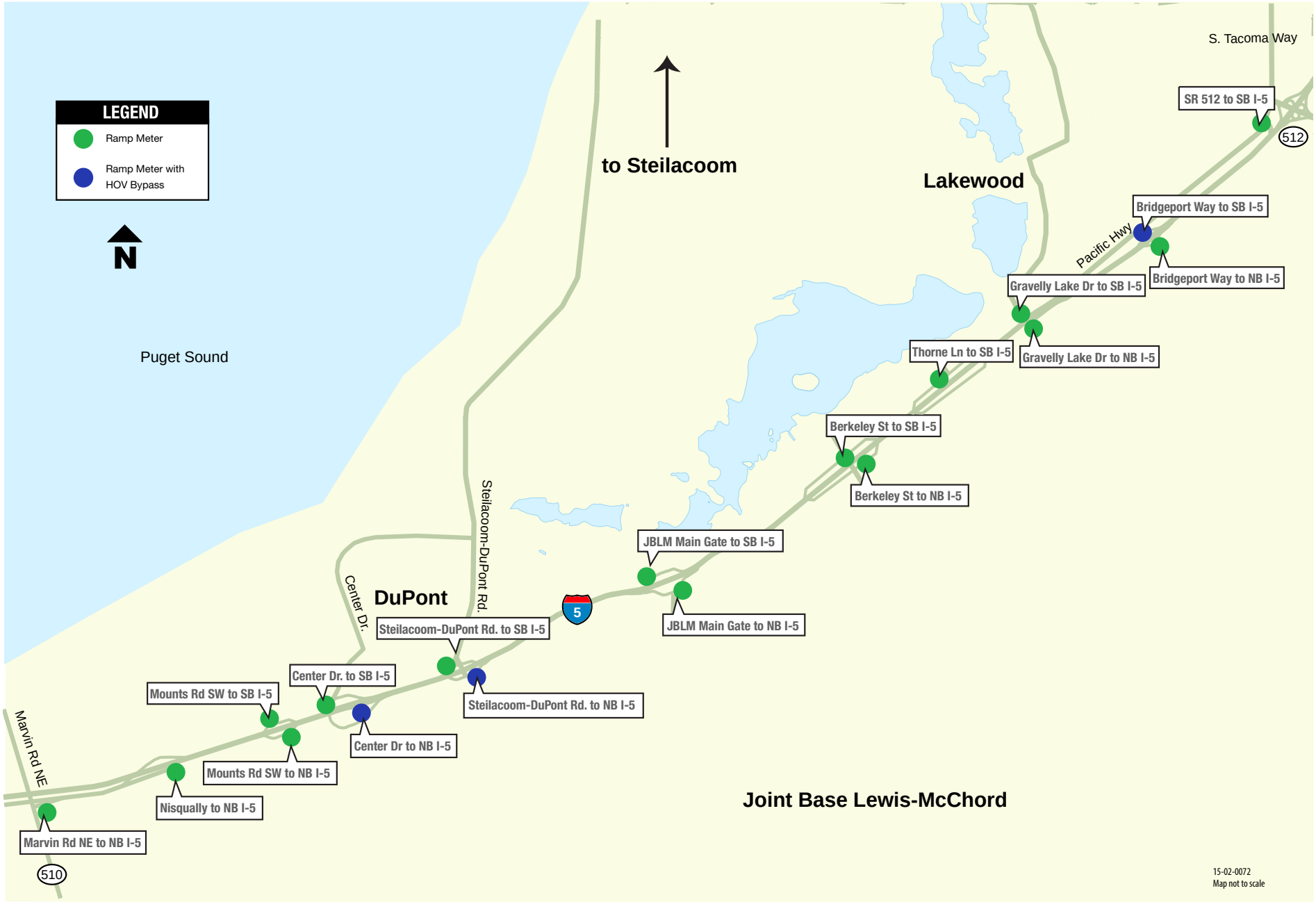
WSDOT

Locations of new ramp meters



New South Sound ramp meters coming soon to I-5 May 2015

What's happening?

Starting as soon as May 18, motorists will notice 18 new ramp meters being activated along a 15-mile stretch of northbound and southbound Interstate 5 between State Route 510 and State Route 512. Ramp meters are stop-and-go traffic signals on highway on-ramps that regulate the rate at which cars merge onto the highway. These "smart meters" will automatically turn on when traffic conditions warrant their use, and they will automatically adjust their cycle times to maximize traffic flow on the ramps and highway lanes.

It's important to drive up to the white line, or stop bar, of a ramp meter to trigger the light. If the light is red, stop at the white line. When the light turns green, merge onto the highway.

How do ramp meters work?

Ramp meters are part of a large computer-operated system that is managed in WSDOT's Traffic Management Centers (TMCs). Various freeway detection systems provide the TMCs information about traffic flow, such as the volume and speed of vehicles on freeways and ramps. This traffic data is continually fed to the ramp meters, which in turn automatically alter their cycles to maximize traffic flow on both the ramps and the freeways.

Why does WSDOT use ramp meters?

WSDOT uses ramp meters to reduce collisions and decrease travel times for drivers. Most ramp meters allow only one vehicle to proceed with each green light, creating a 4- to 15-second delay between cars entering the highway. This delay helps reduce disruptions to freeway traffic and reduces collisions that can occur when vehicles merge onto the highway.

How do ramp meters help traffic move better?

Without ramp meters, multiple cars try to merge onto the highway at the same time. Drivers on the highway slow down to allow cars to enter, and these slower speeds quickly cause backups. When cars enter the highway in controlled intervals, they are less likely to disrupt highway traffic flow. A short wait on the ramp allows drivers to increase their average freeway speeds and shorten overall freeway travel times. Ramp meters also reduce the number of collisions that often occur when multiple vehicles merge onto the highway at the same time.

Will the ramp meters cause backups on local streets?

City streets may initially have backups while motorists adjust their travel times with the new ramp meters. It takes a while for motorists to change driving habits after new ramp meters are activated. WSDOT will monitor traffic flows and make adjustments to the meters if necessary.

How much traffic drives on I-5 through the JBLM Corridor?

Below are average traffic counts on northbound and southbound I-5:

Location	ADT*	Location	ADT*
State Route 510	84,000	Center Drive	113,000
Nisqually	113,000	Steilacoom-DuPont Road	112,000
Mounts Road	112,000	JBLM Main Gate	129,000
Berkeley Street	119,000	Thorne Lane	132,000
Gravelly Lake Drive	130,000	Bridgeport Way	127,000
State Route 512	105,000		

**ADT - Average daily traffic. Vehicle counts in both directions of I-5 over one 24-hour period.*