No. 1

Sound Transit/WSDOT Re-Alignment

ISSUE SUMMARY

Submitted by: Environmental Coordination Team (Perry Weinberg)

Date: August 16, 2000

Action requested Program Action Team concurrence

Project(s) (if applicable): Regional Express Star Lake (272nd/SR 99)
Regional Express Federal Way (S.320th and 23rd Ave. S.)

ISSUE: For projects that comply with air quality standards on the date of opening but where modeling shows there will be an air quality violation sometime thereafter, must appropriate mitigation be provided at the time the project is built to address the future air quality problem or can the mitigation be deferred until such time as it is actually needed?

BACKGROUND: The air quality analysis for both the Federal Way and Star Lake projects involved modeling for the year of opening (2005) and a horizon year of 2020. In 2005, the projects will be in compliance with air quality standards. In 2020, however, the modeling indicates the carbon monoxide (CO) standard at one intersection for each project will be exceeded. This exceedance will occur with or without the projects, but will be made worse by the projects. To comply with air quality conformity requirements under the Clean Air Act, mitigation would be required to ensure the CO standard is met. This would involve certain traffic-related improvements, such as lane splits, through lanes, and/or dedicated left-turn lanes.

Since the projects meet air conformity in the year of opening, and due to the cost of the mitigation, Sound Transit proposed to defer the mitigation and to re-model the air quality analysis in 2005 after the projects are implemented. There is a chance that the mitigation will not be necessary based on improved air quality and/or a new regulatory model. This approach was acceptable to the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and to the FTA. WSDOT and FHWA, however, typically require air quality mitigation to be implemented concurrent with the projects and expressed concerns about whether Sound Transit would be around to implement the mitigation at a later time and whether Sound Transit would have sufficient money to implement the mitigation later. FTA suggested that it can condition grant awards to ensure the mitigation is implemented in the future if necessary. WSDOT suggested that Sound Transit consider programming funds for the future mitigation so that they would be available if necessary.

DECISION: Environmental staff at Sound Transit, WSDOT, FHWA, and FTA have agreed that it is acceptable to defer the mitigation as proposed. Remodeling will be conducted in 2005 with the approved regulatory model at that time (this could, for example, mean using MOBILE 6 instead of MOBILE 5a). FTA will require the mitigation to be implemented if necessary as part of its grant award. Sound Transit has committed to set aside sufficient project funds to implement the mitigation should it be required after the remodeling in 2005.

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