

FAQ's regarding transportation in the Puget Sound Region

9. What should we do to reduce congestion?

We should completely revamp our transportation planning process.

Currently, our government planning agencies start by selecting a solution and then defining a process that will justify that selection. That approach has left us in our current muddle – uncertainty about the Alaskan Way Viaduct, an SR-520 plan that is expensive and adds almost no capacity, and a light rail plan that is expensive and ineffective beyond belief.

The Sound Transit “maximum rail” plan – consuming over half of the resources in the “integrated roads and transit” plan coming up for a vote in November 2007 -- merely replaces some of our region’s most effective express bus routes and does nothing to reduce congestion. Light rail’s geographic coverage is limited in comparison to the diversity of origins and destinations of travel. Bottom line: Not enough people will ride light rail to make any difference on the roads. Even Sound Transit admits that light rail will not reduce congestion; the train simply provides an alternative for the small fraction of travelers who find it convenient for their trip.

The region’s broken planning process leaves us with an adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan that allows congestion to get worse by nearly double the level seen today.

An effective planning process would start with measurable goals, define alternatives to serve those goals, evaluate the alternatives and select the one’s that provide the most performance for the least cost. To be specific, real congestion reduction should be a primary goal. The metropolitan region of Atlanta, Georgia has recently mandated that 70% of the weighting in the evaluation of their alternative should be for congestion reduction. The Puget Sound region should follow that example.