

Implementation Issues

17 Where does corridor establishment fit in the overall process of building a new roadway corridor?

Exhibit 6 describes the process for answering the following questions:

1. Is a new corridor necessary?
2. Where is the best location for the corridor?
3. What are the environmental impacts of the corridor?
4. What mitigation should be implemented?

If the County Council decides to establish this corridor as recommended, Questions 1 and 2 above will have been answered. The third and fourth questions about corridor impacts and mitigation will require additional environmental and engineering analysis. To date, the County has completed only the programmatic, or corridor-level, Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). This is the document that recommends the route shown on Exhibit 2 as the best corridor location. However, the current level of engineering and environmental analysis is adequate only to compare different corridor locations. Additional analysis will be needed to further define how the new roadway would be built, what the impacts would be, and what mitigation would be appropriate.

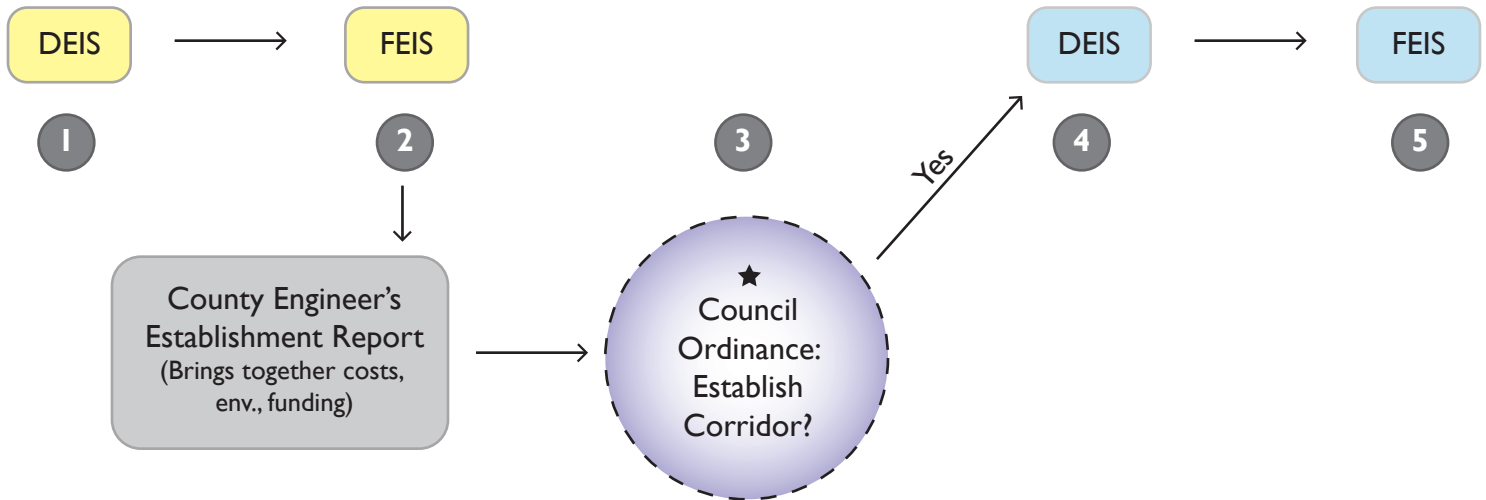
Exhibit 6

Environmental Documentation

(Purpose is to evaluate environmental effects to inform decision-making)

Corridor Level

★ Establish Corridor



- 5% Design

vs.

- 30% Design

- Comparative Impacts

vs.

- Specific Impacts

- Select Best Corridor

vs.

- Select Best Alignment in Corridor

- Establish Corridor

vs.

- Define Specific Mitigation Measures

18 What elements of the new corridor need to be further defined?

There are several elements of the new connection from 128th Street East to Falling Water Boulevard East that need further engineering detail and definition to determine how to build the road with the least cost and impact. These include:

- How to intersect the new corridor with McCutcheon Road East/128th Street East
- The best alignment for the “hill climb” up the east wall of the valley
- How to cross or relocate Tacoma Water Department’s transmission main
- Where to locate the “Plateau Intersection” with the Cascadia Connector
- Where to cross the headwaters of Canyon Falls Creek
- How to intersect with Falling Water Boulevard East

19 What improvements beyond the new corridor need to be further defined?

As shown on Exhibit 4, the new corridor would be part of the network of roads accommodating travel to and from the Plateau. The traffic analysis done for the corridor-level EIS examined conditions in the year 2030. For this longer planning horizon, the analysis assumed that several planned transportation improvements in the vicinity of the new road would be in place by 2030. These related future improvements are described in Appendix C. However, it is not likely that all these improvements will be complete before a new Rhodes Lake Corridor is constructed. For that reason, it is necessary to consider how the corridor would affect traffic patterns in the year that it opens.

In order to define the impacts of constructing a new corridor and opening it to traffic, the project-level EIS will consider additional questions. The following questions are likely to be

addressed, for both “opening day” of a new corridor, and for the longer planning horizon of 2030:

- What widening will be needed on 128th Street East?
- How should that widening take place?
- How should the bridge over the Puyallup River be widened or replaced?
- What improvements will be needed on SR 162?
- What improvements will be needed on Military Road East?
- What improvements will be needed on Falling Water Boulevard East?
- What improvements will be needed on existing Rhodes Lake Road East?
- When are further improvements needed?
- Are there other traffic impacts that will result from the new corridor?

Many of the potential impacts from the new corridor would affect existing roadways such as 128th Street East, which is located in a designated rural area. Appendix D examines concepts for minimizing the impacts of roadway capacity projects in rural areas. This material was adapted from an appendix of the Final Programmatic EIS for the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor.

20 What impacts and mitigation measures will be considered in the Project-level EIS?

Every EIS is required to investigate a standard list of potential impacts to the natural and built environments. However, each project has areas of particular concern, which merit special focus in the EIS. Because of its location, the potential new Rhodes Lake Road East corridor has raised a unique set of concerns. The planned land use changes on the Plateau are of a scale unprecedented for Pierce County. The associated change in traffic volumes and the scale of the proposed roadway facilities have understandably been a source of concern to residents in the vicinity of the new corridor. The recently

adopted Alderton-McMillin Community Plan, the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor Study Open Houses, the Project Leadership Team forums, and open community input have highlighted the following concerns:

- Traffic Volumes – Peak hour traffic on 128th Street East is estimated to increase more than ten-fold to almost 3,800 by the year 2030. This will result in residential uses fronting a busy major arterial. There is also widespread concern about the additional traffic on roads such as SR 162 and Military Road East that are already congested.
- Community Character – The Puyallup Valley is a relatively undeveloped, relatively quiet area with mostly agricultural or large-lot residential uses. The valley is part of the rural area of Pierce County and is anticipated to remain rural. The valley contains the most productive agricultural soils in the county and Pierce County recently adopted the Agricultural Strategic Plan which sets a commitment and course of action that not only preserves prime agricultural farmland but builds the local farm economy as well. Local residents are concerned that this community character will be marred by congestion, noise, and visual impacts. Adopted policies in the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan and the Alderton-McMillin Community Plan were developed to ensure this community remains rural with a productive agricultural economy.
- Agricultural Impacts – The direct impacts to agricultural lands include approximately five acres within the proposed new corridor limits classified as Agricultural Resource Land (ARL), although most of this is steep forested land not used for farming. It is likely that an additional one to two acres of ARL or Rural Farm land along 128th Street East could be disturbed by future widening to accommodate travel demands. However, it is recognized there are indirect impacts of the road, such as increased traffic congestion that makes it more difficult for farmers to get their local goods to market.
- Conversion of Rural Land Use – The high volumes of traffic anticipated on both 128th Street East and SR 162 have raised concerns that land in the valley will be

attractive for commercial or other more intensive uses, and that land use will be changed in response to pressure by developers.

Recognizing the potential impacts of a new corridor, the Pierce County Executive issued a memorandum to the County Council with his perspective on strategies to fulfill the intent of the Alderton-McMillin Community Plan and address the mobility issues of the area. This memorandum, dated November 14, 2007, is found in Appendix E.

21 What are the principles of mitigation to consider?

The County Executive's memorandum mentioned above, along with the Draft and Final Programmatic EIS for the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor, suggest a number of specific principles of mitigation that should be considered in the analysis and design of the new corridor. These include:

- Minimize roadway cross section (number of lanes/width)
- Minimize “spillover” roadway illumination
- Provide landscape buffers to minimize noise and visual impact
- Explore other methods to minimize the visual impact of this new corridor
- Implement potential access management tools, including possible purchase of development rights and access rights
- Enhance the County's transportation concurrency systems to ensure the adequacy of the county road facilities as new growth comes
- Coordinate with WSDOT to update their Route Development Plan for SR 162

The environmental impacts of the new corridor are of special concern to the local community, and will need special focus in the project-level EIS and may require addressing within the development process. However there are other issues such as the river crossing and the earthwork needed on the hill climb to

the Plateau that will also merit particular focus. The scope of the project-level EIS will be determined in the future if the County Council decides to establish a new corridor and proceed with its implementation.

The Final Programmatic EIS for the Rhodes Lake Road Corridor discussed a number of mitigation measures at a conceptual level of detail. The Mitigation Summary from that document is included as Appendix F of this County Engineer’s Report. The entire Draft and Final Programmatic EIS documents are included electronically at the end of this County Engineer’s Report.

22 How will mitigation measures be incorporated into the design and construction of a new corridor?

At the current early stage of corridor planning, it is not possible to determine how or whether a particular mitigation measure should be incorporated into the roadway design. Mitigation strategies identified in the programmatic Draft and Final EIS and the County Executive’s November 14, 2007, memorandum will be considered in any project-level EIS. The project-level EIS will also consider relevant policies of the Alderton-McMillin Community Plan. The project-level EIS will include additional engineering analysis to better define the alignment and lane configuration of the corridor. This will allow evaluation of how and where a particular mitigation measure such as landscape buffers could be effectively incorporated. Specific mitigation measures adopted in a final project-level EIS would be included in the design and construction of the new corridor.