Direct Access Recommendations

1 I-5/NE 145th Street
Direct Access to/from South
Cost: $8.83 M

North of the express lanes, several commuter bus routes originate from areas around 145th NE, but few of these routes use the freeway HOV lanes because it is too difficult to weave across the freeway in time to get to the NE 145th Street right-side off ramp after leaving the express lanes. Instead, some routes get off at Northgate just so they can get back on again and be in the outside lane. By providing direct access ramps to and from the south at NE 145th, north King County and SR 522 bus routes could use the HOV lanes and avoid arterial congestion in the Northgate area.

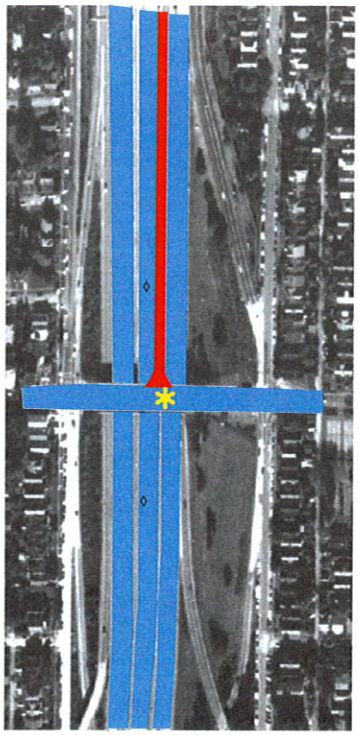
2 I-5 Express Lane/NE 50th Street (shown at right)
Direct Access to/from North
Cost: $6.04 M

Currently, buses and carpools headed towards the University of Washington from the north in the morning have to get out of the HOV lanes at Northgate and weave their way across congested traffic to reach the University District exits at NE 45th and 50th Sts. Snohomish County's Community Transit operates several bus routes this way. The proposal is to build a ramp from the middle of the NE 50th St. bridge down to the express lanes, to and from the north. The ramp would be reversible, matching the direction of the express lanes. This is one of the highest-rated direct access proposals because it would carry relatively high volumes of people for a relatively low cost.

Existing
Proposed
Park & Ride
New Signal
HOV Lanes
Pedestrian Bridge or Platform

3 I-5/E-3 Busway
Transit Ramp to/from South
Cost: $46.09 M

All of the buses coming up I-5 from the south to get to Seattle face a dilemma as they approach Seattle in the HOV lane: to get off at Spokane St., they need to start moving over well before they reach the exit. Not only is it difficult to merge across the heavy traffic at that location, but buses do not get to use part of the HOV lane, costing them several minutes of travel time. These ramps would eliminate the need to get to the Spokane St. exit by providing a direct, transit-only connection to the busway that runs into the downtown Seattle transit tunnel.



Freeway-to-Freeway Recommendations

1 I-5/SR 520
Reversible Ramp
Cost: $ 11.12 M

By far the highest-rated freeway-to-freeway connection, this ramp would allow HOV traffic to and from SR 520 to use the I-5 express lanes. Buses on SR 520 traveling in the peak direction could then go directly into the downtown Seattle bus tunnel. Because there is heavy bus service on SR 520, the number of people that would be benefited is high, and the cost is relatively low. Carpools headed between SR 520 and Mercer St. would also be able to avoid the "Mercer Weave" on the mainline, which forces Mercer St. traffic to quickly cross four lanes of dense traffic to get from left-side entrances to right-side exits.

If the proposal to use the western lane of the express lanes as a permanent southbound HOV lane is accepted, then this ramp would go from westbound SR 520 to southbound I-5 express lanes at all times. A separate HOV connection from northbound I-5 to eastbound SR 520 could be located on the shoulder of the I-5 mainline. However, if the express lanes continue to operate as they do today, this ramp would be reversible, operating in the same direction as the express lanes.

SNOHOMISH COUNTY

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

HOV lanes connecting Snohomish and King counties are heavily used, as is transit service using those lanes. Increasingly, congestion is making it more difficult for transit and carpools to get into and out of the HOV lanes, and general freeway congestion is worsened by buses and carpools weaving in and out of the center lane. The proposals shown here will improve the operation of the freeway for all users and make transit service more reliable.

Current regional transit services offered by Community Transit are directed to the south into King County, and to serve that existing service, direct access ramps that allow transit to get to and from the south would be adequate. But recent discussions about the Regional Transit Authority's "HOV Expressway" concept have prompted discussion of a regional bus route that would provide frequent all-day service up and down the I-5 corridor. To allow this kind of service, access would be needed to both the north and south. A relatively inexpensive station at Mountlake Terrace could also be added under that scenario. As a result, some of the following improvements are only recommended if an I-5 regional express bus service is provided.

In Snohomish County, potential freeway-to-freeway ramp connections were evaluated for each quadrant of the interchanges between I-5, I-405 and SR 525; I-5 and SR 2; and I-5 and SR 526. None of these are "definitely" recommended, but two connections are "possibly recommended," as described on the following page.

HOV LANES -- SNOHOMISH COUNTY

The evaluation of HOV lane segments recommended extension of the HOV lane system north on I-5 from the I-5 SR 526 interchange to US 2, and adding HOV lanes on SR 526, connecting I-5 to Mukilteo and the Everett Boeing plant. Core HOV lane segments on I-5 and I-405 continue to be recommended.

The proposed HOV lane on SR 525 is only conditionally recommended. Currently this segment of SR 525 has only a single travel lane in each direction. If a second general purpose lane is added, then adding a third lane for HOV will not be justified, since the other two lanes will operate at freeflow levels. If only HOV lanes are built, giving one general purpose lane and one HOV lane in each direction, the HOV lane is justified and recommended. Traffic analysis suggests that the single general purpose lane will be heavily congested in the future. More discussion is needed to decide on an ultimate lane configuration for SR 525.

❶ Mountlake Terrace Park and Ride - In Line Transit Stop Cost: $2.82 M

This alternative consists of an at-grade transit stop in the median of I-5 adjacent to the Mountlake Terrace Park and Ride Lot. Elevators and stairs would connect the passenger platforms with a pedestrian overpass crossing northbound I-5 and connecting into the northwest corner of the park and ride lot. This alternative would be recommended only in conjunction with a regional I-5 bus route.

- Existing
- Proposed
- Park & Ride
- New Signal
- HOV Lanes
- Pedestrian Bridge or Platform

Direct Access Recommendations

2 I-5/SW 128th Street
Direct Access to/from South
Cost: $6.86 M

At the end of phase 1, a direct access connection at SW 112th St. had been proposed instead of at 128th St., but after more discussion, 128th was put on the table instead. Ramps would drop down from the existing 128th St. overpass into the HOV lanes below, connecting to the arterial HOV lane that exists today on Airport Rd., and to two park and ride lots located near the interchange. A new signal would be needed in the middle of the bridge. To make this proposal work for traffic, it should be constructed at the same time as a separate proposal that will reconfigure the existing general purpose on and off ramps, adding loop ramps in two of the four quadrants of the interchange. In the process, this would eliminate the need for some left turns from 128th St. to enter and exit from the freeway.

3 164th/Ashway Park & Ride Lot/I-5
Direct Access to/from South
Cost: $10.85 M

WSDOT and Community Transit are working towards construction of a park and ride lot at I-5 and 164th St., adjacent to Ash Way, which would relocate the existing lot to the west. This ramp would allow buses and carpools to go from the new park and ride lot directly into the HOV lanes. If an I-5 regional bus route is developed, this ramp could connect to both the north and south, otherwise it would connect to and from the south only.

4 164th /SR 525
HOV-Only Interchange to/from South (Swamp Creek Park & Ride)
Cost: $1.98 M

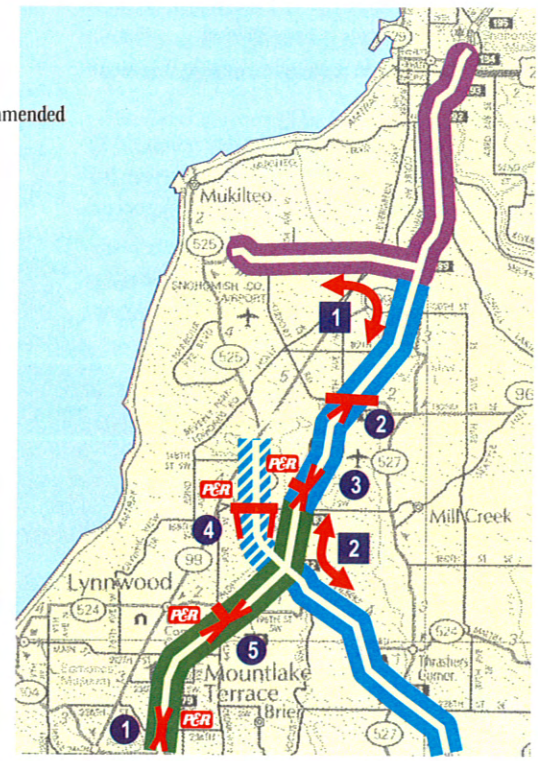
Unlike the rest of the proposals in this document, this project would provide new HOV-only ramps to the outside lane of SR 525 at 164th St., in a place where no ramps exist today. Because there is no access at this location today, Community Transit buses serving the lot use a bus stop on the freeway to pick up passengers southbound and exit at Alderwood Mall Boulevard and use arterial streets to serve the lot northbound. These new ramps would allow buses to get to SR 525 directly and to serve the lot the same way both north and southbound. Since an HOV lane is only proposed in this section of SR 525 if it is one of only two lanes in each direction, weaving to the center HOV lane will not likely be an obstacle, and an outside ramp connection should be adequate.

5 Lynnwood Park & Ride Access
Cost to/from South Only: $18.36 M
Cost to/from North & South: $29.38 M

The Lynnwood park and ride lot is the major transfer point for transit in south Snohomish County. This "T-ramp" connection would allow buses and carpools to go straight from the lot into the HOV lane. If there is a regional I-5 bus route, then ramps would provide access to and from both north and south, allowing buses to enter the lot, make a passenger stop, and then continue on the route without delay. Otherwise, ramps would connect to the south only.

Legend

- Completed or Funded HOV Core
- Unfunded HOV Core - Recommended
- Unfunded HOV Core - Conditionally Recommended
- Potential HOV Core Extentions
- Subject to Voter Approval
- Proposed Direct Access Facility
- Proposed Freeway-to-Freeway Connection
- P&R Planned or Existing Park & Ride



Freeway-to-Freeway Recommendations

1 I-5/SR 526 Interchange
SW Quadrant
Cost: $6.66 M

This ramp would allow traffic on SR 526 to reach the center-HOV lanes on I-5 to and from the south without weaving across traffic. If a future, reversible HOV lane is constructed on SR 526, this ramp might also be constructed as a reversible ramp to save construction cost.

2 I-5/I-405/SR 525 Interchange
NE Quadrant
Cost: $71.75 M

These ramps would provide a direct connection from the HOV lanes on I-5 and the HOV lanes on I-405 for through-traffic, that is, traffic going north on I-405 that will continue north on I-5, and traffic going south on I-5 that will continue south on I-405. These ramps are "possibly recommended," depending on how much funding is made available for freeway-to-freeway connections.

Next Steps: From Proposals to Implementation

The HOV Pre-Design Studies project recommendations are one of the first steps toward implementing an improved, continuous HOV system. Now that a specific proposal has been presented, the Transportation Commission, the Central Puget Sound Regional Transit Authority (RTA), the Puget Sound Regional Council and others must decide whether to incorporate these recommendations into their plans, and whether to include them in funding proposals to the voters or the legislature. Public response to these funding proposals will have an effect on those decisions.

By Spring of 1996, the RTA will decide what to include in its next regional transit proposal to the voters. Some of the facilities included in this booklet may be included in the RTA proposal, which is subject to voter approval.

The Transportation Commission periodically refines the State Highway System Plan, and it may decide to add some of the recommendations from this project into the definition of the HOV Core Program. The Commission and the State Legislature must also decide whether and when to request an increase in statewide transportation taxes. Without new transportation revenues, these recommended projects can not move forward.

Finally, if funding is found and HOV projects advance to the design and construction stages, environmental and public involvement processes will be carried out. Throughout the process, the public and elected representatives will have frequent opportunities to shape the transportation system.

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Washington State Department of Transportation

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