

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION NAME: Puget Sound Clean Air Agency

## Program Title: Climate Protection Program

**What is the program?** This program includes several projects aimed at reducing VMT. These include:

1. *Land Use and Air Quality Analysis:* The goal of this project is to identify key land use characteristics that result in lower VMT. We are working with academic researcher Dr. Larry Frank to identify land use characteristics (referred to as urban form) that would help reduce GHG emissions and meet the Governor's and the Legislatures greenhouse gas reduction goals. This work builds on the existing research demonstrating that local amenities, increased density, street connections, and access to transit.

Preliminary results show that we can explain about 30 to 35% of the variation in VMT with changes in density, retail space, land use mix (civic, education uses, entertainment, retail, office etc.), number of intersections, and auto ownership.

2. *Assessing GHGs from SR-520 Improvement Project:* This project calculates the GHGs associated with the proposed SR-520 Bridge Improvement project, focusing on the three options (bridge, tunnel, and changing on-ramps). We are evaluating how different levels of transit service and other amenities affect bridge traffic and air emissions. This project is part of the Health Impacts Assessment as required under ESSB 6099.<sup>1</sup>
3. *GHG Emissions Inventory Assistance to Local Jurisdictions:* We are working with ICLEI, an international non-profit that has developed emissions inventory software for local jurisdictions to calculate their GHG emissions. We are developing a regional guidance document for Puget Sound local jurisdictions to use the software. In addition, we're gathering data necessary to run the software, including VMT estimates from PSRC, and will post them in a data repository on our website. This will allow small jurisdictions with limited resources to easily calculate their GHG emissions.

### How does the program help reduce VMT?

1. The land use and air quality project will provide land use characteristics that could be used as community development goals. For example, if we find that certain intersection densities and number of retail or amenities are associated with reduced VMT, we could offer these up as goals for developing communities or include them as development requirements for state or regional funding, particularly since they will be based on the Governor's and State Legislature's

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<sup>1</sup> An act relating to the state route number 520 bridge replacement and HOV project, signed May 2007.

goals. We can also ask our researcher to identify land use characteristic goals that will meet the VMT goals stated in ESHB 2815.

2. The GHG emission estimates from the SR-520 project will be shared with the stakeholder advisory committee that is evaluating the three options. We have included a number of assumptions about transit levels and land use in an effort to demonstrate the impact of these services on GHG emissions.
3. The local guidance document and data repository will assist jurisdictions in estimating their GHG emissions. More specifically, we are working with PSRC to generate the VMT estimates that locals would use in their inventories. Key assumptions about how these numbers are generated have a dramatic effect on the VMT estimates and how jurisdictions view their responsibilities in implementing strategies aimed at reducing VMT.

**What is happening now (current status/activities)?** We expect a draft final guidance document from ICLEI and a final report from Dr. Frank at the end of June. We expect to obtain VMT estimates for our local jurisdictions by early fall and to create the repository by early 2009. We expect to finalize our GHG estimates for the SR-520 replacement project by August 2008.

**What can we be doing with existing resources to enhance the program's ability to reduce VMT?** We expect local jurisdictions to need assistance in developing strategies to reduce their VMT. This includes increased transit service and advanced community development.

**What could we (or should we) be doing with additional resources? (i.e. where are the opportunities for growth/enhancement)?** As our jurisdictions become more aware of their impact on VMT, we will need to provide services and assistance to help reduce their overall emissions, particularly as they pertain to transportation.

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