

PSRC Transit Access Recommendation Report

February 2024

Introduction

Transit is an essential component of the regional transportation system, connecting people to jobs, schools, friends and family, and essential destinations. Transit access refers to the ability of people to easily get to and use transit. The [VISION 2050](#) Regional Growth Strategy calls for PSRC to provide and encourage alternatives to driving alone and ensure access to and availability of reliable transit options. The region is served by nine transit agencies that provided over 221 million boardings in 2018. More than 80% of the trips to access transit were made by active transportation modes (walking and bicycling). The remainder of the trips were either made by private vehicles or a variety of pick-up/drop-off modes, including ADA Paratransit, community shuttles, and Mobility On Demand (MOD) services, among others.

In 2016–2017, PSRC completed a multi-year assessment of transit access and published tools to assist local jurisdictions and transit agency stakeholders in improving transit access in the region, including the Transit Access Checklist, Toolkit, and Funding Matrix published in 2017, on the PSRC website at: <https://www.psrc.org/our-work/transit-access>. These tools were intended to be used with one another to help increase transit access at any location and used by jurisdictions, transit agencies, and other agencies to coordinate and collaborate on the assessment of transit access needs and opportunities across the region.

Existing PSRC Transit Access Tools

Transit Access Checklist is intended for use by stakeholders to provide a framework for conducting a comprehensive assessment of existing transit access conditions at any given location, framing questions under key characteristics such as urban form, transit service, and parking. It also includes suggested data sources that local agencies can use to complete the checklist.

Transit Access Toolkit identifies 60 distinct transit access improvements and organized them across eight strategic areas. The Toolkit was designed to help stakeholders understand how each strategic area increases access to transit and the roles played by various stakeholders in implementing access improvements. The Toolkit also documents benefits, costs, common issues and challenges, and regional examples of all access improvements identified.

The **Transit Access Funding Matrix** is intended to assist stakeholders in identifying potential funding opportunities for transit access strategies identified in the Toolkit.

To better connect people to transit, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) specifically calls for developing and updating tools and resources to help identify where access to transit can be improved in the region. With the anticipated expansion of the regional transit network, it is projected that active transportation access to transit will rise from the current 83% to reach 90% of all trips accessing transit by 2050. In addition, jurisdictions, transit, and other responsible agencies will need to collaborate in their planning to facilitate various transit access modes around future station areas.

During the early project scoping phase, relevant committees identified potential ways for PSRC to support local jurisdictions and transit agencies as they work to improve transit access, including:

- **Clarifying stakeholder roles and responsibilities** throughout the process.
- **Providing data, tools, and resources** to support transit access work by local agencies.
- Seeking ways to improve **access to and from historically marginalized and underserved communities**.
- **Developing regional metrics** for tracking transit access improvements.

As part of the RTP implementation and in response to committee input, PSRC developed a transit access work program that began with a review of existing tools and resources in conjunction with updated data to help identify potential improvements to regional transit access assessments.

Ad Hoc Transit Access Working Group

To assist staff with technical expertise and lived experience, PSRC recruited an ad hoc working group to support the review and evaluation of existing tools, resources, and data through the development of case studies. PSRC's committee leadership assisted staff in identifying potential working group members with specific expertise and perspectives across the region. As a result, PSRC recruited stakeholders from diverse fields as described below:

- **Local jurisdiction staff** with expertise in land use planning, development, and infrastructure in the public rights-of-way, including sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and other facilities supporting access to transit, MOD, specialized transportation, and other modes.
- **Transit agency staff** with expertise in transit station and/or stop access and management of parking at park-and-rides.
- **Developers/architects** with expertise in Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) and place-making.
- **System users** who can provide lived experiences to inform the transit access work, including mobility device users.
- **Additional perspectives** include public health and state perspective (WSDOT) on improving access to transit in the region.

The working group was charged with reviewing existing tools, developing a recommendation report, and providing input and guidance on future transit access tasks. The working group convened four times between May 2023 and January 2024, with input via email between meetings.

This report documents the findings from the meetings and case study work and outlines recommendations for the next steps of the transit access work program.

Transit Access Case Studies

As noted in the previous section, the purpose of the case studies was to assess PSRC's existing transit access tools, pinpoint areas for potential improvements, and develop the next steps of the work program. This section highlights findings from the literature review and a summary of the case studies.

Literature review summary

Before delving into the case studies, PSRC conducted a review of recent studies and resources to build on the existing transit access literature review and to identify key characteristics that influence transit access. The review reaffirmed the use of previously identified key characteristics: urban form, transit service, and parking. It also identified additional details to these characteristics, such as the availability of MOD services and considerations of equity and safety as crucial elements for assessing transit access. The full literature review document can be found at: <https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/2023transitaccess-literaturereviewfindings.pdf>.

Case Study Site Selection

PSRC sought potential case study locations by reaching out to various committees comprising stakeholders with vested interests in transit access. Then PSRC consulted with working group members to finalize the sites. Staff provided a preliminary review of potential sites, and the working group helped select five locations across the region that represent different contexts and transit access challenges. Based upon further working group feedback, the [Opportunity Score](#) and the availability of MOD programs were also considered. The following are the sites selected for the case study:

- Wheaton Way Transit Center in Bremerton.
- Pacific Avenue and S 72nd Street in Tacoma.
- Tukwila International Boulevard Station in Tukwila.
- Judkins Park Station in Seattle (future light rail station under construction).
- Mariner Station in Unincorporated Snohomish County (future light rail station under consideration).

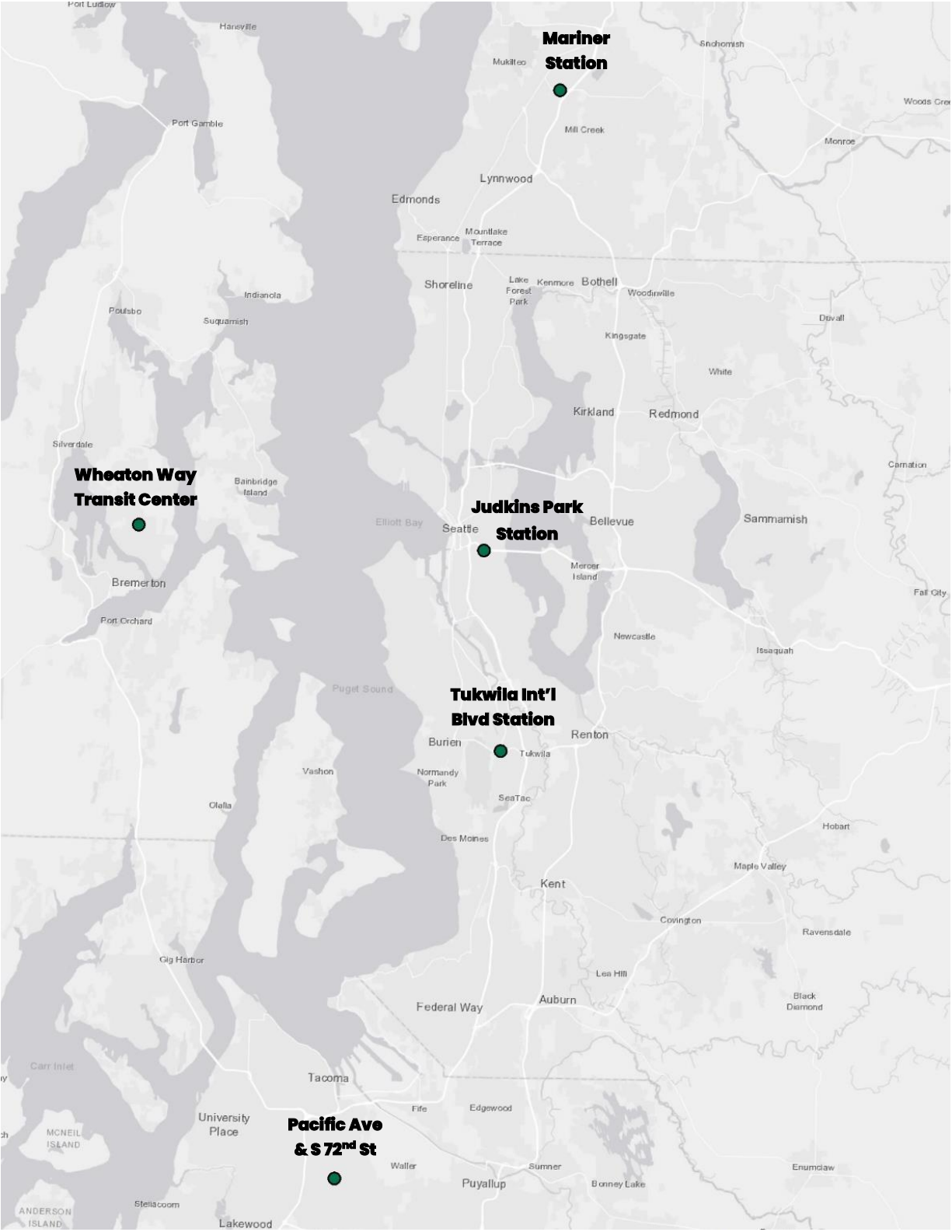


Figure 1 Transit Access Case Study Sites

Methodology

For the case study, PSRC staff initially filled out the Transit Access Checklist using readily available resources. Staff made note of the questions that required further information or data. Then, PSRC submitted data requests to pertinent agencies, including jurisdictions and transit agencies. PSRC used the data and feedback provided by these agencies to complete a checklist review of each site and then used the resources to connect access challenges with strategies described in the Transit Access Toolkit.

Summary of findings

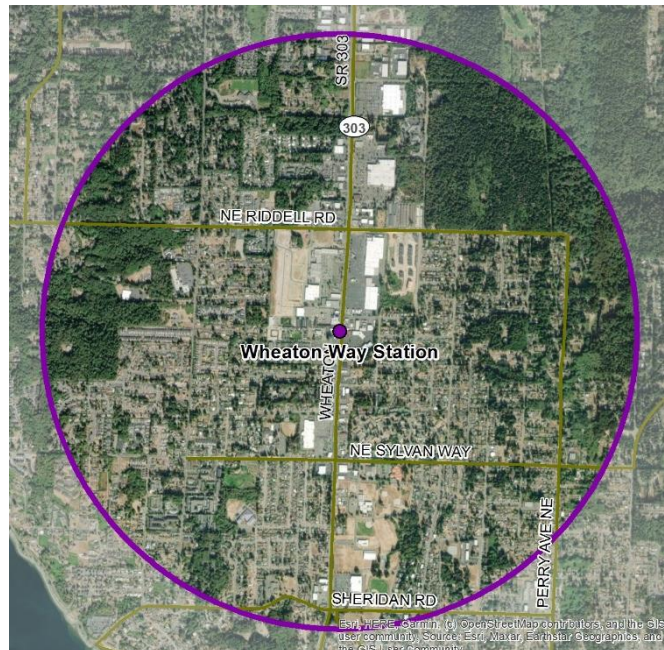
Case Studies

Selected sites include both existing and future potential station areas across the region, served by a variety of transit options, including local bus, bus rapid transit (BRT), light rail, transit agencies' MOD programs, complementary ADA paratransit, and other transportation options. Below are the key findings from each case study site:

Wheaton Way Transit Center, Bremerton

Context Derived from Checklist:

- **Urban Form:** The area is characterized by superblocks. Immediate land uses are predominantly commercial, while some higher-density residential complexes surround the station outside of the commercial area. Frequent congestion affecting bus travel time is observed at this location due to the transit center being located mid-block, with access limited to Wheaton Way/SR 303. The area has incomplete pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the vicinity of the station.
- **Transit Service:** The site is served by seven bus routes including three commuter and one express service connecting riders to other transit stations and a ferry terminal in Bremerton. This site provides covered waiting areas.
- **Parking:** 162 dedicated park-and-ride spaces are available at a 40% utilization rate.



Transit Access Improvement Strategies: based on the Checklist review, relevant transit access solutions can be found under the “Enhance street network connectivity” strategy in the Toolkit.

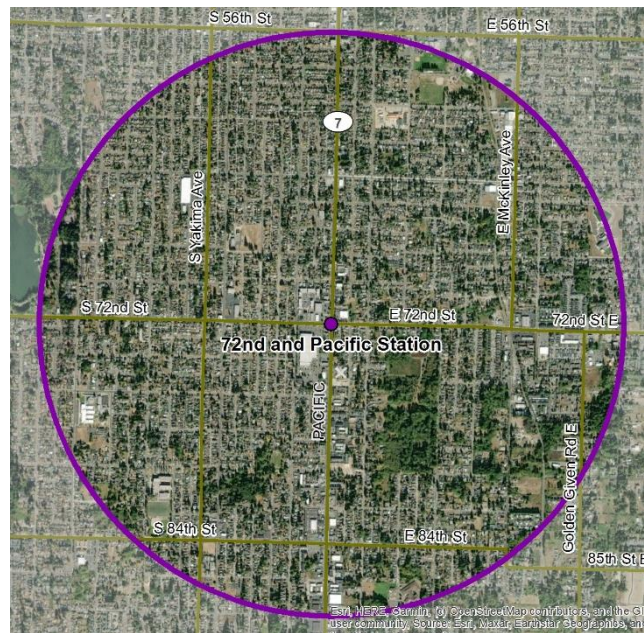
Key Stakeholders:

- Kitsap Transit
- City of Bremerton
- WSDOT

Pacific Avenue and S 72nd Street, Tacoma

Context Derived from Checklist:

- **Urban Form:** Located at the intersection of superblocks, the site experiences frequent heavy congestion. Although the station area has sidewalks, there are some gaps, and it lacks bicycle facilities. The Pacific Avenue and nearby superblock commercials create an access barrier for transit users. Moreover, Pacific Ave itself is a significant barrier for pedestrians and bicyclists attempting to access bus stops due to wide roads and lack of safe active transportation facilities. Based on the review of WSDOT Crash Data, the station area experienced several fatal and serious collisions involving pedestrians and bicyclists in the past five years.
- **Transit Service:** Currently two bus routes serve this location, offering riders access to transit centers and major destinations in Tacoma and Lakewood. However, the current environment seems to present challenges for transit users, particularly regarding rider information. It appears that customer information and wayfinding at the bus stops in this station area could be improved.
- **Parking:** While ample surface parking is available near commercial properties, there are no dedicated parking or park-and-ride facilities near the station. Agencies have indicated that paratransit, shuttles, or taxis use adjacent parking lots for pick-up and drop-off.



Transit Access Improvement Strategies: based on the Checklist review, relevant transit access solutions can be found under the “Improve active transportation environment” and “Elevate the transit user experience” strategies in the Toolkit.

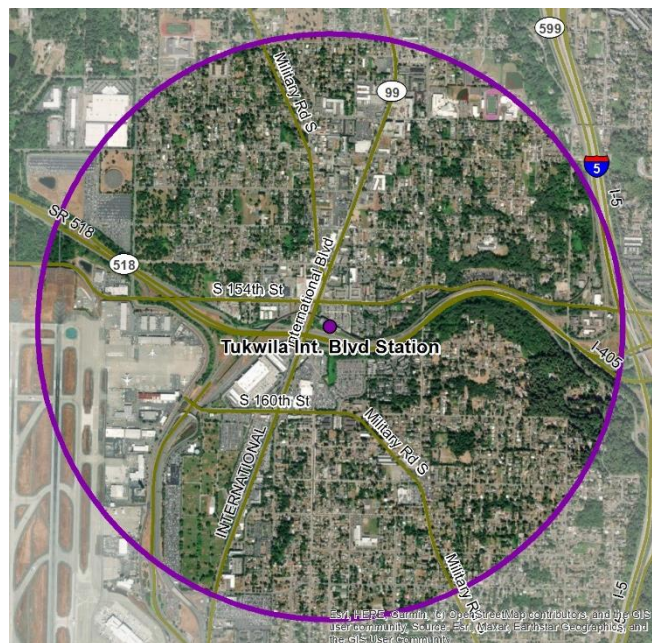
Key Stakeholders:

- Pierce Transit
- City of Tacoma
- WSDOT

Tukwila International Boulevard Station, Tukwila

Context Derived from Checklist:

- **Urban Form:** The station area experiences a high volume of vehicles with consistent congestion during the PM peak, typically on weekdays. Some major thoroughfares have sidewalks, although they may be incomplete and narrow. No protected bicycle connections are available around the station.
- **Transit Service:** Four bus routes and light rail offer transportation to various regional destinations including Downtown Seattle and major cities in South King. Metro provides Metro Flex, a Mobility On Demand service in this area, averaging 28 rides per day. Metro and Sound Transit identified the station area as the primary transfer point. Improving customer information is necessary as there is currently no real-time arrival information for the light rail.
- **Parking:** There are approximately 600 parking stalls available, with a utilization rate consistently at or above 95%. Transit agency staff noted that the parking lots usually reach full capacity by 8:30 am. However, a relatively high percentage of riders appear to be accessing this station using a variety of modes other than personal vehicles as well.



Transit Access Improvement Strategies: based on the Checklist review, relevant transit access solutions can be found under the “Improve active transportation environment” and “Elevate the transit user experience” strategies in the Toolkit.

Key Stakeholders:

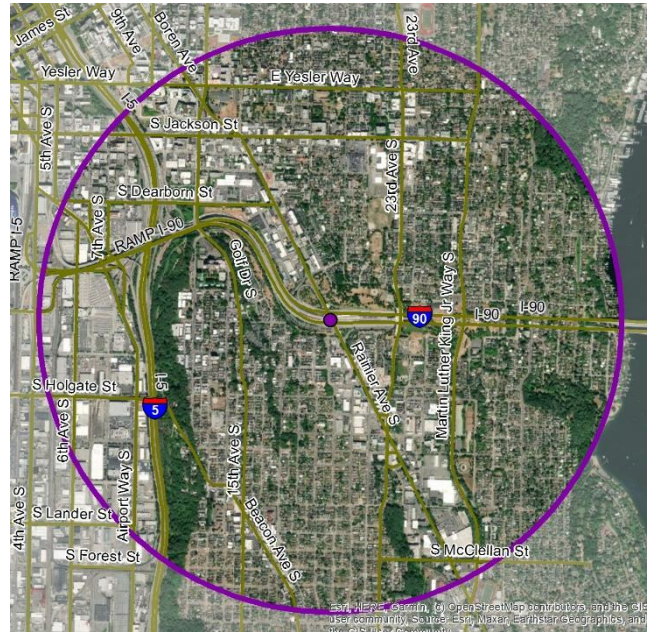
- Sound Transit
- King County Metro
- City of Tukwila
- City of SeaTac
- WSDOT

Judkins Park Station (Future Station), Seattle

This station is under construction, with a planned opening date in 2025 as part of Sound Transit’s East Link Extension. Located in the heart of I-90, it benefits from nearby bus stops, encouraging convenient transfers between local buses and the light rail.

Context Derived from Checklist:

- **Urban Form:** The area encompasses a variety of land uses. By 2050, the area is projected to experience substantial population growth, estimated at 58% increase, alongside a significant increase in employment opportunities, expected to rise by 80%. There is a gap in the sidewalks north of the station on Rainier Ave S.
- **Transit Service:** Current bus routes connect riders to many key destinations in the greater Seattle area. King County Metro suspects that there are medium to high levels of pick-up/drop-off usage in the station area, and they identified the station as a primary transit route transfer point.
- **Parking:** There is no dedicated parking lot for the current station. Sound Transit is working closely with nearby communities to minimize potential parking impacts to surrounding neighbors and businesses, as the new station is expected to bring increased demand for parking in the area.



Transit Access Improvement Strategies: based on the Checklist review, relevant transit access solutions can be found under the “Improve active transportation environment” and “Elevate the transit user experience” strategies in the Toolkit.

Key Stakeholders:

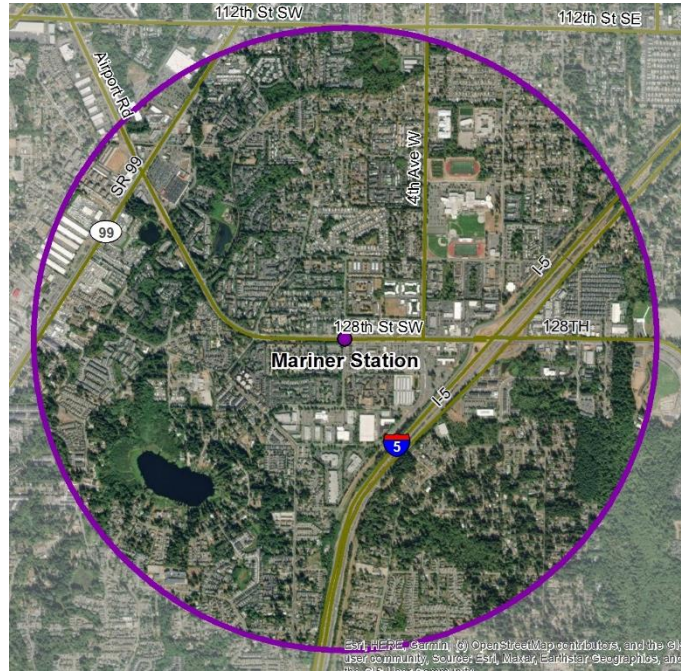
- Sound Transit
- King County Metro
- City of Seattle
- WSDOT

Mariner Station (Potential Future Station), Everett

Mariner Station is one of the potential light rail station locations Sound Transit is considering for their Everett Link extension project (expected to open for service 2037–2041).

Context Derived from Checklist:

- **Urban Form:** The site is situated within a commercial area, with residential properties nearby. Currently, the bicycle lanes along 128th and Airport Road lack protection or buffering. According to the WSDOT’s Crash Data Portal, there have been several collisions involving bicyclists and pedestrians within the immediate station area over the past five years. Per local staff, there is a fair amount of people crossing the arterial mid-block or away from marked or signalized crossings along 128th.
- **Transit Service:** Currently, at Mariner Park and Ride (which serves as a proxy for this future site), there are fewer than 1,000 average weekday boardings with minimal transfer or drop-off activity observed. There is a Swift Bus Rapid Transit Station (connecting Blue & Green lines) within a mile distance from this site. It is anticipated that ridership demand will increase with the start of Link light rail.
- **Parking:** Private commercial parking lots are available near the station area. Mariner Park and Ride (serving as a proxy to the site), offers 653 parking stalls with a relatively low utilization rate.



Transit Access Improvement Strategies: based on the Checklist review, relevant transit access solutions can be found under the “Improve active transportation environment” and “Improve access via local transit and drop-off modes” strategies in the Toolkit.

Key Stakeholders:

- Sound Transit
- Community Transit
- Snohomish County

Staff collected feedback from local agencies on using the Checklist to assess transit access needs and context of each site and providing data for PSRC to complete the assessment. Here are some highlights heard from local staff:

- It is **difficult to answer** some checklist questions due to a lack of reliable and/or relevant data. Some agencies expressed difficulty determining the availability of data resources, accessing recent and accurate datasets, and which agency is responsible for providing data for which checklist questions.
- While the existing checklist seems to ask relevant questions, some local staff suggested including **additional questions**, to consider equity considerations or MOD-related components and/or new technologies when evaluating transit access needs.
- There are many questions in the checklist and many answers in the checklist that **require additional notes and explanations**.

The ability to facilitate collaboration between agencies is the key benefit of using existing transit access tools. PSRC identified the following as areas for potential improvement in these tools:

- Existing tools are lengthy and static, requiring significant staff time and effort to use and they are not fully interconnected. For example, data is often difficult to access or cumbersome to request from jurisdictions and transit agencies. Also, it is difficult to identify the key characteristics of each site as the **Transit Access Checklist** does not provide the context review results automatically.
- The **Transit Access Checklist** can lead generally to strategies in the **Transit Access Toolkit**, but which strategies are highlighted can be subjective and open to interpretation.
- The **Transit Access Toolkit** does not provide further guidance or assistance to develop shared transit access responsibilities among stakeholders.
- The **Transit Access Funding Matrix** is outdated, and the connection between the matrix and other elements of the PSRC transit access tools is unclear.
- None of the tools fully address key topics like equity, safety, and new technologies. Also, the tools do not provide a clear method to evaluate the transit access needs of future station locations. Tools are unable to distinguish the most impactful transit access improvements.

Recommendations

VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy includes a goal to attract 65% of residential growth and 75% of employment growth to regional growth centers and within walking distance of high-capacity transit station areas by 2050. The RTP adopted in May 2022 identifies improving access to transit as one of the key policy focus areas and further calls for the region to develop and update tools and resources to help identify where access to transit can be improved with an emphasis on active transportation access. Creating convenient and safe connections, particularly for pedestrians and bicyclists, will be critical for ensuring that transit is a viable choice for many communities as the region grows and the transit system expands. By 2050, more than half of households in the region will be located within a walkable distance of an integrated, high-capacity transit system, with transit ridership anticipated to triple the current levels.

Summary of recommendations

As noted in the case study findings, transit access tools can help local agencies better coordinate and share responsibilities to improve transit access needs in any given area. Based on the working group discussion and committee outreach, below is the summary of recommendations for next steps:

- **Develop clear and comprehensive information on the roles and responsibilities of agencies.** This could be achieved by facilitating a regional dialogue, enabling transit access stakeholders to address shared responsibilities and overlapping roles, and exploring opportunities for collaboration. Through such discussions, the region can develop guidance on how to determine roles and responsibilities early in the planning process. Agencies can collaborate to determine the most effective approach for implementing transit access solutions based on the unique characteristics (e.g. urban form, transit service, parking) of different transit locations. While agencies share transit access best practices, challenges, solutions, and resources, PSRC can facilitate the coordination and provide technical assistance, like data sharing or developing a model agreement for local agencies, to encourage regional collaboration.
- **Automate and streamline the tools to help local agencies more easily assess transit access needs and opportunities.** There is potential to enhance the interactivity and user-friendliness of transit access tools by creating a web-based tool. This work could benefit local agencies in accessing and utilizing PSRC's regional transit, active transportation, and demographic data for their local planning work. One promising suggestion for automation would be to develop a transit access context typology and an automated tool, similar to the PSRC's [Housing Opportunities by Place](#) tool. This automated tool would direct users to a subset of transit access improvement solutions tailored to their specific transit access context, making the process more efficient and impactful.

- **Integrate new emerging themes, including equity, safety, and new technologies to transit access tools.** These topics can be incorporated into transit access work in a variety of ways if adequate data is available. If the data is not readily available, ongoing efforts to develop and gather data pertinent to these topics would be needed. Furthermore, identifying key metrics related to these various topics will be a crucial step. PSRC will engage stakeholders to discuss and explore the best ways to integrate these new themes into the tools. Also, the tools can refer to the latest PSRC resources like the [Opportunity Mapping Index](#), [Displacement Risk Mapping](#), or [Transportation System Visualization Tool](#) in addition to other agencies' resources. These will help assess transit access needs more easily without contacting multiple agencies for data.
- **Develop guidance on equitable engagement and outreach for transit access.** This can build upon PSRC's existing [Equitable Engagement Guidance](#). A key outcome of this effort is to explore the question of "who" in relation to transit access, ensuring that riders representing people with accessibility needs, as well as communities of color, are actively involved and derive benefits from transit access improvements. The guidance on transit access engagement will support agencies in effectively engaging communities that have traditionally not been part of the planning and decision-making processes. Also, agencies can strengthen their current process of reaching diverse transit users and implement transit access solutions that meet their needs.

In addition to the above list, the working group expressed interest in exploring opportunities to prioritize funding for projects that do the most to improve transit access in areas identified with the most need. This could be achieved in various ways building upon the recommendations noted above.

Next steps

As a regional convener and data hub, PSRC is in a unique role to provide technical assistance in support of local agencies working to achieve regional transit access goals. The above recommendations will help PSRC to develop the next steps of the transit access work program and roll them into the regional transit access needs assessment to get ready for the next Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) work for further implementation. Transit access planning work incorporated into the adopted RTP can influence future project selection processes and implementation to achieve the goals of VISION 2050.

Recommendations of this report will be shared with PSRC's committees and boards to provide an update to PSRC's Transit Access work program, including elements to be included in the RTP.