

Background

5 Why is the County considering a new corridor?

The area south of Bonney Lake and north of the City of Orting has been designated as the Orting Plateau. This area is shown on Exhibit 2. As land use plans for this sparsely developed area are implemented as shown on Exhibit 3, the existing roadway facilities will not adequately serve the east-west travel demand.

6 Why won’t the existing east-west roadways be adequate?

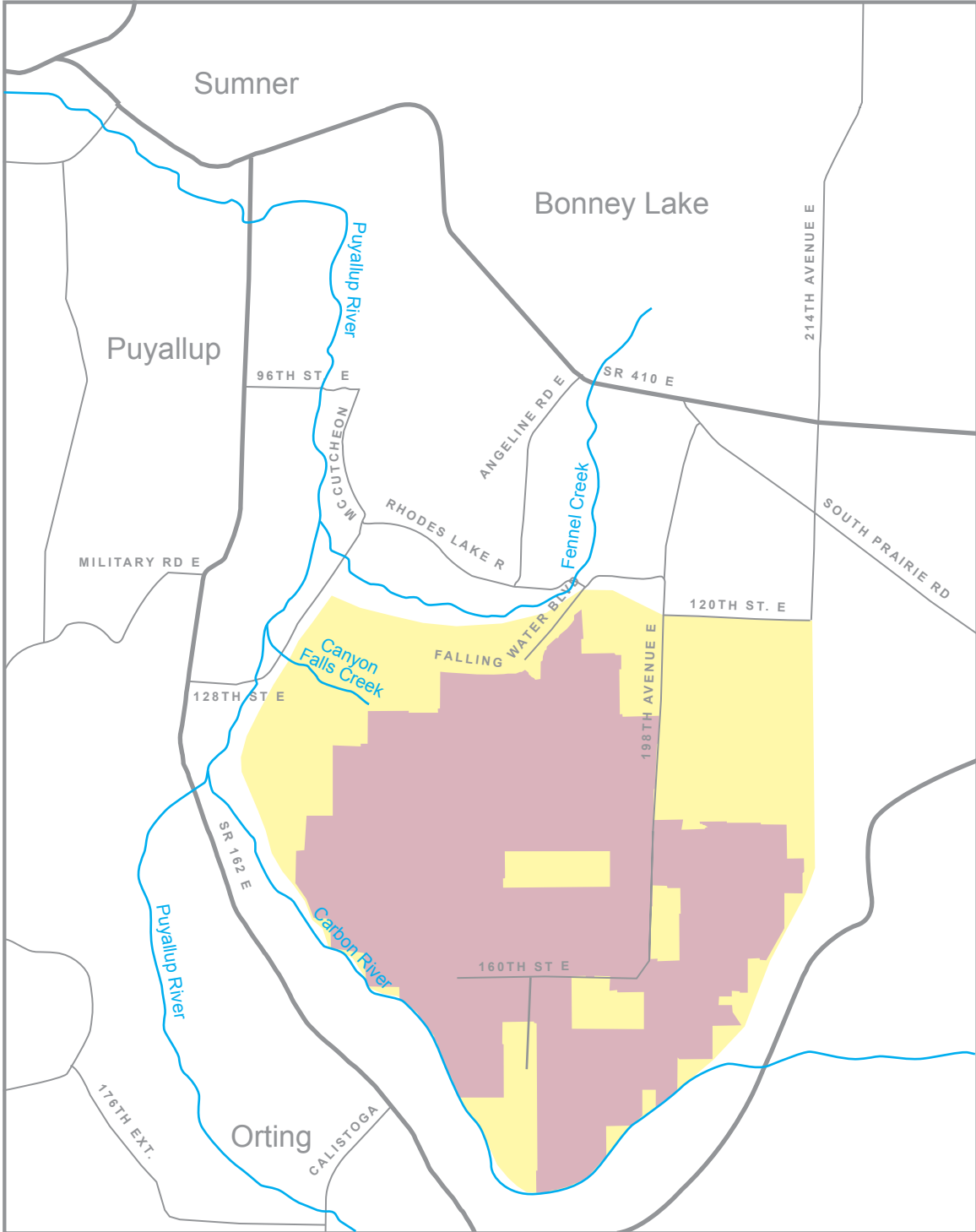
Today, only two routes accommodate east-west travel between the Plateau and the areas of Pierce County to the west of the Plateau: SR 410 and the current Rhodes Lake Road East. SR 410 is becoming increasingly congested, as are the roadways that feed Plateau traffic to it, such as 198th Avenue East and South Prairie Road East. Traffic projections indicate that SR 410 will remain extremely congested even if WSDOT is able to add HOV lanes in the future. Increasingly, Plateau traffic will need to use Rhodes Lake Road East as an east-west option.

Rhodes Lake Road East is currently a steep, winding two-lane road. In several locations its geometry does not meet current design standards. In its current condition it is not suitable to serve as a major arterial, but given its location, travel demand will force its use as an arterial unless an alternate route is developed.

7 Will this new corridor accommodate all of the future travel needs?

No. This new corridor will not completely fulfill the travel demand created by the current and new development in the next twenty years. The Rhodes Lake Road Corridor Study DEIS noted that the corridor “would be a substantial first step toward meeting the ultimate east-west travel demand to and from the development on the plateau, but would likely need to be supplemented with other facilities in the future” (Page 1-3, Rhodes Lake Road DEIS).

Exhibit 2
Orting Plateau



- Orting Plateau
- Cascadia
Employment Based Planned Community

8 Why is the east-west travel demand expected to increase so much?

Eastern Pierce County has experienced rapid growth and corresponding pressure on its transportation network. This growth will continue as land use decisions by Pierce County (the County) and the incorporated cities in east Pierce County are implemented. In its 1994 Comprehensive Plan, the County identified the Orting Plateau as an area which would accommodate a significant amount of the population growth anticipated for the succeeding decades.

When fully developed, much of the Orting Plateau (also called the Bonney Lake Plateau) will be taken up by the Cascadia Employment-Based Planned Community. The master plan for Cascadia calls for nearly 10,000 jobs and over 6,000 homes. However, the Plateau will see a significant amount of residential development in addition to Cascadia. Exhibit 3 lists the major developments which are currently planned. Some of these are already partially developed. In order to illustrate the magnitude of change on the Plateau, we have used 2002 as a baseline year representing an essentially predeveloped condition.

Exhibit 3

Estimated Housing Units and Employment in the Orting Plateau – 2002 to 2030

	Development	Housing Units	Employment
	2002 “Existing”	1,004	73
Development from 2002–2030	Cascadia (EBPC)	6,440	9,550
	Falling Water	979	0
	Plateau 465 (Investco)	2,000	0
	Other Developments	904	69
	Growth from 2002	10,323	9,619
	2030 Orting Plateau Totals	11,327	9,692

9 What initiated the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor Study?

Recognizing that the existing roadway network would not be adequate for future traffic volumes from development on the Plateau, in 2001 the Pierce County Council passed a Resolution of Intent (Resolution No. R2001-80) to establish a new County roadway, between 198th Avenue East and SR 162, in the vicinity of Rhodes Lake Road East. The resolution directed the County Engineer to study the potential corridor and report back to the County Council. The Rhodes Lake Road Corridor Study process began in 2003, and examined several different alternatives to accommodate the future east-west travel demand to and from the Plateau.

10 What alternatives were considered in the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor Study (RLRCS)?

The alternatives included a Baseline (no build) alternative, improvement of the existing Rhodes Lake Road East corridor, and new routes tying to SR 162 in the “mid valley” as far south as 128th Street East and as far north as 96th Street East. At the request of residents in the mid valley, the County considered routes beyond the limits of Resolution No. R2001-80, such as a South Plateau Connector into downtown Orting, and improvement of the 214th/218th Avenue East corridor around the east and north sides of Lake Tapps.

11 What documents were prepared as part of the RLRCS?

The following documents were prepared as part of the Study:

- Phase 1 Resource Notebook – February 2004, (summarizing conditions in the general study area)
- Phase 2 Alternatives Screening and Evaluation Summary Report – February 2004 (summarizing initial alternatives development and screening)
- Expanded Scoping Documentation Report – March 2006 (summarizing evaluation of additional options beyond the original study area)

- Draft Programmatic E.I.S. – June 2007
- Final Programmatic E.I.S. – January 2008

12 How was the recommended corridor selected from all the ones considered?

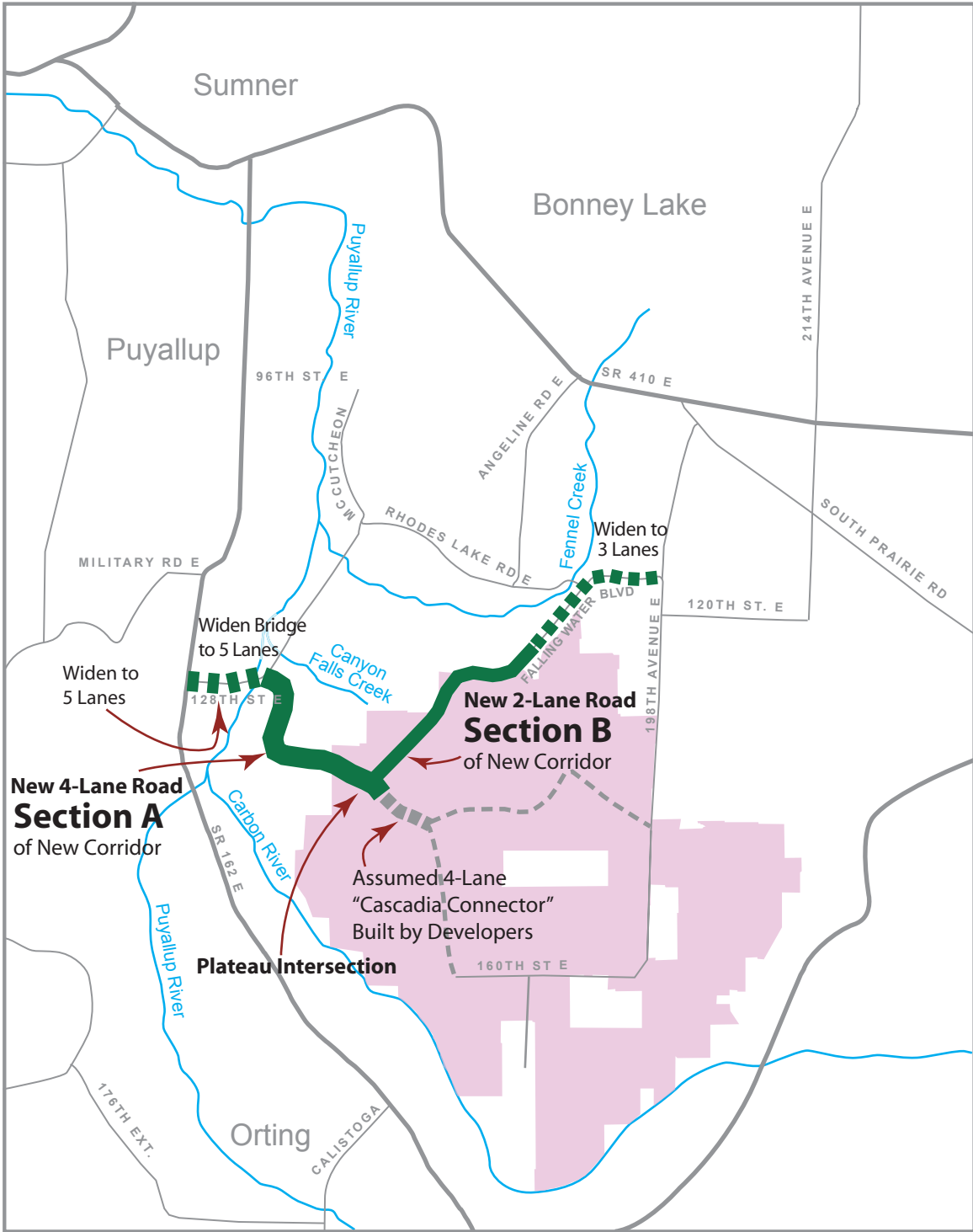
Four key issues were concluded in the Study:

- The no-build alternative would not be acceptable with the planned land use, because of severe congestion on the Plateau, including Rhodes Lake Road East.
- Improving the existing Rhodes Lake Road East to Major Arterial standards would be very costly, have high wetland impacts, and be less effective for mobility than other options.
- The mid-valley corridor options would be most effective for meeting the future east-west travel demand to and from the Plateau. These mid-valley options included Alternative B (a new road off the Plateau with a new river crossing and roadway across the valley to connect into the Military Road East/SR 162 intersection) and Alternative D (a new road off the Plateau connecting to the existing Puyallup River Bridge at 128th Street East).
- Alternative D offers the best balance of accommodating travel demand while minimizing impacts to people and the natural environment.

The most recent document produced in the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor Study is a Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), issued on January 11, 2008. This EIS formally recommends Alternative D as the preferred alternative, as shown on Exhibit 4.

Exhibit 4

Rhodes Lake Road East Corridor Components



 Cascadia Employment Based Planned Community

13 What other roadway improvements were assumed in the corridor analysis?

The Alternative D corridor connects an existing road (128th Street East) with a recently built road (Falling Water Boulevard East) to create a complete corridor between SR 162 and 198th Avenue East. The new portion of the corridor would skirt the northern edge of the Cascadia Employment-Based Planned Community (EBPC). The corridor analysis assumes a “Plateau Intersection” that is essentially a “fork in the road” for traffic coming up to the Plateau, as shown on Exhibit 4. Traffic could turn to the northwest to reach Falling Water Boulevard, or continue southeast into the EBPC. The corridor analysis assumes that developers will extend a major road from the Plateau Intersection into the EBPC, which would be the main generator of traffic on the new corridor. This privately-constructed roadway has been labeled the “Cascadia Connector” for purposes of this report.

The Rhodes Lake Road DEIS assumed a number of other significant roadway network improvements in 2030 (see Appendix C – Assumed 2030 Baseline Road Improvements). It should be noted that the FEIS for this project also analyzed the impacts of only two lanes being constructed on SR 162 and no HOV lanes on SR 410.

It is understood that while the existing 128th Street E is not a part of the subject establishment, it would carry higher volumes of traffic as a result of its linkage to the plateau. Additional lanes on this road and the bridge across the river would be needed to accommodate this traffic. The widening of 128th Street E should be limited to an additional lane in each direction with the possible addition of left turn lanes where needed. This roadway is within the designated rural area of the county and should be not be widened beyond a 4-lane road in order to maintain the community’s rural character.

Anticipated future volumes will require additional lanes on 128th Street East and widening of the existing bridge over the Puyallup River. The volumes may also justify adding a third lane on the existing Rhodes Lake Road East to add a two-way left turn lane. These improvements will be necessary at some point, though they would fall beyond the limits of this corridor establishment.