

# DOWNTOWN: On the go!



## Downtown Tacoma Transportation Partnership

*Report: June 2008 - June 2009*

*Proposal: Phase II July 2009 - June 2010*



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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Downtown: On the Go! is a partnership between the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, the City of Tacoma, and Pierce Transit. These organizations have leveraged their resources and relationships to work together with employers to promote commuting options that address the transportation and parking challenges of downtown Tacoma. This report summarizes the partnership (Phase I) and outlines a proposed budget and activities to move forward over the next year (Phase II), with the potential of creating a permanent, self-sustaining organization.

### **SIGNIFICANCE:**

Mobility in downtown Tacoma, the region's economic hub, is integral to the city's economic growth, vitality, and livability. Many businesses and employees already face challenges with parking costs and access, and many downtown commuters experience long drive times on congested roadways. As Tacoma grows, these challenges will worsen if the current drive-alone rate is maintained. Additionally, vehicle emissions are the largest contributor to air pollution in Washington State. Reducing drive-alone trips has a profound impact on our environment and air quality. Options like transit, ridesharing, biking, and walking also improve morale, health, and can actually save time and money.

### **PHASE I: INCEPTION**

In January of 2008, the City of Tacoma and Pierce Transit sponsored a Downtown Transportation Summit, held at the Tacoma Art Museum. More than forty Downtown leaders and community activists spent the day identifying underlying problems and potential solutions. The day started with participants exploring how downtown Tacoma became so automobile dependent. The Chamber had just received a grant from the State of Washington and was for the first time becoming involved in efficient transportation solutions. Among the outcomes of this meeting was a commitment to move forward with enhanced employer interactions.

During the summer of 2008, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and the Chamber hosted a series of transportation forums for downtown CEOs facilitated by some of the region's leading transportation experts. From these sessions, the message was clear: business leaders want private sector solutions, and they are ready to take action. Rick Williams, consultant and Executive Director of the Lloyd District Transportation Management Association, facilitated a series of meetings on topics outlined by the business community:

- Transit
- Bicycling & Walking
- Carsharing & Telework
- Organizational possibilities and development

Members of the partnership identified challenges, resources, strategies, and program ideas to promote commuting options while exploring the potential role and duties of a formalized organization.

## **PHASE II: PLANNING**

As Phase I concludes, the partnership is at a crossroads. Current funding (State grants to the City and Chamber) has nearly expired, and while other short-term funds are being pursued to maintain Downtown: On the Go!, they are not long-term solutions. Based on the past year's actions and recommendations of the Transportation Partnership, a "planning year" was proposed to work with the Partnership on creating a viable, workable, and sustainable organization and funding plan. The proposed budget (p. 12) outlines estimated costs for Phase II while providing a starting point for the Partnership to create a formal organization. At the June 11 Transportation Partnership meeting, partners agreed to move forward with a Phase II process, assuming a funding source is secured.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **THE DOWNTOWN: ON THE GO! PARTNERS**

In 2007, the City of Tacoma received Growth Transportation and Efficiency Center (GTEC) funding from the Washington State Department of Transportation to promote transit, walking, biking, and ridesharing to downtown Tacoma residents and commuters.

The Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber received a WSDOT Trip Reduction Performance Program (TRPP) grant to work with employers to reduce drive-alone commute trips into downtown Tacoma.

These two efforts had a natural relationship to the existing and ongoing work of Pierce Transit. Pierce Transit contributed market research, marketing, and staff time for Downtown: On the Go! efforts.

As Downtown: On the Go!, the City, Chamber, and Pierce Transit have partnered in campaigns, programs and events to promote alternate transportation modes. Their partnership has been a critical component in the advancement of these efforts. The relationships, expertise, and resources each agency brings have made our work efficient and effective.

### **CEO FORUMS**

In the summer of 2008, The City, Pierce Transit, and Chamber hosted three transportation forums for downtown business executives. The forums were facilitated by the following transportation experts:

**John Resha:** Resha is the former Director of the Urban Mobility Group and has had more than 15 years of in shaping and managing transportation systems. Resha shared his experience developing commute reduction programs with Seattle employers to increase mobility while helping enhance downtown business.

**Rick Williams:** Williams is a parking and transportation consultant and Executive Director of the Lloyd District Transportation Management Association in Portland, OR. Williams is an expert in developing and implementing transportation and parking strategies for both the private and public sectors. Williams offered strategies for planning a transportation system that maximizes land values while minimizing transportation costs to businesses and employees and addressed financial and other tangible costs of parking for businesses and developers.

**Paula Hammond:** Hammond is the Washington State Secretary of Transportation. She spoke about WSDOT's vision for a reliable, responsible, and sustainable transportation system and how Tacoma's Commute Trip Reduction efforts are contributing to this vision. Hammond highlighted Tacoma's unique collaboration and strong partnerships in these efforts. She also articulated some of the ways in which transportation demand management strategies, like Commute Trip Reduction, promote economic activity and enhanced livability in communities.

The overwhelming response from these forums was that the business community was ready to take action, and the Downtown: On the Go! Transportation Partnership was formed with these private-sector leaders.

## **PHASE I: INCEPTION OF THE TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP**

### **Members:**

Herb Brooks, Neil Walter Company  
Jennifer Burley, University of Washington Tacoma  
Maria DeVore, BCRA  
Kathy Grenz, Regence Blue Shield  
Mark Grotefend, CH2M Hill  
Anna Grover-Barnes, DaVita  
Kathy Hanna, CH2M Hill  
Ted Johnson, Simon Johnson LLC  
Natalie Karamatic, Russell Investments  
Mike Liepman, Franciscan Health Systems  
Bev Losey, Brown & Brown Insurance  
Natalie McNair-Huff, TrueBlue Inc.  
Tom O'Connor, O'Connor and Associates  
Kent Roberts, Columbia Bank  
Shannon Tiegs, Colliers International  
Patti Sutton, Propel Insurance

### **Staff:**

Karen Henderson, Pierce Transit  
Jessica Holden, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber  
Liz Kaster, City of Tacoma  
Chelsea Levy, Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber  
Scott Morris, Pierce Transit  
Lind Simonsen, Pierce Transit  
Sharon Stockwell, Pierce Transit  
Daphne Tackett, Pierce Transit  
Diane Wiatr, City of Tacoma

### **MEETING SCHEDULE:**

The following work plan was based on concerns and challenges raised by business leaders at an initial focus group; meeting topics were organized around themes drawn from these concerns.

#### **Meeting 1 (February 5): Goal setting and strategizing**

*Goal: Adopt a goal of 65% drive alone rate (35% transit, biking, walking, ridesharing). Establish a coordinated messaging strategy, recommendations for tools and resources.*

#### **Meeting 2 (March 12): Transit routes, capacity, programs, and frequency**

*Goal: Commit to geomapping employees' addresses, establish transit ridership goal.*

#### **Meeting 3 (April 9): Biking/Walking infrastructure and amenities**

*Goal: Commit to participate in Bike Month activities, establish walking and biking goals.*

#### **Meeting 4 (May 14): Car sharing and telework.**

*Goal: Establish the partnership's position on car sharing. Identify resources and tools employers need to implement telework policies.*

#### **Meeting 5 (June 11): Recommendations, sustaining the partnership, and next steps**

# TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP CALL TO ACTION

*This working document outlines the mission, vision, recommendations, and concerns of the Transportation Partnership. Rick Williams continues to work with staff and the partners to facilitate the process.*

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## WHO WE ARE

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*Downtown: On the Go!* is a partnership of executive leadership drawn from the public and private sectors working together to increase alternative mode commuting in the Downtown from 24% to 35% by 2030. Downtown's private sector stakeholders have created a meaningful and focused partnership with the City of Tacoma and Pierce Transit to coordinate this new direction.

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## DRAFT MISSION

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To realize a Downtown that facilitates employment and residential growth, maintains efficient movement of people, and promotes a vibrant, livable downtown through coordination of transportation access options and products.

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## CATALYST TO CHANGE – VISION AND GOALS FOR DOWNTOWN

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Tacoma's downtown is projected to produce 23,607 net new jobs and 16,787 new residents by the year 2030.<sup>1</sup> This growth is important both for Tacoma and for Pierce County. High density development in Tacoma's City Center supports regional growth management goals, increases the economic vitality of Downtown, and allows for efficient use of resources (land and infrastructure) to serve development. Without appropriate transportation investments and well-designed and innovative commute options programs, the development to support this growth cannot happen.

Physical and economic constraints will require commuters to depend less on automobiles and more on other forms of transportation. If commuters continue to drive alone at the rates they do today, desired growth will be hindered by the resulting consequences:

- Increased congestion and travel times for all modes
  - Higher than necessary parking development costs
  - Displacement of land (by parking facilities) that might have supported commercial and residential development.
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## CALL TO ACTION

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To ensure that the Downtown is accessible, attractive, and economically competitive, *Downtown on the Go!* will work toward the goal of an 11 percentage point increase in non-single-driver mode choices by 2011<sup>2</sup> All partners, through collaborative discussion, negotiation, and commitment of resources, mutually agree to act in support of this common goal.

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<sup>1</sup> This number is the Puget Sound Regional Council's growth projection by 2030 for the downtown. Year 2000 employment population estimated at 23,093. Year 2000 residential population estimated at 7,213.

<sup>2</sup> As identified in the 2008 Downtown Plan update, Policy 2.3F.B pg 45. 2008.

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## PROGRAM DIRECTION

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The Downtown on the Go! partnership will initiate programs and strategies designed to influence meaningful changes in employee commute choices over the next 20 years. Programs and strategies for transit, biking, walking, and ridesharing will need more focused coordination, direct contact with businesses, targeted communication, and sustained delivery to be successful. The following draft “work plan” outlines new directions for alternative mode commuting to and from downtown Tacoma.

### I. TRANSIT

#### System Design

- ✓ Initiate a geocode process that is as comprehensive as possible to display downtown employee residential origins.
- ✓ Initiate an evaluation of lighting/security needs at key downtown transit stops serving downtown commuters. Present findings and recommendations for improvement to City of Tacoma and Pierce Transit for implementation.
- ✓ Develop a more coordinated deployment of downtown security resources to key transit locations by time of day to ensure high visibility of security personnel during peak hour arrivals and departures. Partner with TPD and/or BIA in development of this coordinated strategy.
- ✓ Work with Pierce Transit to develop more transit options to and from downtown from outlying areas to reduce the number of downtown employees driving to the Tacoma Dome park and ride (Bonney lake and Enumclaw were specifically identified by the Partnership). Couple this effort with geocode analysis of employee residential origins.
- ✓ Communicate parking capacity/availability analysis at major park and rides and communicate to downtown employees as means to get employees into “satellite” locations that serve as transit feeders to downtown.
- ✓ Reevaluate the purpose of the Tacoma Dome Park and Ride. Consider charging a fee-to-park for those who use the garage as proxy for downtown parking.

#### Communication:

- ✓ Initiate an enhanced program of one-on-one business consultations that partners *Downtown: On the Go!* staff and Pierce Transit. Purpose would be to (a) communicate the *Downtown: On the Go!* effort, (b) evaluate and provide solutions to employee needs and (c) assist in design and implementation of internal (tailored) employer/employee transportation programs.
- ✓ Develop a *Corporate Goal* or *Executive Challenge* event to engage downtown executive leaders to set a “top down” example” for their individual businesses and employees.
- ✓ Initiate a “transit mentor” program within companies as a means to encourage employees to try transit (Pierce Transit provides test rides).
- ✓ Develop Public Service Announcements (PSA’s) with a *Downtown: on the Go!* message to increase awareness of the effort (and its goals) and to get positive messages about transit commuting out to downtown employees and employers.
- ✓ Develop a series of “case studies” on local downtown businesses that “meet the challenge” as information and communication pieces for peer businesses.

- ✓ Initiate a survey of downtown employees focused on understanding employees' needs, perceptions and challenges regarding transit. This will be accomplished in part through Pierce Transit's system redesign study, which will begin in the very near future and will be completed in early 2010.

Incentives:

- ✓ Develop an ORCA-based Passport program for downtown employers.
- ✓ Continue and expand efforts to put free transit (as an introductory incentive) into employee hands. Couple with communication efforts described above.
- ✓ Derive a clearer understanding of business tax credits for both transit programs and residential "proximity to workplace" programs.

## **II. BICYCLING & WALKING**

System Design:

- ✓ Conduct an inventory of available bike parking in key commercial buildings. Provide "upgrade" plans to individual building owners where bike parking is inadequate. Plans would include assessment of location and quality of racks, security and number of racks needed.
- ✓ Work with the City to develop an assessment of the quality of road surfaces on current bike lanes, resulting in an improvement plan for lanes in substandard condition.
- ✓ Work with City to strategically locate bike parking (racks and lockers) in public parking garages.
- ✓ Use geocodes to assess potential bike lane connections on targeted streets.
- ✓ Advocate for code changes to establish minimum bike parking standards correlated to bicycle mode split goal.

Programs:

- ✓ Bike rack purchase program (using grant monies to purchase bike racks for businesses/property owners).
- ✓ Bike locker program, which allows employees to rent secure locker space for bike storage.
- ✓ Partnership with athletic clubs to provide shower use for bicycle commuters parking downtown.
- ✓ Partner with Pierce Transit on a bike locker/storage program at key transit stations.

Outreach / Communications:

- ✓ Individualized bike trip planning assistance.
- ✓ Continued participation in Bike Month events and activities.
- ✓ Augment marketing of bikes on bus/rail program(s).
- ✓ Web-based bicycle parking map for downtown employees.
- ✓ Speaker series on bike topics (ranging from safety to equipment to riding in inclement weather).

### **III. CARSHARING & TELEWORK**

#### Carsharing

- ✓ Conduct a survey of Employee Transportation Coordinators and downtown employees to determine level of potential “daily personal trips” that could be accommodated in a ZipCar / Scoot Car program. Survey would also test sensitivities to cost, need for information and one-on-one assistance.
- ✓ Pursue a grant to pilot a ZipCar or Scoot Car program in downtown.

#### Telework

- ✓ Compile case studies on businesses that currently provide formal telework programs to derive a better understanding of elements that need to be in place (i.e., business type, employee profile, etc.) to support a formal program.
- ✓ Based on case studies, create a profile of business types/categories most likely to benefit from telework policies and programs.
- ✓ Identify “likely candidates” in downtown Tacoma that would benefit from information, assistance, and planning for telework programs.

### **IV. ORGANIZATION**

- ✓ Initiate a Phase II process to formally establish *Downtown On the Go!* as a centralized resource organization serving the downtown Tacoma business community.
- ✓ Create a business/work plan for a new organization delivering transportation demand management programs and services to downtown businesses and property owners (public and private).
- ✓ Define programs and action steps for delivery of desired services. The “program direction” elements in this document would serve as the framework for the development of the business plan.
- ✓ In conjunction with organizational development, identify and procure a sustainable public/private funding agreement necessary to support the organization and its business plan in the long term.

## **PROPOSED BUDGET**

*July 2009 – June 2010: \$200,000*

This proposed budget serves two purposes. The first is to outline of estimated costs for the Phase II: Planning. The second is as a draft budget to be used as a starting document for partners to revise and adjust if the Partnership evolves into Phase III: Implementation.

<b>Item (see details below)</b>	<b>Estimated Cost</b>
Staff (1 FTE)	\$75,000
Incentives and Subsidies	\$15,000
Programs	\$25,000
Marketing	\$60,000
Consultant Assistance	\$25,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$200,000</b>

### **STAFF ROLES**

- Maintain and grow Transportation Partnership
- Administer Scoot Car program
- Continue outreach and education to downtown employers
- Continue to foster strong collaborations between the Chamber, City, and Pierce Transit.

### **INCENTIVES/SUBSIDIES**

Commuter Prizes	\$350 per month	\$4,200
ORCA Passes for prospective riders	\$300 per month	\$3,600
Campaigns		\$7,200

### **PROGRAMS**

- Business Outreach
- Education
- Transportation Forums
- Telework Resources
- ScootCar administration
- Promote ORCA Passport program (managed by Pierce Transit)
- Bicycle Advocacy and basic infrastructure (bike racks)
- Paid Parking Transition plan (when parking meters are installed)
- Services for partners (outlined in call to action)

### **MARKETING**

- Continue to partner with Pierce Transit for design marketing
- Use a variety of media
- Develop web presence to promote Downtown: On the Go!

### **CONSULTANT ASSISTANCE**

- Rick Williams, Rick Williams Consulting
- Potential for telework assistance and other outside resources

## **PHASE II: PLANNING**

*July 2009-June 2010*

Phase II of Downtown: On the Go! builds on the work in Phase I. Members of the partnership agreed that in order to proceed with Phase II, the Partnership needs to include broader representation from the business community. Partners and staff agreed to work on growing the partnership as the first step in Phase II.

Phase II will establish a long-term funding and organization plan to ensure efforts to promote commute options and provide transportation and parking resources could continue in a sustainable and effective manner (Phase III: Implementation). It will also continue to provide the tools and resources available to downtown businesses in Phase I.

### **ROLE OF TRANSPORTATION PARTNERSHIP**

- Expand the Partnership and process by helping bring in other business leaders and building buy-in.
- Participate in developing Downtown: On the Go! into a viable, workable business plan.
- Make a good faith effort to identify private sector funding contributions.

### **STAFF ROLE**

The coordinator position is a continuation and growth of the existing coordinator.

Role of the staff member:

- Grow and maintain the Transportation Partnership (particularly reaching out to large employers not currently involved).
- Continue providing outreach and education to downtown businesses about commute options and employer transportation programs and resources.
- Provide support to Employer Transportation Coordinators.
- Administer Scoot Car (a carsharing system).

### **INCENTIVES & SUBSIDIES**

Incentives and subsidies remove barriers and provide motivation for employees to try new modes of transportation. As in the past year, incentives will be awarded on a monthly basis, and one-time subsidies will be offered for new transit and rideshare users. This has proven an effective way to entice commuters to try something new, often resulting in a significant commuting behavior change.

### **PROGRAMS**

- Coordinated Business Outreach – Includes individual consultations, Transportation Fairs, and marketing.
- Education – Provide educational materials opportunities to commuters, employers, and transportation coordinators on commute options, relevant changes, and services.
- Transportation Forums – Host a second series of forums targeting transportation issues facing businesses.

- Telework Resources – Provide resources, toolkits, case studies, and support to businesses interested in implementing telework policies.
- ScootCar: Allows employees to use the car for personal appointments and trips.
- Pierce Transit will manage ORCA-based passport program for downtown employers.
- Bicycle Advocacy and basic infrastructure (bike racks) – provide bicycle racks, information, and support to bicycle commuters and employers to support bicycling at their workplace.
- Paid Parking Transition plan (when parking meters are installed) – Work with the City of Tacoma and businesses to develop transition plans and resources for the rollout of paid on street parking.
- Services for partners (outlined in call to action).

### **CONSULTANT SERVICES**

Continue to work with Rick Williams on a monthly basis to help facilitate and guide this process. With extensive experience assisting cities in developing transportation management programs and in-depth familiarity with Tacoma, Williams is a valuable resource and plays a role staff cannot.

## **DOWNTOWN: ON THE GO! PARTNER CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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