

**Sound Transit/WSDOT Re-Alignment
Issue Paper No. 35**

TOPIC:	Inclusion of Traffic Systems Management(TSM)/ Travel Demand Management(TDM) as an alternative
ACTION SPONSOR TEAM:	Environmental Action Team
PRIMARY AUTHOR(S):	Federal Transit Administration, Jennifer Bowman Federal Highway Administration, Sharon Love
APPLICABLE PROJECTS:	All Sound Transit Regional Express Projects
ISSUE:	When should a TSM/TDM alternative be included in a NEPA document and what should the TSM/TDM alternative look like?
DATE APPROVED:	July 12, 2001

BACKGROUND

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) is a general term for strategies that encourage more efficient use of transportation resources by reducing the demand for and changing the patterns of travel. TDM strategies usually include incentives and disincentives for particular trips. They may provide an incentive to travel at off-peak times or to eliminate trips. They may also encourage efficiency through changes to routes, destinations and modes. Other strategies may reduce the need for travel through land use changes and substitutes for physical travel.

Transportation System Management (TSM) refers to a variety of activities which attempt to increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system without adding major new infrastructure. Activities may include ramp metering, signalization improvements, and applying Intelligent Transportation System technology.

The National Environmental Policy Act requires consideration of all reasonable and feasible alternatives as a part of the environmental review. In its regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1502.14), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) calls the alternatives analysis section the "heart of the EIS," and require that agencies shall:

- (a) Rigorously explore and objectively evaluate all reasonable alternatives and for alternatives which were eliminated from detailed study, briefly discuss the reasons for their having been eliminated.

- (b) Devote substantial treatment to each alternative considered in detail including the proposed action so that reviewers may evaluate their comparative merits.
- (c) Include reasonable alternatives not within the jurisdiction of the lead agency.
- (d) Include the alternative of no action.
- (e) Identify the agency's preferred alternative or alternatives, if one or more exists, in the draft statement and identify such alternative in the final statement unless another law prohibits the expression of such a preference.
- (f) Include appropriate mitigation measures not already included in the proposed action or alternatives.

Although the "no-build alternative" (which might include short-term minor activities, like safety upgrading and maintenance projects) might not seem reasonable, it must always be included in the analysis. It can serve two purposes. First, it may be a reasonable alternative, especially for situations where the impacts are great and the need is relatively minor. More often, the no-build serves as a baseline against which the other alternatives can be compared.

For FHWA highway projects, TSM alternatives are often evaluated as potential design options to a proposal. These alternatives may include high-occupancy vehicle lanes, ridesharing, signal synchronization, and other actions, including mass transit options. TDM alternatives are generally included as variations of other alternatives. STRE projects generally would be considered TSM alternatives.

If an alternative does not satisfy the purpose and need for the project, as a rule, it should not be included in the analysis as an apparent reasonable alternative. There are times when an alternative that is not reasonable is included based on the request of another agency or due to public expectation. In such cases, it should be clearly explained why the alternative is not reasonable (or prudent or practicable), why it is being analyzed in detail and that because it is not reasonable that it will not be selected.

Special cases include projects that will result in increased capacity for single occupant vehicles (SOV), projects funded through FTA Section 5309 New Starts, and HOV access ramps.

SOV Capacity:

Contact FHWA to discuss the development of a Congestion Management System (CMS) as required by the FHWA/FTA Final Rule on Management and Monitoring Systems, Federal Register, December 19, 1996.

New Starts:

Contact FTA to discuss the development of a Baseline alternative as required by the December 7, 2000 Final Rule on Major Capital Investment Projects.

HOV Access Ramps:

Sound Transit Policy (Sound Transit Motion #98-87) states:

“Before building individual access ramps, the RTA will work with the state Transportation Department, local transit operators, local jurisdictions and citizen committees to assess each facility’s location and function. This assessment will determine whether there are ways to achieve equivalent transit speed, reliability and ridership at a lower cost or by making transportation system management improvements instead.”

DECISION:

Each project must consider a TSM/TDM strategy when scoping alternatives. In most cases transit and other HOV facilities are considered TSM alternatives and should be identified as such in the environmental document. Alternatives that are carried through the NEPA analysis should incorporate all reasonable TDM/TSM strategies. Any TSM/TDM alternatives considered but rejected must be discussed in the “Alternatives Considered but Rejected” section of the NEPA document.

**ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION TEAM DECISION ON ISSUE PAPER NO. 35:
Inclusion of Traffic Systems Management (TSM)/ Travel Demand Management (TDM) as an alternative**

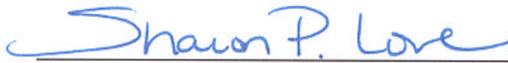
AGREED TO ON July 12, 2001 BY:



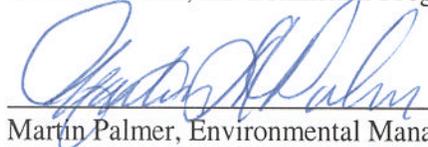
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