

Chapter 1: Introduction

City Transportation Goals and Study Objectives

The City of Renton’s Comprehensive Plan establishes the city’s overall transportation goals and policies in the Transportation Element (see **Renton Transportation Goals** below). Rainier Avenue is one of the city’s critical transportation corridors serving the central Renton area, and faces existing operational problems and projected increased traffic congestion in the future. The adopted goal for the Rainier Avenue Corridor Transportation Study (“the Study”) is to

... comprehensively address traffic congestion, traffic safety, transit and high occupancy vehicle speeds, pedestrian circulation, and visual and urban design issues in this corridor.

The Study accomplished its stated objectives, established early in the planning process:

- ◆ To develop a set of transportation system improvements that will address the existing and future transportation (general traffic and transit) needs.
- ◆ To develop feasible transit improvements to enhance speed and reliability of transit services consistent with Sound Transit and King County Metro needs.
- ◆ To maintain and enhance economic activities.
- ◆ To increase safety by managing property access from Rainier Avenue.
- ◆ To prioritize the improvements.

Renton Transportation Goals

The City sets forth its overall transportation goals and policies in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan (amendments adopted in November 2004). The following goals are applicable to this project:

- ▶ Contribute to a balanced multi-modal transportation system through reasonable, planned, economically feasible arterial improvements that enhance HOV and transit operations, support adopted land plans, protect or improve business access and protect Renton’s neighborhoods.
- ▶ Maximize the use of transit in Renton by providing step-by-step transit improvements to produce regionally linked and locally oriented transit services and facilities needed to serve travel demand generated by Renton residents and businesses.
- ▶ Increase the person-carrying capacity of the Renton arterial system by the construction of improvements and the implementation of actions that facilitate the flow of HOVs into, out of, and through Renton.
- ▶ Maintain, enhance, and increase pedestrian and bicycle travel by providing both safe and convenient routes and storage for the commuting and recreating public.

STUDY AREA

The corridor study area runs north on Rainier Avenue South from Southwest 34th Street to Renton's north city limits, as shown in **Figure 1-1**. The primary study area falls between I-405 and Airport Way. However, this study also includes East Valley Road south of I-405 to Southwest 34th Street, in anticipation of several major WSDOT projects in the vicinity: reconstruction of the I-405/SR 167 interchange, and a new interchange on SR 167 in the vicinity of Southwest 34th Street. This study has also reviewed King County's West Hill Community Transportation Plan, which starts at the northern Renton City limits (see page 41 for findings related to this Plan). Finally, the study area includes parallel roadways, including Lind Avenue Southwest, Hardie Avenue Southwest, Shattuck Avenue South and Talbot Road South. (When this study was initiated, the study area was defined with the assumption that Rainier Avenue South would be connected with East Valley Road and a new SR 167 interchange at Southwest 34th Street on East Valley Road would be constructed. However, most recent discussions in 2005 between the City of Renton and WSDOT have resulted in changes to those assumptions.)



South project limits: vicinity of East Valley Road and SW 34th St. (photo facing south)



North project limits: North City Limits (photo facing south)

Figure 1-1. Rainier Avenue Corridor Study Area



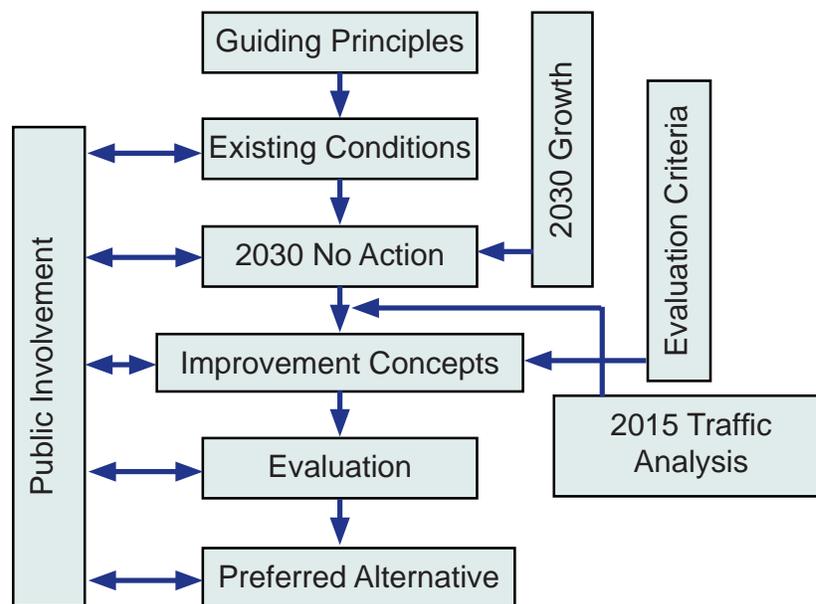
Planning Process

PARTICIPANTS

A core team of Transportation System Division and Economic Development, Neighborhoods, and Strategic Planning Department staff managed the project from start to finish, with direction from an Executive Committee of senior City management and project input from a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency steering committee. The steering committee included representatives from City departments, as well as affected agencies including Sound Transit, WSDOT and King County (see **Appendix 1-A** for Committee membership). The City worked closely with WSDOT staff to coordinate project assumptions and study recommendations with State plans for I-405 and SR 167 improvements. The City Council’s Transportation Committee provided key policy oversight as the Study evolved, with final approval from the City Council.

Figure 1-2 illustrates the process by which the project team developed its recommendations.

Figure 1-2. Study Process



PROJECT PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Study participants worked from a set of “guiding principles” to establish the planning assumptions for the study (see **Appendix 1-B**). Those principles provided a policy framework and study parameters with respect to issues such as land use assumptions, level of service policies, and assumptions about the regional transportation system (highways and transit service) that kept the project focused.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

City staff conducted numerous in-person briefings to businesses along the Rainier Corridor, in addition to presentations to the Greater Renton Chamber of Commerce, other business groups, and three public open houses. Residents, property owners and businesses in the project vicinity received three project newsletters, and all city residents received project updates via the City Source insert in the Renton Reporter newspaper (see **Appendix 1-C**). The public also had access to project updates via the city's web site and city staff received several suggestions and comments "on line." The project's web page URL is <http://www.ci.renton.wa.us/pw/transportor/rainier/rainier.htm>.



City of Renton

Rainier Avenue Transportation Study

Project Newsletter, Vol. 3, Number 1

Please Join Us
You are invited to attend the upcoming public open house to review the project team's preliminary recommendations for this important transportation corridor. The Mayor and City Council want to hear your thoughts about these recommendations before adopting a final plan later this year.

What's Been Happening?
Last June, we held our second open house to present the full range of ideas generated by city staff, partner agencies and the public. Subsequently, the project team projected traffic conditions in 2015 to help identify which projects would be needed in the short versus the long run.

Key objectives are to maintain and/or improve transit travel time through the Rainier Corridor, to improve pedestrian and vehicular safety on Rainier Avenue, and to enhance business vitality by improving the appearance of Rainier Avenue through Renton.

Study Recommendations
The project team has identified preliminary recommendations for a first phase of improvements for the corridor. Key elements are shown on Figure 1, including:

1. Safety and aesthetic improvements on Rainier Avenue S, including landscaped medians between S 2nd Street and S 4th Place
2. New transit lanes on Hardie Avenue SW from SW Sunset Boulevard to Rainier Avenue S
3. Sidewalk and street crossing improvements on Rainier Avenue S between S 2nd Street and S 4th Place.
4. Replacement of the Hardie Avenue SW railroad bridge
5. Northbound transit-only signal on Rainier Avenue S at Hardie Avenue SW
6. Improved access to Renton Center from Hardie Avenue SW

The Mayor and City Council will review public comment and adopt a final set of recommendations in 2005.

The Rainier Avenue Transportation Study

The Rainier Avenue Transportation Study will produce a master plan for proposed improvements to the Rainier Corridor, including:

- Improved transit services
- Reduced traffic congestion
- Improved safe access to and from businesses along the corridor
- Intersection improvements
- Enhanced pedestrian safety and comfort

The study area encompasses 3.5 miles of Rainier Avenue (including East Valley Road) from the proposed new ramps on SR 167 in the vicinity of SW 34th Street to the north city limits.

Figure 1. Study Recommendations: Phase 1

Note: Some buildings and details are not shown to simplify details of mapping.