Transit Agency Involvement in Land Use Planning
A case study from the Puget Sound Region

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Snohomish County
Population: 605,000 (2000)
Area: 2,090 sq miles
Land Use: 68% forest land, 18% rural, 9% urban/city, 5% agricultural
Planning Environment for Land Use Outreach

- State Growth Management Act (1990) required local jurisdictions to adopt comprehensive plans and required coordination.

- Twenty-one cities and towns in Snohomish County developed or updated comprehensive plans in accordance with the new law.

- The law required setting Level Of Service standards (LOS) for roads and transit.

- The law was directed at local jurisdictions and Counties with permitting/land use authority, transit agencies were not directly subject to the law.

Land Use Outreach

Two basic program components:

- **Provide policy input to local jurisdictions**
  - Supply model transit-supportive policies
  - Give presentations to local planning commissions
  - Comment on draft plans/policies

- **Review of proposed land use actions**
  - Request opportunity to review permit applications
  - Meet with permitting staff at cities
  - Interact with developers
  - Provide a link with transit planning and TDM programs
Lessons Learned

We did some of the right things:

• Obtained Transit Board endorsement of policies
• New staff position dedicated to land use outreach
• Approached problem from both ends (policies in comprehensive plans and review of actual projects)
• Leveraged opportunities created by the Growth Management Act
• Emphasized coordination with local jurisdictions

Lessons Learned

We didn’t do some things that would have been helpful:

• No budget to help pay for identified facility improvements
• Connection with TDM/vanpooling programs was informal
• Outreach to the private sector was weak (developers, architects, planners, commercial realtors, etc)
• Didn’t follow-up with local jurisdictions regularly
• Didn’t develop a robust tracking system to document program effectiveness
Observations and conclusions

- A long-range perspective is important, keep expectations realistic
- Cooperation of local jurisdiction planning/permitting staff is essential
- The program must offer benefits to the private sector (a carrot to go along with the stick)
- The problem must be approached from both ends (local jurisdiction adoption of supportive policies and input on specific land use proposals)