

The Federal grants for SR 520 could include:

- \$41 million for transit improvements, including enhanced bus services with the purchase of 45 additional buses for the corridor.
- \$63 million to develop an advanced tolling system that could contribute up to \$500 million toward replacing the aging SR 520 bridges and help manage congestion.
- \$23.1 million for advanced traffic management and traveler information systems to provide real-time traffic information and more reliable trips for drivers.
- \$27.4 million to purchase additional ferries and make improvements at ferry terminals and docks throughout the Puget Sound.
- We will use existing revenue to continue building commute trip reduction programs and encourage employer-based programs that reduce rush-hour-traffic demands such as telecommuting, flexible work schedules, and ride sharing.

Improvements through the plan



Timeline

- Spring 2007**
 - Submitted UPA grant application
- Summer 2007**
 - Selected as grant finalist
- Fall 2007**
 - King County received funding for five of six transit projects included in the UPA and new enhanced bus service on SR 520
- Winter/Spring 2008**
 - Tolling and traffic technology concept development
- Summer 2008**
 - Launch an environmental process for a proposal to toll the existing SR 520 floating bridge
- Fall/Winter 2008**
 - Develop design and contracts
 - Meet with local agencies and the public to get comments
- Spring 2009**
 - Legislature approves tolling for the SR 520 bridge
- As early as 2010**
 - Launch the tolling project on SR 520

This partnership also includes you. Your participation is important to us and we welcome your involvement. Look for updates about the status of the UPA program and get more information at www.wsdot.wa.gov/Congestion/UPA.

For more information, contact

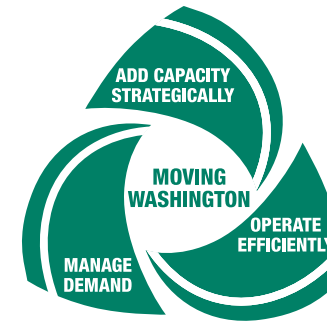
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The Lake Washington Urban Partnership

Spring 2009

To reduce traffic congestion in major urban areas, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) requested innovative ideas to improve big-city freeway traffic flow through the combined use of transit, technology, telecommuting and tolling – the four T's.

In response to USDOT's request, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and King County submitted an Urban Partnership Agreement (UPA) grant application to help fund the replacement of the vulnerable SR 520 bridges and reduce congestion along the SR 520 corridor across Lake Washington.

The USDOT selected the UPA plan to receive funding to implement innovative congestion management strategies on SR 520, Interstate 90 and across Lake Washington in the next few years. Managing highway demand is one of the strategies of *Moving Washington*, WSDOT's three-pronged effort to fight congestion. By managing demand, operating more efficiently and adding capacity where it makes sense we can have a transportation system that is responsible, reasonable and sustainable.

Funded by:  U. S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

Improving congestion on SR 520

There is no single solution to fix traffic congestion along SR 520. The four T strategies in our plan will work together to ensure the free movement of people and goods on SR 520 well into the future of our quickly growing region.

Transit

Increasing transit services along SR 520 would move more people and provide more options to commuters. Other improvements such as additional park and rides, the use of the King County MetroRapidRide bus rapid transit (BRT) program and better rider information services would make ride sharing more convenient.



A King County Metro bus approaches the Portage Bay Bridge.

Technology

Existing tools such as ramp meters, traffic sensors embedded in the roadway and changeable message signs would improve traveler information and traffic control. New innovations, such as variable speed limits, improved on- and off-ramp access and real-time traveler information signs would help provide commuters with a more reliable trip.

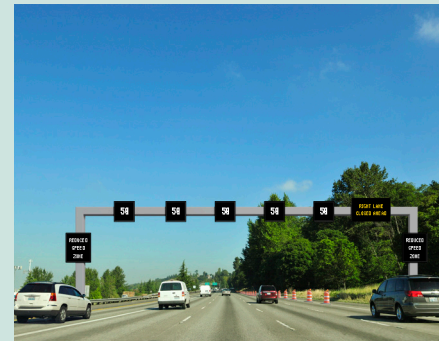


Image of future technology that will be implemented on SR 520 and I-90, including variable speed limits and electronic message boards.

Telecommuting

Encouraging people to work from home at least part-time and/or adjusting their work schedules to take advantage of lower toll rates during off-peak hours, allows businesses to contribute to the goal of decreasing traffic in this busy corridor. A small change in the number of drivers who choose an alternative to driving alone would have a significant effect on traffic flow.



Many employers recognize the value of allowing employees to telecommute.

Tolling

Electronic tolls eliminates booths, lines, and delays because drivers would not have to stop to pay. Toll prices that vary by time of day, called variable tolling, would discount bridge travel during less crowded times and charge higher prices during peak travel times. This system would encourage some drivers to choose alternate transportation methods to help ease congestion during peak travel times.



Visualization of a fully electronic tolling system on the SR 520 bridge.

The partnership's importance

SR 520 is one of two east-west Lake Washington crossings. The corridor is critical to the region's economy and quality of life because it links densely populated and quickly growing cities to some of the largest employers in the state. Because of the region's dependence on SR 520 and its vulnerabilities, the UPA provides a critical component to help replace the aging bridge and to improve SR 520 traffic flow.

Keeping people and goods moving

The region has grown significantly but the capacity of the 50 year-old SR 520 corridor has remained unchanged. Today, SR 520 is one of the most congested corridors in the Puget Sound region, serving approximately 115,000 vehicles each day. Variable tolling, increased transit, improved real-time driver information, and more telecommuting options, will help reduce congestion. Recent analysis indicates that up to 20 percent of drivers will make different choices when tolls are introduced and new services are available in the corridor. They might take transit, carpool, shift the time of their trip, or change destinations.

Vulnerable SR 520 bridges must be replaced

Built in the 1960s, the Evergreen Point Bridge and the Portage Bay Bridge are vulnerable to windstorms and earthquakes and are at risk of collapse if not replaced. If either of these bridges were to collapse, it could cause serious injury or loss of life and overwhelm all major regional highways with re-routed traffic.

Funding

Governor Gregoire determined that the region needs a safer and more reliable SR 520 before 2018, asking WSDOT to find ways to build new bridge as quickly as possible. However, with many other competing needs in the region, the state has insufficient funding to replace the bridge or make other vital corridor improvements without relying on tolling for a portion of the revenue. Also, the longer it takes to start construction, the more inflation and price increases will affect costs. In 2008, State Legislature selected tolling as a way to fill the -\$4+ billion funding gap. The Urban Partnership's federal grant money provides the means to starting tolling earlier. Tolling earlier will improve cash flow, the cost of borrowing, and leverage an estimated \$370 million in additional bridge funding to save taxpayer money.

520 tolling survey findings

In 2008, State Legislature created the 520 Tolling Implementation Committee charging it with evaluating tolling for financing the 520 Bridge Replacement Project. The committee reported back to the Governor and State Legislature in January 2009.

As part of the evaluation, the committee conducted a phone survey between July and December 2008 reaching 16,000 people. Here are some of the results:

Most supported tolling the 520 Bridge

Three-fifths or more of the respondents supported tolling the 520 Bridge as a means of paying for a portion of the bridge replacement.

Electronic tolling increased support for tolling

When respondents learned that electronic tolling means vehicles travel at normal speeds through the toll area, a third or more were much more likely to support tolling the 520 Bridge.

Support for early tolling when they considered its impact on toll amounts and financing costs

More than half supported tolling the existing 520 Bridge in 2010 when they knew that early tolling would result in lower tolls and financing costs.

Support for early tolling when considering effects on travel speed

About half supported tolling the existing 520 Bridge in 2010 when they knew that early tolling would result in faster travel speeds on the bridge.

Support for variable rate tolling

Respondents supported for variable rate tolling and the support increased when they knew that toll rates during off-peak times would be about half of peak toll rates.