



Current Study Status – Winter 2008

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) continues to work with local jurisdictions and agencies to study Clark County's future high capacity transit (HCT) options. The Clark County HCT System Study is working toward a final System Plan of recommendations for the future HCT service that will best serve Clark County residents. This information sheet provides an update on the study's status, recent study milestones, and other important developments. Further details are available on the study website at <http://rtc.wa.gov/hct>.

Study Purpose

Clark County has grown significantly over the past 25 years and will continue to grow, bringing economic benefits as well as increased traffic congestion and travel delays. The Clark County HCT System Study's purpose is to identify a high capacity transit system that provides efficient and high quality transit service connecting county residents with where they want to go.

Study Update

Since the HCT System Study began over a year ago, the study team has collaborated with the study's Task Force and Steering Committee and the RTC Board of Directors to complete a number of tasks. In the spring of 2007, they developed and adopted the study's goals and objectives to guide the assessment of potential HCT modes and travel corridors. The goals and objectives became the foundation for the criteria used to narrow the modes and corridors to those best suited for use in Clark County.

The study team also conducted a travel market analysis to identify the most promising corridors for potential development of an HCT system. In the summer of 2007, using the travel market analysis and other criteria, the study reached a major milestone by narrowing the potential modes and corridors. The modes carried forward for further consideration included bus rapid transit (BRT), BRT Lite, commuter rail, light rail transit (LRT), and streetcar. The corridors carried forward for further consideration included I-5/Hwy 99, I-205, SR-14/Mill Plain, SR-500/Fourth Plain, and Chelatchie Prairie Railroad.

Possible HCT Modes

After studying many modes of transit, the study team narrowed the field to those modes that best fit Clark County's transit needs. The following modes are being evaluated for possible inclusion in the final HCT System Plan:

Bus rapid transit (BRT) – BRT is a strategy to reduce travel time for bus riders and improve bus efficiency in congested corridors. BRT would operate in an exclusive lane for buses. In addition, BRT includes signal preemption, in-line station, and would have a distinct brand identity.

BRT "lite" – BRT "lite" is bus service that operates mixed with traffic, but includes improvements to increase bus reliability. Other improvements could include bus priority at traffic signals or queue jumps at intersections.

Light rail transit – Urban rail systems powered by electricity that operates on its own exclusive track. Would include in-line stations and would have a distinct brand identity.

Streetcar – Streetcar transit is similar to LRT, but operates in shared vehicle lanes in city streets. It uses electrically powered rail cars.

Commuter rail – Transit service using an existing heavy rail line connecting outer areas with a downtown area or other major destination. Includes fewer stops and best serves longer trips.



Bus Rapid Transit

Possible HCT Alignments

The study team is currently sharing technical analysis of the transit corridors and alignments with the study Task Force, Steering Committee, and the general public. The team has identified priority system plan strategies for implementation before 2030 and other options for future analysis after 2030. The system strategy map on the opposite page shows these possible HCT options and has been approved by the Task Force, Steering Committee, and the RTC Board of Directors.

Proposed Mid-Term HCT (2030)

- *I-5/Hwy 99 (Lincoln to Salmon Creek)* - Continue to study transit options traveling in an exclusive lane or mixed with traffic.
- *I-205 (Columbia River to Salmon Creek)* - Continue to study bus rapid transit along I-205 and possible conversion to light rail in the long-term.
- *Fourth Plain Blvd (from Vancouver on Fourth Plain Blvd, ending on Fourth Plain Blvd or SR 503)* - Focus on HCT improvements on Fourth Plain Blvd and continue to study transit options traveling in an exclusive lane or mixed with traffic.
- *Mill Plain (ending at Fishers Landing)* - Continue to study bus rapid transit and bus rapid transit “lite” options.

Proposed Long-Term HCT (beyond 2030)

(These are options that could be incorporated into the long-term vision and may become viable in the future, but do not warrant further study at this time)

- *I-5/Hwy 99 (Salmon Creek to 219th Street)* - Continue to study transit options traveling in an exclusive lane or mixed with traffic.
- *SR 14* - Continue to study bus rapid transit or bus rapid transit “lite” options and possible extension of an exclusive transit lane on SR 14.
- *SR 500* - Possible extension of an exclusive transit lane on SR 500.
- *Chelatchie Prairie* - Preserve corridor for future commuter rail service by identifying commuter service needs and ensuring that trail and freight rail use do not preclude future commuter service.

Alignment and Mode Recommendations

Having narrowed the modes and corridors, the study team is in the final stages of their detailed corridor and alignment analysis. They will use an evaluation matrix to prioritize which corridors will provide a long term plan for a potential HCT system for Clark County. The evaluation matrix uses the study goals and objectives to evaluate each possible corridor and possible alignment.

The following are the study goals:

- Enhance overall transportation opportunities for Clark County residents and businesses
- Provide transit riders with an accessible, efficient and well-connected regional transit system
- Support a vibrant and sustainable Clark County economy
- Support livable communities
- Support a healthy environment
- Develop a system that can be funded and demonstrates stewardship of public funds
- Provide for the long-term viability of the HCT System Plan

Next Steps

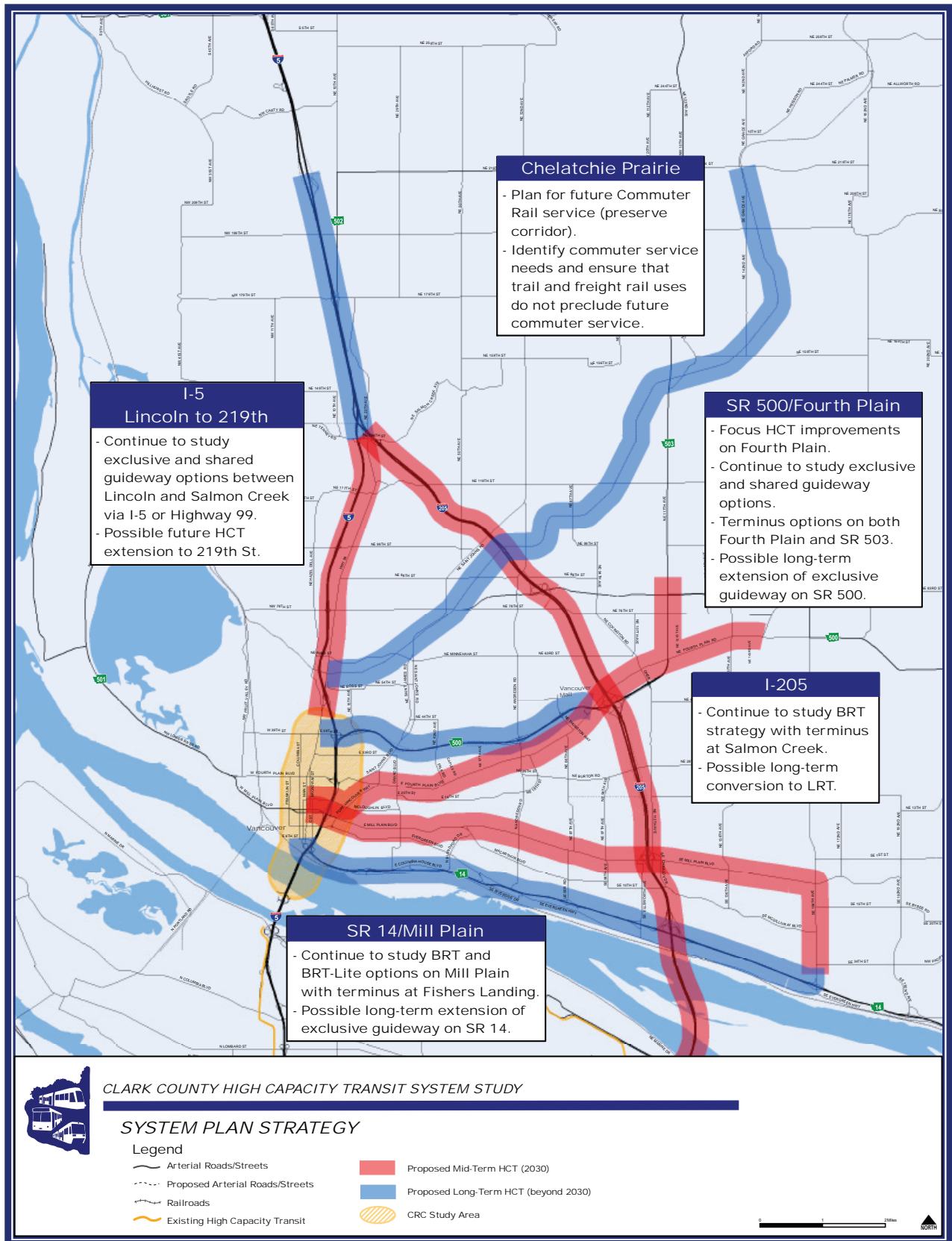
After reviewing the proposed corridors and modes using the evaluation matrix and input received from the Task Force, Steering Committee, and general public, the study team will begin to analyze system plan elements during the spring 2008. They will:

- Match selected corridors with the modes that are the most promising
- Develop a final System Plan that outlines the HCT options that address Clark County’s future transportation needs

The final System Plan will be a comprehensive plan for Clark County and will include:

- Potential HCT modes and alignments within those corridors
- Identified priority corridor(s) to move forward in an Alternative Analysis
- Recommended HCT policies and other corridors for further analysis

This image shows the travel corridors and possible alignments the study team is currently evaluating.



Columbia River Crossing & C-TRAN Coordination

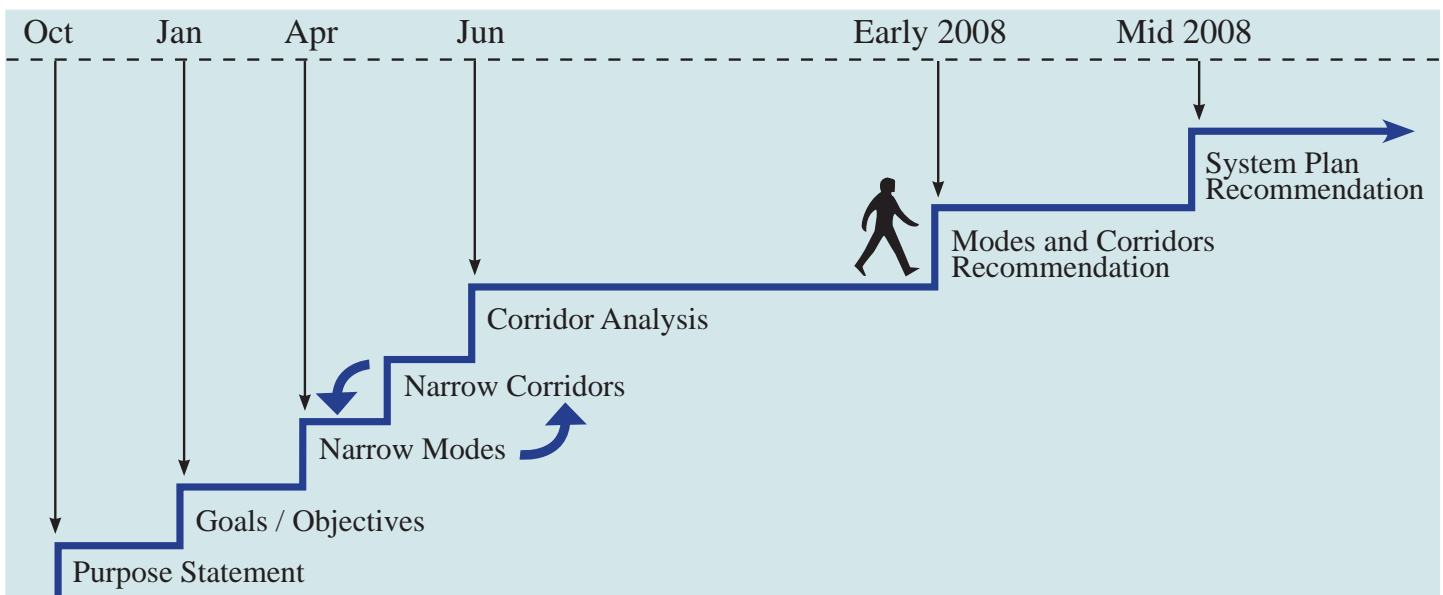
The Clark County HCT System Study continues to coordinate with the Columbia River Crossing (CRC) Project and C-TRAN to plan an effective regional transit system. CRC is working to improve highway capacity and transit service in the I-5 corridor across the Columbia River. C-TRAN will provide the crucial local connections for any future HCT services in Clark County.

CRC plans to release a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) in March 2008. The DEIS will include transit alternatives designed to reduce congestion on I-5 from SR 500 in Vancouver to Columbia Boulevard in Portland. CRC is considering bus rapid transit paired with

express bus service or light rail paired with express bus service and is investigating several possible alignments. The Clark County HCT System Study is examining alignments designed to connect with a future CRC transit project and expand transit service to more areas of Clark County. The study team is working closely with CRC to share data and ensure efficient transit connections in the future.

C-TRAN continues developing a 20-year Transit Development Plan for Clark County. The Clark County HCT System Study is coordinating with C-TRAN's long-range planning efforts to assure seamless transit connections between any future HCT system and local transit routes and modes.

The schedule below shows the current status of the study.



Get Involved

Comments and questions from the Clark County community are essential to the success of this study effort. Please get involved and share your comments by:

- Visiting the study website at <http://rtc.wa.gov/hct> for more study history, current study information, public event announcements, and to share your comments with the study team
- Sharing your comments by email or calling: Dale Robins at the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council
hct@rtc.wa.gov
(360) 397-6067