

Pacific Avenue | State Route 7 (SR 7) BRT
Tacoma, Washington
Small Starts Project Development
(Rating Assigned November 2020)

Summary Description	
Proposed Project:	Bus Rapid Transit 14.3 Miles, 30 Stations
Total Capital Cost (\$YOE):	\$170.00 Million
Section 5309 CIG Share (\$YOE):	\$75.20 Million (44.2%)
Annual Operating Cost (opening year 2024):	\$1.13 Million
Current Year Ridership Forecast (2017):	3,600 Daily Linked Trips 1,122,400 Annual Linked Trips
Horizon Year Ridership Forecast (2040):	5,900 Daily Linked Trips 1,845,200 Annual Linked Trips
Overall Project Rating:	Medium-High
Project Justification Rating:	Medium
Local Financial Commitment Rating:	High

Project Description: Pierce Transit proposes to construct bus rapid transit (BRT) along Pacific Avenue/State Route 7 (SR 7) from downtown Tacoma south to the Spanaway Walmart Supercenter. The project includes the construction of 5.6 miles of dedicated transit lanes, purchase of 17 60-foot articulated BRT vehicles, intersection and pedestrian access improvements, off board fare collection, and fiber optic network and transit signal priority system installation. Service is planned to operate every 10 minutes during weekday peak periods, every 15 minutes during weekday off-peak periods, every 30 minutes on weekday evenings, and every 20 minutes on weekends. Service is planned to operate for a span of 20 hours on weekdays and 18 hours on weekends.

Project Purpose: The corridor connects downtown Tacoma to key destinations, such as the Greater Tacoma Convention Center, the University of Washington Tacoma, the multimodal Tacoma Dome Station, Pacific Lutheran University, Parkland Transit Center, and regional parks. The corridor is currently served by Pierce Transit's busiest fixed-route bus line which experiences declining travel speeds and service reliability due to growing traffic congestion. The project is intended to increase transit travel speeds by using exclusive or semi exclusive bus lanes in congested areas, provide vital linkages to other transportation services including Sound Transit and Amtrak, and enhance safety and security for transit patrons.

Project Development History, Status and Next Steps: The locally preferred alternative (LPA) was included into the region's fiscally constrained long-range transportation plan in May 2018. Pierce Transit adopted the LPA in July 2018. The project entered Small Starts Project Development in August 2018. Pierce Transit anticipates completing the environmental review process with receipt of a Categorical Exclusion from FTA in early 2021, receiving a Small Starts Grant Agreement in late-2021, and starting revenue service in September 2024.

Significant Changes Since Last Evaluation (November 2019): Due to refinement of the project design, the number of stations decreased from 32 to 30 stations. The cost increased

from \$150.0 million to \$170.0 million due to the addition of two roundabouts, installation of fiber optic cable, utility relocations, right-of-way acquisition for sidewalks, contingency, escalation, and contractor fees. Pierce Transit increased the amount of CIG funds being requested from \$59.9 million to \$75.2 million, increasing the CIG share from 40.0 percent to 44.2 percent.

Locally Proposed Financial Plan		
<u>Source of Funds</u>	<u>Total Funds (\$million)</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Federal: Section 5309 CIG	\$75.20	44.2%
Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program	\$8.44	5.0%
FHWA Flexible Funds (Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program)	\$4.18	2.5%
State: State Budget Line Item	\$15.00	8.8%
Washington State Department of Transportation Regional Mobility Grant	\$4.20	2.5%
Local: Sound Transit Sales, Rental Car and Motor Vehicle Excise Tax Revenues and Bonds	\$60.00	35.3%
Pierce Transit Capital Reserve Funds	\$2.98	1.7%
Total:	\$170.00	100.0%

NOTE: The financial plan reflected in this table has been developed by the project sponsor and does not reflect a commitment by DOT or FTA. The sum of the figures may differ from the total as listed due to rounding.

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LAND USE RATING: Medium

The land use rating reflects population density within one-half mile of proposed stations, employment served by the line, and the share of legally binding affordability restricted (LBAR) housing in the station areas compared to the share in the surrounding county.

- The station areas have an average population density of 4,100 persons per square mile, corresponding to a Medium-Low rating according to FTA benchmarks. An estimated 40,000 jobs would be served by the project, which corresponds to a Medium-Low rating. Daily parking fees in the Tacoma central business district average \$12, which corresponds to a Medium-High rating. The ratio of station area to county LBAR housing is 3.19, corresponding to a High rating.
- Downtown Tacoma is the densest portion of the corridor, with a university campus, medical centers, museums, and a sports arena. Much of the rest of the corridor contains low-density suburban development, including strip malls, low-rise apartment buildings, and single-family homes. Big-box retail and undeveloped land surround the southern terminus in Spanaway.
- The pedestrian environment in Downtown Tacoma is generally very high quality. The pedestrian environment deteriorates going south with frequent driveway accesses, very long blocks, and some missing curb ramps, sidewalks, and crosswalks. The southern end of the corridor lacks sidewalks.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RATING: Medium

Transit-Supportive Plans and Policies: Medium

- *Transit-Supportive Corridor Policies:* Pierce County, the City of Tacoma, and university plans support transit-friendly development downtown and immediately along Pacific Avenue/SR 7. Outside of downtown, plans are not supportive of transit-friendly development beyond the first one or two blocks. Draft updates to the plan that applies to much of the corridor outside of the City of Tacoma would increase minimum densities.
- *Supportive Zoning Near Transit Stations:* Base commercial and mixed-use zoning in downtown Tacoma supports development at Low to Medium-Low densities per FTA benchmarks, but with design feature bonuses or transfer of development rights (TDR), densities in the Medium-High to High range are permitted. Elsewhere, allowed densities are in the Medium-High to High range within one or two blocks on either side of the corridor, but residential densities behind that are less dense, in the Medium-Low range.
- *Tools to Implement Land Use Policies:* Incentives for transit-oriented development (TOD) include height bonuses in Tacoma for transit-supportive features, a regional TDR program, and a regional TOD fund. The City of Tacoma has engaged the development community through requests for joint development proposals, one-on-one meetings, and technical assistance. Pierce County has undertaken extensive outreach to update its community plan for much of the corridor.

Performance and Impacts of Policies: Medium

- *Performance of Land Use Policies:* Recent and proposed developments in downtown Tacoma show transit-supportive densities and uses. Outside of downtown Tacoma, there is less evidence of transit-supportive development proposals.
- *Potential Impact of Transit Investment on Regional Land Use:* Significant vacant and underutilized land is present throughout the corridor. Zoning and the market are very supportive of TOD in downtown Tacoma, where significant population and employment growth is anticipated by 2040. Population growth outside of Tacoma is expected to lag significantly behind the metropolitan area's rate.

Tools to Maintain or Increase Share of Affordable Housing: Medium

- Corridor-specific affordable housing supply is well documented, but corridor-specific needs are not. Tools and strategies to preserve and increase affordable housing are extensive and include revolving loan funds, density/height bonuses, tax exemptions, programs for non-profit developers, and specific incentives for providing units for very- and extremely- low-income households. However, while there is currently a significant supply of affordable housing, many units' restrictions are set to expire by 2025.



Pierce County, Washington

Figure 1. Project Map

Legend

- PT HCT Stations
- PT HCT Corridor
- City Boundaries
- Spanaway Census Tracts
- Waterbody



Station Segments

- Downtown Tacoma
- South Tacoma
- Parkland
- Spanaway

Transportation Network

- Interstate Route
- State Route
- Railroads
- Roads
- Tacoma Link
- Tacoma Link TCC Extension
- Tacoma Link TCC Proposed Station
- Tacoma Dome Link Extension
- Tacoma Dome Link Proposed Station

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Miles

