
<td>85,000 - 101,000</td>
<td>23% - 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Capacity Transit Communities (HCTC)</td>
<td>35,000 - 52,000</td>
<td>10% - 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities and Towns</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated Urban</td>
<td>41,000 - 60,000</td>
<td>11% - 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas</td>
<td>11,000 - 22,000</td>
<td>3% - 6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>364,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is assumed the Pierce County countywide control total is 364,000 in reconciling the ranges associated with each geography.

High Capacity Transit Communities (HCTC) Geography
Draft Vision 2050 describes the HCTC Geography as including, “…urban unincorporated areas planned for annexation or incorporation and with existing or planned access to high-capacity transit.” High-capacity transit is defined as including Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). The inclusion of Tacoma’s southern Potential Annexation Area within the HCTC Geography reflects the description of this geography as Pierce Transit has a programmed route within this area.

Pierce Transit Long Range Plan – Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Pierce Transit is currently updating its Long-Range Plan. The current plan includes four BRT routes with the addition of another through an update process that recently started. Three of the four BRT routes are within unincorporated urban Pierce County (Attachment B). Although BRT route #1 is recognized through the RGS/ HCTC geography, the full extent of the BRT extends beyond the Tacoma PAA. BRT route #4 runs down the transportation spine of the South Hill Community Plan area and BRT route #5 runs through the Mid-County Community.
Potential Incorporation Area(s)
The Pierce County Comprehensive Plan was amended in 2015 to incorporate text and policies
to recognize unincorporated urban areas that may support incorporation – forming a new city
government. To date, the County has designated one area as a Potential Incorporation Area
(PIA) – the Employment Based Planned Community (EBPC) of Tehaleh. Another area is being
formally considered through the update of the South Hill Community Plan. The current proposal
before the Planning Commission includes proposed Goal SH LU-1 which states, “Designate the
South Hill Community Plan Area as a Potential Incorporation Area (PIA).”

The absence of a PIA designation does not prevent residents from proposing the incorporation
of their community. This is evident by a recent proposal to incorporate the Spanaway
community. As Vision 2050 foresees all unincorporated urban areas as eventually being
annexed or incorporated, it is unclear why unincorporated urban communities that are served
by a planned BRT route are not within the HCTC Geography.

Pierce County Comment Letter – Draft Vision 2050
In its September 16, 2019 Draft Vision 2050 comment letter, Pierce County requested PSRC to
set realistic and achievable population growth targets for the Pierce County unincorporated
geographies. The letter, along with the attached material, identifies the number of vested
projects and associated housing units within the urban area. There are 97 single-family
developments in the pipeline for Pierce County with 15,458 lots across vested developments.
The estimated population for currently vested projects outside the Tacoma PAA alone would
likely exceed the low range of the population targets currently in Draft Vision 2050.

RECOMMENDATION
1. Modify boundaries of the HCTC and Unincorporated Urban geographies
   A. Expand the boundaries of the HCTC Geography to include the unincorporated urban
      community that will be served by Pierce Transit’s planned BRT routes. This expansion
      encompasses approximately 17,890 acres within the community plan areas of Mid-
      County, Parkland-Spanaway-Midland (P-S-M), and South Hill.

      | Community Plan Area | BRT Route #          |
      |---------------------|----------------------|
      | Mid-County          | Route #5 (112th Street) |
      | P-S-M               | Route #1 (Pacific Ave/SR 7) |
      | South Hill          | Route #4 (Meridian Ave/SR 161) |

   B. Reduce the boundaries of the Unincorporated Urban Geography to reflect the
      expansion of the HCTC Geography. This reduction encompasses approximately 17,890
      acres associated with Mid-County, P-S-M, and South Hill.

Attachment A includes maps that illustrate the recommended changes to the HCTC, and
Unincorporated Urban Geographies as depicted in Draft Vision 2050 Figures 10 and 12.
2. Refine the Pierce County Population Growth Target Ranges

The refinement of growth target ranges responds to Pierce County’s request to recognize its local growth and development circumstances and reflect the recommended modifications to the HCTC and Unincorporated Urban Geographies.

To accommodate the County’s request for additional population growth, the high end of the HCTC has been increased by 25,000 to total 77,000. To correspond to the reduction of the area, the growth target for the Unincorporated Urban Geography is proposed to be set at 29,000.

The growth targets for both the Core Cities and Rural Areas geographies are recommended to be set at the low end of the existing range to meet the countywide control total of 364,000. The low end of the Rural Areas is in recognition that the targets are aspirational and reflect what the region is striving towards; and that the County won’t be penalized if future growth exceeds this target.

The table below illustrates the resulting growth targets and percent growth shares as recommended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>Growth Share</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Cities</td>
<td>137,000</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Core Cities</td>
<td>85,000</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Capacity Transit Communities (HCTC)</td>
<td>77,000</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cities and Towns</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unincorporated Urban</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Areas</td>
<td>11,000</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>364,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Refine the Pierce County Employment Growth

Puget Sound Regional Council should adjust the Employment Growth targets accordingly in Figure 7 to reflect the desired housing-jobs balance ratio.
Attachment A

Proposed Modifications

To

High Capacity Transit Communities

And

Urban Unincorporated Geographies
Attachment B
Pierce Transit’s
Planned
Bus Rapid Transit
Routes
1. Pacific Avenue/State Route 7 Corridor

**Location:** Downtown Tacoma to Tacoma Dome Station to Spanaway - Current Route 1 but will terminate downtown and not extend west the 5.2 miles to Tacoma Community College. This inaugural BRT route will directly serve Tacoma Dome Station as well.

**Total Fixed Route Boardings (2018) and Systemwide Rank:** 1.65 million (#1)

**Includes six Census Tracts designated as Opportunity Zones:** 53053061601, 53053061602, 53053062400, 53053071503, 53053071408, 53053071409

**BRT Route Length:** 14.4 miles

**Estimated Construction Cost per Mile:** $10.0 million

**Projected Number of 60-foot Articulated Vehicles Needed:** 17

**Planned Opening for Revenue Service:** September 2023

**Why was this corridor selected for BRT?**

Based on continuously high ridership when compared to the rest of the fixed route system, a feasibility study was started in February 2017 to evaluate the various High Capacity Transit modes that could best serve this highly productive but congested transit corridor. BRT was selected since it best meets the project’s “Purpose and Need Statement” for transit speed and reliability, as well as more frequent service that most closely emulates Light Rail Transit systems, albeit at a significantly reduced cost to construct and operate. Major milestones were reached in 2018 when the project was formally accepted into Project Development by the FTA over the summer with a Small Starts Capital Investments Grant (CIG) application successfully submitted that fall. Subsequently, a favorable “Medium-High” project rating was received from the FTA in March 2019 with the allocation of construction funding expected in Federal Fiscal Year 2020. The project began its Preliminary Engineering/Design phase in fall 2019. Construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2021 with revenue service planned for the fall of 2023.

2. Downtown Tacoma to Lakewood

**Location:** Downtown Tacoma to the Lakewood Towne Center Transit Center via South Tacoma Way - Current Route 3. This second BRT route would serve the Tacoma Mall Transit Center too.

**Total Fixed Route Boardings (2018) and Systemwide Rank:** 517,255 (#3)

**Includes four Census Tracts designated as Opportunity Zones:** 53053061601, 53053061602, 53053062600, 53053071805

**Proposed BRT Route Length:** 11.3 miles

**Estimated Construction Cost per Mile:** $12.2 million (Assumes a 2.5% annual inflation rate)

**Projected Number of Additional 60-foot Articulated Vehicles Needed:** 17

**Planned Opening for Revenue Service:** 2026

**Why consider this corridor for BRT?**

Demonstrated by steady gains in ridership since the route was redesigned with the March 2017 service change, which shifted service west to cover more business along South Tacoma Way. In addition, the City of Tacoma’s recently adopted Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan calls for higher density mixed use redevelopment, which would provide even greater demand for a high capacity rapid transit service. The route would serve three Pierce County Regional Growth Centers too (Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Mall, and Lakewood), meaning a likely candidate for discretionary PSRC funding. Other key destination points in the corridor include Pierce Transit headquarters and Lakewood City Hall. This proposed BRT corridor was added to the Regional Capacity Projects List, as adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan by the PSRC in May 2018. Based on these and other criteria, the current Route 3 is an ideal candidate for BRT.
3) S. 19th Street and Bridgeport Way West Corridors

**Location:** Downtown Tacoma to Tacoma Community College via S. 19th Street. TCC to the Lakewood Towne Center Transit Center via Bridgeport Way - Current Route 2. This third BRT route is the least refined concept to date and could be split into two discrete projects, such as an east-west BRT and a north-south enhanced, limited stop bus or "BRT Lite."

**Total Fixed Route Boardings (2018) and Systemwide Rank:** 739,468 (#2)
**Includes three Census Tracts designated as Opportunity Zones:** 53053061400, 53053061601, 53053061602
**Proposed BRT Route Length:** 11.9 miles
**Estimated Construction Cost per Mile:** $760,000 (Assumes a 2.5% annual inflation rate)
**Projected Number of Additional 60-foot Articulated Vehicles Needed:** 16
**Planned Opening for Revenue Service:** 2030 - 2035

**Why consider this corridor for BRT?**
Demonstrated by steady gains in ridership over the past two years, the current Route 2 is also a candidate for an upgrade to BRT, as depicted in the agency's *Destination 2040* Long Range Plan. The east-west segment from downtown Tacoma to Tacoma Community College is being considered as a higher capacity transit corridor in anticipation of the Tacoma Link Light Rail extension project opening in 2039. Pierce Transit believes that offering a rubber-tired rapid transit alternative in the 2030s could help stimulate mixed use economic development in a corridor the City of Tacoma has identified as a high priority. This could, in turn, help to increase the required transit demand, for the planned westerly streetcar extension from the Hilltop District to succeed.

Another area being considered for BRT is the current north-south segment of the Route 2 corridor from Tacoma Community College to the Lakewood Towne Center via University Place, connecting two Regional Growth Centers. However, Bridgeport Way W has recently been completed and does not offer the additional ROW required for a dedicated bus lane. Instead, this corridor could benefit from more frequent service using articulated coaches operating in mixed traffic, perhaps as a limited stop overlay service to complement the existing Route 2. In order to better guide this decision, a High Capacity Transit Feasibility Study is recommended to determine the most effective alternatives for both S. 19th Street and Bridgeport Way W at the lowest capital costs.

4) South Meridian/State Route 161 Corridor

**Location:** 176th Street E (vicinity of Pierce County Airport – Thun Field) to downtown Puyallup and Sounder (commuter rail) Station - Current Route 402. This fourth BRT route would serve the South Hill Mall Transit Center too.

**Total Fixed Route Boardings (2017) and Systemwide Rank:** 329,437 (#7)
**Includes no Census Tracts designated as Opportunity Zones**
**Proposed BRT Route Length:** 8.0 miles
**Estimated Construction Cost per Mile:** $13.5 million (Assumes a 2.5% annual inflation rate)
**Projected Number of Additional 60-foot Articulated Vehicles Needed:** 12
**Planned Opening for Revenue Service:** 2030

**Why consider this corridor for BRT?**
The project’s genesis was the *Meridian Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Area (EZRA) Engineering Study*, initiated by the City of Puyallup in 2009. As with other BRT proposals, the initial goals and objectives were to reduce traffic congestion by shifting SOV trips to high capacity transit trips, especially since fixed route ridership in this high-density urban corridor is growing. This proposed BRT corridor was added to the Regional Capacity Projects List, as adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan by the PSRC in May 2018. The corridor was also identified in the *Puyallup Comprehensive Plan - Transportation Element* as an integral part of the City’s Transit Priority Network, where transit stop amenities and pedestrian access improvements are recommended. Once constructed, the BRT route will connect two Regional Growth Centers (Puyallup Downtown and Puyallup South Hill).
5 Lakewood to South Hill

**Location:** SR 512 Park-and-Ride (Lakewood) to South Hill Mall Transit Center (Puyallup) - Current Route 4 with different termini.

**Total Fixed Route Boardings (2018) and Systemwide Rank:** 400,402 (#4)

**Includes no Census Tracts designated as Opportunity Zones**

**Proposed BRT Route Length:** 11.0 miles

**Estimated Construction Cost per Mile:** $14.5 million (Assumes a 2.5% annual inflation rate)

**Projected Number of Additional 60-foot Articulated Vehicles Needed:** 17

**Planned Opening for Revenue Service:** 2030

**Why consider this corridor for BRT?**
The Route 4 went into service in June 2015 when the Routes 204 and 410 were combined into one. Since that time, Route 4 continues to be one of Pierce Transit’s most productive. The proposed project, once constructed, would finalize the agency’s vision of upgrading all four trunk routes to Bus Rapid Transit within the next 10 to 15 years. However, since this BRT corridor as proposed is not shown in the Regional Capacity Projects List, as adopted in the Regional Transportation Plan by the PSRC in 2018, it would need to be added once the Transportation 2050 call for projects begins in 2021-2022. Once constructed, the BRT route will connect two Regional Growth Centers (Lakewood and Puyallup South Hill).