

10. I-405 Plan: Environmental Opportunities

As one of the largest transportation projects in Washington State history, the I-405 Corridor Program offers an unprecedented opportunity to improve transportation while also addressing the corridor's existing environment. The Corridor Environmental Program (CEP), issued in March 2002, presents the goals and objectives of the environmental program and outlines strategies for improving the corridor's natural and built environments.



The CEP reflects the program's Purpose and Need statement to maintain, protect or enhance both the community livability within the corridor and the integrity of the region's natural environment. Strategies for addressing environmental impacts include early action measures.

The CEP provides guidance for the development of environmental agreements among the implementing and regulatory agencies.

Goals and Objectives

The CEP established the following goals and objectives to guide the development of future I-405 Program project level environmental programs:

- Integrate transportation and environmental investments in a way that improves critical natural resources and supporting habitat
- Use a watershed-based approach to mitigation to ensure transportation related environmental funds are spent on the greatest environmental benefit
- Implement the I-405 Program in a manner that supports Growth Management Act goals

The goals and objectives for enhancing the I-405 Corridor environment were grouped according to Natural or Built Environment. The objectives will form the foundation of project decisions and permits as the corridor program is implemented.

Natural Environment Objectives



- Avoid and minimize impacts to fish and wildlife habitat, and compensate for unavoidable impacts
- Maintain, protect, and enhance the functions of fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands and other waters of the state and seek a net gain in those functions through preservation, restoration, creation and enhancement
- Manage mitigation sites; design, implement, monitor, evaluate and adjust mitigation sites to ensure standards
- Establish an innovative mitigation strategy and schedule to protect environmental resources while ensuring transportation project delivery; integrate strategy and schedule into an agreement among project proponents and local, state and federal regulatory agencies
- Maintain, protect and improve air quality in the corridor and the region during construction and operation through:
 - > Innovative Project Design
 - > Mitigation of construction related emissions
 - > Measures such as congestion reduction, transportation demand management and fuel and technology improvements that reduce transportation related emissions of ozone precursors, particulate matter (PM10 & PM2.5), toxic air pollutants, and carbon monoxide
- Provide treatment for water quality and quantity for new impervious areas. Appropriately retrofit existing storm water outfalls, and participate in watershed-based storm water mitigation projects that would result in net improvements in the water quality and hydrology baselines in the affected watersheds.
- Protect sole source aquifers and minimize impacts to ground water quality and quantity
- Result in no net loss of wetland area and function or floodway area and function
- Design and implement appropriate mitigation projects in advance of transportation project construction activities

Built Environment Objectives

- Avoid or minimize right-of-way and noise impacts to residences and businesses by incorporating appropriate design/technologies
- Use advance mitigation to reduce impacts of construction on mobility and communities
- Use adaptive management techniques to monitor/adjust transportation improvements and schedules to achieve maximum benefits at lowest environmental and social costs
- Locate and design transportation facilities to promote compact development and provide flexibility to serve future inter-modal needs
- Develop a project implementation program that will include the following early actions:
 - > Transportation Demand Management
 - > Transit investments provide alternative means and routes for travel in impacted areas
 - > Environmental mitigation
 - > Targeted arterial investments

Mitigation Strategy

Early Action

Based upon the CEP goals and objectives the program will identify early actions that can be implemented to address project impacts to both the Natural and Built Environments. These early action strategies will be developed and completed prior to permits being issued for construction.

Natural Environment Early Actions

Under the CEP, implementing and regulatory agencies will jointly make decisions on early action mitigation for impacts to water resources, wetlands, floodplains, protected aquatic and upland species and habitat. The process involves two general phases:

- Prior to transportation project permitting, an early-action mitigation program will be developed and implemented to compensate for environmental functions that are likely to be impacted by the program
- During transportation project permitting and construction, identify avoidance, minimization, on-site/in-kind, and off site compensatory mitigation measures best suited to address project-level impacts.

The off-site mitigation opportunities will rely heavily, but not exclusively, on information provided in the Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) 8 and 9 programs and approved habitat conservation plans (HCP). Those agencies with jurisdiction/authority over the impacted resource will help define the best compensation opportunities.



The area in the vicinity of the I-405 and SR 167 interchange may be used as an example project of this approach. Should this strategy prove successful it could become a template for the entire I-405 corridor and other future urban projects.

Built Environment Early Actions

The Program's impacts to the built environment affect the corridor's right-of-way, noise levels, mobility (during construction) and social environment. An implementation program to address avoidance and mitigation is being developed and will include early TDM, transit and alternative means and routes for travel in the impacted areas. The Program is also looking at creative ways to reduce noise in corridor communities.

Project Level Environmental Opportunities

The level of detail necessary to determine project level environmental impact decisions was not provided in the programmatic EIS. However, the CEP will guide project level mitigation decisions.