

TRANSPORTATION CORRIDORS

PURPOSE

Both local and state travel routes through the City provide strategic regional connections. Two routes – East Marginal Way South and the West Valley Highway – are discussed in the Manufacturing/ Industrial Center element and the Tukwila Urban Center element. Three routes – Tukwila International Boulevard (99), Interurban Avenue, and Southcenter Boulevard – will be discussed in this element. These corridors are important to the region and the City for a number of reasons. (*Figure 14*)

- First, they serve the surrounding residential and employment community with products and services. Community members spend a significant amount of time in these corridors and it is here that they are most likely to meet other members of their community.
- Second, these areas offer the best travel routes in the City for both residents and businesses because of transit service and arterial and freeway automobile access.
- Third, they are regional throughways--that are also the front door to Tukwila's residential neighborhoods. They create an impression and are a reflection of the community to the rest of the region.

*Figure 14 –
Transportation
Corridors*

ISSUES

For the City's transportation corridors there are similar city-wide concerns:

- how to maintain or create distinctions of character along linear corridors in order to have visual interest
- how to have quality environments with the high travel demands placed upon them
- the cost of upgrading the corridors with sidewalks, storm drains, trees, street lights and other amenities

- conflicts between through traffic and destination traffic and between cars and pedestrians
- how to balance the intensification of mix of uses vertically, thereby maximizing the usefulness of the corridor for transit travel, while minimizing the auto congestion
- how to expand east/west travel.

Tukwila International Boulevard (Highway 99) was a precursor to Interstate 5 and still contains vestiges of the old highway with commercial activity mixed with a few residential buildings. There has been no consistent pattern of development due to past lax regulation of land use by the County. In the past, all frontage property that could provide reasonably flat land was designated for commercial retail and service uses accessed by automobile. There are often abrupt transitions between uses along the highway and the adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Interurban Avenue is isolated from most of the community but has good access to the interstate system. It has a mix of office, industrial, commercial and significant recreational uses, with some older single residential units and newer apartment structures. It is the historic beginning and heart of old Tukwila. Except for the river, however, most of the physical reminders of that history are gone.

Southcenter Boulevard (from Interurban Avenue to Tukwila International Boulevard) is the newest of the corridors and, unlike the others, it is characterized primarily by office and residential uses, with only limited commercial use. Southcenter Boulevard because of its recent vintage is more conforming and most like a future vision in terms of standards of a corridor.

As travel along streets and highways generally becomes more congested, these three corridors offer logistically good access to existing alternative travel such as bus routes and potential rail service.

As travel continues to increase over the next 20 years, choices will have to be made that address the growing congestion, the threat of further air quality degradation, and the use of alternative travel modes. The Comprehensive Plan provides a baseline for the future studies that these choices will entail.

The Transportation Corridors Element addresses four categories of interest:

- Creating areas of focus
- Improving private development

- Enhancing and improving transportation choices and facilities
- Developing partnerships and strategic plans.

Tukwila International Boulevard (TIB) Corridor

The Tukwila International Boulevard corridor is defined as all properties extending from SR 599 south to South 160th Street that abut TIB, plus any adjacent commercial properties (*Figure 15*). The development along the corridor is old and lacks amenities typical of new development areas.

There is a large amount of residential property along the corridor north of South 137th Street (if extended) that tends to be visually and physically isolated by the significant grade changes to either side of the right-of-way and the descent from the plateau to the valley. The majority of the commercial district is south of South 137th Street (if extended); commercial properties north of South 137th Street (if extended) exist as isolated level areas or pieces of land benched into the hillside.

The natural features of the corridor are ravines and a valley wall that cuts across the northern section. The southern section is part of a large plateau between the Green River Valley and Puget Sound.

The corridor is a jumble of land uses, building types, signs, parking lots, and a wide expanse of roadway. Despite the absence of sidewalks, there are a high number of pedestrians. The appearance of the road itself, coupled with its continuing use as a major arterial, attracts many lower-quality and marginal activities, and some structures show signs of poor maintenance and disinvestment. The corridor has the highest crime and pedestrian fatality rates in the City. It was identified as the highest priority for City action during the Vision Tukwila process, and design and improvement decisions are being made as this Plan develops.

With redevelopment, the Tukwila International Boulevard corridor could evolve into a true local center for the residents flanking it. This would necessitate a fundamentally different attitude toward public and private development than has been seen in the past. Deliberate steps will need to be taken to improve the public environment: streets, sidewalks and public areas. The location, intensity and quality of new buildings and renovated buildings will need to be guided. The corridor cannot be viewed as a single, continuous road containing the same kind of uses and buildings forms along its entire length. Rather, different parts should have different degrees of emphasis. For instance, in order to create a sense of a place over time, relatively intensive uses and activities will need to be concentrated into a relatively small area that is walkable and that can be

*Figure 15 –
Pacific Highway
Corridor*

served by public transit. Auto-dominated or oriented uses will need to shift away from the center.

Part of the area's poor image stems from the criminal activity seen and perceived. Of the 24 Police Department reporting districts, 4 are along the TIB corridor, and Department statistics indicate that approximately 40% of the City's crimes occur along this corridor.

Adjacent to the entire length of TIB is a mix of housing from low to high density. Most of the units are over 20 years old. Much of the high-density housing, although not all, lack amenities and are poor quality because of their age. They provide relatively inexpensive housing for the region.

Many residents within and immediately adjacent to the TIB -corridor are impacted by social and health problems such as low paying jobs, domestic violence, drug activity, etc. These issues and the transient nature of the community, to an unspecified extent, are increasing the insecurity and images of the criminal character of the area.

Interurban Avenue South Corridor

Interurban Avenue South consists of three distinguishable sections – a commercial and industrial northern section (between 42nd Avenue South and Interstate 5), a large middle residential, commercial and industrial section (south of Interstate 5 and north of South 152nd [if extended]) and a southern commercial and industrial section (between South 152nd [if extended] to the north and Interstate 405 to the south). (*Figure 16*)

There are three major recreational uses along the corridor, separated by a light industrial district, they are: the King County Green River Trail, Foster Golf Course, and Fort Dent Park.

The development pattern of the Interurban Avenue corridor was influenced heavily by the railroad and industrial uses it served. Consequently, a broad mixture of uses and building forms can be found here, often in proximity to one another. Small houses are set amidst industrial activities. Narrow streets and short blocks are common. In contrast are the carefully groomed grounds of the public golf course. The area is in transition, and is principally a corridor for through traffic.

Southcenter Boulevard Corridor

The Southcenter Boulevard corridor extends from the eastern City limits of the railroad tracks and Grady Way west to Tukwila International Boulevard (TIB corridor). (*Figure 17*) It is a major east-west corridor for the south King County area, and is a frontage road and alternative to Interstate 405 and SR 518. Along the length of the road there are offices and low-, medium-, or high-density residential uses. There are several

*Figure 16 –
Interurban Avenue
Corridor*

commercial sections, which are primarily for convenience uses and are confined to specific locations.

GOAL AND POLICIES

Figure 17 – Goal 8.1 General Transportation Corridor
Southcenter Boulevard

Corridor *Transportation corridors that are functional, attractive and diverse along their lengths both for the people who live along them, traveling through them and those traveling to visit these areas.*

Policies

- 8.1.1 Improve the pedestrian environment with street improvements that include curbs, sidewalks or trails, and regularly spaced street trees.
- 8.1.2 Provide pedestrian pathways between sidewalks and building entrances and between adjacent properties and buildings to ensure that parking lots are not a barrier to pedestrians within commercial areas.
- 8.1.3 Develop parking standards that are (1) sufficient to meet typical daily demand, (2) reflect any significant shifts in transit usage in the corridor, (3) encourage shared parking between mixed uses and sites, and (4) includes off-site parking when impact to adjacent uses not affected.
- 8.1.4 Landscape interior areas as well as perimeter strips in parking lots.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Parking lot landscape standards

- 8.1.5 Require mechanical equipment and trash and recycling containers to be incorporated into the overall design of sites and buildings and screened from view.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Roof designs to include and conceal equipment
- Prohibit dumpsters within front yards
- Design standards

- 8.1.6 Set standards for bicycle parking.

- 8.1.7 Enforce the amortization of nonconforming adult entertainment uses along the commercial and residential sections of the corridors.
- 8.1.8 Encourage the development of corridor focal points, while ensuring higher-quality design.
- 8.1.9 Design processes and standards that achieve higher-quality designs and materials within the commercial and multi-family residential zoned areas than within the commercial/light industrial zoned areas.
- 8.1.10 Utilize the goals, policies, and illustrations in the Comprehensive Plan for use as Neighborhood Commercial Center design guidelines.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

■ Design guidelines and illustrations

- 8.1.11 Provide design guidelines and illustrations that explain the harmonious building character desired and the design parameters for development.
- 8.1.12 Require roof lines to be prominent and to contribute to the distinct characters of the areas.
- 8.1.13 Seek opportunities to integrate public art into public improvements.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

■ Design competition

■ Arts Commission

- 8.1.14 Reduce the dominance and clutter of signs through amortization of existing signs and replacement in compliance with Tukwila’s Sign Code.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

■ Sign Code

- 8.1.15 Preserve signs that are exceptional and significant.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

■ Sign landmarks designation process

- Significant sign amortization exception process
- Sign Code

8.1.16 In the event that a light rail system is developed in either the Tukwila International Boulevard (formerly known as Pacific Highway), Martin Luther King, or Interurban corridor, such a system should be designed and constructed to achieve the following objectives:

- Such a system shall, if appropriate and feasible, include one or more rail stations located at key intersections in order to develop multi-modal transfer areas for buses, automobiles, pedestrians, and/or rail.
- Such a system shall be designed and located so as to minimize interference with pedestrian and vehicular traffic (including both automobile and truck traffic) along, crossing, and turning on and off the transportation corridor.
- For the Tukwila International Boulevard corridor, City preference shall be given to locating rail lines and stations at-grade or below grade as necessary to minimize interference with existing traffic patterns.
- Design of a light rail system shall minimize the adverse effects of bulk, view blockage, and interference with light and air for neighboring properties and public areas.
- Design of a light rail system shall minimize the potential adverse impacts and maximize the benefits of a rail system on the redevelopment of Tukwila International Boulevard or Interurban Avenue South in a manner consistent with any adopted plans and policies for those geographic areas.
- Design of a light rail system shall minimize impacts on sensitive areas, including salmon spawning habitat areas.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Sign landmarks designation process
- Significant sign amortization exception process
- Sign Code

Goal 8.2 Tukwila International Boulevard Corridor Goal

A Tukwila International Boulevard corridor that is an attractive, safe, and profitable place to live, do business, shop, and work, and is a positive reflection of the City as a whole and of the surrounding residential and business community.

- 8.2.1 Mitigate transportation impacts associated with regional travel by the use of extensive amenities, transit service, and appropriate siting and design of new uses, including the highway itself.
- 8.2.2 Give priority to pedestrian safety over vehicle safety in street design.
- 8.2.3 Improve the street to encourage pedestrian and transit travel, and actively discourage additional lanes in order to protect and enhance the local commercial, residential and pedestrian character.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Wider sidewalk standards
 - Curb-lined streets
 - Planted medians with designated left-turn pockets at intersections
- 8.2.4 Locate transit facilities, potentially including a rail station, within the SR 518/Pacific Highway vicinity in order to develop a multimodal transfer area for buses, automobiles, pedestrians, and rail.
 - 8.2.5 Include on-street parking stalls for local customer use as a design option for street improvements to enhance redevelopment options.
 - 8.2.6 Underground existing and future overhead distribution lines, including transit operation utilities, in accordance with rates and tariffs applicable to the serving utility.
 - 8.2.7 Design the Tukwila International Boulevard street improvements for the section north of S. 137th Street (if extended) with minimal use of amenities and improvements, reflecting this section's different topography.
 - 8.2.8 Improve an east-west transportation corridor north of South 144th Street intersecting with Tukwila International Boulevard.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Alternatives study
- 8.2.9 Improve South 144th Street (including right-of-way acquisition where necessary) between Military Road South and 42nd Avenue South to serve as a significant pedestrian corridor.
- 8.2.10 Develop standards and design guidelines that recognize the physical difference between the valley wall and the plateau and that retain the hillside's character, including significant vegetation, change of grade, and a sloping trait.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Limited retaining wall height
 - Limited building size and paved areas
- 8.2.11 Develop a strategic and financial plan for implementing these Tukwila International Boulevard corridor policies that facilitates private and public investment. 8.2.12 Assemble business and resident groups to coordinate the development of the strategic plan, to participate in community policing to monitor and decrease crime along the corridor, and to develop and coordinate an image concept for marketing and design guidance.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Block watch
 - Apartment managers' and owners' forums
 - Tenant councils
 - Chamber of Commerce participation
- 8.2.13 Maintain the predominately residential use and character between South 128th Street and South 137th Street (if extended), with appropriate zoning and a significant component of vegetated hillside; allow a limited amount of neighborhood-oriented retail activity in residential projects that front on TIB.
- 8.2.14 Allow heights along the corridor as follows:
- six-story heights south of South 154th Street;

- ten-story heights south of SR 518 (excluding the area noted below) and on the west side of the corridor north of S. 128th Street; and
- three stories north and south of S. 158th Street, as shown in Figure 18.

*Figure 18 –
Highway 99
Height Exception*

- 8.2.15 Appropriately fence outside storage and sales areas with high-quality materials; limit use, size, and location of metal security and other fencing and require concealment with appropriate landscaping.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

■ Fencing standards

- 8.2.16 Allow a diversity of uses along the corridor, including residential, retail, service, light manufacturing, office, and recreational and community facilities.
- 8.2.17 Create a pedestrian-oriented Neighborhood Commercial Center as a focal area along Tukwila International Boulevard; create a Regional Commercial area south of the Neighborhood Commercial Center and create opportunities for either commercial or industrial uses at the north end of the corridor.
- 8.2.18 Encourage building design on the east side of Tukwila International Boulevard between South 137th Street (if extended) and South 144th Street to reflect the importance of the area as a visual focal point for traffic through the corridor.
- 8.2.19 Where significant distant views occur along the corridor, encourage development to recognize and incorporate these into project design. Developments should minimize obstruction of views from nearby projects through appropriate landscape design, building design and site planning.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

■ Design guidelines that illustrate techniques

- 8.2.20 Provide flexibility in the application of design standards in order to encourage pedestrian-oriented and pedestrian friendly development and to allow creativity in the design process.
- 8.2.21 Allow commercial use of residentially zoned property where such action expands small and/or irregularly shaped commercial districts, encourages redevelopment of non-conforming use sites; minimizes vehicular travel on adjacent

residential local access streets; front and orients any commercial uses toward Tukwila International Boulevard; creates a site, structures, landscaping and other features that are compatible with adjacent residential district standards and planned character.

Interurban Avenue South Corridor

Interurban Avenue South has been described as having two distinct characters--a middle and two ends. The two ends are similar because they intersect with major freeways. The middle section is a mixed-use area and the historic heart of old Tukwila. The middle section also tends to be somewhat restricted because of the valley wall, the river, and Foster Golf Course and Fort Dent Park.

The development pattern of Interurban Avenue was influenced heavily by the railroad and industrial uses it served. Consequently, a broad mixture of uses and building forms can be found. Small houses are set amidst industrial activities. Narrow streets and short blocks are common. Parts of Interurban are still in transition, and Interurban is primarily a corridor for through traffic.

Goal 8.3 Interurban Corridor Goal

A high-amenity multi-modal transportation corridor with a varied mix of office, commercial, recreational, high-density residential and light industrial uses.

Policies

- 8.3.1 Develop the north section as an area of regional commercial or light industrial uses; the middle and south sections as a mix of residential, commercial or, in some areas, light industrial uses.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Zoning Code
- 8.3.2 Allow three story buildings within the middle section and allow four story buildings within the Fostoria, Fort Dent, Nielsen Farm, and freeway interchange areas, and allow six stories within the Gateway Drive area and light industrial areas south of I-5 (Figure 19)
- 8.3.3 Allow residential uses as second-story and above uses in all Regional Commercial Mixed Use zoned areas.

*Figure 19 –
Interurban Avenue
Corridor*

- 8.3.4 Create a logical and harmonious division between commercial or industrial uses and residential uses by using changes in topography and through appropriate development standards, including street design.
- 8.3.5 Improve public rights-of-way that connect Interurban Avenue and the river with signage, street parking, paving, and other elements that signify the riverfront.
- 8.3.6 Develop preferred station sites and rail alignment through the Interurban corridor that maximize service and access to regional services and minimize visual impacts along its entire route.
- 8.3.7 Work with the transit agency to install transit shelters designed to reflect the historic use of the corridor for public transit.
- 8.3.8 Provide prominent public art and interpretive markers at highly visible locations, explaining the history of the Interurban Trolley, the river, and other important aspects of the area.
- 8.3.9 Preserve or commemorate the structures remaining from the turn of the century, in either their present or a nearby location, as determined in a city-wide survey and designation process.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

- Investigate the possibility of preserving community club building
 - Historic recognition/preservation incentive program
- 8.3.10 Locate major gateway features at the north and south freeway interchanges, incorporating such elements as landscaping, lighting, signage, or artwork.

Southcenter Boulevard Corridor

Southcenter Boulevard effectively extends within the City of Tukwila from the eastern boundary of the railroad tracks to the western boundary at Tukwila International Boulevard. The street acts as a major east/west corridor for the south King County area and is a frontage road and alternative to I-405/SR518. Office and multi-family buildings comprise most of the developments along the east half of Southcenter Boulevard, and these act as buffers between the commercial/industrial uses to the south and the residential uses to the north.

Goal 8.4 Southcenter Boulevard Goal

A corridor of low-rise offices, residences, with localized commercial uses at major intersections all of which act as a buffer to the low-density residential neighborhoods to the north.

Southcenter Boulevard Policies

- 8.4.1 Allow residential uses as second story and above uses in all Regional Commercial Mixed Use zoned areas east of 51st Avenue South.
- 8.4.2 Maintain the low scale, one to three-story, commercial character of Southcenter Boulevard east of 51st Avenue South.
- 8.4.3 Balance the competing concerns of uphill residents for maximum views and the community-wide desire for contour-hugging design and angular lines of hillside structures.
- 8.4.4 Require sloped roof lines along Southcenter Boulevard to imitate the local topography and residential character.
- 8.4.5 Recommend and pursue with the transit agency an east-west transit service along the Boulevard.
- 8.4.6 Provide additional pedestrian connections between residential areas to the north and Southcenter Boulevard.
- 8.4.7 Work with the State Department of Transportation to landscape and maintain the appearance of its properties and provide noise attenuation where technically feasible.
- 8.4.8 In future improvements incorporate additional landscaping to transform the street into a true boulevard.
- 8.4.9 Improve landmarks and city identity by:
 - Locating major gateway features at the Interstate 5 interchange with Southcenter Boulevard
 - Redesignating South 154th Street as Southcenter Boulevard.
- 8.4.10 Emphasize the landscaping, residential character, and hillside traits and character along the Southcenter Boulevard corridor.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES:

- Sketched examples of form, features, and site layout of desired buildings
- Board of Architectural Review

Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Pedestrian-oriented Neighborhood Commercial Centers, generally focused around key intersections in transportation corridors can help provide the sense of a "people place" that the neighborhoods bordering the corridors need. A Neighborhood Commercial Center not only helps mitigate the corridors' transportation impacts on residential areas, it can also provide a commercial focus for the businesses bordering the corridor.

A key element in a successful pedestrian environment is the ability to walk continuously along the front of stores and see into the building interiors (e.g. shop display windows) instead of into parking lots. Thus, standards regarding a site's design--building setback, landscaping, fencing, signage, sidewalks and automobile access and parking are the important issues.

Goal 8.5 Neighborhood Commercial Centers

Neighborhood Commercial Centers generally focused around key intersections in transportation corridors that serve multiple neighborhoods, and provide a "people place" as well as a commercial focus for businesses along the corridor. A key characteristic of a Neighborhood Commercial Center is its pedestrian orientation, with streetfront windows, attractive landscaping, screening, and sidewalks.

- 8.5.1 Allow a diverse mix of uses, including above-street residential, retail, service, office and recreational and community facilities.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Zoning Code
- 8.5.2 Encourage the consolidation of existing smaller properties into larger lots through property owner(s) development plans.
- 8.5.3 Through public and private project design and regulation, create recognizable, compact, pedestrian-oriented Neighborhood Commercial Centers.
- 8.5.4 Encourage new construction rather than the conversion of existing residential structures to commercial uses.

- 8.5.5 Combine parking placement and build-to standards to achieve the compactness of a consistent building wall and pedestrian orientation, creating a focal point emphasis in Neighborhood Commercial Centers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Parking behind or beside buildings

- 8.5.6 Incorporate a significant landscape element into the street design within Neighborhood Centers.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Parking behind or beside buildings

- 8.5.7 Encourage two- to four-story buildings within Neighborhood Commercial Centers to emphasize their importance and desired activity level, limiting commercial uses to two lower levels, except in Urban Renewal areas.

- 8.5.8 Ensure appropriate structural transitions between commercial and residential zones.

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

- Multi-family and commercial design guidelines

- 8.5.9 Include substantial areas of glass in the design of ground-level retail and service structures and require building entrances to face the street.

- 8.5.10 Require developments to incorporate pedestrian amenities and open spaces such as plazas, art, and canopies in order to convey the impression of a town center and community focal point.

- 8.5.11 Employ appropriate design elements such as slopes, peaks, caps, steps, exaggerated parapets, colors, and lighting to make the rooflines prominent, creating a distinct Neighborhood Commercial Center character.

- 8.5.12 Work with Metropolitan King County to create distinctive transit stops within Neighborhood Commercial Centers that are integrated with adjacent development and pedestrian connections, with a design that is harmonious with the neighborhood.

