



Chapter 1: Executive Summary

The City of Vancouver’s vision for downtown embodies a vibrant, revitalized area with strong linkages to its neighborhoods, the Port of Vancouver, Officer’s Row and a redeveloped riverfront. As one of the region’s largest municipalities, the City of Vancouver is also tackling some very difficult city-wide issues which include managing growth and implementing the comprehensive plan vision. The downtown Vancouver area will play an extremely important role in the City’s overall growth management strategy. The core area public street, water and sewer infrastructure is already in place, and much of it is currently underutilized – making it well-suited to accommodate a good portion of the region’s growth.

Downtown Vancouver will play an extremely important role in the City’s overall growth management strategy. The Downtown Vancouver Transportation System Plan establishes the link between land use and transportation in the core area, and identifies multi-modal plans and strategies to manage growth.

The City is rapidly seeing its vision materialize, as downtown Vancouver is on the verge of significant growth with investment approaching \$1 billion in new housing, offices, retail space, and civic amenities. Construction is well under way on the Heritage Place Condominium development, and there is great momentum towards further downtown revitalization. Meanwhile, the downtown Vancouver transportation system is also experiencing significant change, principally the result of the Mill Plain Extension project which currently under construction. It will, upon completion, provide both improved access across the railroad tracks to the Port of Vancouver, and modified traffic patterns in the downtown area.

To address the combined impacts of downtown redevelopment and major transportation improvements, the City of Vancouver has undertaken a study of the downtown Vancouver area

transportation system. The study began in April, 1999, and included a comprehensive evaluation of the detailed operations for all aspects of the transportation system, including street, parking, transit, pedestrian, bicycle and freight mobility (trucking and rail). The study is culminated in the Downtown Vancouver Transportation System Plan (TSP). The Downtown Vancouver TSP is fundamentally based on the vision and policies adopted in the Vancouver Comprehensive Plan – Visions for the Vancouver Urban Area and the Esther Short Redevelopment Plan.

The Downtown Vancouver TSP is a multi-modal plan that includes recommended projects and strategies to manage growth and meet the City’s transportation needs over the next twenty years. A comprehensive

analysis of the downtown transportation system was conducted including a detailed evaluation of the impacts of near and long-term development as well as, the proposed Special Events Center located south of Esther Short Park. As top priorities, the Plan ensures maximum pedestrian access and circulation, and promotes utilization and enhancement of the existing system through better management.

How Was The TSP Prepared?

The Downtown Vancouver TSP was prepared with input from technical, policy, and community based sources. Inter-jurisdictional coordination and technical input in the study and review of the draft TSP was conducted through formation and regular meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee. For policy-level review and guidance a series

of workshops with the City Council, Planning Commission and Downtown Redevelopment Authority were held throughout the study process to present and discuss the major findings and draft recommendations.

Community input was obtained through a series of meetings with the Community Resource Team, which included representatives from neighborhood and business associations, and interested citizens. Several Public Open House Meetings and public forums were held during the study process to disseminate information and gain important feedback on major issues.

The Downtown Vancouver Transportation System Plan includes: an assessment of the existing transportation system; an evaluation of the impacts of growth and alternatives to meet the plan’s goals; an identification of transportation system improvement projects (by mode); a transportation financing plan; as well as, policy recommendations and strategies that can assist the City in implementing the Downtown Vancouver TSP. In accordance with the goals of the study, the TSP will foster a safe and accessible transportation system for all users.

Recommended Projects

To safely and efficiently accommodate the future movement of all users and modes in the downtown Vancouver planning area, a series of improvements to the existing transportation system are identified. The priorities of this plan are to: 1) ensure adequate pedestrian access and circulation; and, 2) utilize and enhance the transportation system through transportation system management (TSM) and demand management (TDM) projects and strategies before adding capacity. Examples of TSM and TDM projects include:

- Downtown Signal System Enhancements (including capabilities for transit signal priority treatments along Main Street).
- Variable Message Signing (commensurate with completion of Special Events Center).

- Establishment of a Downtown Transportation Management Association.
- Establishment of a Special Events Management Task Force.

Sidewalk and bicycle system improvements are identified in the TSP. The projects identified should encourage non-auto travel in the downtown area, better link the downtown area neighborhoods, and better integrate all travel modes (including transit). The Downtown Vancouver TSP also includes project recommendations to fully complete the Columbia River and Historic Vancouver Discovery Loop trail systems. Some of the significant project recommendations include:

- Full sidewalk completion and pedestrian system and safety enhancements on Main, Columbia, McLoughlin, Evergreen and 12th Streets (including street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and other pedestrian amenities).
- New multi-use path overcrossings of I-5 (at 7th Street) and SR-14/BNSF RR (Old Apple Tree) to better link downtown and the Historic Reserve and Waterfront areas.
- Pedestrian signal and street crossing improvements around Esther Short Park and C-TRAN Transit Center.
- Re-striping a number of City streets with on-street bicycle lanes (while maintaining on-street parking to the fullest degree possible), including Lincoln, Franklin, Columbia, Main (or Broadway), McLoughlin and Evergreen Streets.

Street system improvements are identified as part of the Downtown Vancouver TSP effort. Today there is significant under-utilization of the City’s current street capacity in downtown. The analysis of growth and development over the next twenty years indicates that the transportation system will continue to accommodate expected, future downtown travel demand - and that the City should be able to maintain its growth management standards. The strategy based on the study’s analysis and findings, identified projects not so much as additional capacity measures but more so as multi-modal enhancements.



Therefore, the TSP recommendations include the following street improvements:

- Designation of Jefferson and Kauffman Streets as truck routes to provide and facilitate truck route service between I-5 (via the Mill Plain Extension) and the industrial activities in the study area.
- Ft. Vancouver Way reconstruction (south of Evergreen Boulevard) to safely accommodate the mix of auto, bicycle and pedestrian travel as part of any future re-use in the Historic Reserve area.
- Reserve Street reconstruction (between Evergreen Boulevard and Mill Plain Boulevard) to safely accommodate the mix of auto, bicycle and pedestrian travel.
- Esther Street undercrossing of BNSF Railroad to redevelopment opportunities along the Columbia River.

To enhance the downtown commercial core area the TSP also recommends converting Main and Broadway Streets to two-way traffic operations, which would likely include focusing C-TRAN bus operations onto Main Street.

Recommended Policies

There is significant, unmet travel demand in the I-5 Corridor. Today, I-5 experiences high levels of congestion. Without significant capacity improvements the level of congestion along I-5 in the downtown Vancouver area is expected to triple or quadruple within the next 20 years. I-5 congestion is a significant barrier and impediment to downtown Vancouver accessibility, and left unabated could jeopardize the City's vision. Long-range policies and plans for LRT in the I-5, bi-state corridor are adopted as part of the *Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Clark County* (October 1999). LRT alone will likely not solve all of the I-5 congestion problems, and many of these regional issues are currently being studied as part of the I-5 Trade Corridor Study by both the Washington and Oregon Departments of Transportation.

The Downtown Vancouver TSP contains a Background and Policy Principles section, including a goal statement and a comprehensive set of policies to address issues like the I-5 corridor, but also to guide the individual modal sections for a complete TSP. Each modal section of the Downtown Vancouver TSP contains specific goals, plus a number of objectives by which the plan findings and recommendations are measured.

Recommended Implementation Strategies

The Downtown Vancouver TSP recommends a number of implementation strategies to enhance the transportation system within downtown.

Pedestrian/Bicycle System Strategies

- Update the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan with transportation system projects (including street, sidewalk, multi-use path, bicycle lane and TSM improvements) as prioritized in the Financial Plan.
- Prepare a comprehensive Neighborhood Traffic Calming Plan to identify city-wide policies and programs that would be appropriate to implement in the downtown Vancouver area.
- Conduct further operational studies of Main Street, Columbia Street and Fourth Plain Boulevard, (after completion and operation of the Mill Plain Extension) to determine feasibility of re-striping those streets to include on-street bicycle lanes.
- Conduct structural feasibility study to determine if a multi-use path can be added to the Fourth Plain Boulevard / I-5 overcrossing.
- Prepare a comprehensive Bicycle Master Plan to identify city-wide policies and programs to implement in the downtown Vancouver area, including establishment of a Vancouver Bicycle Program.
- Establish a downtown commuter bike facility (secure parking, showers, and changing rooms) and other bicycle amenities in the

downtown area.

Street and TSM System Strategies

- Conduct further study of the potential for a new I-5 southbound off-ramp in the vicinity of 6th Street to enhance access to downtown. Additionally, study of access to I-5 should also be conducted to identify measures to mitigate the I-5 southbound on-ramp queues in the vicinity of 5th Street/Washington. This study should be completed prior to the design and eventual construction of the 7th Street Overcrossing in order to determine the specific project limits.
- Prepare an Event Management Plan (EMP) to facilitate coordination between city staff and the special event center operators. The EMP should be programmatic in nature to respond to the level of activity associated by the various activities that may take place at the facilities. The EMP should also include an emergency service (provider) coordination element consisting of a more detailed plan outlining specific responsibilities for each agency.
- Conduct a special study of potential Transit Signal Priority (TSP) applications within the downtown network to evaluate potential signal system and operational enhancements for transit operations.

Parking System Strategies

- Develop, evaluate and adopt a comprehensive zoning code for auto/truck parking, bicycle parking (including minimum and maximum standards), loading zone, and neighborhood parking permits.
- As part of an overall downtown parking strategy, the number of on-street parking spaces with short time limits should be increased to provide enhanced parking for downtown business patrons.
- Parking fees for long-term parking should be increased to help address revenue needs and promote use of alternative modes within

downtown.

- Evaluate emerging technologies and explore management techniques through programs like free parking for carpools, vanpools, electric cars and consolidated parking meter systems.

Transit and TDM System Strategies

The Downtown Vancouver TSP concludes that there is sufficient street system capacity to meet current and projected bus volumes. Furthermore, current and future system capacity at the major downtown intersections will be sufficient to accommodate bus through- movements and turning movements. There will be significant pedestrian and transit demand associated with the Special Events Center requiring special transit service and access. The following transit strategies are recommended as part of the Downtown Vancouver TSP:

- Maintain the 7th Street Transit Center as a major focal point for transit service in the downtown area.
- Monitor future traffic conditions and projected bus operations to identify possible future justification of signal preemption systems or dedicated bus lanes for downtown transit operations.
- Accommodate, as much as feasible, transit access at major events, including adequate signage directing attendees to bus loading areas.
- Designate Main Street as a major downtown transit corridor.
- Provide pedestrian-friendly linkages between Washington Street and downtown transit stops.

There is the need for a central forum to address transportation demand management affecting the downtown Vancouver area. Historically, associations of employers within particular geographic areas have been effective in recognizing and addressing demand management issues. Public agency support for employers association can further reinforce the effectiveness of transportation demand management



initiatives in the downtown area. The following TDM strategies are recommended:

- Establish a downtown Vancouver Transportation Management Association (TMA). One potential approach is a non-profit organization to be owned and managed by employers. City of Vancouver support to the Association could be provided through in-kind administrative support from City staff.

Transportation Finance Plan

The following table summarizes each of the recommended improvements, and illustrates the recommended Transportation Finance Plan for the Downtown Vancouver TSP, including project costs, benefit, participating partners, timing and priority for each of the TSP modal plan elements. The Financial Plan spans the next twenty years, and utilizes a number of possible funding sources to help pay for the City's projects in downtown Vancouver.