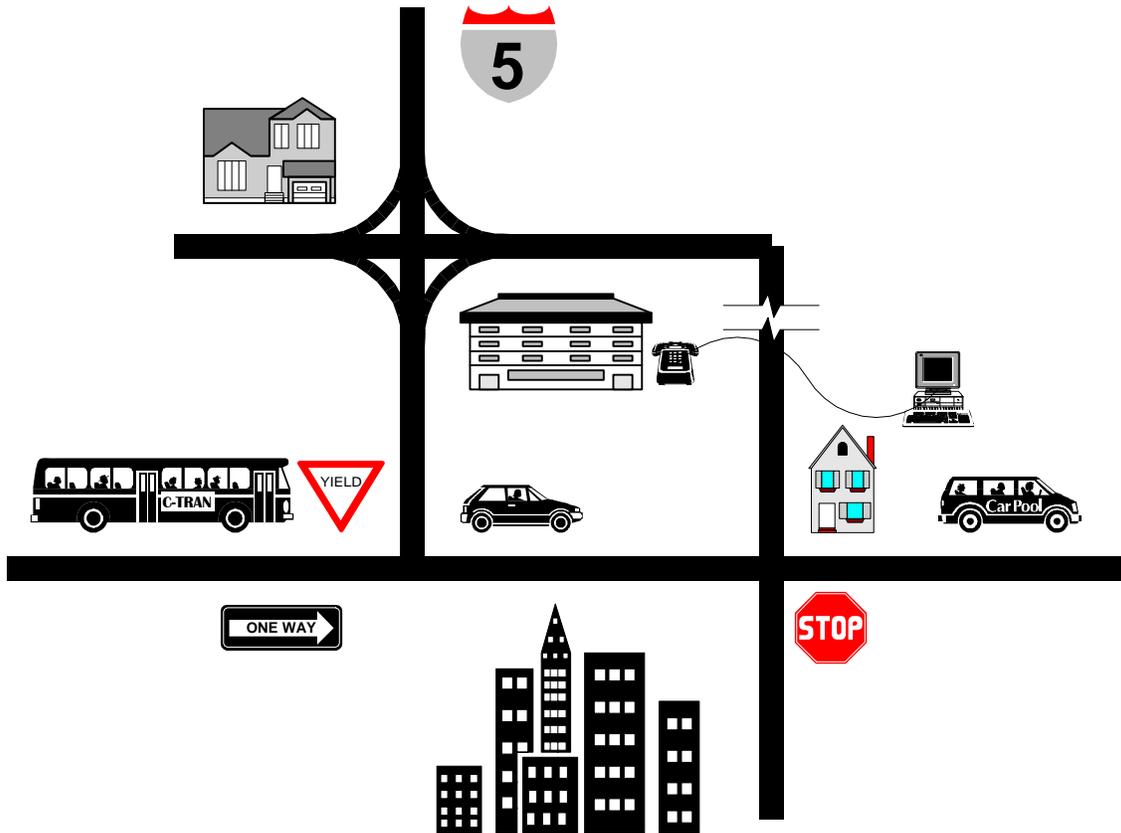


*Transportation
Futures
Committee
Executive Summary*



DECEMBER 1996

BACKGROUND

A. THE NEED FOR THE TRANSPORTATION FUTURES COMMITTEE

The Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1990 was passed in response to concerns statewide about rapid growth and the impacts on traffic congestion, air quality, housing costs, and quality of life. The GMA set up a framework for a long range comprehensive planning process that addressed growth related issues. The transportation element of the GMA Plan for Clark County calls for establishing a regional transportation system that is balanced across all modes of travel and recognizes the link between transportation and land use in order to provide mobility for the movement of goods and people. The Plan identifies three major activity centers, downtown Vancouver, Salmon Creek/Washington State University and Vancouver Mall. A key element of the Plan is the identification of the need to develop high capacity transit (HCT) in the travel corridors connecting the activity centers.

Previous transportation system analysis concluded that all HCT modes, including light rail transit (LRT), should be evaluated further in the I-5 corridor and that only HCT bus options should be evaluated further in the I-205 corridor. Analysis of the two bi-state corridors resulted in the selection of the I-5 corridor as the first priority for HCT in Clark County. Subsequent studies resulted in the selection of LRT as the preferred mode and I-5 as the preferred alignment in Clark County with a terminus in the vicinity of 88th Street. A local financing proposal was developed to provide local funding for an LRT project from Clark County to Clackamas County, Oregon.

In February 1995, Clark County voters defeated the financing proposal for the Clark County portion of the South/North LRT project. The defeat of the LRT vote led to an extensive discussion of the next steps for addressing bi-state transportation needs. Policy makers agreed that it was imperative to engage the community in a full debate on a wide range of transportation issues and needs facing Clark County. Hence, shortly after the vote, local elected officials recommended that a citizens-based discussion of future transportation issues be implemented.

As a first step in the process, the Board of Clark County Commissioners and the Vancouver City Council appointed a group of citizens to serve on a Focus Group to recommend a citizen-based approach to discuss our community's future transportation needs. The results of the two Focus Group meetings in May 1995 became the foundation for the issues subsequently examined by the Transportation Futures Committee.

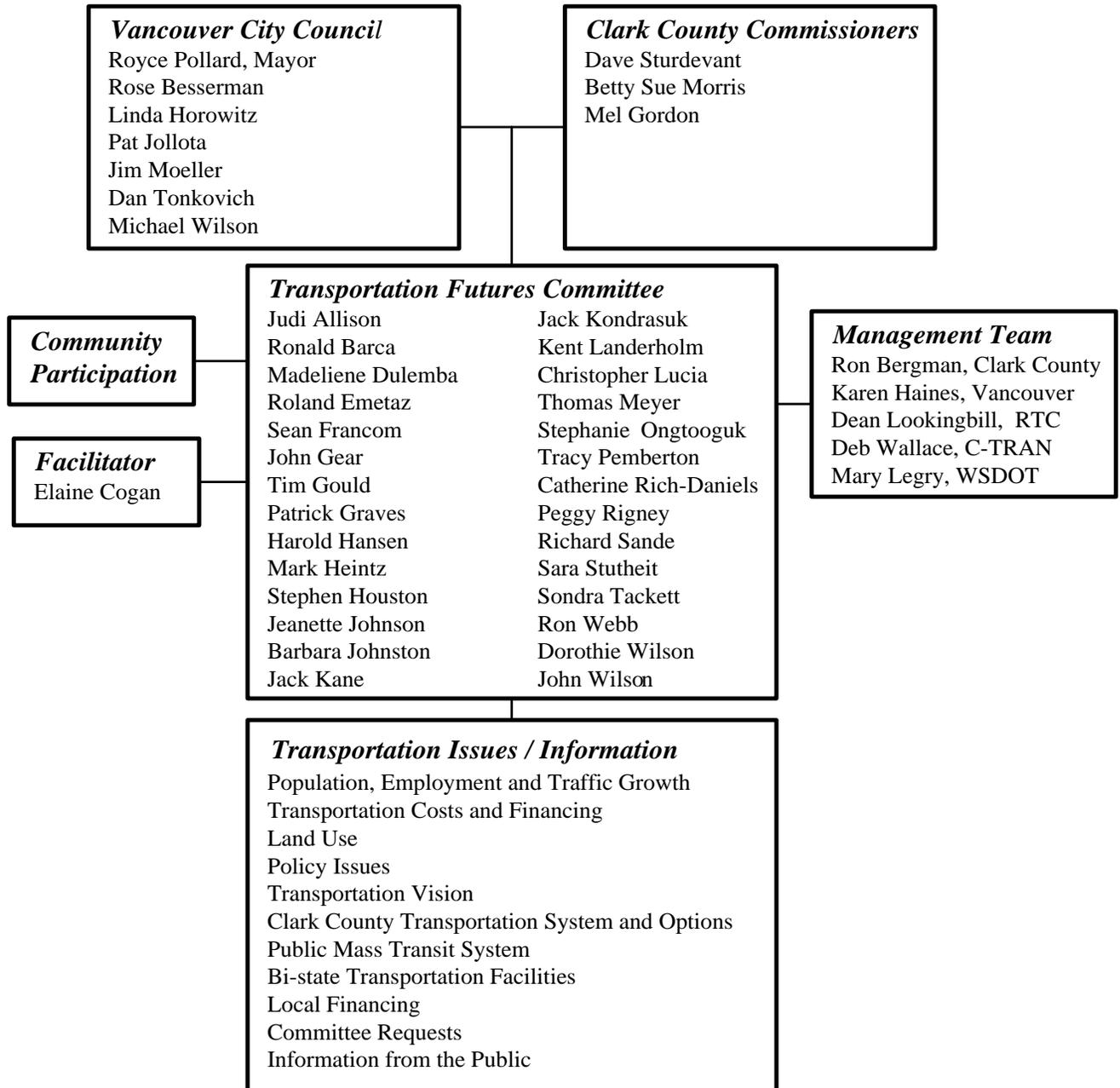
The Vancouver City Council and Clark County Commissioners appointed 30 people to serve as members of the Transportation Futures Committee (TFC). Committee members were asked to represent themselves and were not asked to speak for specific interest groups, organizations or neighborhoods. They were individual citizens who reflected the diversity of the community in regard to transportation issues in Clark County. Two members subsequently resigned for medical and work reasons.

B. TFC STRUCTURE AND STUDY PROCESS

1. STRUCTURE

The figure below displays the TFC structure.

Transportation Futures Committee Structure

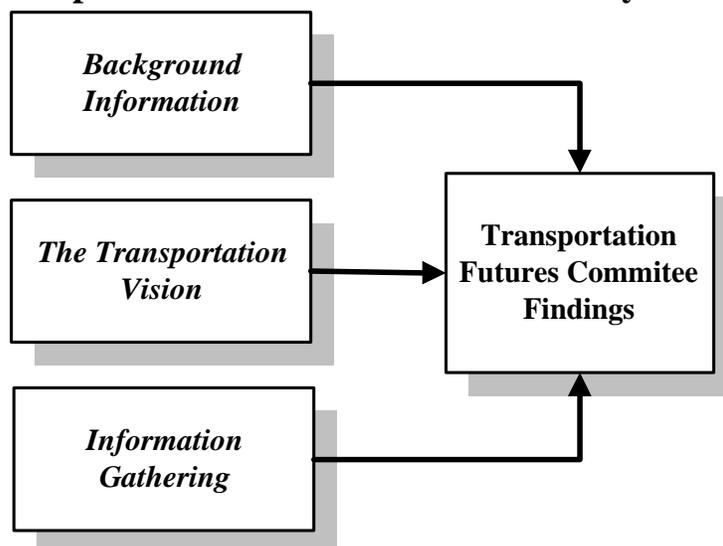


The Management Team, composed of representatives from the participating jurisdictions, provided direct support to the Committee. The facilitator’s role was to promote a positive environment for Committee relationships and discussion. Participation and comment by the community was an important element in the Committee’s deliberations and meetings and in addition to the community outreach activities, included public comment time at the meetings.

2. OVERVIEW OF STUDY PROCESS

There were four distinct phases of the process which are illustrated in the following figure.

Transportation Futures Committee Study Process



a) Background Information

Committee members were given information about historical and future growth in Clark County, with an emphasis on population, employment, traffic, and travel patterns.

b) Transportation Vision

This phase of the Committee's process included the development of a consensus on a transportation vision and served as the foundation for evaluating transportation policies and options in the next phase of the study

c) Information Gathering

This phase was devoted to gathering a wide range of facts and analysis about transportation options and strategies. It included information about transportation policies, the Clark County transportation system, public mass transit options, bi-state transportation facilities, and local financing options.

d) Findings

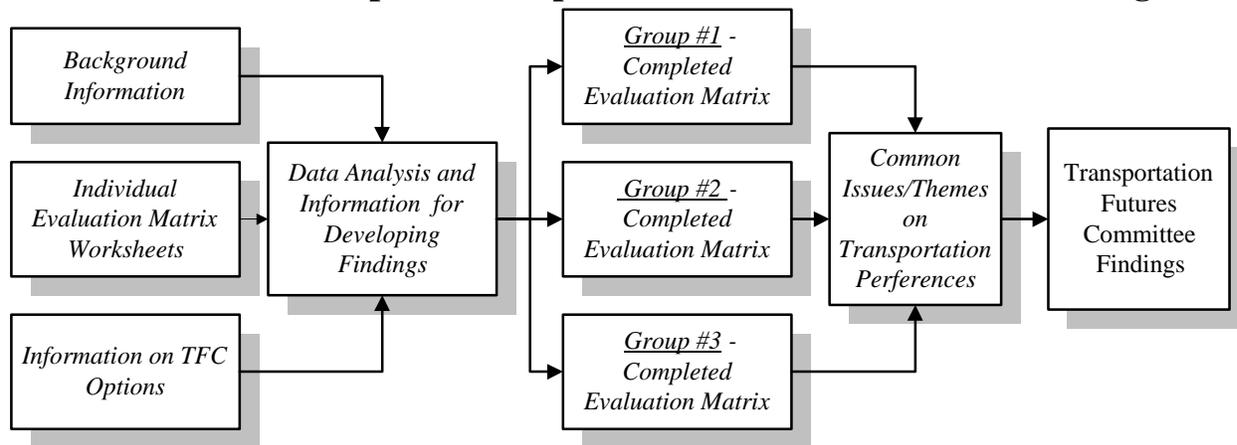
The Committee reviewed and discussed the information presented and compared it to the vision. The findings describe the Committee's position on transportation policies, approaches and options that best implement the transportation vision.

FINDINGS OF THE TRANSPORTATION FUTURES COMMITTEE

A. PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE FINDINGS

The development of the TFC findings began with a process similar to that followed during the development of the transportation vision and identification of problems and is illustrated below.

Process to Develop the Transportation Futures Committee Findings



B. FINDINGS

These findings are based on the Committee's evaluation of transportation options related to the transportation vision, which states:

To promote regional mobility of people and goods, Clark County will have a comprehensive transportation system accountable to the public that:

- *Provides choices and alternatives*
- *Enhances quality of life*

And is:

- *Socially, environmentally and economically responsible*
- *Efficient*
- *Responsive*
- *Linked to land use*
- *Safe, and*
- *Accessible to all.*

The following findings represent a consensus by the TFC of how best to attain their vision and solve or address the transportation issues of the community. They are based on TFC's assessment of transportation options relative to their vision and evaluation criteria. The findings are also based on the TFC's review of information presented during the study process.

1. OVERALL

The Transportation Futures Committee finds that current and past land use and transportation planning and funding have encouraged use of the auto to the detriment of alternative modes of transportation, such as public transit, bicycle and pedestrian travel. The Committee recommends adjusting this imbalance by supporting a balanced approach to improvements, including public mass transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities and roads.

2. POLICIES

The Committee finds that land use decisions should not only be supported by transportation planning, but should encourage more responsible neighborhood development that supports multiple transportation alternatives. Techniques to achieve this goal include:

- Allow for appropriate commercial development in predominantly residential neighborhoods
- Reduce or eliminate minimum parking requirements in favor of maximum requirements
- Provide significant incentives for businesses to reduce parking needs and improve access for pedestrians, bicyclists and buses

The Committee finds that local government should include capacity for public mass transit and other alternative modes in overall road capacity when meeting concurrency requirements.

To reduce commuting trips, the Committee supports incentives for citizens and the private sector and requirements for government to encourage the following:

- Telecommuting
- Altered work hours (flex-time or staggered work hours)
- Ride-sharing

The Committee endorses sufficient funding for maintenance and necessary expansion of our existing road system.

The Committee strongly encourages consistent regular coordination between public and private entities engaged in transportation planning and construction.

3. INTERNAL CLARK COUNTY TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

The Committee favors a multimodal approach (i.e., roads, bicycle, pedestrian and public mass transit facilities) to address current and future transportation problems.

The Committee finds that a grid system improves links between neighborhoods, helps decentralize traffic throughout the road system, improves access for emergency vehicles, and fosters use of alternative means of travel (such as public mass transit, bicycling and walking).

- For new development, a grid system should be encouraged or required.
 - For existing development, property owners should be encouraged to provide easements for bicycle or pedestrian paths or roads that increase transportation connections.
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The Committee finds that the following facilities and techniques will help attain the vision. (Not in order of priority)

- High Occupancy Vehicle lanes
- Neighborhood traffic calming strategies
- Signalization/timing improvements
- Ramp metering
- Safety improvements
- Complete network of sidewalks

The Committee encourages local government to develop and implement a rating system for the quality and safety of non-vehicular transportation facilities.

4. PUBLIC MASS TRANSIT OPTIONS

The Committee finds that public mass transit is an integral component of a multimodal transportation system that provides alternatives to driving alone.

The Committee finds that current transit service should be more flexible and efficient. Some commercial or residential areas developed at urban densities are not adequately served. In other cases, existing service to more rural areas is not cost-effective and may not be desired by area residents. Consideration should be given to decreasing service in such areas to increase coverage and frequency in urban areas.

The Committee finds that public mass transit service provides a social service function by enhancing mobility for those who are unable to use a private automobile or other means of transport. The community should continue to be committed to providing public transit service to ensure mobility for all.

The Committee finds that paratransit service should be made available for the entire area within the Clark County/transit service boundary to improve mobility for all qualified citizens in the community.

The Committee recommends the following:

- Investigate serving middle and high school students with C-TRAN service instead of the current separate school bus system to reduce overall transportation costs and improve efficiency.
- Encourage private transit service while protecting the public utility aspect of C-TRAN.

The Committee also supports continued investigation of:

- Additional express routes
- Increased service between activity centers
- Use of smaller vehicles for feeder service
- Fareless areas

5. BI-STATE TRANSPORTATION FACILITIES

The Committee supports a balanced approach to bi-state transportation issues, focusing on:

- Reducing demand for new transportation facilities and improvements in the long-term by:
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- Encouraging economic development that supports family wage jobs in Clark County and reduces the need to commute to Oregon.
- Promoting the use of alternative modes of transportation to driving alone (e.g. public transit, carpooling, bicycling, altered work hours and telecommuting)
- Increasing capacity to accommodate long-term population growth and continued need for bi-state transportation facilities, with first priority on the I-5 corridor. Making more effective use of existing facilities is a high priority in this order of preference.
 - 1) Improved and/or expanded bus service
 - 2) High Occupancy Vehicle lanes (using existing facilities wherever possible)
 - 3) Commuter rail
 - 4) Light rail
 - 5) Reversible lanes
 - 6) Widening I-5 (highway and bridge) for general purpose traffic
 - 7) Ferry system

The Committee finds that a third auto bridge and highway corridor is not an acceptable solution to bi-state congestion.

The Committee finds that reducing automobile congestion and demand will free up capacity for freight highway needs. In addition, the Committee supports the practice of “piggybacking” (transporting truck containers by rail) as well as improved rail/truck/port connections (also referred to as multi-modal freight facilities).

The Committee urges local, state, and federal officials to actively represent the needs of Clark Commuters to Oregon.

6. LOCAL FINANCING

The Committee finds that the following transportation financing principles will best attain the Committee’s vision:

- The cost to the user of a transportation alternative, whether collected at the point of use or through taxation, should increase in proportion to use consistent with encouraging alternatives that minimize impacts on the environment and resource consumption.
- Funding for transportation alternatives that minimize impacts on the environment and resource consumption should be encouraged.
- Financing mechanisms that retain local money (i.e., taxes and fees) within Clark County and provide for local options should be favored.
- Public awareness of the true or full costs of transportation alternatives should be enhanced.

The Committee supports the following financing options, in order of preference:

- 1) Sales tax on motor vehicle fuel coupled with a reduction in motor vehicle excise taxes (MVET)
 - 2) Local option gas tax and local option sales tax
 - 3) State funds reallocated for alternative modes
 - 4) Mileage-based fees
 - 5) Tolls
 - 6) Impact fees
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RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE TFC FINDINGS FROM MANAGEMENT TEAM

Following the completion and release of the TFC's findings, an extensive public outreach process was initiated to get public comment on the findings. The Management Team reviewed the public's comments and has developed the following recommendations based on the Committee's findings and the results of the public review activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations resulting from the TFC findings have been separated into three distinct categories: 1) existing policies, (recommendations that can be categorized as already occurring within existing policies); 2) new policies or actions, (recommendations that require additions or changes to existing transportation policy; and 3) new activities, (recommendations that require more comprehensive study to determine feasibility before consideration for inclusion in transportation plans or policies). The categories of recommendations are arranged in the same transportation categories as the TFC findings.

1. TFC FINDINGS CONSISTENT WITH EXISTING TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

Policies

- Land use decisions should be supported and consistent with transportation plans.
- Continue incentives to encourage telecommuting, flex-time, and ride sharing through commute trip reduction.
- Continue sufficient funding that maintains and expands the transportation system.

Internal Clark County Transportation System

- Use a multimodal approach to address current and future transportation problems.

Public Mass Transit

- Public mass transit is an integral component of a multimodal transportation system; support more express bus service and additional all-day public transit service between activity centers.
- Public mass transit provides a social service function by enhancing mobility for those who are unable to use a private automobile or other means of transport. Continue commitment to provide public transit service to ensure mobility for all.
- Continue to assess potential for the use of smaller transit vehicles for low demand bus routes and the use of fareless areas.

Bi-State Transportation Facilities

- Support a balanced approach to bi-state transportation facilities.
 - Encourage family wage jobs in Clark County.
 - Promote alternatives to driving alone.
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2. TFC FINDINGS THAT REQUIRE MODIFYING EXISTING TRANSPORTATION POLICIES

Policies

- Encourage mixed use neighborhood development that allows for appropriate service-oriented commercial development in residential neighborhoods.
- Consider the establishment of maximum parking requirements and provide incentives for businesses to reduce parking needs and improve access for alternate modes.
- Include public mass transit and other alternative modes in determining concurrency.
- Establish a process for regular coordination between public and private entities engaged in transportation and construction.

Internal Clark County Transportation System

- Review the following types of facilities and techniques and their effectiveness in improving the transportation system: neighborhood traffic calming strategies, signalization/timing improvements, ramp metering, safety improvements, complete network of sidewalks.

Public Mass Transit Options

- Review the cost-effectiveness of existing service in rural areas and consider decreasing service in rural areas in order to increase coverage and frequency in urban areas thereby making current transit service more flexible and efficient.
- Develop criteria to determine conditions in which private transit service within the C-TRAN service area may be appropriate.

Bi-State Transportation Facilities

- Recognize the I-5 corridor as the priority corridor for capacity improvements to bi-state transportation facilities.
- Make more effective use of existing facilities with continued commitment to improved and/or expanded bus service as the first priority for bi-state improvement.
- Incorporate a higher degree of consideration of intermodal connections in the planning process and increase coordination with freight interests to more fully address goods movement needs in the I-5 corridor.
- Identify ways to actively represent the concerns of Clark County commuters who travel into Portland daily.

Local Financing

- Consider incorporating the following transportation financing principles into existing plans and policies:
 - The cost to the user of a transportation alternative, whether collected at the point of use or through taxation, should increase in proportion to use consistent with encouraging alternatives that minimize impacts on the environment and resource consumption.
 - Funding for transportation alternatives that minimize impacts on the environment and resource consumption should be encouraged.
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- Financing mechanisms that retain local money (i.e., taxes and fees) within Clark County and provide for local options should be favored.
- Public awareness of the true or full costs of transportation alternatives should be enhanced.

3. TFC FINDINGS THAT CALL FOR NEW STUDY ACTIVITIES

A number of new activities and/or studies have been identified within the TFC's findings. The purpose of the studies would be to provide a more comprehensive examination of the proposed transportation strategies or concepts.

HOV System/Facility Study - The TFC identified high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes as the second priority for improving the I-5 corridor and as a strategy to address mobility for the internal Clark County transportation system. To date, the Clark County region does not have policies or programs to develop HOV facilities. The goal of a high-occupancy-vehicle (HOV) program would be to improve overall mobility in the most congested parts of our region by increasing the people-moving efficiency and capacity of freeways and arterials. Integration of an HOV program with land use goals, transit operations and high capacity transit facilities could also provide incentives for people to choose higher occupancy modes of travel. A region-wide system plan for Clark County would define HOV policies/objectives, identify the need and benefits of HOV facilities and the location of possible corridors and/or facilities.

Commuter Rail Study - The Committee identified commuter rail as a bi-state transportation option that should be studied to make more effective use of existing facilities. A detailed study of this concept is required to better understand issues including feasibility, cost, and demand.

Development of Mobility Quotient - The Committee found that a method is needed to determine the quality, safety, completeness of non-vehicular transportation facilities that can support alternative modes such as walking and bicycling. Local jurisdictions should work cooperatively to develop and establish a mobility quotient to assess the constraints and opportunities of the transportation infrastructure for non-vehicular travel. The mobility quotient could, for example, identify areas of the transportation system where bicycle access is poor due to lack of roadway shoulders or disconnected bikeways.

Grid Street System Analysis - The Committee supported a street grid system to improve linkages between neighborhoods, decentralize traffic throughout the road system, and promote the use of alternative modes of travel. Local jurisdictions are asked to work cooperatively to review ordinances for new development, especially residential development, and modify them to limit non-through streets, circuitous streets, and cul-de-sacs. Existing developments also should be assessed to identify locations where connections between residential areas and to activity centers for non-vehicular trips can be improved.

Public Transit (C-TRAN) Service for Public School Students The Committee supported further study of a concept to bus upper-grade level school children on C-TRAN. C-TRAN, in coordination with local schools and other agencies, should investigate the cost-effectiveness, efficiency, safety, and security of serving middle and high school students.

I-5 Capacity Study - The Committee recommended that I-5 remain as the priority corridor for bi-state transportation improvements and calls for making more effective use of existing facilities with the focus on lower capital improvements before higher cost options are considered. Results of the survey also indicated that HOV improvements and I-5 widening be given consideration in the corridor. A detailed analysis of I-5 capacity, including a reconnaissance of the effectiveness of a wide range of transportation modes should be undertaken to provide more balanced capacity and

improved travel flows along I-5. Scope of analysis should include the full bi-state I-5 corridor from Clark County to downtown Portland.

South/North Corridor Project Involvement - Light rail transit in the I-5 corridor was identified as a viable option by the Committee based on technical findings that the Clark County segment of the South/North Corridor has significant bi-state mobility benefits. It is recommended that a strategy be undertaken which focuses on lower cost options for the corridor in the near term and leaves light rail as an option for a future community decision. Accordingly, it is recommended that the South/North Final Environment Impact Statement reflect a phased bi-state strategy which includes near term bus and park-and-ride improvements in Clark County in place of the Clark County light rail terminus option. Additional new study activities previously mentioned in this report will be coordinated with the phased bi-state strategy and will include the bi-state mobility impacts of high occupancy vehicle improvements, commuter rail, and I-5 corridor travel flow improvement options. The Clark County region should continue participation in the South/North Corridor Study to ensure a coordinated strategy for resolving bi-state mobility problems.

Third Highway Corridor and Bridge Issues - The Committee found that a third highway corridor and bridge was not an acceptable solution to address bi-state congestion, however, results from the public survey of the Committee's findings, described in the previous section, indicate a difference of opinion on this issue. In order to further community discussion, a public discussion of a third highway corridor concept is recommended. In addition to the travel and cost impacts developed for the TFC, this discussion should address the following issues: air quality, land use, historical and cultural resources, and community goals and livability.

Transportation Financing - The Committee recognized that transportation funding must be adequate to maintain the existing system and expand it where needed. A wide range of financing options that should be considered if additional funding is needed. Additional study should be conducted to determine the level of funding and the type of funding strategies and options that should be pursued to maintain the viability and growth of the transportation system.

Continuation of a Citizen Transportation Committee (CTC) - A broadly-based representative countywide Citizen Transportation Committee could provide the mechanism to better community understanding and consensus for major transportation initiatives. The CTC's responsibility would be to work together to recommend policies and solutions to our community's transportation problems, with their authority agreed to among the RTC Board and all individual member agencies. The Committee could include some members from the previous Transportation Futures Committee but also include additional members to gain new perspectives. Overall, the goal would be to establish an ongoing advisory citizen transportation input process to complement the current decision process both at the regional and local levels. An ongoing Citizen Transportation Committee could be very useful in helping to implement TFC findings that require new initiatives (e.g. commuter rail, HOV lanes, public transit for school bussed children and others). The CTC could help identify transportation project priorities, in the discussion of new transportation funding sources, and other significant transportation issues.
