Study Summary (2006 – 2008)

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 High Capacity Transit 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.

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) along with its partner agencies has completed a two-year effort to develop a High Capacity Transit (HCT) System Plan. The Plan includes bus rapid transit (BRT) in the Highway 99, Fourth Plain, and Mill Plain corridors and significant bus improvements in the I-205 corridor.

The plan will serve as a guide for C-TRAN and the communities in Clark County as they move forward with improvements in the planned HCT corridors. Local jurisdictions and transportation agencies will also be asked to consider the plan as they prepare capital improvement programs and work plans.

Background

High Capacity Transit can include services such commuter rail, subway, bus rapid transit, light rail transit, and streetcars. These are all considered HCT because they can move more people at higher speeds than conventional buses.

The Clark County High Capacity Transit System Study was initiated in late 2006 to develop a plan for how HCT could serve the future transportation needs of Clark County.

Although there has been discussion of extending light rail into Vancouver since the early 1990's, this is the first comprehensive planning process that looks at potential service for the entire county and the viablity of all HCT modes, not just light rail. The study also examined how to best connect to the Columbia River Crossing Project, as well as bi-state connections within the I-205 corridor.

The Public Process

Several committees were established to guide and oversee the progress of the HCT study.

The **Steering Committee** included elected representatives and staff from the study partner agencies and jurisdictions. The group provided policy direction for the study, and served as a focal point for consensus building among jurisdictions.

The **Task Force** included citizens and business leaders representing a range of community interests. The Task Force provided input on public values and provided recommendations to the Steering Committee. The Task Force was integral to developing the study purpose statement.

The **Sounding Board** included groups of active citizens and the general public. Meetings involved workshops and open houses at key milestones where the public was able to hear study updates and provide feedback.

Information from the public outreach process, including study goals, fact sheets, meeting summaries, reports, and videos, may be found on the study website at *http://rtc.wa.gov/hct*.

Sounding Board

Modes

The study team identified and evaluated nine potential HCT modes (or types of transit vehicles) based on how well they satisfied the study purpose and goals. The team considered factors such as whether the modes were proven technologies, affordable, and whether they were compatible with land uses in Clark County. Based on the initial assessment, the study committees recommended removing four modes (monorail, heavy rail, personal rapid transit, and water transit) from consideration because they were not considered viable. The five remaining modes included:

- **BRT-Lite** *(bus rapid transit operating primarily in mixed traffic)*
- **BRT-Full** *(bus rapid transit operating primarily on exclusive guideway)*
- **Streetcar**
- **Light Rail**
- **Commuter Rail**

In addition to the modes above, **BRT-Hybrid**, was developed later in the study process. BRT-Hybrid would operate in mixed traffic as well as on cost-effective sections of exclusive guideway. BRT-Hybrid would result in lower capital costs than BRT- Full concepts while still saving significant travel time over BRT-Lite and conventional bus.

Bus Rapid Transit

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is a strategy to reduce travel time for bus riders and improve bus efficiency in congested corridors. BRT uses features such as exclusive lanes, signal preemption, in-line stations, and a distinct brand identity.

Corridors

Fifteen travel corridors were identified as possible locations for HCT alignments within Clark County. An initial assessment of the corridors helped the study committees to narrow the options to five promising corridors that merited more detailed analysis. The five corridors included:

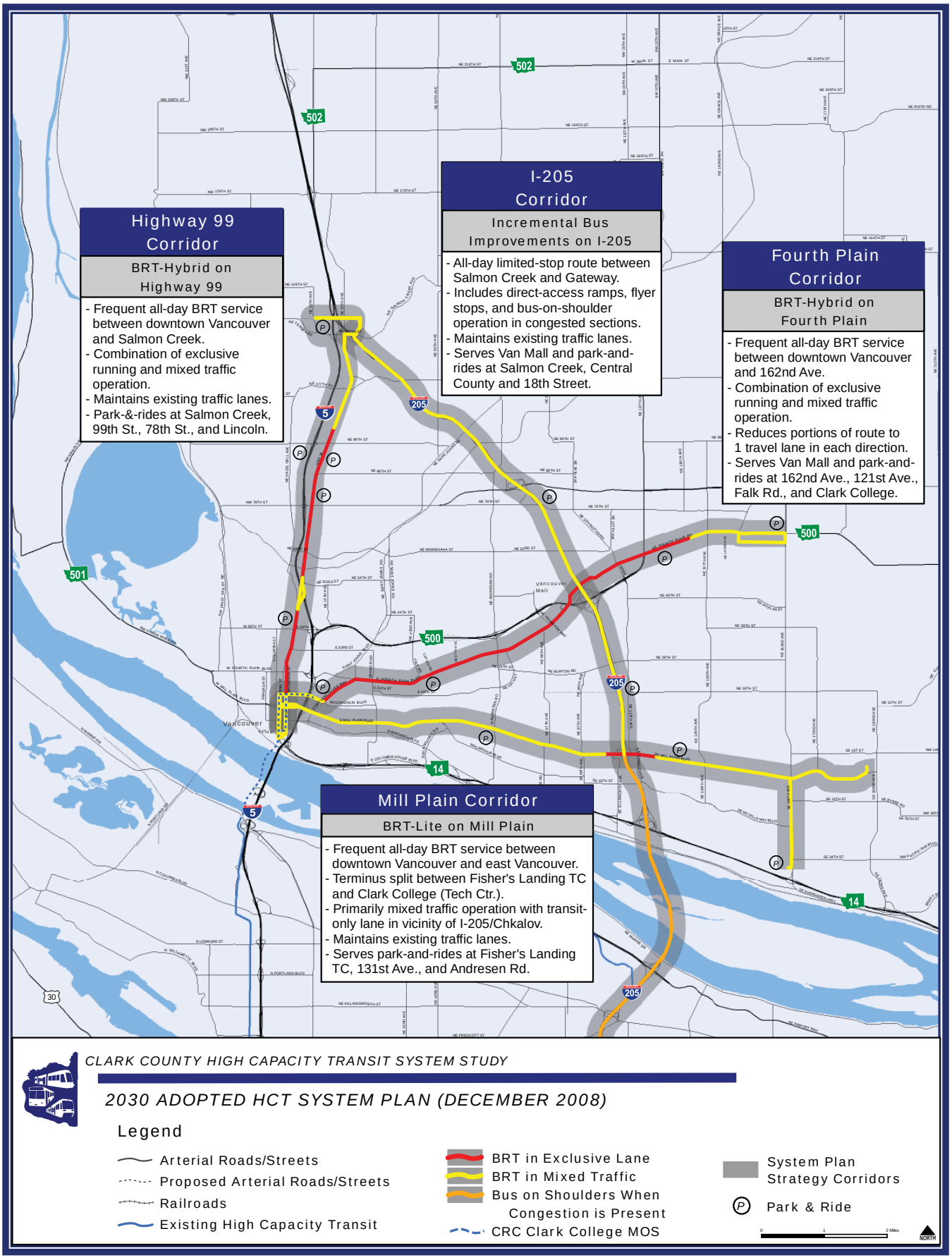
- **I-5/Highway 99**
- **SR-500/Fourth Plain**
- **I-205**
- **SR-14/Mill Plain**
- **Chelatchie Prairie**

HCT System Plan Recommendations

The study team reviewed the recommended corridors and modes using input from the Task Force, Steering Committee, and general public, as well as an evaluation matrix that considered how well each system element satisfied the goals of the study. The team then analyzed potential system plan scenarios in order to determine which combinations of corridors and modes were the most promising to carry forward into a final system plan that would most effectively address Clark County's future transportation needs.

The System Plan alignment recommendations are shown on the next page.

- **Highway 99** – *Serves intra-county and bi-state trips while retaining express bus service on I-5 and supporting redevelopment efforts on Highway 99.*
- **Fourth Plain** – *Serves intra-county trips and some bi-state trips while supporting Fourth Plain redevelopment plans.*
- **I-205** – *Serves intra-Clark County trips and bi-state trips through incremental improvements to bus service and park and rides while preserving the freeway median for future transit use.*
- **Mill Plain** – *Serves primarily intra-county trips with the addition of a transit-only lane near Chkalov and I-205.*


Highway 99 Corridor
BRT-Hybrid on Highway 99
- Frequent all-day BRT service between downtown Vancouver and Salmon Creek.
- Combination of exclusive running and mixed traffic operation.
- Maintains existing traffic lanes.
- Park-&-rides at Salmon Creek, 99th St., 78th St., and Lincoln.
I-205 Corridor
Incremental Bus Improvements on I-205
- All-day limited-stop route between Salmon Creek and Gateway.
- Includes direct-access ramps, flyer stops, and bus-on-shoulder operation in congested sections.
- Maintains existing traffic lanes.
- Serves Van Mall and park-and-rides at Salmon Creek, Central County and 18th Street.
Fourth Plain Corridor
BRT-Hybrid on Fourth Plain
- Frequent all-day BRT service between downtown Vancouver and 162nd Ave.
- Combination of exclusive running and mixed traffic operation.
- Reduces portions of route to 1 travel lane in each direction.
- Serves Van Mall and park-and-rides at 162nd Ave., 121st Ave., Falk Rd., and Clark College.
Mill Plain Corridor
BRT-Lite on Mill Plain
- Frequent all-day BRT service between downtown Vancouver and east Vancouver.
- Terminus split between Fisher's Landing TC and Clark College (Tech Ctr.).
- Primarily mixed traffic operation with transit-only lane in vicinity of I-205/Chkalov.
- Maintains existing traffic lanes.
- Serves park-and-rides at Fisher's Landing TC, 131st Ave., and Andresen Rd.
Vancouver
Vancouver Mall
CLARK COUNTY HIGH CAPACITY TRANSIT SYSTEM STUDY
2030 ADOPTED HCT SYSTEM PLAN (DECEMBER 2008)
Legend
Arterial Roads/Streets
Proposed Arterial Roads/Streets
Railroads
Existing High Capacity Transit
BRT in Exclusive Lane
BRT in Mixed Traffic
Bus on Shoulders When Congestion is Present
CRC Clark College MOS
System Plan Strategy Corridors
Park & Ride
NORTH

Policy Recommendations

In addition to recommending modes and corridors, the adopted HCT System Plan includes policy recommendations that will help guide how the corridors develop so they are supportive of an HCT System. Transportation policy recommendations include:

- **Maximizing ridership** by serving both intra county and bi-state transit trips,
- Designing the system in a way that ensures the HCT vehicles move through the corridors **faster than conventional bus**,
- **Maximizing access** to the system, and
- **Balancing trade-offs** between ridership and cost.

Land use policy recommendations include:

- Moving towards **transit-supportive** land uses,
- Promoting a **mix of land uses** (including retail, business, and residential),
- **Parking management** strategies, and
- **Transit oriented design** which results in improved access to transit.

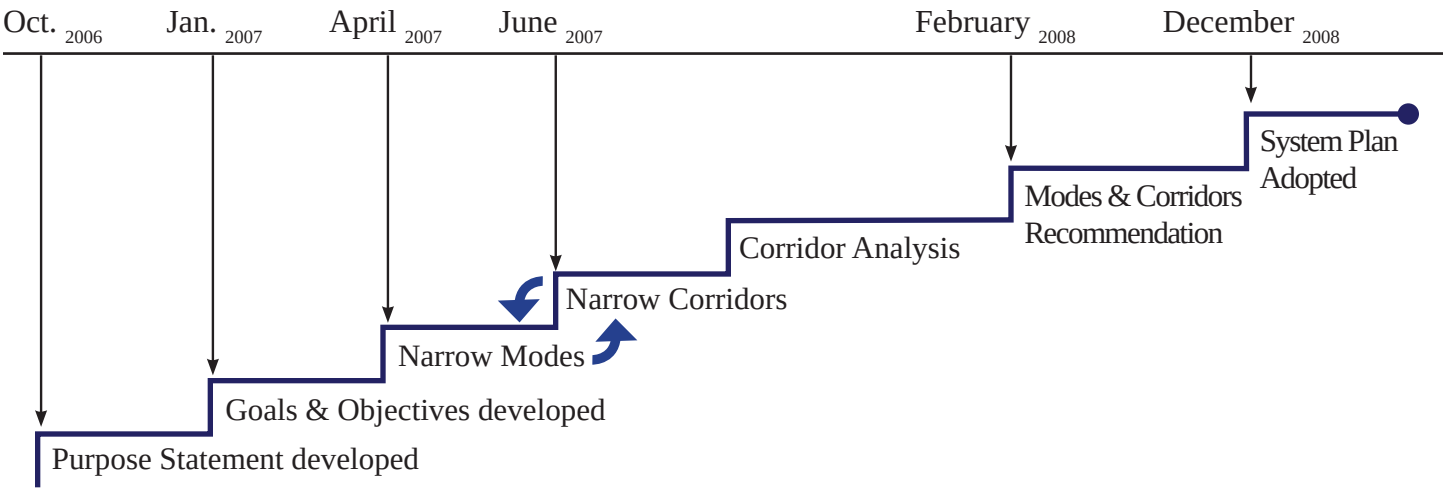
Next Steps

The HCT System Plan was approved by the study Task Force and Steering Committee and adopted by the RTC Board on December 2, 2008. The plan provides a blueprint for how local governments and C-TRAN can move forward to implement HCT within the corridors recommended in the plan. Next steps include:

- **Identifying a priority corridor** - C-TRAN will lead the effort to determine which HCT corridor should be developed first. The Study committees have identified the Highway 99 and Fourth Plain corridors as having the highest priority.
- **Making the region competitive for federal funding** through transit funding programs like *New Starts* or *Small Starts*.
- **Performing an Alternatives Analysis** for the priority corridor to identify the most appropriate HCT mode and alignment.
- **Preparing an HCT Funding Strategy**.

Implementing the plan will also require significant cooperation between RTC, WSDOT, C-TRAN, Clark County, and local governments as well as support from neighborhoods and businesses in the community.

Study Process Steps



For more information

Visit the study website at ***http://rtc.wa.gov/hct*** or contact **Dale Robins** at the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council: ***hct@rtc.wa.gov*** or ***(360) 397-6067***.