

# Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit

Guidance and Resources for Plan and Policy Development





## ▶ Introduction



By 2040, the central Puget Sound region will be home to 5 million people and 3 million jobs. As the region grows, building a balanced, multimodal transportation system is necessary so people can get where they need to go while maintaining a high quality of life, economic well-being, and a healthy environment.

A strong transit system is the foundation of this future vision. But, it isn't enough to say more transit and better access to transit is needed. The region has to plan for it and make it happen. Transit systems function best when they are well-integrated with and supported by local land use and community design decisions. Supporting transit requires looking at how streets and roads are built and what mix of land uses are there around them, making it easy for people to access transit, and making sure people have reasons to ride transit.

All of this starts at the local level. Local governments are responsible for the land use decisions and public infrastructure that support the transit system: local roadways, sidewalks, bikeways, and other public connections to bus stops, light rail stations, and transit centers. And, since a local comprehensive plan establishes the guiding vision for a community's future growth and development, it is essential to include elements that will help to achieve transit-supportive outcomes.

This toolkit provides three strategies designated to strengthen the linkage between land use and transit in local plans and implementation regulations. Examples of goals, policies, and implementation actions are also provided.

Although not meant to be exhaustive, this toolkit identifies key elements of transit-supportive planning and provides important Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and transit agency contacts and web resources. The toolkit draws from a wide variety of national and local best practices, including the work of the Growing Transit Communities Partnership in the central Puget Sound region, transit agency long-range plans (where they exist), and local comprehensive plans from cities across the United States.

## ► What makes up the transit system?

During the development of Transportation 2040, PSRC and the region's transit agencies developed a transit service typology that describes the full array of public transit services found within the region. Each transit type plays a role in the region's transportation network. The strategies in this toolkit can be applied to all three transit types. The strategies can also facilitate the evolution from one type of transit to another within a jurisdiction.

### **Core Transit Services**

Light rail, bus rapid transit, and high frequency local buses are considered core transit services. Core services are generally routed to or through areas with higher density population and/or employment. By providing frequent and efficient service to areas with higher densities and mixed uses, core services are expected to draw high ridership. Typically running all day, core service is intended to operate at high frequency and at higher speeds to the extent practical.

### **Community Connector Transit Services**

This is transit routed between or through areas that are not dense enough to warrant core service but that the operator is required or has chosen to serve for policy reasons. Because of the land use pattern it serves, it is less likely to draw large numbers of people. Typically running through much (but not all of) the day, it tends to be lower frequency but can operate at higher or lower speed depending on individual routes. Community Connector routes may evolve into core service when transit demand and land use changes warrant it.

### **Specialized Transit Services**

This is transit routed to serve very specific users at specific times, such as peak period commutes from park-and-ride lots to employment centers. Running only at specific times, it is generally high speed and express, and is typically designed to carry high volumes of passengers. Specialized services are generally seen as complementary to core service; however, where possible, reducing duplicative service is encouraged.

## ► Why create transit-supportive places?

A balanced, multimodal transportation system with effective transit makes our communities more livable and sustainable and provides a higher quality of life. Implementing our regional vision depends on excellent transit service.



### People

- Lower transportation costs
- Greater mobility for people who cannot or do not want to own a car
- More housing choices
- Fewer hours spent in traffic
- More access to jobs, services, and activities—locally and regionally
- Improved safety



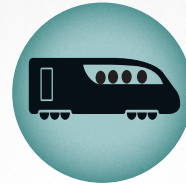
### Communities

- Stronger sense of place
- More efficient use of land
- More efficient public works investments
- Reduced congestion on roads
- Stronger economy



### Environment

- Healthier communities
- Better air quality
- Fewer greenhouse gas emissions
- Better water quality
- Protected farmland and open space



### Transit Providers

- Increased ridership
- Lower operating costs
- Safer operations and fewer accidents
- Greater integration of facilities into local communities
- Improved speed and reliability

## ► What are the elements of a transit-supportive plan?

Transit-supportive plans address three elements:

- 1 Coordinating land use and transportation
- 2 Supporting multimodal mobility
- 3 Connecting people to transit

## ► Why include transit-supportive elements in comprehensive plans?

The comprehensive plan articulates the ideal outcomes that would result if the plan were fully realized and sets the preferred courses of action to achieve a community's vision. Having strong policies that support transit and transit-oriented development will help a community create and maintain quality neighborhoods and meet the community's goals in the areas of mobility, environmental protection, economic development, and access to jobs and services.

Transit-supportive comprehensive plans should include goals, policies, and objectives that:

- Are consistent with regional policies and reflect the community's vision for its transportation system.
- Promote a sustainable public transportation system as an opportunity to enhance livability and economic opportunity to maintain quality of life.
- Emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy travel and increase travel options.

## Policy Strength Continuum

Policy language should convey the appropriate strength to achieve the desired outcome. Even strong policies are only effective if they are clearly linked to development regulations and funding.

### Statements of Inclination

*Convey intent to improve but make no target or definition of success.*

Example:  
Portland, OR: "Operate the street system in a manner that benefits transit."

### Statements of Principle

*Describe clear targets or conditions of success.*

Example:  
Santa Monica, CA: "The primary purpose of arterial streets that are also frequent transit streets is to move people rather than vehicles."

### Statements of Impact

*Go further, describing particular situations where transit should have priority.*

Example:  
Seattle, WA: "Implement Transit Signal Priority (TSP) along transit corridors to provide transit vehicles with precedence at signalized intersections, while considering cross-street pedestrian and traffic demand."



*Adapted from City of Bellevue Transit Master Plan*

## ► Why now?

The Growing Transit Communities Partnership was formed to make the most of the region's commitments to invest over \$25 billion in high-capacity transit (light rail, bus rapid transit, express bus, streetcar, and commuter rail). The partnership's work culminated in the release of the Growing Transit Communities Strategy (the strategy), which includes three steps to promote thriving and equitable transit communities in the central Puget Sound region.



Local implementation of the Growing Transit Communities Strategy starts with local jurisdictions developing updates to their long-range plans, or comprehensive plans. Between 2015 and 2016, most cities and counties in the central Puget Sound region will complete the state-mandated comprehensive plan update process. The Growing Transit Communities Partnership is providing this toolkit to build on the strategy and provide a resource for communities to incorporate transit-supportive elements in their updated plans and provide resources to facilitate the process. This toolkit also supports other local long-range planning efforts, including development or update of transit-supportive subarea plans, functional plans, and other long-range planning documents.

More information about the Growing Transit Communities Partnership and Strategy is available online at [www.psrc.org/growth/growing-transit-communities](http://www.psrc.org/growth/growing-transit-communities).



# Strategies for Creating Transit Supportive Plans ▶



# 1 Coordinating Land Use and Transportation

## ► Promote compact, mixed-use development near transit

Development that contains a mix of retail services, jobs, housing and other uses can attract a critical mass of people and activity. Compact, higher density development patterns shorten the distance people must travel to reach their destinations and supply the ridership that can support more frequent transit service and a greater variety of routes. In turn, higher service levels in these areas attract more riders and support the local land use vision.

### Strategies

- Plan for and encourage transit oriented development that achieves transit-supportive densities and mix of uses within transit station areas and corridors.
- Conduct station area planning around planned and existing transit hubs and stations.
- Work with transit providers to target investments to areas with higher intensity/density land use designations.
- Provide diverse housing types affordable to a full range of incomes within transit communities.

## How it's been done

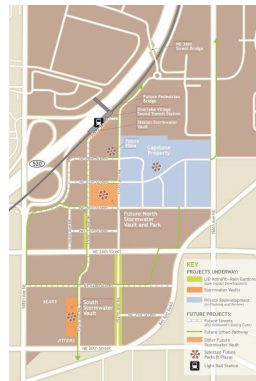
### In Policy

#### **Redmond Comprehensive Plan: Redmond 2030**

“Designate portions of Redmond’s Downtown and the Overlake neighborhoods as Urban Centers under the Countywide Planning Policies and Regional Growth Centers under VISION 2040. Recognize these areas as such in all relevant local, regional policy, planning and programming forums. Through plans and implementation strategies, encourage and accommodate focused office, retail and housing growth, and a broad array of complementary land uses. Prioritize capital investment funds to build the necessary infrastructure for these Urban Centers, including transportation, utilities, stormwater management and parks. Also, emphasize support for transit use, pedestrians and bicycling.”

### In Practice

#### **Overlake Station Area Planning**



Light rail is coming to Redmond’s Overlake area in 2023. Redmond is building on the area’s proximity to SR 520 and transit connections to downtown Redmond, Bellevue, and the Seattle region by planning for significant growth in Overlake. Light rail will transport residents, employees,

and visitors between two Overlake stations and regional destinations. Complete streets and new non-motorized crossings of SR 520 will improve access to transit and provide new connections between Overlake Village and area employers. Overlake will continue to succeed as a regional hub of activity because the community, private property owners, and developers worked together to set a vision and established a strategy to achieve that vision.

Source: City of Redmond, [tinyurl.com/Redmond-Overlake](https://tinyurl.com/Redmond-Overlake)

## ► **Develop thriving and equitable communities around transit**

Growth around transit stations and corridors should benefit all people by increasing economic development and access to jobs, expanding housing and transportation choices, promoting neighborhood character and vitality, and improving public health and environmental quality. The Growing Transit Communities Strategy calls for regional and local actions that will attract more of the region's residential and employment growth near high-capacity transit, provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes near high-capacity transit, and increase access to opportunity for existing and future community members.

### Strategies

- Adopt policies that encourage diverse and affordable housing choices near transit to meet regional and local needs.
- Preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing near transit with a broad range of innovative approaches such as incentives, and inclusionary zoning, targeted financing tools, public-private partnerships, and others.
- Prioritize public investments and partner with other public and private agencies to encourage siting of community, cultural, institutional, and social service facilities along high capacity transit corridors.
- Assess and prioritize investments to address local community needs in the areas of public health, economic development, mobility, education, and public safety in order to increase the equitable access to opportunity for all residents.
- Promote universally accessible design.

### How it's been done

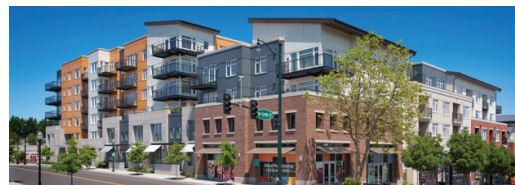
#### **In Policy**

##### **City of Burien Comprehensive Plan**

"The City should encourage the development of uses in or near Burien's Transit Center that are compatible with transit activity, reinforce transit use and are consistent with the Burien Vision for the downtown."

#### **In Practice**

##### **The Residences at Burien Town Square**



Burien initiated an innovative public-private partnership that led to a pioneering transit-oriented development project. The 124-unit Residences at Burien Town Square is located in downtown Burien in walking distance of the Burien Transit Center, shops, restaurants, services, and the Burien Library.

*Source: City of Burien, [tinyurl.com/BurienTownSquare](http://tinyurl.com/BurienTownSquare)*

## ► Strategically manage parking in pedestrian- and transit-oriented areas

Availability and cost of parking can have a significant impact on whether people decide to drive or use transit. The less land devoted to parking, the more space that is available for other uses. This puts more destinations within walking distance, creates a more comfortable pedestrian experience, and can help an area reach a development intensity that supports public transportation and spur additional development. Reduced parking requirements can also help lower the cost of new development, which can make housing and commercial rent more affordable.

### Strategies

- Develop area-wide parking strategies
- Reduce minimum parking requirements in areas well-served by transit.
- Support reduced parking requirements with incentives such as transit pass subsidies for building tenants, bicycle parking, car share parking, or other amenities.
- Use pricing strategies for public and on-street parking to manage area-wide parking supply.
- “Unbundle” the cost of parking from the rent or purchase price of housing.
- Allow and encourage shared parking among neighboring land uses or community parking facilities in commercial districts.

### How it’s been done

#### In Policy

##### **Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plan**

“Providing for vehicular parking will be considered as a component of a total access system of all modes of transportation—bicycle, pedestrian, transit and vehicular—and will be consistent with the desire to reduce single occupant vehicle travel, limit congestion, balance the use of public spaces and consider the needs of residential and commercial areas. Parking demand will be accommodated in the most efficient way possible with the minimal necessary number of new spaces. The city will promote parking reductions through parking maximums, shared parking, unbundled parking, parking districts and transportation demand management programs.”

#### In Practice

##### **Boulder Central Area General Improvement District**



Boulder, Colorado’s Central Area General Improvement District operates 4,000 parking spaces in its downtown. Its parking pricing system helps to manage congestion and parking demand while parking revenues are used to pay for pedestrian improvements and provide free transit passes to downtown employees.

Source: Metropolitan Planning Council Solving the Parking Predicament Series, [tinyurl.com/BoulderParking](http://tinyurl.com/BoulderParking)

## 2 Supporting Multimodal Mobility

### ▶ Work closely with transit agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and the community

The Growth Management Act requires consistency between the local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan transportation element and other plans, including the six-year plans required of public transportation agencies and neighboring jurisdictions plans (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(c)). Local jurisdictions achieve this consistency by coordinating with one another and transit agencies in their planning efforts. Community members must be involved in these efforts.

### Strategies

- Engage a full range of community members, including low-income, minority, and transit-dependent residents who may face barriers to public participation in planning for the future transit system.
- Work with transit agencies and neighboring jurisdictions to coordinate local land use and capital improvement strategies with transit agency plans and criteria to identify transit corridors and markets.
- Collaborate with transit agencies to ensure that agency transit-oriented development policies, plans, and programs and local jurisdiction policies and actions are consistent and complementary.

### ▶ What plans do transit agencies prepare?

State law requires each of the public transit agencies that operate in Washington to provide a six-year Transit Development Plan (RCW 35.58.2795). The Transit Development Plan provides a six-year forecast of service levels, capital projects, and agency financials. See the Resource section for contact information for local transit agencies. Transit agencies also prepare long-range plans which serve as blueprints for the future development of the transit system.

## How it's been done

### In Policy

#### Community Transit Long-Range Transit Plan

"Community Transit's service network will be constructed around transit-emphasis corridors that provide convenient travel options along arterial streets. These corridors are principal arterials and/or state routes with a mixture of core commercial, high-density residential, suburban, and rural development. Important attributes of these transit emphasis corridors include high-densities of housing and jobs in proximity with one another, pedestrian scale and design, connection to major growth centers, and roadway features that facilitate transit service.

The transit-emphasis corridors reflect the common efforts of both Community Transit and local jurisdictions. Throughout this long range planning process, local land use and transportation planners have worked with Community Transit to identify and refine a set of corridors that has the potential to support future transit-oriented developments."

### In Practice

#### Swift Bus Rapid Transit



The City of Lynnwood is planning a revitalization along SR 99, a Community Transit *Swift* bus rapid transit corridor. The current development pattern is a mix post-World War II commercial strip development combined with shopping centers, automobile dealerships, wrecking yards, and mobile home parks. The City of Lynnwood developed the SR 99 Corridor Subarea Plan, Design Guidelines, and Zoning Regulations. The plan seeks to make the corridor pedestrian friendly while reconnecting neighborhoods to and across SR 99. Lynnwood's plan recognizes the value of BRT as a catalyst for new development.

Source: *City of Lynnwood, [tinyurl.com/SR99Revitalization](http://tinyurl.com/SR99Revitalization)*

## ► Strengthen multimodal solutions to help meet transportation needs

The Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to establish level-of-service (LOS) standards for transportation-related facilities. LOS standards articulate the speed and reliability of transportation facilities and services. Historically, LOS standards have focused primarily on road capacity for motor vehicles. However, VISION 2040's Multicounty Planning Policies require communities to establish multimodal LOS systems that evaluate the performance of transportation facilities for a variety of users and modes, including transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.

### Strategies

- Adopt multimodal LOS standards.
- Partner with service providers when developing methodologies and standards that measure mobility or level of service across modes.
- Include transit corridor infrastructure within the local transportation improvement plan.
- Establish LOS minimums for transit where practicable.
- Allow transit projects as mitigation for development impacts through SEPA or concurrency programs.

## How it's been done

### In Policy

#### City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan

Establish LOS standards for a range of multimodal transportation modes to identify deficiencies and need for improvements. Bellingham's adopted LOS standard is "Person Trips Available by Concurrency Service Area" based on arterial and transit capacity for motorized modes and on the degree of network completeness for pedestrian and bicycle modes. The individual thresholds for each transportation mode available in each Concurrency Management Ordinance.

### In Practice

#### City of Bellingham Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program



In 2008, Bellingham developed and adopted a new **Multimodal Transportation Concurrency Program** that includes LOS measurements for pedestrian, bicycle, multi-use trails, and public transit in addition to the traditional auto-centric volume to capacity (v/c)

ratio LOS standards used by most jurisdictions. The program integrates transportation with land use. It classifies each of its Concurrency Service Areas (CSAs) according to land use typology, availability of multimodal transportation facilities and transit service.

Source: *Institute of Transportation Engineers*, [tinyurl.com/BellinghamConcurrency](http://tinyurl.com/BellinghamConcurrency)

## ► Promote and implement programs that encourage alternatives to driving alone

Transportation demand management (TDM) uses an array of data collection and management tools to encourage the efficient use of the transportation system. TDM encompasses a broad variety of programs, policies, and strategies that encourage alternatives to driving alone such as car sharing, employer-based programs, or development-based programs that offer incentives to ride transit, and public education and marketing programs to promote transit and other alternatives to driving.

### Strategies

- Require a TDM plan as part of site plan review for larger developments.
- Work with local transportation management associations (TMAs) to identify opportunities for working with local businesses and entities to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.
- Work with employers to limit free parking and provide incentives to discourage driving alone.
- Create marketing programs that encourage the use of transit and other alternatives for commute, shopping, recreational, cultural, and other trips.

### How it's been done

#### In Policy

##### **City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Toward a Sustainable Seattle**

"Provide, support, and promote programs and strategies aimed at reducing the number of car trips and miles driven (for work and non-work purposes) to increase the efficiency of the transportation system, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions."

#### In Practice

##### **U-PASS Program**



The University of Washington's U-PASS encourages alternatives to driving alone by providing students, faculty, and staff with a variety of low-cost transportation options.

Source: *University of Washington, [tinyurl.com/UPASS-UW](http://tinyurl.com/UPASS-UW)*

## ► Enhance transit speed and reliability with capital improvements and operational strategies

Local jurisdictions and transit agencies are partners in supporting transit operations. Local jurisdictions and transit agencies share responsibility for the operating environment. Transit-supportive design standards, capital investments, and operational strategies can speed up transit, increase efficiency, and improve reliability.

### Strategies

- Develop a category in the street classification system for transit streets as a way to guide investments in transit-supportive infrastructure.
- Coordinate local actions regarding the funding, design, and operations of transportation facilities with the needs of transit agencies.
- Adopt street design standards that support transit.
- Provide specialized infrastructure such as signal prioritization, bus stop curb extensions, and dedicated lanes to support transit.
- Provide space for transit infrastructure, such as bus stops and transit layover facilities.

### How it's been done

#### In Policy

##### **Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan**

"Transit-emphasis corridors shall connect designated compact and mixed-use urban centers and conform to urban design and infrastructure standards that accommodate and enhance the operation of transit services, and planned for mixed-use commercial and residential developments that are designed to be transit-oriented."

#### In Practice

##### **Swift BRT Queue Jump Signals**



Community Transit's *Swift* bus rapid transit buses now get a head start with a queue jump signal at SR 99 and 148th Street between Lynnwood and Everett, where the northbound transit lane ends. This improvement helps keep *Swift* buses running on time.

Source: Community Transit, [tinyurl.com/swiftBRT](https://tinyurl.com/swiftBRT)



# 3 Connecting People to Transit

## ► Provide access to transit

Connecting people to transit is an essential element of a sustainable transit system. Connecting people to transit requires policies and projects that address access to, from, and within station areas, transit centers, major transit hubs, and transit corridors for transit, pedestrians, bicycles, and motorists.

The importance of good bicycle and pedestrian facilities is underscored in the Growth Management Act, which requires a pedestrian and bicycle component in local comprehensive plans. Planning for pedestrian access to transit is especially important, as most transit trips begin and end with walking. Strong bicycle and pedestrian connections make it more convenient, safer, and more enjoyable to ride transit. This helps generate new transit riders, which supports the long-term sustainability of the transit system.

### Strategies

- Promote the integration of different transit modes, such as bus to rail, rail to ferry, or ferry to bus connections.
- Prioritize multimodal improvement projects and include them in the six-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).
- Provide facilities that connect people to transit, such as crosswalks and pedestrian bridges, wayfinding signs, continuous sidewalks, shared use paths, bike lanes, and cycle tracks, and bicycle parking.
- Develop clear, formalized, and interconnected streets and small blocks to make destinations visible and easier to access.
- Adopt Complete Street policies.
- Expand the sidewalk network in areas where it is incomplete or non-existent to provide links for a transit corridor.
- Design park-and-ride facilities to meet the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists while supporting efficient transit operation.

## ▶ Complete Streets

Complete streets are designed and operated to enable safe and convenient access for all road users, while accommodating the movement of freight and goods. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities can safely move along and across a complete street. By designing and operating streets to be complete, transportation agencies increase capacity, avoid expensive retrofits, encourage physical activity, and help create walkable communities.

- Source: *VISION 2040, Page 82*

## How it's been done

### In Policy

#### City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan

Apply the Complete Streets guiding principle, where appropriate, in the planning and design for new construction, reconstruction, and major transportation improvement projects, to appropriately accommodate all users, moving by car, truck, transit, bicycle, wheelchair, or foot to move along and across streets. The Complete Streets guiding principle shall also be used to evaluate potential transportation projects, and to amend and revise design manuals, regulations, standards, and programs as appropriate to create over time an integrated and connected network of complete streets that meets user needs while recognizing the function and context of each street.

### In Practice

#### Stadium Way Project



Tacoma's Complete Street policies were recently advanced through the Stadium Way Complete Streets Project. This \$13 million capital facilities project is nearing completion. Project elements include sidewalks, bike lanes, rain gardens, and an overall design that is able to accommodate a possible light rail extension. Stadium Way is a corridor that connects the downtown core to the city's highest density residential area, the Stadium District.

Source: *City of Tacoma, [tinyurl.com/StadiumWay](http://tinyurl.com/StadiumWay)*



## ► Resources and Contacts

### Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)

PSRC's mission is to ensure a thriving central Puget Sound now and into the future through planning for regional transportation, growth management and economic development. At PSRC, central Puget Sound counties (King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap), cities and towns, ports, tribes, transit agencies, and the state work together to develop policies and make decisions about regional issues. PSRC works with local government, business and citizens to build a common vision for the region's future, expressed through three connected major activities: VISION 2040, the region's growth strategy; Transportation 2040, the region's long-range transportation plan; and Prosperity Partnership, which develops and advances the region's economic strategy.

#### **Plan Review**

PSRC works with countywide planning groups, local jurisdictions, transit agencies, and others to ensure that regional and local planning efforts are coordinated and adopted regional policies and provisions are addressed. PSRC conducts three types of plan review:

1. Reviews of local comprehensive plans, including the certification of transportation elements.
2. Reviews of countywide planning policies and multicounty policies, including certification of countywide policies for consistency with the regional transportation plan.
3. Consistency review of transit agency plans.

PSRC's Plan Review Manual is a helpful resource, providing details on the policy and plan review and certification process, background, and framework. The manual also provides guidance and checklists for aligning plans and policies with VISION 2040 and Growth Management Act requirements.

Learn more at [www.psrc.org/growth/planreview](http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview)

### Multicounty Planning Policies

VISION 2040 contains multicounty planning policies that provide guidance and direction for local decision-making and planning. Several of the multicounty planning policies are related to transit and provide guidance to local jurisdictions working to incorporate transit-supportive elements into comprehensive plans.

Learn more at [www.psrc.org/growth/planreview](http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview)

## PSRC Contacts

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## Resources for Creating Transit Supportive Plans

PSRC has assembled a resource library with links to websites, reports, and other resources with information about the topics discussed in this toolkit, including:

- Complete Streets
- Comprehensive plan development
- Growth Management Act
- Parking management strategies
- Transit-oriented development
- Transportation Demand Management
- Transit facility siting and design
- Examples of transit-supportive comprehensive plans

Learn more: <http://psrc.org/transportation/transit/toolkit>

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## Acknowledgements

The Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit was developed by the Growing Transit Communities Partnership and the PSRC's Transportation Operators Committee (TOC). The TOC is the primary forum for discussing and resolving issues of common concern and/or interest to the public transportation operators in the four-county Puget Sound region. The TOC advises the Transportation Policy Board, and includes representatives of the public transit agencies in each county: Sound Transit, Pierce County Ferries, the City of Seattle, Washington State Ferries, and Washington State Department of Transportation.

## Content and design by:



A special thanks to the organizations that contributed to the development of this publication:



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Puget Sound Regional Council

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