

SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE REPORT

***SR 167 – 8th Street E Vic. to S 277th Street Vic.
Southbound HOT Lane***

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

DCE	Documented Categorical Exclusion
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
HOT	High-Occupancy Toll
HOV	High-Occupancy Vehicle
MP	mile post
MP	Milepost
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
OD Data Study	origin-destination study
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
EPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SOV	single-occupant vehicle
SR	State Route
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is the proposed project and why is it needed?

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) plans to widen the State Route (SR) 167 roadway to construct a new southbound high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane from the vicinity of 8th Street E (MP 10.2) in Pierce County, Washington to the vicinity of S 277th Street in Kent (MP 18.24), King County, Washington. The construction of the HOT lane will require widening of the southbound bridge at the SR 18 interchange. Ramp meters will be installed at southbound on-ramps at the SR 167 interchanges with 15th Street SW, Ellingson Road, and 8th Street E. In addition, new signals will be installed at the SR 167 southbound ramp terminals with Ellingson Road and 8th Street E. SR 167 is an important thoroughfare for cars, trucks, and transit in the Green River Valley. This additional capacity will relieve congestion and improve safety for commuters traveling southbound on SR 167.

What is the focus of this report?

This report describes the existing conditions and analyses social, economic, and environmental justice effects related to the construction and operation of a southbound HOT lane on SR 167.

This report describes the effects of the proposed project on nearby neighborhoods and their resources as well as any effects on the local economy, how the project might affect minority or low-income populations differently, and whether those effects could be considered disproportionate or not.

Since this is a tolling project, we discuss the effects of the proposed project on social, economic elements and environmental justice populations by examining the effects within a traditional study area as well as effects on users within the travelshed.

What is the purpose of this Social, Economic and Environmental Justice Technical Report?

This report was prepared as part of a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Documented Categorical Exclusion (DCE), which requires all actions sponsored, potentially funded, permitted, or approved by a federal agency to consider the environmental effects of the Proposal Action. The Washington

Benefits of the project include:

- Improved traffic flow for motorists
 - This is a prime benefit because at the end of the day, the lanes are HOV lanes that we then allow SOVs to buy into.
 - Faster trip and reliable travel times for single occupant vehicles that use the HOT lanes
 - A transportation alternative that will alleviate congestion and facilitate mobility
 - A reduction, in general, of time that people and freight spend in traffic
 - Accommodation of future population and employment growth in the region
 - Improved traffic on vital alternative routes such as I-5 as people choose different travel options and/or patterns
 - Improved safety through ramp and merge area improvements, keeping the HOT lanes separate from general purpose traffic, and having limited access points to the HOT lanes
-

SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) requires a similar evaluation of environmental effects of proposed actions for state and local projects. This project is required to comply with both NEPA and SEPA, which includes a review of potential effects and possible mitigation measures. When there is an existing potential for social and economic elements or environmental justice populations to be affected as a result of the proposed project, then a review of those potential effects and possible mitigation measures is required by both NEPA and SEPA.

How were social and economic elements evaluated?

For the *traditional* evaluation, we determined that the majority of the direct and indirect effects would be within a half mile of the highway. This area became our study area, which is illustrated in Exhibit 2. This methodology is prescribed in the guidance document, *WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual Chapter 458*.

How were effects on environmental justice populations evaluated?

Along with evaluating effects on environmental justice populations within the traditional study area, we looked at how environmental justice populations using the HOT lanes might be affected differently. We examined data from a larger *travelshed* area for that analysis. The travelshed, illustrated in Exhibit 1, was established for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project and covers a larger geographic area of the corridor from I-405 and I-5 to SR 512 and to SR 164 to the east.

This additional methodology included data from a detailed origin-destination study and extensive public outreach done for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project. Both gathered information on how tolling might affect specific populations. This data was applicable since it covered the same geographic area and the same populations.

Exhibit 1
Travelshed Boundaries



What data sources were used in this report?

We used demographic data from the U.S. Census, school data, the Puget Sound Regional Council, as well as focus group and outreach information from the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project, to determine how low-income populations might be affected by this project.

We also used information from some of the reports completed for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project (Perteet Inc., 2007a) and the SR 167 Corridor Plan (Perteet Inc., 2007b), because this project is an extension of the HOT lanes on SR 167 and is a component of the SR 167 Corridor Plan.

What are the potential social and economic effects and what mitigation is proposed?

We found that most of the effects will take place during construction and there will be very few operational effects. During construction of the project, SR 167 will remain open most of the time and access to emergency vehicles will be maintained. However, some lane closures will occur during construction, as well as some night-time complete closures that will require shifting traffic between the Ellingson Road on- and off-ramps and the 15th Street SW on-ramps. As a result, travel times will likely increase during construction-related traffic slowdowns and detours. Increased travel times and detours during construction could temporarily cause changes in traffic travel patterns. In addition, slow travel times and congestion due to construction could increase travel times for freight into and out of the study area. Another possible effect of the proposed project is increased noise due to construction activities, diverted traffic using local streets, and operation of the new lane.

In order to mitigate for these effects, most traffic diversions are expected to be at night after peak traffic periods. Therefore, this shouldn't have a detrimental effect on access to businesses or public services. WSDOT will use the project website and fact sheets or newsletters to communicate with and provide information about the project schedule and detours to residents and businesses. A number of other construction-related mitigation measures are identified in Chapter 3 of this report.

**Exhibit 2
Location of Noise Wall and
Project Widening Locations**



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

The primary operational effect of the proposed project is increased noise due to traffic. The Traffic Noise Analysis Report describes mitigation for construction and operational related noise in the form of a noise wall. The noise wall is proposed on the east side of SR 167 from approximately 6th Avenue North to Ellingson Road, where the most sensitive noise receptors exist. The proposed location of the noise wall is illustrated in Exhibit 2.

Continued development along the SR 167 corridor within the county and local cities is creating general cumulative effects by increasing the demand for social resources and utilities, and increasing noise. However, the HOT lane cumulative effects will be beneficial rather than adverse, by improving travel time, safety, and mobility in the study area. The proposed project will also improve access to public services and result in more reliable bus and emergency response vehicle travel times.

What are the potential environmental justice effects and what mitigation is proposed?

We found similar construction-related and operational effects for environmental justice populations and the social and economic elements.

Construction effects will affect all populations equally, as the proposed project will not require any property acquisitions from private citizens or displacements. Neither construction nor operation of the proposed project will require the displacement of any residences or businesses that provide unique services to minority and/or low-income populations, are owned by minorities, or employ large numbers of minorities.

Operational effects, primarily noise, will effect populations closest to the project alignment, which is primarily on the east of the highway in the City of Algona. However, these effects are being mitigated and described in the “Traffic Noise Analysis Technical Report” (Perteet, 2008c).

Will the proposed project have any effects within the study area on Social and Economic elements?

Since the only effect of the proposed project on the nearby neighborhoods is noise, and those effects will be mitigated, there will be no adverse effects within the study area. This project will also mitigate noise for many existing noise effects on sensitive receptors in the study area. Traffic modeling indicates that the proposed project will improve travel times throughout the corridor, which will allow study area residents and businesses to reach their destinations more quickly and efficiently. This will reduce travel costs for businesses and allow residents to save time and access social services and businesses more easily.

Will there be any disproportionate adverse effects due to equity on environmental justice populations?

Since the only effect on the nearby neighborhoods is noise, and those effects will be mitigated, there are no disproportionate adverse effects to low-income or minority populations in the travelshed. We concluded there would not be any disproportionate adverse effects on low-income users of the new HOT Lane, largely because they can still travel to their destination without having to take an alternative route within the travelshed to avoid a toll. Also, according to the HOT Lanes Pilot Project, some low-income users may not pay as often to use the HOT Lanes, but are still very supportive. Low-income populations that are carpools will continue to be able to use the HOT Lane for free. Traffic modeling indicates that the proposed project will improve travel times in the general-purpose lanes and users should not experience a travel time penalty. In addition, carpools, vanpools, transit, and toll paying SOVs will benefit from improved travel times in the HOT lane.

The construction and operation of this project is not expected to reduce the net population of fish within the study area. This project is also not expected to change or alter access to tribal fishing grounds.

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CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

What is the proposed project and why is it needed?

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) plans to widen the State Route (SR) 167 roadway to construct a new southbound high-occupancy toll (HOT) lane from the vicinity of 8th Street E (MP 10.2) in Pierce County, Washington to the vicinity of S 277th Street in Kent (MP 18.24), King County, Washington (Exhibit 3). This new HOT lane will be a continuation of a southbound HOT lane that was constructed for the HOT Lane Pilot Project, which extends from the I-405 interchange in Renton to S 277th Street in Kent.

High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are managed lanes intended to increase mobility by allowing more vehicle use of the HOV lane. HOT lanes maintain free, priority status for transit and carpools, the same as a HOV lane, but also allow single occupancy vehicles to pay a toll to use the lane. Toll rates are variable, depending upon the level of congestion.

The construction of the HOT lane will require widening the roadway to the outside of the existing pavement between 6th Avenue N in Algona and 5th Avenue S in Pacific (MP 16.42 to MP 10.7). Most of the widening will occur in the median of the highway. However, some road widening will occur outside of the existing lanes, where there is insufficient room in the median from MP 13.5 to MP 11.4, as illustrated in Exhibit 4. Within this outside widening section, there is an area where widening will occur both in the median and the outside of the median from MP 13.5 to 13.1.

In addition, it will require widening the southbound bridge at the SR 18 interchange. Ramp meters will be installed at southbound on-ramps at the SR 167 interchanges with 15th Street SW, Ellingson Road, and 8th Street E. In addition, new signals will be installed at the SR 167 southbound ramp terminals with Ellingson Road and 8th Street E. All of the proposed widening work will occur within the WSDOT right-of-way, with the exception of the stormwater site. The stormwater site will be purchased at the northwest quadrant of the SR 167 / SR 18 interchange area.

Exhibit 3
Vicinity Map



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

SR 167 is an important thoroughfare for cars, trucks, and transit in the Green River Valley. The additional capacity that this project will provide to SR 167 will relieve congestion and improve safety for commuters traveling southbound. This project, combined with other planned SR 167 projects, could make the highway a viable alternative to I-5.

What is the purpose of the project?

The general purpose of the proposed project is to provide a transportation alternative to alleviate congestion and facilitate mobility through the corridor. The number of vehicles traveling through the SR 167 corridor is expected to increase over the next several years. The HOT lane will extend approximately eight miles in the southbound direction which will provide buses, carpools, and vanpools with improved travel speeds and reliability in this part of the corridor. Once this project is operational, the HOT lanes will likely improve traffic flow by moving approximately ten percent more vehicles and people through the corridor during the peak period. Speeds in the general-purpose lanes are expected to remain the same or increase by as much as 10 mph, depending on the location and time of day.

The purpose of a HOT lane is to increase mobility by allowing SOV vehicles to use the HOV lane when space is available. HOT lanes maintain free, priority status for transit and carpools, the same as a High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane, but also allow single-occupant vehicles (SOVs) to pay an electronic toll to use the lane. Toll rates vary, depending on the level of congestion at any given time. The use of the lane by vehicles other than carpools, vanpools, and buses will be allowed until the speeds reach 45 miles per hour. This will ensure travel time reliability for transit.

How will WSDOT measure project success?

WSDOT will measure project success by achieving the following objectives:

- Realize a reduction in congestion and an increase in mobility that improves the level of service rating for SR 167,

Exhibit 4
Project Alignment



- Reduce, in general, the time that all people spend in traffic through this section of SR 167.

Why is it important to consider social and economic elements and environmental justice Populations?

WSDOT builds transportation systems to improve the safety and mobility of people and goods. WSDOT also builds these systems to increase the livability of communities. During the environmental documentation phase of transportation project development, it is important to examine the potential effects of the project on communities. WSDOT's environmental policy acknowledges the state's vital interests in protecting and preserving natural resources and other environmental assets and its citizens' health and safety.

Several state and federal statutes and regulations also require us to examine potential effects on social elements, public services, utilities, and environmental justice, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1970, and the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

What can be found in this report?

This report describes the existing conditions and the effects on social and economic elements, and environmental justice populations that may be attributed to the construction and operation of the proposed project.

We evaluated the effects on social and economic resources and environmental justice populations by reviewing the economics of the area and identifying key gathering places and other social resources. We looked at who will be affected and determined if any low-income or minority populations would be disproportionately affected. In addition, WSDOT evaluated if this project disproportionately affects local tribes or tribal lands in accordance to tribal treaty rights.

Specifically, this report evaluates both the effects of widening the highway to add capacity and tolling on highway users.

How will toll collection work?

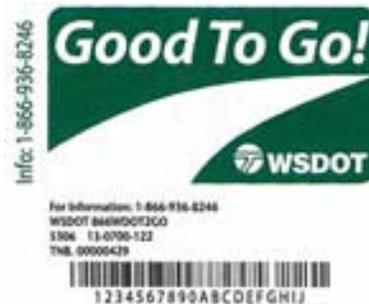
Toll booths will not be used for the HOT lane system. Instead, an electronic toll collection system using vehicle-mounted transponders, illustrated in Exhibit 5, will be read by roadway transponder readers over the road while vehicles are traveling at highway speeds. Electronic signs will display the current toll rate. Single occupant vehicle drivers will pay a single entry fee for the trip regardless of where they enter and exit the HOT lane. Keep in mind that the toll is not the same for anyone entering the system at any location. The price can be different at any given time to ensure that the overall performance of the lane is maintained. It is likely that those entering the HOT Lane near the end will pay more than those who get in the lane at the start.

For single occupant vehicles to use the HOT lanes, a driver must obtain a transponder and open a toll account with WSDOT. WSDOT has a flexible account and payment plan making it easy for people to have access to the HOT lane system. Opening an account to use the HOT lanes may be done through the mail, by phone or fax (toll-free numbers), on the Internet, or at a **Good To Go!** Customer Service Center.

Drivers will be provided a choice of using credit cards, debit cards, or cash payments. Also, low income users can open up an account with their EBT (Electronic Benefit Transfer), cards. After registering, the transponder will be sent in the mail or handed to the driver at the place of registration. Once the driver has properly mounted the transponder in their vehicle, the driver can now choose to use the HOT lanes if driving by themselves. Once in the HOT lane, the transponder reader will record the transponder number and automatically deduct the toll from the pre-paid account.

When a vehicle has two or more occupants, a transponder shield needs to be placed over the transponder card when traveling in the HOT lane to avoid toll charges.

Exhibit 5
Example of a Transponder Card



All state of Washington electronic tolled facilities will use the same transponders so drivers will not different transponders to driver on SR 167 HOT lanes and the Tacoma Narrows Bridge toll as an example.

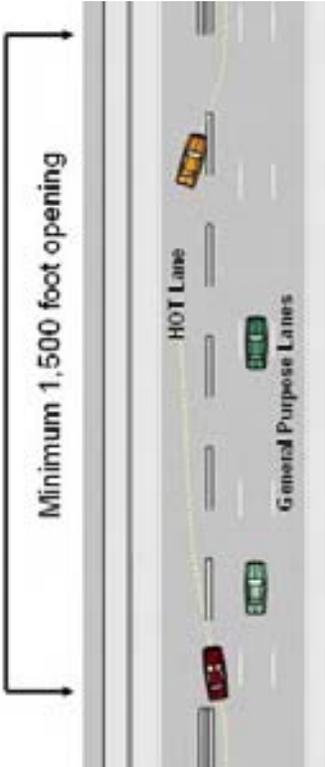


Driver with transponder card on his vehicle.

How will people get in and out of the HOT lanes?

The HOT lane will be separated from the general purpose lanes by double white “buffer” lines. It is illegal to cross the double white lines. Drivers can access the HOT lane at the point where the HOT Lane begins or at several mid-point access locations. Typically, each mid-point access location’s buffer opening will be a minimum of 1,500 feet long – providing ample access both into and out of the HOT lane. WSDOT is planning a total of three mid-point access openings in the study area; an example of a mid-point access point is illustrated on Exhibit 6.

**Exhibit 6
Example of HOT Lanes
Mid-Point Access**



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CHAPTER 2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

This chapter discusses the existing conditions of the social and economic study areas. Social elements include community cohesion, population characteristics, regional and community growth, community resources, recreational resources, pedestrian and bicyclist resources, transit resources, and environmental justice populations. Economic elements include population trends, housing, employment, and tax base.

What is the affected environment?

The proposed project is located on SR 167 in the Green River Valley and it crosses the cities of Auburn, Algona, and Pacific.

Since this is a tolling project, we discuss the effects of the proposed project on social, economic elements, and environmental justice populations by evaluating traditional and travelshed study areas and data.

How were social and economic elements evaluated?

The study area for the *traditional* evaluation focuses on the new southern segment of HOT lanes and how it relates to the overall HOT Lanes Pilot Project. It evaluates the effects of the proposed project on people and communities within a half-mile of the highway. This methodology is prescribed in the guidance document, *WSDOT Environmental Procedures Manual Chapter 458*.

We used demographic data from the U.S. Census and school demographic data, as well as focus group and outreach information to determine how minority and low-income populations might be affected by the project.

How were effects on environmental justice populations evaluated?

We evaluated both the effects on environmental justice populations within the study area as well as effects of all users of the facility. To evaluate the effects on the users of the facility we used a *travelshed*, which focuses on what will be the entire HOT lanes corridor. The travelshed, which was established for the pilot project, covers a larger geographic area of the corridor from I-405 and I-5 to SR 512 and extends to SR 164 to the east.

Exhibit 7
SR 167 8th Street E /
S 277th Hot Lanes Project-
Study Area



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

This additional methodology included a detailed origin-destination study and extensive public outreach which was done for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project. It focused on how tolling might affect different populations. Data from the HOT Lanes Pilot Project Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Report (Perteet Inc., 2007a) was used for this report, because it encompasses the same geographic area and the proposed project is an extension of the existing HOT lanes.

For the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project, the travelshed was developed by analyzing the results of an origin-destination study (OD Data Study) conducted on May 17, 2005 (PPR, Inc., 2005). During this study, vehicle license plates were videotaped while vehicles entered and exited SR 167 to determine the origin of drivers based on vehicle registration. WSDOT videotaped license plates at key locations within the study area, 227th Street, 208th Street, and 24th Street, during peak morning and afternoon hours, 6:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., and 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. The State Department of Licensing then matched 27,200 registered owners to the videotaped license plate numbers. The registered owner addresses were then plotted on a map and summarized with registration addresses to determine the number of registered vehicles per household.

We also used information from some of the reports prepared for the SR 167 - Corridor Plan (Perteet Inc., 2007b), because this proposed project is a component of the Corridor Plan. Some of the information from this report and the public outreach completed for it applies directly to this project.

What types of land uses occur in the study area?

The proposed project is located in the Green River Valley and crosses the cities of Auburn, Algona, and Pacific. These communities are connected by SR 167, which runs north-south. In addition, SR 18 provides an east-west route that links the Green River Valley to I-5 in the Federal Way area providing one of the most important freight corridors in the state serving both the Port of Tacoma and Port of Seattle.

The study area consists primarily of manufacturing and light industrial development located on the west side of SR 167, while residential development in the study area is predominantly

Exhibit 8 Land Uses in the Study Area



Neighborhoods along the eastside of SR 167



Commercial light industrial businesses

SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

located to the southeast of SR 167, as illustrated in Exhibit 8. In addition, the Auburn Supermall and the Emerald Downs horse race track are located within the study area. As described in the Public Services and Utilities Technical Report, there are a few governmental services, churches, a cemetery, and parks within the study area as well.

The area within the overall travelshed has become highly residential and the population has grown dramatically since the 1970s. There are also a mixture of residential, commercial, retail, and industrial lands.

Who uses SR 167?

The data from the origin-destination study completed in 2005 showed that the users of SR 167 are primarily commuters driving north to work in the morning and south toward their homes in the evening. In addition, the Kent Valley is the second largest distribution center on the west coast of the United States, and SR 167 is heavily used by large distribution trucks. Other users of the corridor include people from throughout the Puget Sound region and travelers from as far away as Canada and California.

How did WSDOT evaluate potential equity issues for the project?

Transportation decision makers must consider the unique needs of any community that may be affected by a transportation project. To do this, we evaluated potential equity issues for this project by reviewing census data, school district data, and travel survey data. As part of the HOT Lane Pilot Project, WSDOT talked with members of the community through stakeholder meetings, focus groups, and public meetings to learn more about groups that might be affected by the project. WSDOT also compared expected project outcomes to the requirements of several laws, policies, and directives related to environmental justice.

The basis for examining equity in transportation projects can be found in Executive Order 12898 and Executive Order 13166 in addition to the earlier referenced laws and statutes. Equity concerns must be addressed throughout the transportation

process. These policies and directives require that agencies do the following:

- Ensure that projects are designed to avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations
- Provide opportunities for full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process. Exhibit 9 shows WSDOT's booth that was set up at local malls as a way to reach out to a broad spectrum of the population within the travelshed
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations

The following types of equity were evaluated in this report:

- **Participation:** How will users accept and use HOT lanes?
- **Modal:** How will the implementation of HOT lanes affect people's choice of transportation options such as driving solo, carpooling, or using transit facilities?
- **Opportunity:** Can transponder cards be easily obtained by HOT lane users, including low-income groups?
- **Income:** How will HOT lanes affect users of the facility including low-income populations?
- **Geographic:** Will there be differences in benefits based on where users live and work?

A full description of the project effects is provided in Chapter 3.

What data did WSDOT use to evaluate potential equity issues?

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requests that an environmental justice analysis use at least two independent sources of demographic data to identify the low-income and minority populations for a project. For this analysis, WSDOT used the origin-destination study (OD Data Study), as described above, to compare demographic data from the U.S.

Exhibit 9

Public Information Displays at Local Malls



WSDOT wanted to ensure that full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities was provided throughout the planning process for this project.

SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

Census and school districts. U.S. Census data includes information from the census tract level. School district data includes districts where at least one-quarter of the district's territory is located in the travelshed.

The two sets of data were consistent in suggesting that the U.S. Census demographic data accurately portrays minority and low-income populations in the SR 167 travelshed.

From 2005 to 2007, WSDOT conducted several technical studies and public opinion research surveys to understand who currently uses SR 167, how the Pilot project may affect travel behaviors, and the public's perception of HOT lanes.

The studies conducted for the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project included:

Origin-Destination of Transit Users

WSDOT used Sound Transit's 2004 *Fare Reconciliation Survey* (Sound Transit, 2004) to identify the general geographic distribution of people who use transit on SR 167.

Origin-Destination User Study (OD Data Study)

A videotape study of license plates was conducted on May 17, 2005 to determine the origin of drivers based on vehicle registration.

Traffic Analysis

WSDOT conducted two traffic studies to help understand how SR 167 is currently being used:

- Traffic and Revenue Analysis – SR 167 - HOT Lanes Pilot Project (Wilbur Smith, 2006a)
- SR 167 - 8th Street E Vic. to S 277th Street Vic. Southbound HOT Lane Traffic Report (Pertec Inc., 2007c)

Other Studies

WSDOT used HOT lane monitoring studies from across the country to understand the potential effects that HOT lanes can have on environmental justice populations. WSDOT evaluated HOT lane projects from Minnesota, California, Texas, Florida, and Georgia.

**Exhibit 10
Diversity of Travelers in the
Study Area**



SR 167 is used primarily by commuters and freight carriers.

**Exhibit 11
Public Outreach at the
Kent Farmer's Market**



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

In addition, for the HOT Lane Pilot Project, WSDOT gathered data as part of the public outreach process including mailed surveys, focus group interviews, and comments gathered at community meetings, as illustrated in Exhibit 12. This information is applicable since the outreach included the entire travelshed area and the two projects have similar characteristics. Details of these outreach efforts can be found in the SR 167 Corridor Plan (Perteet Inc., 2008b).

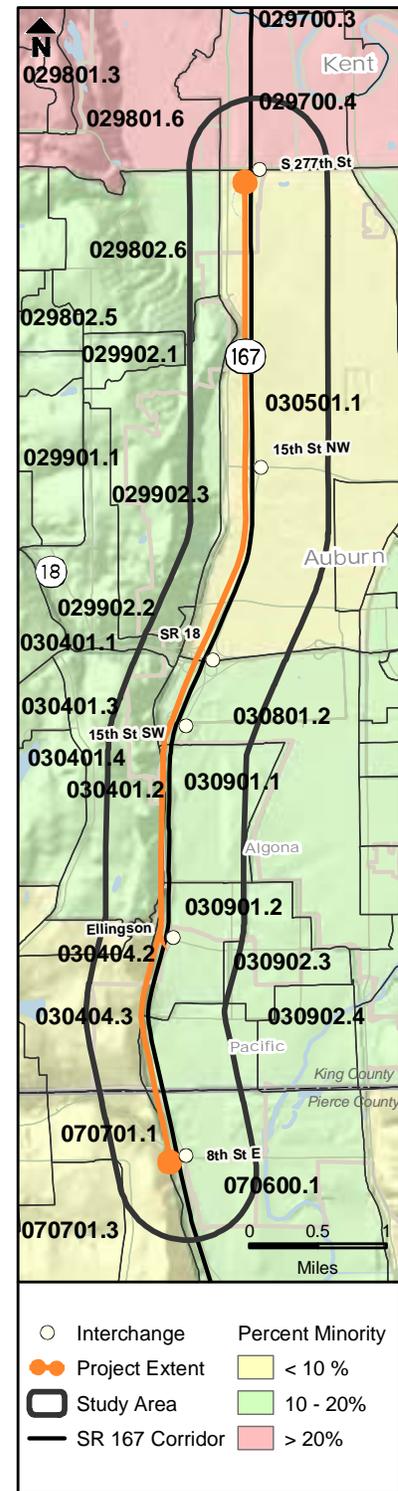
What minority populations live within the traditional study area?

The U.S. Census data shows that all minority populations, except American Indian/Alaskan natives, within the traditional half-mile radius study area had a lower percentage of the total population than that of the King and Pierce County average. The American Indian/Alaskan native population within the study area was 1.5 percent as compared to the King County and Pierce County population of 1.1 percent.

Within the study area, the highest concentrations of minorities are located on the east side of SR 167. The highest concentrations of Asians are in the north and Blacks or African Americans are in the southwest. American Indians/Alaskan natives and Hispanics live predominantly in the eastern portion of the study area.

The location of the total minority population in the study area is depicted in Exhibit 12. Exhibit 13 illustrates the comparison of minority population data between the study area and King and Pierce Counties. The specific locations of minority groups are illustrated in the figures within Exhibit 14.

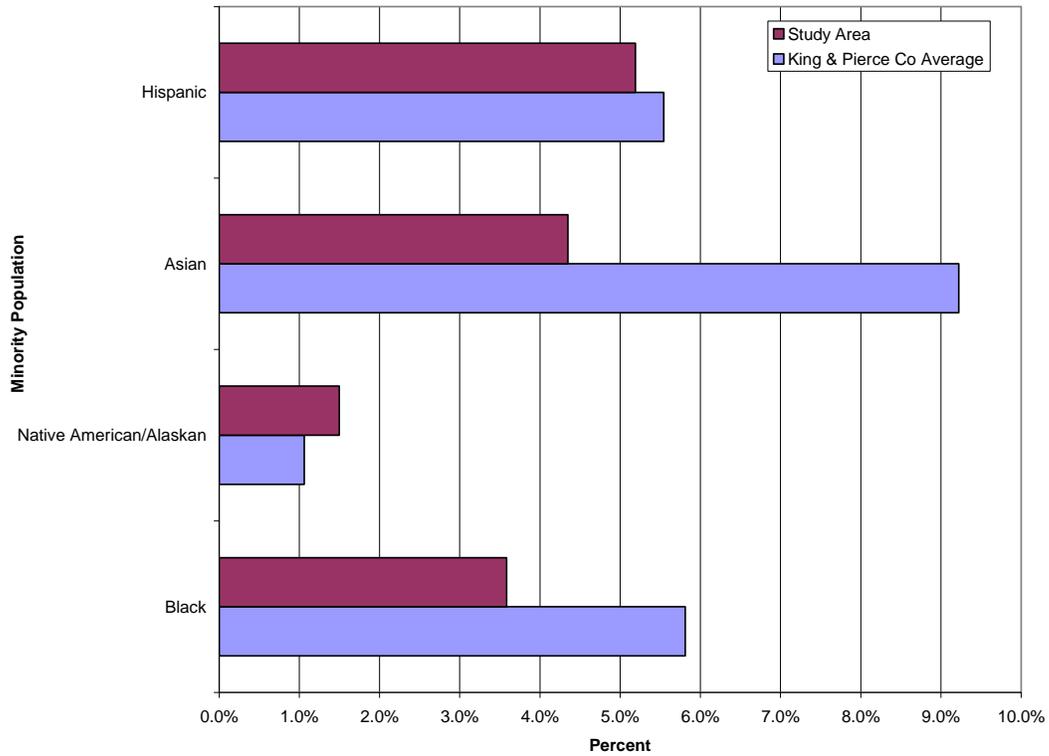
**Exhibit 12
Location of Minority Populations within the Study Area (by Census Block Group)**



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

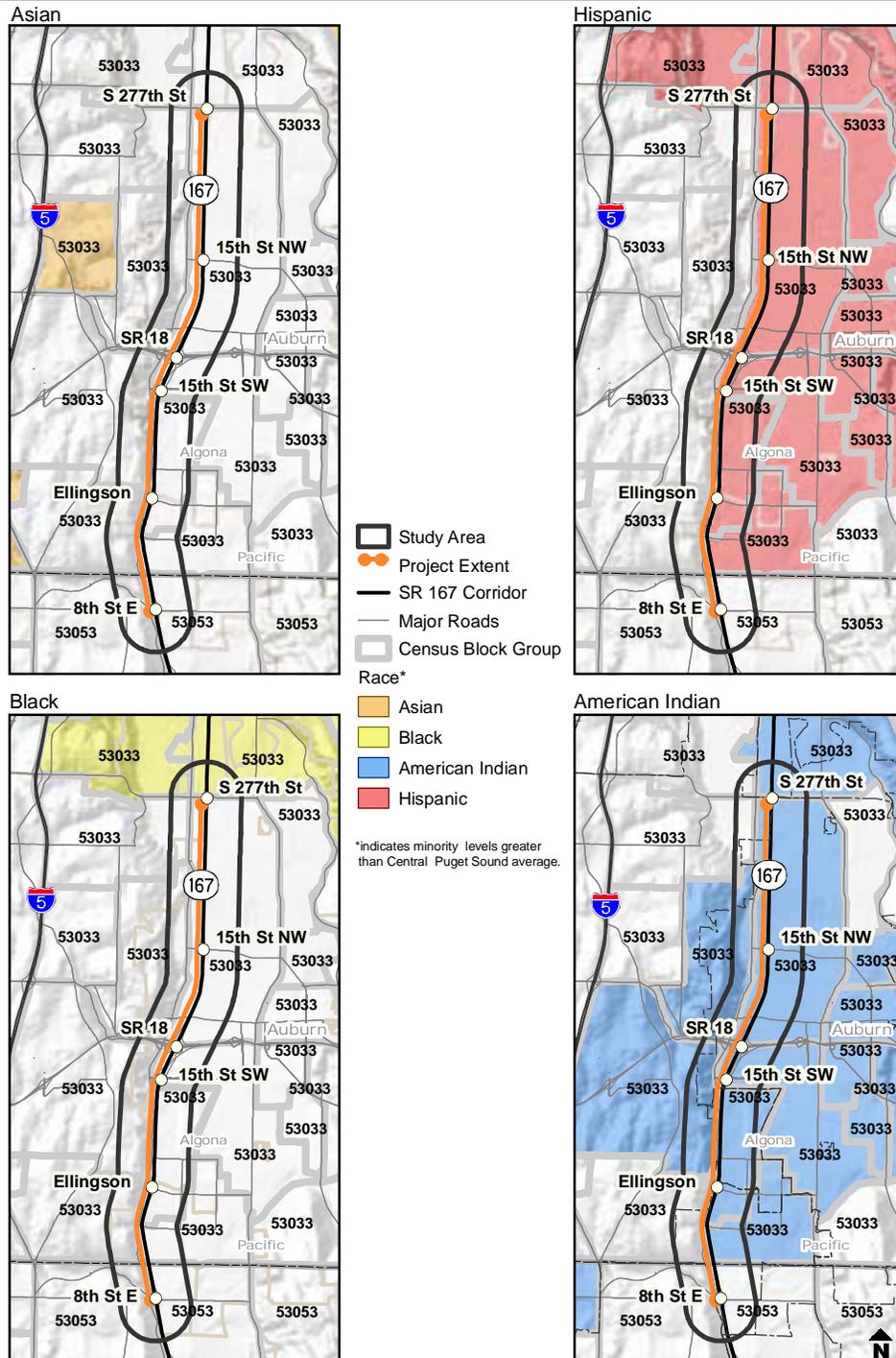
Exhibit 13

Comparison of Minority Populations in Study Area to King and Pierce Counties



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

**Exhibit 14
Census Block Group Analysis - Minority Populations Greater than King and Pierce County Average within the Study Area**



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

These demographic trends are generally replicated in the school district data. Although the school district and census tract lines do not match exactly, the averages of the school district demographics for the area are similar to the overall averages pulled from the census tract data demographics, as illustrated in the previous exhibit, Exhibit 15.

Exhibit 15 Comparison of School District and Census Demographics for Minorities within Study Area				
Data Source	Black	Asian	American Indian/Alaskan	Hispanic
School District Average	6.8%	9.5%	3.1%	9.3%
King/Pierce Co. Average	5.81%	9.22%	1.06%	5.54%

Why is it important to involve tribal governments in the project?

American Indians are included in environmental justice analyses because they are minorities and are protected under Civil Rights laws. WSDOT consults with Indian tribes that could be affected by a project. WSDOT sent letters providing information on the project to the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, Duwamish Tribe, Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, and Puyallup Tribe, and will continue to coordinate with the tribes. These tribes have crucial information on natural, cultural, and archaeological resources in the study area that WSDOT can incorporate into the environmental and design processes. Tribal coordination efforts are further enforced by a WSDOT Executive Order signed in 2003 that directs WSDOT employees to enter consultation with tribes who have ancestral homelands in areas throughout the state.

What minority populations live within the travelshed?

The U.S. Census data shows that all minority populations within the travelshed, except Hispanic, had a lower percentage of the total population than that of the King and Pierce County average. The Hispanic population within the travelshed was 5.5 percent as compared to the King County and Pierce County population of 5.2 percent.

Within the travelshed, the highest concentrations of minorities are located to the north, in Kent. The highest concentrations of African-Americans are located in the Kent and Renton areas. The highest concentrations of American Indians/ Alaskan natives live along the eastern side. Hispanics are distributed more evenly throughout the travelshed.

The location of the overall minority population in the travelshed is illustrated in Exhibit 16. Exhibit 17 illustrates the comparison of minority population data between the travelshed and the King and Pierce County average. The specific locations of minority groups within the travelshed are illustrated in figures within Exhibit 18.

**Exhibit 16
Location of Minority Populations within the Travelshed by Census Block Group**



What information do we have about low-income populations within the traditional study area?

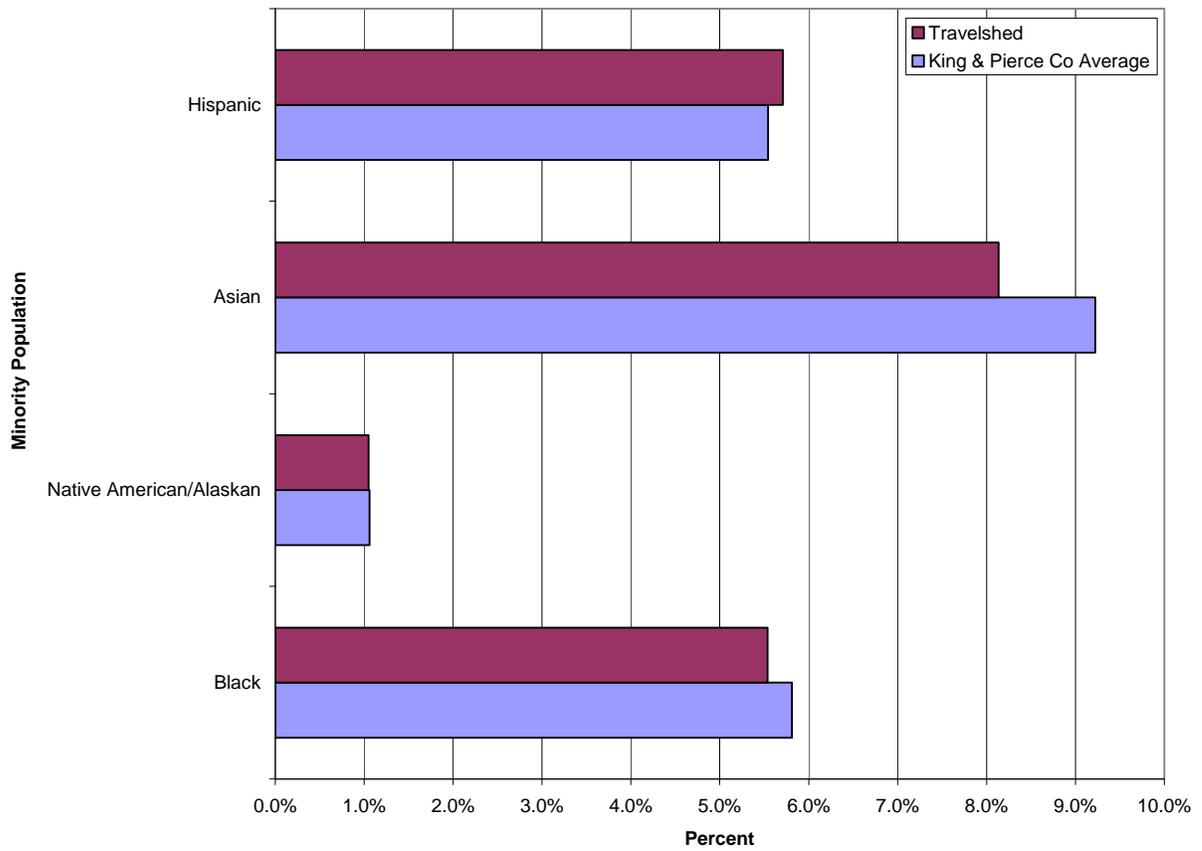
Data collected from the U.S. Census shows that the low-income populations within the study area represent a lower average percentage of the total population (6.0 percent) than that of the King and Pierce County average (8.4 percent). However, some individual census tracts have higher averages than the King and Pierce County average, as illustrated in Exhibit 19.

What information do we have about low-income populations within the travelshed?

Data collected from the U.S. Census shows that the low-income populations within the travelshed represent a lower average percentage (6.1 percent) of the total population than that of the King and Pierce County average (8.4 percent). However, some individual census tracts have higher averages than the King and Pierce County average, as illustrated in Exhibit 20.

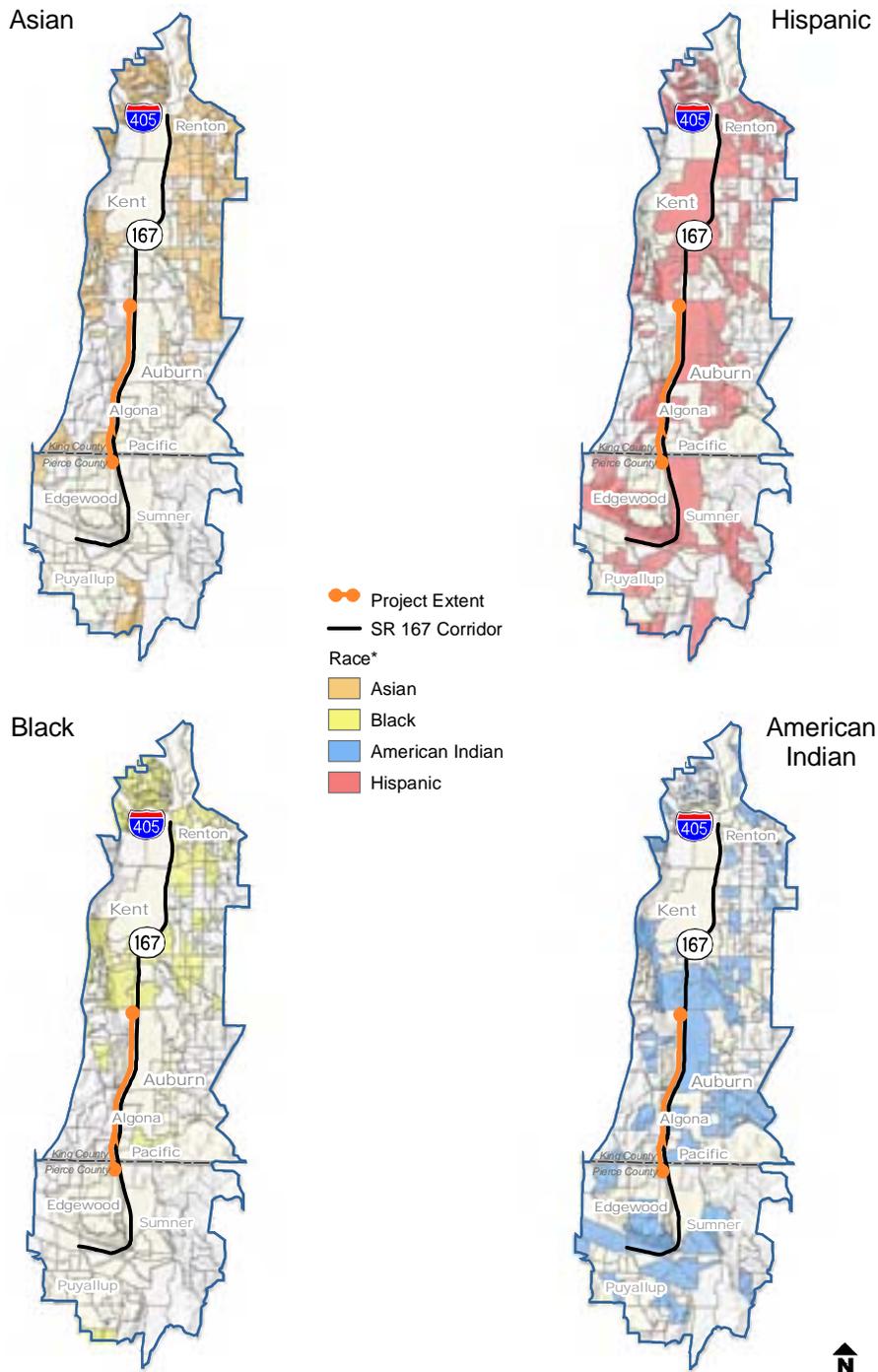
Exhibit 17

Comparison of Minority Populations in Travelshed to King and Pierce Counties



SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

**Exhibit 18
Minority Populations Greater than King and Pierce County Average within the Travelshed**



*Indicates minority levels greater than Pierce and King County combined average.

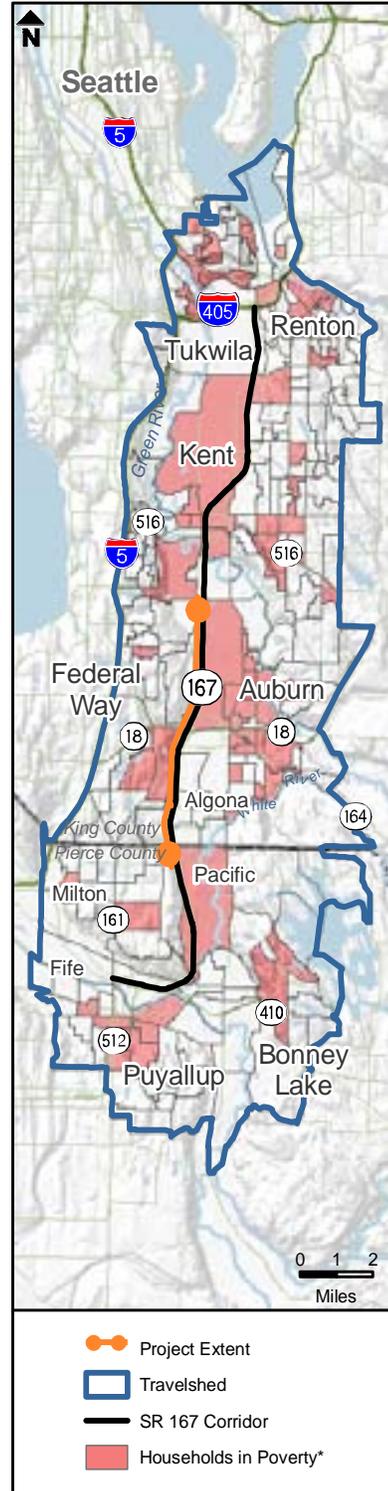
SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

Exhibit 19
Census Block Groups within the Study Area with Higher Poverty Rates than the King and Pierce County Average Poverty Rate



*Percentage of households in poverty greater than Pierce and King County combined average

Exhibit 20
Census Block Groups within the Travelshed with Higher Poverty Rates than the King and Pierce County Average Poverty Rate



*Percentage of households in poverty greater than King and Pierce County combined average

What zoning and community elements are within the study area?

The Green River Valley has dramatically changed over the years. Today, SR 167 is the key that holds this region together as the primary transportation system, linking residents and businesses to the Seattle and Tacoma metropolitan areas.

Zoning within the study area cities of Auburn, Pacific and Algona is largely commercial and light industrial. In fact, one third of the Puget Sound region’s warehouse facilities are located along SR 167, making this highway one of the primary freight corridors in the state. There are some residential areas in Algona that are adjacent to the highway and many more residential areas further from the highway. The SR 167 corridor is also important to residential neighborhoods as a morning and evening commuting corridor as well as a critical freight corridor receiving goods from both the Port of Tacoma, and the Port of Seattle. The goods are delivered in this corridor provides jobs at distribution centers along SR 167.

The portion of Auburn that is in the project study area is primarily commercial and light industrial land. There are three parks and a trail in the area as well, including Gaines Park, Centennial View Park, the proposed Auburn Environmental Park, and the Interurban Trail. In addition, Emerald Downs (a private horse racing facility), the King County Transfer Station, and Mountain View Cemetery are all close to SR 167.

In Algona, approximately half of the study area is light industrial while the other half is primarily residential. This part of the study area includes the following public services: Alpac Elementary School, Algona Police Department, Algona City Hall, Algona Library, and Algona Park.

The City of Pacific has predominantly heavy commercial and light industrial land within the study area. However, there are some residential areas abutting SR 167 and there are two churches within the study area.

SR 167 serves as the main link between these three communities. These communities are also served by rail and bus transit services that serve the Seattle, Bellevue, and Tacoma employment centers.

**Exhibit 21
Photographs of
Communities within the
Study Area**



Residential neighborhood in Pacific



Safeway distribution center in Auburn



Transit service to Auburn is provided by Sound Transit Sounder commuter rail and fixed route bus service provided by three transit agencies.

What is the economy like within the study area?

Between 1980 and 2000, the population in cities within the travelshed grew by 68 percent, from 175,000 to 294,000. The employment growth has also been significant – 180,607 jobs in 2000 compared to 94,917 jobs in 1980. This trend is expected to continue, as Puget Sound housing and land prices rise, attributable to the relative affordability of housing and land in the Green River Valley compared with other areas in Puget Sound.

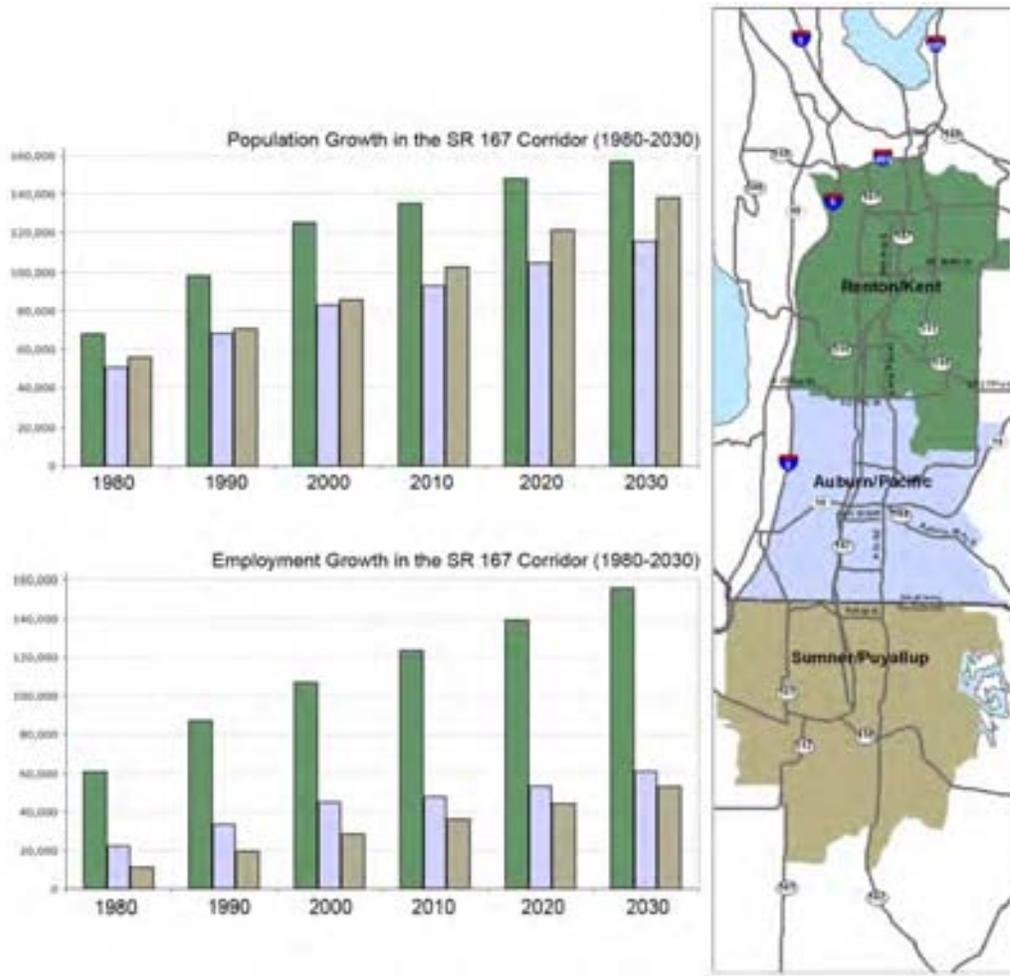
The high demand for jobs and additional affordable housing will continue to increase residential, industrial, and commercial development throughout the corridor. Washington State's Growth Management Act policies direct and encourage higher density and mixed-use land uses within established urban corridors.

Regional manufacturing, industrial, and urban centers have developed in the travelshed, which are important to the economy of the region. Urban centers are designated in Renton, Tukwila, Kent, Auburn, and Puyallup. Manufacturing centers are designated in Tukwila and Kent.

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) currently projects that the corridor's population will grow to over 410,000 by 2030, a 39 percent increase over the 2000 population. While historically much of the growth has been in the north end of the SR 167 corridor, models predict that future residential growth will be stronger in the southern end of the corridor; as illustrated in Exhibit 22.

Regardless of the project, the economy of the region will continue to grow at the projected levels. The project is not anticipated to have any adverse effect on the economy, but should have a beneficial effect with improved travel time.

Exhibit 22
 Population and Employment Growth in the Travelshed



CHAPTER 3 ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The WSDOT team reviewed existing data, project plan sets, and construction methods to identify areas of potential effects and determine appropriate mitigation measures. The expected direct and indirect effects of the proposed project were determined by the process recommended in the WSDOT *Environmental Procedures Manual* (Chapter 412) and the Council of Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR 1508.7). The following definitions guided the analysis of effects for social, economic, and environmental justice:

Direct effects are defined as the immediate effects of the project. Direct effects include all negative and positive immediate impacts from project-related actions. A common example of a direct impact on a social element occurs when the project requires temporary or permanent access to a property that currently houses a public facility.

Indirect effects are sometimes called secondary effects and usually occur later in time or further in distance, after construction of the project. These effects can also be negative or positive. An example of an indirect effect of a project on an economic element would be changes to transportation patterns and land uses that, over time, cause a detrimental effect on a local business.

Both direct and indirect effects can be temporary or permanent. These effects will be described in reference to the five forms of equity: income, participation, modal, geographic, and opportunity, as defined below:

- **Income equity** is evaluated by whether people will be able to afford to utilize the proposed project.
- **Participation equity** is based on whether there was adequate outreach to the targeted user to determine if prospective users understand the project and if obstacles and benefits to the project are identified.
- **Modal equity** refers to the direct and indirect effects of the project to solo drivers, carpoolers, and transit users.
- **Geographic equity** is based on how users of the proposed project may be affected based on where they live and work.

Benefits of the project include:

- Improved traffic flow for motorists
 - Same comment in Exec Summary.
 - Faster trip and reliable travel times for single occupant vehicles that use the HOT lanes
 - A transportation alternative that will alleviate congestion and facilitate mobility
 - A reduction, in general, of time that people and freight spend in traffic
 - Accommodation of future population and employment growth in the region
 - Improved traffic on vital alternative routes such as I-5 as people choose different travel options and/or patterns
 - Improved safety through ramp and merge area improvements, keeping the HOT lanes separate from general purpose traffic, and having limited access points to the HOT lanes
-

- **Opportunity equity** is the ability of all user groups to have access to the proposed project facility and the benefits that would be provided to users of the facility.

Will the proposed project pose disproportionate effects to minority users?

WSDOT’s analysis of project data indicates that the proposed project is not expected to directly or indirectly have disproportionately adverse effects on minority users. The project will improve community cohesion, traffic safety, travel times, and access to community resources (i.e., social, religious, or cultural). The project will benefit users by reducing traffic congestion and allow drivers greater certainty on their travel time.

Will the proposed project pose disproportionate effects to low-income users?

In general, the project will provide drivers of single-occupant vehicles in the general-purpose lanes with the option of a faster trip and more reliable travel times, regardless of minority status or income. Travel in the HOT lane will require payment; however, based on public outreach on *income equity*, WSDOT learned that the choice to use HOT lanes is not based on income levels or ability to pay the toll. People interviewed by WSDOT in the low-income focus groups specifically stated they would use the HOT lane if it provided them a shorter travel time, a reliable travel time, and was fairly priced and enforced.

To date, research in California demonstrates that a slightly lower percentage of low-income people choose to pay for HOT lanes as higher income people. Studies suggest that some low-income families choose to pay for HOT lanes to get to work on time, to keep childcare costs down, and to make appointments on time without taking as much leave from work.

Furthermore, monitoring programs on existing HOT lane facilities in other states have not demonstrated that low-income populations experience “disproportionately high and adverse effects,” as defined by Executive Order 12898 of 1994.

Income Equity

How will HOT lanes affect users of the facility including low-income populations?

How is low-income defined?

People considered to be low-income have incomes less than the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines. Income data is gathered through the US Census and that data is analyzed to determine the percentage of people below the poverty level.

SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

The proposed project will not have disproportionately adverse effects on low-income populations largely because low-income drivers can still travel to their destination without having to take an alternative route. Additionally, even if a low-income driver chooses not to use the HOT lane, the driver will not suffer a significant time penalty by using the general purpose lanes. Likely, the proposed project will improve travel times in the general-purpose lanes. In addition, drivers can carpool, vanpool, or use transit, all of which have free access to the HOT lane.

Will the proposed project pose disproportionate effects to Tribes?

The construction and operation of this project is not expected to reduce the net population of fish within the study area. This project is also not expected to change or alter access to tribal fishing grounds. WSDOT will continue to consult directly with the tribes throughout the environmental process. More information on the project's impacts to fish species and habitat is in the Ecosystems Discipline Report.

How has WSDOT included the community in this project?

WSDOT coordinated public involvement efforts with other SR 167 projects, including the Corridor Plan and the HOT Lanes Pilot Project. WSDOT sought out group representatives of populations most likely to be affected by the proposed projects, including this proposed project, the HOT Lanes Pilot Project, and other projects proposed in the SR 167 Corridor Plan, and directly involved them in the project's early planning stages.

For example, the 2006 version of the project's factsheet was published on the project website and in locations around the community as illustrated in Exhibit 23.

Public outreach efforts

WSDOT employed diverse public involvement tools to offer multiple opportunities for the public to interact with and advise the project team. Public involvement methods were selected that would maximize state resources as well as public participation.

SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

The target public audiences for involvement included:

- Residents, workers, and business owners
- Local jurisdictions
- Users of the SR 167 corridor, including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, carpool/vanpool users, transit users
- Businesses that rely on the corridor for the movement of goods and provided services

WSDOT employed a number of strategies to involve as many interested parties as possible. The following public involvement and communication activities have been completed to date:

- Fourteen Corridor Working Group (CWG) meetings were held with County and City staff members, as well Council members. This group focused on the proposed project, the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project and SR 167 Corridor Plan (route development plan); reports on tolling, HOT lanes, and traffic forecast; review of the focus groups and other public input; and reaching a regional consensus on the WSDOT projects planned for SR 167.
- WSDOT held four open houses to inform the public of the status of the projects planned for SR 167, which provided an opportunity for public input on the planning process. Open houses were advertised in nine newspapers, four local newsletters, community calendars, through fliers that were left in public places,¹ emailed and mailed invitations to mailing lists, and an announcement on the WSDOT project website.

¹ WSDOT's outreach activities in 2006 and 2007 included outreach in English, Tagalog, Chinese, Russian, Vietnamese, and Spanish. Notices were sent to community centers, services agencies such as food banks and medical clinics, and churches.

SR 167 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity Southbound HOT Lane

- WSDOT held informal outreach activities, including booths at malls and eleven fairs and festivals.
- WSDOT brought a traveling informational display to four locations within the study area.
- WSDOT developed a project folio and a project website.

Attachment B provides a list of all of the outreach activities conducted (Perteet Inc., 2006).

WSDOT used feedback from these outreach activities to evaluate the project's effects and benefits to users of SR 167 and the surrounding communities. The analysis included a focused evaluation of the potential effects on low-income and minority populations.

Key community concerns

As a result of the team's public involvement activities, the following concerns were raised by the public:

Congestion – Traffic volume is high on SR 167 and people are anxious to see improvements being made to address bottlenecks, extend the HOV lanes, and manage congestion through the HOT Lanes Pilot Project. Many people noted that they avoid using SR 167 as much as possible because of congestion.

Local effects – Drivers continue to rely on local roads and arterials when SR 167 is congested.

Enforcement – Drivers are upset with the current level of HOV enforcement on SR 167 and hope to see fairly-enforced HOT/HOV lane systems.

Coordination with other projects – The I-405 Corridor Program, SR 167 Extension Project, and the SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project directly affect conditions on SR 167. Continued coordination with these projects as they progress is a key component of the corridor plan process (Perteet Inc., 2006).

How did the project seek input from the public, especially environmental justice populations?

Environmental justice populations were encouraged to participate during public outreach efforts. As part of the HOT Lanes Pilot Project, three focus groups were held for low-income people in the study area, printed materials were made available in multiple languages, based on census data analysis, and information was provided in places where diverse populations of the public would have access to it, such as malls, fairs, farmer's markets, and kiosks. Also, handouts were left in various community centers.

The three focus group sessions were most beneficial. The focus groups were made up of people who use SR 167 for commuting and qualified as low-income based on incomes in the range of 150 percent of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty level. The outcome of these focus groups concluded that:

HOT lanes are not expected to pose a disproportionate impact on low-income commuters. Based on public outreach it was found that the choice to use HOT lanes is not based on income levels or ability to pay the toll. People in the low-income groups said they would be inclined to use the HOT lane if it provided them a shorter travel time, and was fairly priced and enforced. However, HOV users can still use the HOT lane for free.

HOT lanes are not expected to pose disproportionate effects on minorities. As for those who use SR 167, minority status is not a factor in determining who can use HOT lanes; therefore minorities will not be disproportionately affected by the HOT lanes project. HOV users can continue to use the HOT lane for free.

Trip time reliability and time savings are major priorities. Trip time reliability and time savings were identified as top priorities.

Account options should be flexible. Easy and convenient payment options should be available to access and replenish accounts, especially for those who do not have

Internet access, bank accounts, or credit cards (Perteet Inc., 2006).

How will single occupant vehicles, high occupancy vehicles, transit, and other commuters be affected by the project?

In a *modal equity* evaluation, WSDOT determined that transit, vanpools, and carpools will continue to have priority for use of HOT lanes. Single occupant vehicles will be allowed to use the lanes only when the HOT lanes have capacity available (i.e., when single occupant vehicles will not cause congestion in the HOT lanes). Experience in California, Texas, and Maryland demonstrates that HOT lanes provide a transportation alternative that benefits all segments of the population without conflicting with other public transportation systems such as buses or light rail facilities. This section summarizes the public's general opinion of HOT lanes and under what circumstances people will use the HOT lanes.

Commuters who will most likely use the HOT lanes will be individuals who must be at their jobs at a specific time or whose work income has a direct relationship with the number of customer visits or deliveries made in a day. During the evaluation, WSDOT learned that time savings, consistency, and trip reliability were viewed as important benefits to all populations, including low-income populations that have specific time constraints. These people responded that the cost of the toll on a periodic basis, or even for a few days a week, would be less than the financial penalty incurred by sitting in congestion and being late.

These survey results are consistent with other HOT lane monitoring studies across the country that show all segments of the population use HOT lanes, regardless of income levels. Experience in California, Texas, and Maryland demonstrates how HOT lanes benefit all segments of the population, including low-income. Therefore, it does not appear that high and disproportionate adverse effects on low-income populations will result from this HOT lanes project (Perteet Inc., 2006).

Modal Equity

How will the implementation of HOT lanes affect people's choice of transportation options such as driving solo, carpooling, or using transit facilities?

How will commuter locations affect their use of the HOT lanes?

While conducting a *geographic equity* will evaluate if there be differences in benefits based on where users live and work? For example, a driver entering the HOT lanes in Auburn and traveling to Renton will pay the same toll as the person entering the lanes in Kent and traveling to Renton. The toll is based on speed and how congested the HOT lane is at the time you enter. So, people entering the HOT lane in Auburn may pay a lesser amount than, someone entering the system in Kent. WSDOT considered geographic equity to evaluate whether people at the northern end of the project would pay a HOT lane toll as much or similarly to those in the southern reaches of SR 167.

During focus group meetings, the majority of the people were most concerned about trip reliability and time savings. People were inclined to use the HOT lane system regardless of where they entered the freeway if it helped them get to their destinations on time or reduced their travel times enough to visit more clients in a day, for example (Pertee Inc., 2006).

As a result of this survey and past studies, the HOT lanes system will not adversely affect users based on their general location. People understood that the proposed project is only eight miles in total length; but they felt the overall time savings would be more valuable than the toll.

Will any homes, businesses or community facilities be displaced by the project?

No houses, businesses (including farms), or community facilities will be displaced by the project. Because relocations are not anticipated, no search was conducted to determine available and affordable relocation sites.

Will the proposed project affect community cohesion?

The proposed project will not result in any changes in highway access, arterial access, community life or groups, and will not physically or economically divide communities. The addition of a HOT lane to the study area will not hinder highway or local street access, parking, or use of the adjacent properties.

Geographic Equity

Will there be differences in benefits based on where users live and work?

The project will not require relocation of any home, business, or other facility. The proposed project ultimately will enhance community cohesion by improving the ability of residents and workers to access their homes, businesses, and services by improving travel times through reducing congestion on SR 167 and local arterials that are used as alternatives when the highway becomes congested.

Will noise from the project affect people who live or work within the project corridor?

Many residential neighborhoods can be found along SR 167 within the study area. WSDOT requires projects to evaluate noise effects on sensitive receptors such as residential houses. Three main transportation construction events will trigger a noise evaluation:

- Construction of a new roadway
- Significant changes to the horizontal and vertical alignment of an existing roadway
- Increases in the number of through traffic lanes on an existing highway

The proposed project is expected to affect noise levels. Increased traffic and an additional lane on this segment of the highway will contribute to increased noise. To mitigate these effects, a noise wall is proposed from approximately 6th Avenue N. to 5th Avenue S. on the east side of SR 167, in the City of Algona. More information is available in the *Traffic Noise Technical Report* (Perteet Inc., 2008a). In addition, the proposed project will mitigate noise for some existing noise effects on sensitive receptors in the study area. The proposed noise wall will reduce the current number of residences that experience noise levels in excess of federal standards or will exceed the standards by 2030 based on forecasted traffic numbers.

Will the project result in changes in visual quality for residents or workers who live or work near the project?

One major change in visual quality within the study area will be the construction of a noise wall on the east side of SR 167, as described above, and the widening of the highway on the west side. Roadway widening is not expected to have an effect

How will noise be mitigated?

The FHWA Roadway Noise Abatement Criteria is 67 dBA for the exterior of residences. Measured noise levels near some residences and other sensitive receptors immediately adjacent to the project alignment ranged from 69 to 71 dBA L_{eq} during peak noise hours.

The overall noise reduction that will be achieved by the proposed noise wall will range from 4 to 8 dBA, have an average noise reduction of 7 dBA for receptors immediately adjacent to the project alignment. The wall will provide a benefit of at least 5 dBA at 67 residential properties.

Source: WSDOT, March 2008

on neighbors, as most of the land immediately adjacent to SR 167 in the study area is parallel to a local arterial, the West Valley Highway, as well as farmland and commercial property.

On the east side of SR 167, a noise wall will be constructed to mitigate for increased traffic noise, which will affect the view for people living and working near the wall. The view of the wall is perceived to be an improvement over the view of the highway, especially when combined with the benefit of reduced noise.

Will the project affect access to social resources?

The project will have no permanent effects on social resources, as none will be relocated or permanently disrupted. Once the project is completed, congestion along the SR 167 corridor will be improved along with emergency response times, reliability of transit services, and access to public services.

Minor, temporary effects could affect social resources during construction, due to earth-moving, grading and paving. Access may be temporarily disrupted. During project construction, SR 167 will remain open most of the time and access to emergency vehicles will be maintained. However, some lane closures will occur during construction, as well as some night-time complete closures that will require shifting traffic between the Ellingson Road on- and off-ramps and the 15th Street SW on-ramps. Therefore, travel times for general traffic, fire, emergency medical, and police vehicles through the study area may increase during these construction-related traffic slowdowns.

Will the project present any obstacles for current users of SR 167 to use the HOT lanes?

In conducting an *opportunity equity* evaluation, WSDOT learned that, based on California studies on both SR 91 and I-15, a slightly lower percentage of low-income people chose to pay for HOT lanes as higher income people. This demonstrates that HOT lanes are probably not expected to be out of the financial reach of most low-income families. In fact, studies suggest that some low-income families choose to pay for HOT lanes to get to work on time, to keep childcare costs down, and to make appointments on time without taking as much leave from work.

Opportunity Equity

Can transponder cards be easily obtained by HOT Lane users, including low income groups?

Although these studies show that low-income and non-low-income drivers have nearly equal use of HOT lanes, research does suggest that some low-income drivers may be excluded from using HOT lanes because of their low-income status. When income is low, it can be difficult to secure credit or debit cards, both of which commonly are used to maintain a balance in their **Good To Go!** account. WSDOT has taken steps to ensure that the public can open an account using credit cards, cash, check and EBT card options. (Perteet Inc., 2007a).

Will the project have any effect on regional and community economic growth?

The proposed project is expected to improve travel times, congestion, and reduce the chance for accidents. All of these factors will improve accessibility to the Green River Valley businesses and residential areas and contribute to improving the local economy.

How will WSDOT mitigate any potential effects to social resources, the local economy, and environmental justice populations?

WSDOT will implement a number of measures to mitigate potential effects of the proposed project including, but not limited to the following measures.

- WSDOT will ensure that everyone can easily set up toll accounts. WSDOT currently offers several payment methods to pay for use of the HOT lanes. Drivers may pay with credit cards, debit cards, cash, check and EBT. The cash payment system allows people to open a toll account without a credit or debit card.
- WSDOT will develop and implement a traffic management plan that will provide mitigation measures such as emergency vehicle through construction zones and posting signs to show detour routes if temporary road closures are required.
- WSDOT will provide the fire department, police department, and other service providers with advance notice of construction schedules to allow for

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coordination and to minimize the effects of road closures on response and travel times.

- WSDOT will avoid major construction activities during major events at local facilities that would have a significant effect on traffic. Early and continuous coordination with Emerald Downs, Puyallup Fairgrounds, local jurisdictions promoting fairs and festivals, as well as the local police departments will minimize construction related effects.
- Providing adequate public notice of construction activities, lane closures, alternative routes and detour routes.
- WSDOT will construct a noise wall from 6th Avenue N to 5th Avenue S in Algona.

CHAPTER 4 CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

What are cumulative effects and why do we study them?

Cumulative effects are those that “result from incremental consequences of an action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions.” The cumulative effects of a project may be undetectable when viewed in the individual context of direct or indirect effects. However, cumulative effects can add to other disturbances and eventually lead to a measurable environmental change.

How were cumulative effects on social and economic elements, and environmental justice analyzed?

The procedures for identifying cumulative effects were used from the President’s Council on Environmental Quality rules and handbook and the *WSDOT Environmental Procedures Handbook*, Chapter 412. In general, past and present actions within the study area were evaluated to determine how the proposed project will directly or indirectly affect the study area. Then the effects of the future planned, but not yet built, actions were considered. In the end, all of the predicted effects were summarized and the cumulative effects of the project on social and economic elements and environmental justice populations were estimated.

The timeline of past and future actions were established at 1970 to 2030, based on when the past land use growth, as a result of land use actions of local cities and counties, substantially began to rise in the 1970’s. Using the PSRC data, the 1970’s were determined to be a point in time where the growth was noticeable and the starting point of reasonable past actions. The future point in time is 2030, which is the baseline of the traffic analyses conducted for this project, the SR 167 Corridor Plan, and the SR 167 Hot Lanes Pilot Project.

The past and present actions that affect the project area include:

Past Actions within Study Area

- From 1970 to 2005, the population grew in cities along the SR 167 corridor, by more than 50 percent from approximately 115,000 in 1970 to 225,000 in 2005.² Now, there are between 95,000 and 125,000 vehicles that travel on SR 167 each day, depending on the location within the corridor. In addition, approximately 12,000 freight trucks per day drive on SR 167 just south of S 212th Street, which accounts for 9.7% of all traffic.
- Additional bus and train trips have been added to the study area. However, the total transit ridership makes up only about four percent of the trips made in the corridor.
- The recent completion of 15th Street SW to 15th Street NW - HOV construction along SR 167, which widened the highway from two lanes to three lanes in the northbound direction.
- WSDOT converted all of the SR 167 HOV lanes to HOT lanes with the implementation of the HOT Lanes Pilot Project in the Spring of 2008.

The past actions, from the 1970's to the present, have caused rapid growth of homes and businesses in the Green River Valley and increased traffic in the Green River Valley. The growth has increased traffic, caused more traffic delays and a rise in the accident rate. These problems limit people's ease of access to public services, businesses, and homes in the study area and thereby community cohesiveness. In addition, this is a major freight corridor and it is essential to keep freight trucks moving through the study area. Combined, these problems affect the economic health of business areas that are avoided due to congestion. Although there have been transit and highway improvements in and near the study area, there is still a need for additional highway improvements to relieve bottlenecks, improve safety hazards, and provide more capacity.

² King County, 2005 Annual Growth Report and Washington Office of Financial Management data.

Proposed Project Actions

- Widening southbound SR 167 from two to three lanes by adding a HOT lane will provide more capacity for travelers. This project is estimated to provide up to an additional 38% more vehicles than the current highway configuration during the peak hour of the afternoon.
- The project is also expected to reduce congestion and thereby improve travel time. The estimated travel time savings once this project is completed is seven minutes through the project area.
- This project will save over 1,300 person hours of commute time each day of the week for vehicles in the HOT lane.
- The highway improvements are also intended to improve traffic safety problems.

The proposed project will improve the capacity of SR 167, improve the travel times within the study area, and save people and freight companies money every day by improving travel times and access to public services in the area. In addition, the safety improvements will reduce the need for emergency response services along SR 167, keep travelers safe, and save travelers money in accident and business-related costs. As described in Chapter 3, the proposed project may have temporary negative effects on social resources during construction such as limited or slower access to social resources due to construction-related traffic delays. However, these effects will be minimized through mitigation measures. In the long term, when the project is completed, there will be beneficial effects on social and economic elements within the study area including increased community cohesion.

Future Planned Actions within Study Area
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are planned residential developments in the study area, which will add thousands of new single family homes and many new trips to SR 167.• The planned extension of SR 167 from Puyallup to the Port of Tacoma, which is not yet fully funded.• There are planned road construction projects along SR 167, between 15th Street Southwest and SR 512.

New residential and industrial developments throughout the corridor will continue to add trips to SR 167. The conversion of the existing high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes to HOT lanes north of the project alignment was an attempt to improve traffic flow and travel times by allowing non-HOV vehicles to pay to drive in the HOT lane.

WSDOT plans to add HOV/HOT lane direct access ramps between SR 167 and I-405 to improve connections between SR 167 and I-405 and reduce congestion that forms in typical highway ramps and improve traffic safety. This project is anticipated to benefit social and economic elements in the study area by further enhancing traffic flow on SR 167 and improving access to public services, businesses, and communities.

The extension of SR 167 to the Port of Tacoma will provide significant travel time savings to travelers, especially freight truck drivers, which will benefit the businesses and the local economy within the project area. These projects are unfunded at this time, but may become active in the future.

These projects will improve access to public services along the SR 167 corridor, which is a benefit to social elements of the project and to environmental justice populations that may use those services. Therefore, there are no minority or low-income populations being disproportionately affected by the SR 167 277th to 8th Street E, Southbound, HOT Lane Project.

What are the cumulative effects of the project?

Expected cumulative effects of the proposed project are limited to transportation benefits associated with the SR 167 Corridor Plan. Cumulative effects include improved traffic capacity, improved travel times, improved access to public services, and safety improvements.

CHAPTER 5 REFERENCES

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Attachment A - SR 167 HOT Lanes Pilot Project Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice Report, January 2007

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Attachment B – List of Public Involvement Activities Conducted

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) employed numerous methods of public involvement for the ongoing SR 167 projects, which included the SR 167 Corridor Plan, the High-Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes Pilot Project, and the proposed project, SR 167 Southbound HOT Lane, 8th Street East Vicinity to South 277th Street Vicinity.

Advertising Mechanisms

WSDOT used the following advertising methods in an effort to let the public know about the project and to encourage attendance at the open houses:

- Display advertisements in publications (King County Journal, Auburn, Kent and Renton Reporters, Seattle Times and The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, The Puyallup Herald, The News Tribune, and The Daily Journal of Commerce).
- Announcements in local newsletters and community calendars (*The Auburn Update*, *The Edgewood News*, the *Algona Town Crier*, and Pierce Transit's *RideOn News*).
- E-mail invitations sent to a project email list comprised of 144 members.
- E-mail invitations sent to King County Metro vanpoolers who may potentially travel SR 167.
- E-mail invitations sent to committee chairs, ranking minority members, senators, and representatives in Districts 5, 11, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 33, 37, 41 and 47.
- Postcards (70) sent to the project mailing list.
- Postcards (700) and posters (100) distributed to public gathering places, such as libraries, community centers, and other public buildings.
- Postcards available at information booths at the South Hill Mall in Puyallup and the Super Mall in Auburn.
- Announcement at the January focus groups.
- Announcement on the WSDOT project websites below:
- www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr167/valleyfreewaycorridorplan
- www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr167/hotlanes
- Outreach to local news sources.

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- Corridor Working Group members were also encouraged to notify their constituents about the open houses. Informational materials that were available at the open houses were posted on the project website to allow those unable to attend the events to view the information and contact the project manager with comments.

News Media and Advertising

Local news reporters were contacted with project updates and notifications of public meetings. The project was highlighted in various news articles, on radio shows, and on local television channels. The following news sources were contacted before public meetings:

- *Daily Journal of Commerce*
- *Seattle Times*
- *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*
- *King County Journal*
- *The Mountain*
- KIRO, AM 700
- KOMO, AM 1000
- KUOW, FM 94.9
- KOMO 4
- KING 5
- KIRO 7

The following advertising methods were used in an effort to increase public knowledge about the project and encourage attendance at community fairs and festivals:

- Display advertisements in publications such as The King County Journal, the Auburn, Kent and Renton Reporters, The Tacoma News Tribune and The Puyallup Herald.
- Announcements in local newsletters and community calendars such as *The Edgewood News* and *The Algona Town Crier*.
- E-mail invitations sent out to project e-mail list of 160 members.
- Postcards (100) sent to the project mailing list.

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- Postcards (750) and posters (100) distributed to public gathering places, such as libraries, community centers, and other public buildings.

Information posted on the WSDOT project websites below:

- www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr167/valleyfreewaycorridorplan
- www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/sr167/hotlanes

Other outreach methods

The following methods were used to reach out to the users of SR 167, including minorities and low-income populations. These methods did not involve personal interaction with the community, but provided information about the project and contact information if people wanted to comment on the project.

Traveling Informational Display

General project information was displayed in highly visible and frequented locations, such as community centers and libraries. Comment forms and a comment box were also left with the traveling display and 18 comments were collected. Locations and dates where informational displays have been located include:

- Sumner Library, January 3-24, 2006
- Kent Regional Library, January 24-February 3, 2006
- Renton Community Center, February 3-27, 2006
- Kent Commons, March 6-17, 2006

Project Folio

A project folio was developed to inform the public about the planned improvements along SR 167. The project folio was distributed at open houses, informational booths at fairs and festivals, traveling display locations, community briefings and focus groups.

Distribution List

Through various public outreach tools, citizens made requests to stay updated on the project. More than 140 contacts have been logged into a distribution list during the public involvement process. Members on this list are updated on the project and notified of upcoming public outreach events.

Project Website

WSDOT hosts a project website for the SR 167 Corridor Plan, which is periodically updated to provide the public with the most recent information regarding the project. The Web site provides a forum to post project facts, meeting dates and locations, meeting summaries and general information about the project’s progress. Members of the public also commented on the project online and received responses via e-mail. Approximately 33 comments have been received to date through the web site.

Personal Outreach Activities

The following outreach activities resulted in personal communication with members of the public where comments were solicited on the proposed project.

Open Houses

Exhibit A-1: Open House Summary

Date/Time	Location	People Signed In	Notes
October 4 th , 2005 6 to 8 pm	Chinook Elementary School, Auburn	75	Held in conjunction with public meetings on SR 167, SR 164, and SR 169 plans.
October 13 th , 2005 6 to 8 pm	Renton Community Center		
February 15th, 2006 6 to 8 pm	Sumner Middle School	19	
February 16th, 2006 6 to 8 pm	Kent Senior Center		

Informal Outreach Activities

A number of informal outreach activities were conducted to present project information at highly visible and frequented public events or locations using informational booths at the fairs, festivals and malls listed below. The informal outreach activities reached a total of approximately 700 people. Activities included:

- Kent Farmers Market – June 11 and 25, 2005 (approximately 50 visitors)
- Renton Farmers Market – June 14 and 28, 2005 (approximately 50 visitors)

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- Puyallup Farmers Market – August 5, 2005
(approximately 25 visitors)
- Auburn Good Ol' Days – August 13 and 14, 2005
(approximately 120 visitors)
- South Hill Mall, Puyallup – December 3, 2005 and
February 3, 2006 (approximately 40 visitors)
- Super Mall, Auburn – December 3, 2005 and February
3, 2006 (approximately 23 visitors)
- Puyallup Farmers Market – June 17, 2006
(approximately 76 visitors)
- Kent Farmers Market – June 24, 2006
(approximately 40 visitors)
- Kent Cornucopia Days – July 14, 2006
(approximately 120 visitors)
- Pacific Days – July 15, 2006
(approximately 50 visitors)
- Renton River Days – July 21-23, 2006
(approximately 107 visitors)
- Kent Farmers Market – September 16, 2006
(approximately 49 visitors)
- Puyallup Farmers Market – September 30, 2006
(approximately 36 visitors)