

# DOWNTOWN: On the go!

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A Program of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, City of Tacoma, & Pierce Transit

## The 2010 Legislative Session Keeping Up on Transportation Legislation

Due to contentious budget cuts, you are probably well aware that the Washington State legislature is in session. But you may be less aware of the potentially bright side of the story for transportation (and specifically for alternate commute options). In this year's legislative session, several critical transportation bills are up for passage and need your support.

HB 2855, a bill focused on temporary local funding options for transit agencies as well as the development of sustainable transit funding streams, is finding its way through the legislative process.

As well, HB 2911 has significant support. Focused on "complete streets", this bill would establish the concept as a broad policy goal of the State of Washington.

Finally, several bills pertaining to bicycle and pedestrian safety are on the table, including HB 3001 (bike and ped education in traffic schools), SB 5838 (negligent driving penalties for harming a vulnerable user), and SB 6345 (primary offense for handheld use of a cell phone while driving).

How can you keep up with the progress of these bills? Simply visit <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/>

and type in the bill number.

Want to show your support for a bill? Write your state representative and explain why you, and subsequently he/she, should support the bill. For details on how to contact your district's state representatives, go to <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx>, enter your address (make sure you've got the 'legislative' circle highlighted for 'district type'), click on your representatives' links, and send a timely email or letter.



## Green Business Travel to Seattle

Do you travel from Tacoma to Seattle for meetings, conferences, or leisure? Do you often find yourself sitting in traffic when you do? Do you pay a ton for parking once you get there?

Next time you are sitting in traffic or vying for position among cars, watch as Sound Transit's 590 series buses pass you by, complete with smiling, productive, and/or relaxed passengers.

Buses to Seattle from the Tacoma Dome leave every 5

minutes at peak times, and about every 15 minutes at other times during the week-day, and nearly as frequently from 10th and Commerce. And of course, they continue to run on the weekends, dropping you off at key Seattle locations such as the stadium district. The fare is \$3.00, and can be paid in cash or via your new ORCA card. Buses are generally coach buses, and from the point of view of this frequent rider, are always clean, safe, and fast.

For extensive details on Ta-

coma Dome to Seattle bus travel and back, please request the document *Green Business Travel between Seattle and Tacoma* from Downtown: On the Go!. The document covers in detail a week-day round trip. Feel free to distribute it broadly to fellow employees, friends, and family!

Questions? Check out Sound Transit's website at [www.soundtransit.org](http://www.soundtransit.org) or contact Julia Petersen, DOTG Coordinator at [juliap@tacomachamber.org](mailto:juliap@tacomachamber.org).

## Did you know?

- America's cars and trucks emit more CO<sub>2</sub> than all of the cars in Europe, Japan, China, and India combined.
- The no-fee ORCA card promotion has been extended to February 28th—get yours now!

## Upcoming Events

**Tacoma Green Drinks**  
5:30-8:00pm @ The HUB  
Conversation for those that love to talk about all things "green." This month, TacomaACTS will host.

**Mobility Master Plan Public Review**  
Thursday, February 11th—Two Sessions  
11:30-1:00pm @ Carwein Auditorium, UWT  
6:30-8:00pm @ Rasmussen Rotunda, UPS  
See Pg. 2, Article 2 for details.

**Community Bicycle Fair**  
Wednesday, February 24  
7:00pm @ The HUB  
The Community Bicycle Fair is an open house event that will feature information on bike clubs, bike advocacy, community cycling interests, Safe Routes to School, cyclist and motorist education, and more. More info: <http://blog.twbc.org/>

**Laugh at the Weather Bicycle Ride**  
Sunday, February 28  
Noon @ Tacoma Bike  
A free, social ride of about 10 flat miles. Bring a friend. Refreshments provided before and after. More info: <http://blog.twbc.org/>

**Public Comment Deadline for PRSC's Draft Transportation 2040**  
Tuesday, March 9  
Draft available at: [www.psrc.org](http://www.psrc.org)

**South Sound Sustainability EXPO**  
Saturday, March 13  
10:00-3:00pm @ PLU's University Center  
This public event is intended to connect supporters and providers of sustainability services in hopes of building long-term change in Pierce county.

## The Alternate Commute Case Study: Propel Insurance



What is the #1 way for a business to affect positive change in the rate of employees using forms of alternate commute?

Answer: Remove subsidies for employee parking and replace with a transit pass for every employee.

Leaders at Propel Insurance, with approximately 127 employees working in downtown Tacoma, came to this realization not so long ago. Regulated by the state's Commute Trip Reduction law, Propel is mandated to set goals for reducing the number of employees driving alone to work. Despite their best attempts to meet these goals—promoting transit and other alternate commute options, providing transit passes for employees opting in, and generally supporting employees in making alternate commute choices—their efforts brought about only minor changes in their drive alone rate. Propel leaders quickly realized that in order to meet their alternate commute objectives, something ambitious would need to be done.

Offering a year's notice to employees, they came forward with the decision to stop subsidies for paid parking. And with the introduction of ORCA, they strengthened this decision by opting in for the ORCA Area Passport, providing their employees with unlimited access to 7 Puget Sound transit agencies.

Initially, the change was a challenge. But the significant advance notice, the ongoing support and resources provided by the organization's Employee Transportation Coordinator, and the use of the ORCA card as a high quality employee benefit have all made the transition a smooth one. In 2009, Propel realized a 48.7% drive alone rate, an amazing 30% below the average drive alone rate for downtown employers. As Patti Sutton, Director of Human Resources, says of the success of this change, "Employees have embraced it, and leadership has lead the way."



## Tacoma's Mobility Master Plan Up for Public Comment

If you're interested in biking and walking in Tacoma (and who isn't), then the City of Tacoma wants to hear your thoughts on their draft *Mobility Master Plan*. This document alone will significantly impact the future of Tacoma's biking/walking system. Attend one of these two sessions to learn about the plan and offer your feedback.

The plan is available for pre-review on the City's website ([www.cityoftacoma.org](http://www.cityoftacoma.org)) by searching for 'Mobility Master Plan'. Questions? Contact Diane Wiatr, City of Tacoma Mobility Coordinator, at [dwiatr@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:dwiatr@cityoftacoma.org).

Want to attend and comment?

### Mid-Day Session:

11:30am - 1:00pm

Presentation at 12:00 PM sharp

Carwein Auditorium, Keystone Building, UWT

### Evening Session:

6:30pm to 8:00pm

Presentation at 7:00PM sharp

Rasmussen Rotunda, Wheelock Student Center, UPS

## Commuter Corner ~ Camaraderie & Community on Board the 603

Contributed By: Arabie Jaloway, Dedicated Olympia to Tacoma Bus Rider

I suspect that many people think of the bus as an anonymous place, devoid of camaraderie. But my experience contradicts this. When you've been a bus rider for a while, you begin to feel you know the other regulars. While I bundle my bleary-eyed self to the back of the 603 each morning at 7:30, I exchange "good mornings" with several fellow commuters. I've never formally introduced myself to any of them, but they are a consistent thread running through each morning's commute.

I suppose this could be dismissed as superficial. It's true that, without names, I think of them in terms of the visible characteristics of their commute. There's bicycle guy, who carries his matching red panniers

on board each day. There's commuting-to-UWT guy. And there's sneakers-and-blazer guy who gets on every day at our last Olympia stop.

On the way back south, the faces are a bit different and the bus is usually fuller. Also, the trip ranges from a little slow to tortuously slow (we might not be in SOVs, but we are still bound by the traffic!). I must admit, this makes for a certain amount of grumpiness with delays like slow-to-board passengers fumbling for correct change.

Another frequent delay results from the steady stream of new drivers that seem to cover this route; we occasional wrong turns and unplanned detours.

Earlier this week we had travelled a particularly clogged stretch of I-5 to get to the 512 park-and-ride. When we left, the new driver took a wrong turn, away from Lakewood Station. Now, there is a man who gets on there every day—and the regulars let the driver know it. The driver insisted that her map didn't include the stop. A friendly but persistent argument ensued as passengers insisted on going back. I grew increasingly proud of the informal community that was speaking up for a man they did not know; though we were all at the end of our working days, though we knew that every five minutes lost would delay us more, we insisted that the driver turn around.

# 101 Reasons to Kick Your Car to the Curb

## Reason #5: Stormwater Quality



Though you may not realize it, motor vehicles are one of the leading contributors to stormwater pollution of rivers, lakes, and in our case, Puget Sound. Motor vehicle exhaust, leaks, and heavy metal residuals are captured by rain showers, resulting in stormwater that has as a major component hazardous substances. These substances flow untreated into our watershed, causing water quality degradation and negatively impacting human and marine health and well-being.

The consequences of rapid urbanization, including our extensive roadway and parking lot infrastructure, removal of trees, vegetation, and wetlands, and sprawling residential developments, intensify stormwater pollution. Impervious surfaces do not provide natural filtration of stormwater, and instead deliver pollutants quickly and directly to our streams, rivers, and sound.

The end result for us—a Puget Sound that is polluted and marine life that is potentially irreparably harmed—is difficult to believe from the scenic surface. While we respond with outrage to large chemical and oil spills, we find it much more difficult to fully comprehend the collective impact of our individual automobile use. To put it in perspective, Jay Manning, former Director of the WA State Department of Ecology, states, “Based on actual sampling in



the Puget Sound Basin, we've estimated that the volume of oil that is carried into Puget Sound [every two years] by stormwater runoff is equal to the oil spill in Prince William Sound of the Exxon Valdez.”\* For the most part, this oil comes directly from our automobiles.

What can you do to lessen your impact on stormwater?

- 1) Regularly service your car to ensure that leaks are fixed. When personally conducting maintenance on your vehicle, properly dispose of fluids for free at your City's landfill or hazardous waste facility. NEVER dump automobile fluids into stormwater drains.
- 2) Regularly wash your car at a carwash that captures and treats runoff. Washing at home on a concrete driveway delivers heavy metal residuals directly to stormwater drains. Regular washing prevents build-up of harmful substances on your car's body, which then wash into stormwater during rain events.
- 3) Kick your car to the curb, or use your car less.
- 4) Support low impact development (LID) practices and policies that discourage sprawl, impervious surfaces, and vegetation removal.

Stormwater quality is vital to the health of our local watershed. The choices we make as individuals, particularly in respect to automobile use, have a significant collective impact on our watershed, and subsequently our region's quality of life.

Source: \*Poisoned Waters, a PBS Frontline Special  
[http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/poisonedwaters/view/?utm\\_campaign=searchpage&utm\\_medium=videosearch&utm\\_source=videosearch](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/poisonedwaters/view/?utm_campaign=searchpage&utm_medium=videosearch&utm_source=videosearch)

## DOWNTOWN: On the go!

Have an alternate commute success story you would like to share? How about a poem, limerick, or otherwise creative tidbit tied to transportation? Email [juliap@tacomachamber.org](mailto:juliap@tacomachamber.org) and your story may be published in next month's newsletter!

### The Downtown: On the Go! Program

The Downtown: On the Go! Partnership & Program is a collaborative effort of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and 22 downtown private sector and non-profit employers. Leveraging their resources and relationships, these organizations are working together to increase the number of alternate commute trips into and out of the downtown from 24% to 35% by 2015.

In addition to the programs available through Pierce Transit, the Chamber offers resources and incentives specific to Downtown commuters and businesses. From informational presentations, individualized employee/employer consultations, commuter rewards, socials, and more, the Downtown: On The Go! Program supports you in exploring your commute options!



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