
I-5 Tacoma Mall Boulevard



Access Revision Feasibility Study Final

September 2019



**Washington State Department of Transportation
Olympic Region
Olympia, Washington**

**WSDOT I-5 Tacoma Mall Boulevard Access
Feasibility Study**

September 2019

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OLYMPIC REGION

**I-5 TACOMA MALL BOULEVARD ACCESS
FEASIBILITY STUDY**

Approved by:



John Wynands
WSDOT Olympic Region Administrator

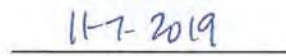


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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
OLYMPIC REGION

I-5 TACOMA MALL BOULEVARD ACCESS
FEASIBILITY STUDY

Study Limits: 130.2 to 133.0

This Feasibility Study has been completed in accordance with Section 550 of the February 2019
WSDOT *Design Manual*.

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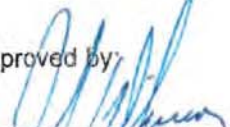
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Tacoma Mall Boulevard Feasibility Study

10/28/2019

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ARR	Access Revision Report
CD	collector-distributor
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
HOV	high-occupancy vehicle
I-5	Interstate 5
LOS	level of service
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
PDO	property damage only
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SRMP	State Route Milepost
TCC	Tacoma Community College
TSMO	Transportation System Management and Operations
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation

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The following individuals participated in the project team to evaluate feasibility of the Tacoma Mall Boulevard Project.

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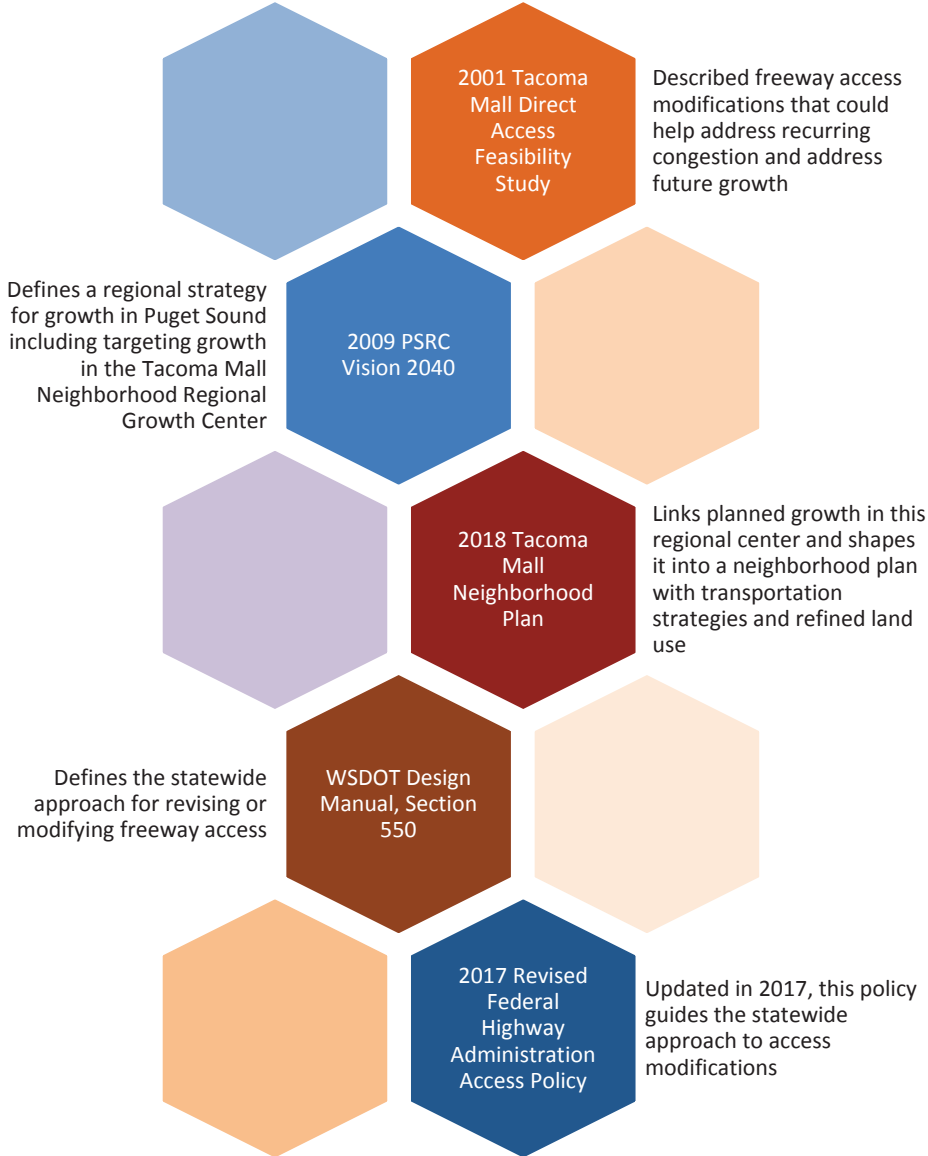
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Executive Summary

Background and History

This feasibility study is the result of coordinated efforts between the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), City of Tacoma, and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for improving access to the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood, which was designated as a Regional Growth Center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). This study has been completed in compliance with Section 550 of the WSDOT *Design Manual* (WSDOT, 2019a), which is based on FHWA policy, and is the incremental next step in investment and infrastructure planning to support the *Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan* (City of Tacoma, 2018a), which also builds on past studies of freeway facilities. Related documents that provide context for this study are shown in Exhibit ES-1.

Exhibit ES-1. Related Planning Documents



Study Purpose and Need Statement

To chart a course for this study and provide a guide for the future, agency stakeholder partners agreed that the project purpose should be to analyze transportation access to and from Interstate 5 (I-5) and the 575-acre Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center. The goal of this study, aligned with the requirements of WSDOT's Practical Solutions guidance (<https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/about/practical-solutions>), is to develop a set of solutions that:

- Manage congestion, reduce crash potential, and decrease queues on South 38th Street and South Steele Street between I-5 and Tacoma Mall Boulevard
- Support future land use projections forecasted in the Regional Growth Center to help ensure that the growth targets, vision, and other objectives of the *Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan* are achieved
- Improve travel reliability for all vehicles on the I-5 mainline within the Tacoma Mall study area
- Integrate modal travel choices consistent with planned projects in the subarea plan, including pedestrian, bicycle, and transit improvements
- Support regional growth objectives and policies (*Vision 2050* [PSRC, 2019], *Transportation 2040* [PSRC, 2010], and the Growth Management Act) focused on investments to increase multimodal transportation options that serve designated Regional Growth Centers

This study defined strategies that will fulfill three specific needs related to congestion, accommodating growth, and providing mobility needs.

Alternatives Considered and Screened

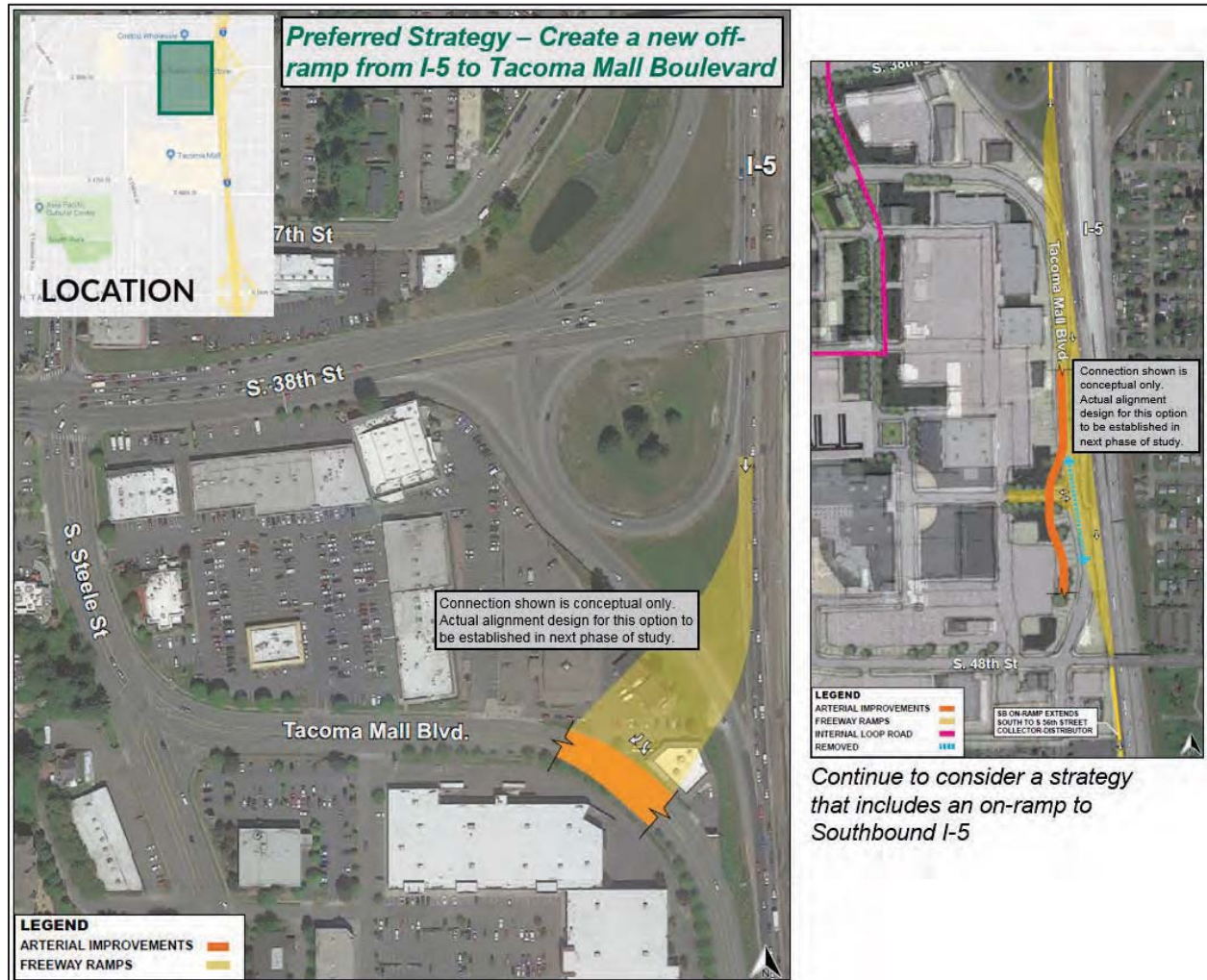
Through a rigorous analytical approach and with stakeholder partners, the project team defined a broad range of over 30 strategies to meet this need. The evaluation and screening approach included consideration of multimodal strategies and WSDOT's Practical Solutions process, which requires consideration of cost-effective strategies that balance the goals of state and local needs while engaging the public in the decision process. These strategies were evaluated and screened down to a single preferred strategy using future travel data as well as feedback from the public at two open house meetings. This study meets the requirements of Section 550 of the WSDOT *Design Manual for Access Revision Report*, and recommends that a modification of access should move forward.

Study Recommendation

The result and recommendation of this study is to continue development and analysis of a bifurcation of the existing southbound off-ramp from Southbound Interstate 5 (I-5) connecting to Tacoma Mall Boulevard to better distribute trips to the subarea. This strategy was viewed favorably by the public at an open house on August 20, 2019, because it distributes vehicle trips destined to the mall away from the South 38th Street and South Steele Street intersection. The strategy performed well against the study evaluation criteria based on technical analysis, and is the policy recommendation of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. A graphical representation of the recommended strategy is shown in Exhibit ES-2.

Stakeholders also recommended continuing consideration of some aspects of an alternative strategy that includes an on-ramp to I-5 southbound from Tacoma Mall Boulevard near South 48th Street.

Exhibit ES-2. Recommended Strategy



Future Study and Next Steps

While continuing future analysis of the recommended southbound off-ramp bifurcation strategy is currently unfunded, future study and development of a strategy would need to address environmental constraints as the design advances. Design refinements will be part of the Access Revision Report process.

The recommended consideration of a southbound on-ramp to I-5 from Tacoma Mall Boulevard north of South 48th Street is also not currently funded.

Carrying the recommended strategy and consideration forward to implementation would include the following steps:

- Complete an Access Revision Report to meet Section 550 of the WSDOT *Design Manual*
- Continue Design
- Complete Environmental Review
- Purchase Right of Way

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