Growing Transit Communities Compact

Preamble

VISION 2040 was approved as the central Puget Sound region's plan for sustainable development following a broad-based, collaborative planning process. Central Puget Sound region voters also approved a series of high-capacity light rail and transit projects—a commitment of approximately $25 billion—that will serve the region's most densely populated and diverse communities for decades to come. These investments present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to shape the region's urban form and ensure that transportation improvements support sustainable development and foster vibrant, healthy neighborhoods for all.

Recognizing what this unprecedented opportunity means for the region and its residents, a broad coalition of stakeholders came together to identify what will be needed to create the sustainable, equitable communities envisioned in the region's plans. The result was the Growing Transit Communities Partnership.

The Growing Transit Communities Partnership produced the Growing Transit Communities Strategy as a tool to implement VISION 2040 and local comprehensive plans adopted under the state Growth Management Act, and which is supported by this Compact. Its goals and recommendations are wide-ranging, developed with the recognition that some tools and approaches may work in some locations but not in others, and that each partner retains flexibility and discretion in pursuing the strategies most appropriate to local needs and conditions. However, the envisioned outcomes, consistent with VISION 2040, require an ongoing dedicated partnership of many interests, including cities, counties, transit agencies, businesses and employers, housing authorities, public health agencies, affordable housing providers, educational institutions, community-based organizations, and development interests.

And while the Compact is not legally binding and does not mandate adoption of any particular policies or actions, it expresses the need for many and diverse partners to work together over time to achieve its goals, recognizing that opportunities for success cannot be achieved unless we work together.

Therefore, as signatories to the Compact, we commit ourselves to working in partnership to achieve the goals and strategies in this Compact, while respecting the diversity of interests, perspectives, and responsibilities throughout the region.

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Whereas *the central Puget Sound region has adopted VISION 2040, with the following vision statement:*

> *Our vision for the future advances the ideals of our people, our prosperity, and our planet. As we work toward achieving the region's vision, we must protect the environment, support and create vibrant, livable, and healthy communities, offer economic opportunities for all, provide safe and efficient mobility, and use our resources wisely and efficiently. Land use, economic, and transportation decisions will be integrated in a manner that supports a healthy environment, addresses global climate change, achieves social equity, and is attentive to the needs of future generations.*

and;

Whereas *the central Puget Sound region is expected to add 1.3 million people and 1.1 million jobs by the year 2040; and*

Whereas *VISION 2040 includes among its goals (1) maintaining a prosperous and sustainable regional economy by supporting businesses and job creation, investing in all people, sustaining environmental quality, and creating great central places, diverse communities, and a high quality of life, and (2) focusing growth within already urbanized areas to create walkable, compact, and transit oriented communities, and (3) meeting housing needs through preservation and expansion of a range of affordable, healthy and safe housing choices; and*

Whereas *the voters of the central Puget Sound region have committed to a $25 billion investment in light rail, commuter rail, bus rapid transit and local streetcar service that creates a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to plan for and support the growth of communities near high capacity transit; and*

Whereas *in 2010 the region adopted Transportation 2040, a long-range transportation plan designed to implement VISION 2040 that calls for implementation of an aggressive transit strategy to keep up with increasing population and employment growth, including completion of Sound Transit 2 projects, additional Link light rail extensions to Everett, Tacoma, and Redmond, and local transit service increases of more than 100 percent in peak periods and over 80 percent in off-peak periods; and*

Whereas *The Regional Economic Strategy recognizes that transportation investments must address the diverse needs of the region's economy and support key employment sectors, provide more convenient and varied transportation options, and improve travel reliability to maintain and enhance quality of life in the region for workers and support local businesses; and*

Whereas *approximately 45% of households currently residing in proximity to existing and planned light rail corridors are moderately or severely housing cost burdened; and*

Whereas *current income distribution for the region shows 13% of households earn between 0-30% of the area median income, 12% of households earn between 30-50% of the area median income, and 18% of households earn between 50-80% of the area median income; and*

Whereas *new market-rate housing trends and subsidized housing resources are not providing sufficient housing choices in transit communities for households earning under 80% of the area median income; and*

Whereas *the combined cost burden of housing plus transportation can be substantially reduced by locating affordable housing opportunities in proximity to transit; and*

Whereas *the report "Equity, Opportunity, and Sustainability in the Central Puget Sound Region" identifies a widespread pattern within the region of unequal household access to educational, economic, transportation, environmental health, and neighborhood resources; and*

Whereas *many communities that are now or may be served by high-capacity transit are home to low-income and minority households and small locally- and minority-owned businesses that are at a potentially higher risk of displacement due to a range of factors; and*

Whereas *transit-oriented development is a land use pattern with many social, economic, and environmental benefits, including more sustainable and efficient use of urban land, support for regional and local economies, reduced combined housing and transportation costs per household, and improved access and mobility for residents; and*

Whereas *the Growing Transit Communities Partnership, a diverse coalition of governmental and nongovernmental partners, was funded by a grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities for the express purpose of helping to implement VISION 2040 by leveraging regional transit investments to create thriving and equitable transit communities around light rail and other high-capacity transit stations; and*

Whereas *the Equity Network Steering Committee has defined equity to mean that all people can attain the resources and opportunities that improve their quality of life and enable them to reach their full potential; and*

Whereas *the Growing Transit Communities Partnership defines equitable transit communities as follows:*

> *Equitable transit communities are mixed-use, transit-served neighborhoods that provide housing and transportation choices, and greater social and economic opportunity for current and future residents. Although defined by a half-mile walking distance around high-capacity transit stations, they exist within the context of larger neighborhoods with existing residents and businesses.*
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> *These communities promote local community and economic development by providing housing types at a range of densities and affordability levels, commercial and retail spaces, community services and other amenities integrated into safe, walkable neighborhoods.*
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> *Successful equitable transit communities are created through inclusive planning and decision-making processes, resulting in development outcomes that accommodate future residential and employment growth, increase opportunity and mobility for existing communities, and enhance public health for socially and economically diverse populations*

Whereas *Growing Transit Communities Partners recognize that transit communities throughout the region will have unique roles, functions, and opportunities, and will develop with different uses at varying intensities; and*

Whereas *creating vibrant transit-oriented communities can be substantially advanced through the development of additional tools and funding for infrastructure improvements in communities along transit corridors; and*

Whereas *Growing Transit Communities Partners believe that progress toward creating equitable transit communities will depend on active participation from a full range of partners over the long term, including transit agencies, businesses, non-profit organizations, as well as local jurisdictions and the Puget Sound Regional Council; and*

Whereas *the Growing Transit Communities Partnership has developed a Toolkit of Strategies and Actions that recommend adoption of specific actions and tools by regional and local governments, by both public and private stakeholders, in order to create, grow, and enhance equitable transit communities throughout the region; and*

Whereas *updates to local comprehensive plans and development regulations, transit agency plans, and the refinement of regional growth and transportation plans present continuing opportunities to implement the Toolkit of Strategies and Actions;*

Now, therefore, the signatories to this Regional Compact:

Agree that the region's long-range growth management, economic, environmental, and transportation goals depend heavily on continued investment in more and better public transportation services ; and

Acknowledge the acute need for additional resources and tools to create and preserve affordable housing throughout the region; and

Recognize that cities and counties will require new resources to create the critical physical and social infrastructure that will support growth, including transportation, utilities, recreation, and public services; and

Agree that progress toward equitable transit communities requires a cooperative, regional approach with diverse partners across governmental and nongovernmental sectors that supports and builds upon existing and ongoing planning efforts by regional and local governments and transit agencies; and

Commit to build upon the work of the Growing Transit Communities Partnership through the promotion of equitable transit communities in light rail station areas and transit nodes located within the region's three long-range light rail transit corridors, and around transit nodes outside these corridors in other parts of the region; and

Recognize that each corridor is at a different stage of high-capacity transit system development, and that future stations may be identified and sited that should also be considered under this Compact; and

Understand that this Compact is designed to express the intent of diverse partners to work together toward common goals, with specific actions identified by partners appropriate to their roles and responsibilities; and

Recognize that the policies and programs promoted by the Growing Transit Communities Partnership may also benefit community development around other transit investments and corridors, including but not limited to bus rapid transit, streetcar, commuter rail, intercity express bus, and ferries; and

Support a continuing process of collaboration and coordinated action to advance the development of equitable transit communities, as guided by the following goals, signatories to this Compact will strive to:

Attract more of the region's residential and employment growth to high capacity transit communities.

VISION 2040 calls for a compact pattern of growth within the Urban Growth Area, particularly in regional and subregional centers served by high capacity transit. The Growing Transit Communities work program has demonstrated that the region's light rail corridors alone have the potential to support this vision by attracting at least 25% of the housing growth and 35% of the employment growth expected in the region through the year 2040. Attracting additional TOD market demand to other regional corridors that are served by other types of high capacity transit is also essential. To advance the Regional Growth Strategy adopted in VISION 2040, promote economic development, and realize the multiple public benefits of compact growth around rapid transit investments, the signatories to this Compact will strive to:

- Use a full range of tools, investments, and economic development strategies, to attract the potential demand for residential and commercial transit oriented development within transit communities consistent with and in furtherance of regional policies and plans, and
- Plan for and promote residential and employment densities within transit communities that support ridership potential and contribute to accommodating growth needs within each high-capacity transit corridor.

Additional transit communities along the region's other high-capacity transit mode corridors will also attract significant portions of future residential and employment growth.

Provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes near high-capacity transit.

Adopted regional policy recognizes housing as a basic human need and calls for local policies and tools that provide for an adequate supply of housing affordable at all income levels, to meet the diverse needs of both current and future residents. Region-wide, affordable housing need is defined by current household incomes, where 18% of households earn between 50% and 80% of AMI, 12% earn between 30% and 50% of AMI, and 13% earn less than 30% of AMI. In transit communities, projected need for affordable housing is higher, especially for households in the lowest income range due to their greater reliance on transit. Depending on local market conditions, efforts to meet that need will focus on new housing, housing preservation, or combined strategies.

In order to meet a substantial portion of this need within walking distance of rapid transit services, the signatories to this Compact will strive to:

- Use a full range of housing preservation tools to maintain the existing level of affordable housing within each transit community, and
- Use a full range of housing production tools and incentives to provide sufficient affordable housing choices for all economic and demographic groups within transit corridors, including-new housing in the region's transit communities collectively that is proportional to region-wide need or greater to serve transit-dependent households.

These goals apply to the region's transit corridors collectively, and do not suggest a specific desired outcome for any individual transit community. Further, fully attaining these goals will require new tools, resources, and subsidies beyond those that exist today.

Increase access to opportunity for existing and future residents of transit communities.

Adopted regional policy recognizes the need to address the diverse housing, transportation and economic needs of current and future residents so that all people may prosper as the region grows. This requires special attention to communities that lack access to transportation choices, quality schools, and other social and physical neighborhood components that allow community members to thrive and succeed.

In order to more equitably meet the needs of all residents of the region, the signatories to this Compact will strive to:

- Improve access to opportunity in the transit corridors through targeted investments that meet the needs of residents and businesses in communities with limited access to opportunity, targeted affordable housing investments in communities with good access to opportunity, and transit connections linking areas with good access to opportunity and areas with limited access to opportunity.
- Use a full range of community engagement strategies to increase the involvement of diverse and historically under-represented groups in transit community development, empower communities to influence decisions at all levels of government, and ensure opportunities for participation throughout decision-making processes.

In order to maximize this historic opportunity, show regional leadership, and act as a national model of how diverse stakeholders can make transformative decisions that advance a region's goals for its people, its prosperity, and the planet, the signatories to this Compact pledge to work individually and collaboratively toward the goals described above, and toward the implementation of the Growing Transit Communities Strategy, as appropriate to each jurisdiction and organization. PSRC will periodically convene representatives of Compact signatories as an Advisory Committee to evaluate the region's progress over time toward achieving equitable transit communities. PSRC's regional monitoring program will track progress of implementing and achieving the goals described in this compact.

Signatories to the Growing Transit Communities Compact

David O. Earlin, Mayor, Edmonds 2-5-15

Name, Title, Organization | Date

Name, Title, Organization | Date

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For more information on the Growing Transit Communities Partnership, please contact Program Manager Ben Bakkenta (bbakkenta@psrc.org or 206-971-3286) or visit the Growing Transit Communities website at http://www.psrc.org/growth/growing-transit-communities/