

North Sound Connecting Communities Project (NSCCP)

Intercounty Transit Committee (ITC)

Final Report and Recommendations

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I. Executive Summary

The lack or scarcity of public transportation connections between counties and important intermodal facilities, such as multi-modal stations and ferry terminals, has been a problem identified by many planners and policymakers in the counties north of Central Puget Sound. A federally funded study through the Whatcom Council of Governments and the North Sound Connecting Communities Project (NSCCP or “Farmhouse Gang,” see Appendix I.) was undertaken in 2003-2004. A broad-based Intercounty Transit Committee of planners, all of the region’s transit providers, private transportation providers, major employers, the Swinomish Tribe, and involved citizens was formed (see Appendix III. for a list of committee members and affiliations) to explore this issue from January through December 2004, with the facilitation of a consultant hired through the Cascadia Center of Seattle. They were provided technical assistance in data gathering, a survey of major employers (100+ employees), and mapping through Western Washington University’s Huxley College of the Environment.

The Major findings of the Intercounty Transit Committee were:

1. There are no public transit connections between Skagit and Whatcom Counties and Whatcom and Snohomish Counties.
2. Existing public transit connections between Island and Skagit Counties and Island and Snohomish Counties are not adequate to meet the demands of patrons.
3. There is a significantly large volume of travel, for work, higher education, services and other needs including recreation, between these counties, especially between adjacent counties.
4. Levels of intercounty commuting for employment are significant and growing.
5. Most major employers and institutions attracting trips (including hospitals, Skagit Valley College campuses, and Western Washington University are located in cities and could also be served by local transit were regional services initiated. Several of the few major employment sites which are not within an established jurisdiction are along existing local transit routes. Many of the major employment sites, especially those in Whatcom and Snohomish Counties, are encouraged by Commute Trip Reduction legislation to offer incentives to employees who commute by public transportation.

The Major Recommendations of the Intercounty Transit Committee were:

1. To establish intercounty transit services connecting Whatcom, Skagit, Island and Snohomish Counties.
2. That a demonstration project should last at least two years, or more, in order to adequately plan, operate, market and develop patronage for such services.
3. That such services would provide a vital option for a portion of the commuting population as well as students at institutions of higher education, citizens needing to travel for some social and health services, as well as serving some recreational travelers and shoppers.

4. That such services would provide a useful Transportation Demand Management tool for travel in the I-5 and SR-20 corridors.
5. That such services would strengthen the role of the region's intermodal and multi-modal facilities.

In addition to these committee recommendations, staff adds the following:

- That the planning of intercounty services be the responsibility of North Sound transit providers (PTBAs).
- That, where appropriate, private transportation providers should be consulted and included.

Discussion: Feasibility of Improving and/or Creating Intercounty Transit Services

A technical assessment of ridership for intercounty transit was beyond the scope of the Intercounty Transit Committee. Ridership studies can be complex and expensive and may be open to interpretation when studying the introduction of a service where no service previously was offered. However, the findings of the WWU-Huxley team suggest that adequate potential ridership exists, especially in services in the I-5 and SR-20 corridors.

The WWU-Huxley team gathered a wide range of information about intercounty travel patterns in the North Sound area. We gathered U.S. Census data, information from several large employers and institutions, and we surveyed major employers (100 + employees at a worksite) from North Snohomish, Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties. San Juan County is without a major employer. Approximately 53 percent of major employers participated in our survey.

United States Census Data collects information about place of residence and place of employment from a sub-sample of citizens. While census data can be very useful, some caution must be taken with its use. It does not assure us that its sample is that of daily commuters. One needs to bear in mind that the average commute distance in Western Washington is around 10 miles each way--with some variation from county to county. In general it is probably safe to assume that persons residing in one county and working in an adjacent county are, in fact, commuting from one to the other. Some persons, a relatively small number, may be "leapfrog" commuting through more than one county. Beyond a certain distance, and taking into consideration severe traffic congestion between Everett and Olympia along I-5, persons listing their residence and employment separated by 100 miles or more may not, in fact, be commuting daily between those locations. Anecdotal experience indicates that some persons residing in Bellingham and working in King County may be maintaining two residences or may be commuting part of the week while telecommuting the rest, or they may have extremely flexible work schedules so as to avoid periods of congestion. While some small number of persons has a "mega-commute," it is probably more efficacious for transit planning to focus on commuting between adjacent counties than leapfrog commuting.

The results of the intercounty commuting analysis are included in the Intercounty Transit Committee's Report and Recommendations below (including graphics) and only summarized here:

1. The volumes of persons living in one county and working in another are substantial in the North Sound region. According to year 2000 U.S. census data:

- 3005 persons live in Whatcom County and work in Skagit County
- 1848 persons live in Skagit County and work in Whatcom County
- 2094 persons live in Island County and work in Skagit County
- 958 persons live in Skagit County and work in Island County
- Island County attracts 1736 commuters from adjacent or nearby counties
- 899 persons live in Whatcom County and work in Snohomish County
- 4447 persons live in Skagit County and work in Snohomish County
- 1239 persons live in Whatcom County and work in King County
- 1689 persons live in Skagit County and work in King County
- 5022 persons live in Island County and work in Snohomish County
- 103,334 persons live in Snohomish County and work in King County
- 30,951 persons live in King County and work in Snohomish County

There are, of course, smaller volumes of persons who live in one North or Central Puget Sound county and work in another, but we are citing only the volumes most pertinent to the proposal here.

These numbers reflect the major intercounty commute volumes for North Sound, although some of the Whatcom-King commutes are probably not daily commutes; a portion are probably telecommuting or developing flexible schedules or maintaining two residences. The census figures do not include the several hundred students of Western Washington University and Skagit Valley College(s) who commute daily between Skagit and Whatcom County or between Island and Skagit County. Some of these travel volumes were captured by the major employer survey undertaken by the WWU-Huxley team. Nor do the census data record students traveling between North Sound counties and Central Puget Sound. Other areas of weakness in census data include non-work and non-commute travel, especially to regional centers and significant traffic generation sites--such as the Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey for which travel analysis data is difficult to obtain or assess.

2. The WWU-Huxley team surveyed over 53 percent of North Sound major employers and included data about WWU and Skagit Valley College(s) student commuting. It found a substantial volume of intercounty commuting to major work sites (100 + employees) which, when mapped, were found mostly to be located in incorporated areas and usually on or near existing local transit routes--which could make intercounty transit services a little more attractive for some commuters. Among its major findings were (bearing in mind that these data represent only about half of the North Sound region's major employers):

- 918 daily commuters from Whatcom to Skagit major employers-sites
- 146 daily commuters from Whatcom to Snohomish major employers-sites
- 887 daily commuters from Skagit to Whatcom major employers-sites
- 585 daily commuters from Skagit to Snohomish major employers-sites
- 469 daily commuters from Skagit to Island major employers-sites
- 619 daily commuters from Snohomish to Island major employers-sites
- 344 daily commuters from Snohomish to Skagit major employers-sites

Again, these data represent only half of the region's major employers and do not include data about commutes to smaller employment sites--which may or may not be as amenable to transit.

Looking at only the Skagit-Whatcom major employer-site commuting, and expanding the survey's numbers to account for major employment sites which did not respond to our survey, one could estimate that at least 2000 persons are commuting each way between easy-to-serve major employment sites. A significant number of Skagit County residents, as many as 600 per day, are students commuting to WWU. This is important because WWU limits and prices parking and encourages transit rather than automobile access to campus. Skagit Valley College probably attracts at least a couple hundred students from Whatcom County, as well as a few hundred from Island County.

There are indicators of significant levels of non-commute travel between Skagit and Whatcom Counties, especially in the I-5 corridor. Over 600 inpatients and 2300 outpatients come to St. Joseph's Hospital in Bellingham each year from Skagit County, and a few hundred outpatients come to St. Joseph's from Island County. Since St. Joseph's Hospital is surrounded by numerous private specialty clinics it is likely that the total volume of outpatients coming to Bellingham from Skagit and Island Counties is substantially larger than the numbers documented for St. Joseph's. It is not unlikely that some outpatients and other visitors would avail themselves of an intercounty transit service. Anecdotal and observational experience suggests that there are also significant levels of travel for the seeking of other services and for recreation.

While many commutes and discretionary trips are difficult to move out of automobiles and onto buses there is reason for optimism in regards to the Skagit-Whatcom proposed service. Original ridership estimates for the innovative Pierce Transit express service between Tacoma and Seattle were very low; in the range of 200 riders per day. Ridership climbed steeply, by a factor of 10, within a few months of the introduction of that service, and has continued to grow over the past 10 years. While Mount Vernon-Burlington and Bellingham are of a smaller scale than Tacoma and Seattle, there is no reason to believe that there is not sufficient unmet demand for at least a basic transit service connecting them.

At the present time over half of WWU's students purchase bus passes and about 50 percent of WWU students, and almost 30 percent of its faculty and staff, regularly take the bus to and from campus. These percentages drop with distance from campus. Some car commuters from Skagit County to WWU are probably parking at a Bellingham remote park-and-ride and then boarding WTA buses or campus shuttles to campus. A bus service connecting Skagit and Whatcom Counties could easily attract some of these I-5 trips to buses further "upstream" and help manage demand on existing park and ride lots.

Quantifying ridership from Skagit (residents) to Whatcom (employment-college):

- If 10 percent of WWU students and staff commuting from Skagit County were to ride the bus it would yield 60 riders per day. These riders would likely use runs later in the morning and earlier in the afternoon than would commuters to regular employment, thus making demand a little more even and manageable.
- If 5 percent of the estimated 1800 Skagit commuters to major employments centers (these are covered by Commute Trip Reduction and should be encouraging such travel) in Bellingham were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 90 riders per day.

These two populations alone could yield loadings of between 19 and 25 passengers per bus trip (depending on whether 6 or 8 round trips were offered). Even if these estimates were somewhat optimistic there is good reason to believe that loadings on this service would, at least, compare adequately with similar services now operated by WTA and SKAT on other non-city routes. Were service seekers and other discretionary travelers to become attracted to this service its ridership would also grow substantially.

Quantifying ridership from Whatcom (residents) to Skagit (employment-college):

- If 5 percent of the (estimated) 2000 commuters from Whatcom to Skagit County major employment sites were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 100 riders per day.
- If 3 percent of the (estimated) 1000 other commuters from Whatcom to Skagit County employers were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 30 riders per day.
- If 5 percent of the (estimated) 150-200 Skagit Valley College students from Whatcom County were to ride the bus it could yield another 8-10 riders per day.

These populations alone account for approximately 140 riders per day or between 17 and 23 passengers per trip. Were service seekers and other discretionary travelers to become attracted to this service its ridership would also grow substantially.

It appears that demand for bus service both ways is reasonably balanced and would likely not result in excessive “deadheading” or buses running empty or near-empty in either direction. The total number of riders attracted from employment and college commutes is estimated to be at least 300 round-trip (or 600 boardings) per weekday. The service might be proposed as “fare-free” for the duration of the demonstration project in order to facilitate rider attraction and minimize administrative costs.

Key administrative personnel at Western Washington University are enthusiastic about a Skagit-Whatcom transit service and have offered to mount an aggressive marketing campaign on its behalf among its students and staff currently commuting from Skagit County. It will also promote this service in various other ways as well as advertising this service widely among students who may need to travel to Skagit County on weekends or periodic breaks.

Quantifying ridership from Island County (residents) to Skagit and Snohomish County (employment-college):

Because Island County has very few major employers, and because of the difficulty of obtaining data about daily commuters to the Whidbey Naval Air Station (NAS), the largest Island County employer, ridership for a new intercounty service is difficult to estimate. Ridership estimates are also complicated by the fact that some commuters from Island County to Snohomish County are already taking the bus to Clinton to connect with the ferry to Snohomish or King Counties, as well as the fact that some Skagit-Snohomish commuters are already driving to the Stanwood Park & Ride to board Community Transit services. Therefore, we will base provisional “very rough” ridership data estimates on census data and attempt estimation only for the Island-Skagit and Skagit-Island-Snohomish commutes. Island Transit is proposing a service which would link Oak Harbor to Mount Vernon via SR-20 and then continue to the Stanwood Park & Ride via I-5. There it would connect with both Community Transit services going south as well as an Island Transit route to Camano Island. This service could potentially attract ridership for both the Island-Skagit and Skagit-Snohomish commutes.

Quantifying ridership from Island (residents) to Skagit (employment-college), one would estimate a little lower percentage since census data reports all commutes, not necessarily those to major employment sites (which may be easier to reach by transit than smaller work sites):

- If 3 percent of the 2094 commuters from Island to Skagit County were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 63 riders per day.
- If 3 percent of the 4447 commuters from Skagit to Snohomish County were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 133 riders per day.
- If 3 percent of the 958 Skagit commuters to Island County employment were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 29 riders per day.
- If 3 percent of the 2265 Snohomish to Skagit County commuters were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 68 riders per day
- If 3 percent of the 510 Snohomish to Island County commuters were to ride the bus it would yield approximately 16 riders per day

Census commute data does not include students, therefore some students commuting either direction between Island and Skagit Counties to Skagit Valley College sites or to colleges in Snohomish County (a connection could be made to Everett Station, the site of several college programs) could very well be attracted to this Island-Skagit-Snohomish connection.

These commuters alone could yield over 300 riders per day (600 boardings) or loadings of between 19 and 25 passengers per bus trip (depending on whether 6 or 8 round trips were offered). Even if these estimates were somewhat optimistic there is good reason to believe that loadings on this service would, at least, compare adequately with similar services now operated by Island Transit and SKAT on other non-city routes. Were service seekers, college students, and other discretionary travelers to become attracted to this service its ridership would also grow substantially.

The expectation of the Intercounty Transit Committee is that the planning for services, the details of routes, schedules, and stops would be developed by the transit agencies operating the services. These services would likely only be introduced if substantial funding were made available by State or Federal sources, since none of the agencies currently has funds available to underwrite more than a small portion of the total amounts required to initiate and sustain such services. As the compilation and writing of this report is concluded it appears likely that the relevant agencies will seek funding for a multi-year demonstration project from the Washington State Legislature.

II. Background: What led to the ITC effort?

The Intercounty Transit Committee effort was a result of several persons within the Steering Committee of the North Sound Connecting Communities Project, a regional forum and cooperative effort involving interested parties in Skagit, Whatcom, Island, North Snohomish and San Juan Counties (NSCCP, a.k.a. “Farmhouse Gang,” see Appendix I.). The NSCCP early on recognized the underdevelopment of intercounty public transportation and intermodal-multimodal facility connections as a regional transportation problem.

While good connections through Island Transit and Community Transit exist between the Whidbey Island portion of Island County and Snohomish County via the Mukilteo-Clinton route of Washington State Ferries (WSF), and between Camano Island and Snohomish County, there is only a limited connection between Skagit and Island Counties in the SR-20 Corridor, and no transit connection between Whatcom and Skagit Counties nor between Skagit and Snohomish Counties. While there is transit service between Burlington and the WSF Anacortes terminal serving the San Juan Islands and Vancouver Island route, there is only a seasonal private transit service at the other end of the ferry route in Friday Harbor and none on any other San Juan Islands served.

At present the principal intercity connectors in the I-5 Corridor are either Amtrak (2 round trips per day between Seattle, Everett, Mount Vernon and Bellingham; one of those trips per day going beyond Bellingham to Vancouver, B.C.) or Greyhound Bus Lines which has several trips per day between Seattle and Vancouver, BC, but has recently cut some stops at Mount Vernon. There are several private “shuttle” services plying up and down I-5, and to a limited extent on SR-20 between Mount Vernon-Burlington and Anacortes-WSF and Whidbey Island, but their focus is generally specialized (airporter, casino) rather than general. The federal Jones Act, which regulates aspects of cross-border transportation, prevents cross-border carriers, such as the Quick Coach which connects Vancouver, Bellingham, and Seattle airports, from carrying passengers from city to city within Washington.

Lack of Connections

One of the major efforts undertaken by the NSCCP pursuant to its initial FTA grant, and continued through the WCOG Statewide Competitive Enhancements Grant, was the development of North Sound traveler information. This exploration identified a number of useful intercounty and intermodal connections as well as several disconnections. A “North Sound Transportation Connections Map” (<http://www.wcog.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=128>) was developed to be used in the intermodal information and kiosk displays funded through the WCOG grant. A secondary aspect of this effort resulted in the identification of disconnects between North Sound counties as well as disconnections between important North Sound centers and intermodal facilities.

Previous studies

There have only been a few studies attempting to examine the demand for improved public transportation within the North Sound region. One was the High Speed Ground Transportation Study of 1992 which was oriented to measuring volumes of I-5 traffic and deriving estimates of travel volume affecting various modal options. The study estimated a robust level of demand for

185 m.p.h. rail transportation between Vancouver, B.C., and Portland, OR. However, the estimates of air travel volume between the cities of Vancouver, BC, Seattle, WA, and Portland, OR were greatly underestimated, especially the volume of travel between Seattle and Vancouver, thus lowering the estimates for train ridership between those locations. Similarly, one suspects that the volumes of personal motor vehicle travel in the I-5/BC99 corridor have been underestimated, although follow-on studies documenting this are lacking.

Another study which attempted to establish the feasibility for North Sound intercounty travel through commuter rail services was one proposed by the NSCCP and executed through the supervision of Snohomish County Public Works and the WSDOT Rail Division by HDR Engineering (<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/rail/plans/everettblaine.cfm>) in 2001. The study was funded at a modest level principally by the Washington State Legislature with partially matching amounts contributed by Snohomish County and other North Sound jurisdictions. The study found no technical fatal flaws to implementing commuter rail services north from Everett but concluded that passenger demand only was sufficient between Everett and Marysville to warrant such services at present, that demand might eventually justify services to Mount Vernon, but that there was insufficient demand, present and future, for such services to Bellingham. The report suggested that a few intercounty commuter express bus services might be warranted. This report was received with some skepticism by several members of the NSCCP Steering Committee who felt it seriously underestimated demand for intercounty public transportation, rail and bus, present and future.

Regional Transportation Problems

It is a truism to describe roadway travel conditions in the Central Puget Sound Region as congested and difficult. Roadway travel is slow, difficult, and often unreliable most weekdays and early evening hours between Marysville/Smokey Point in Snohomish County and south of Tacoma in Pierce County. Segments of congestion exist in the North Sound sectors of the I-5 corridor, in Mount Vernon and Bellingham, due principally to the insufficiency of parallel arterials, poor roadway planning and interchange design and insufficient growth management which has resulted in dispersed (“sprawl”) patterns of development in rural areas of North Sound counties.

At the same time that traffic congestion is increasing, the number of viable travel options is decreasing. WSDOT’s Amtrak Cascades program is several years behind schedule north of Seattle, and of its two daily runs only one finds its way across the border to Vancouver, thus seriously limiting its effectiveness and ridership. Recently Greyhound Bus services have been “streamlined,” probably due to financial and operational difficulties, perhaps due in part to its competitive stance towards Amtrak, and this has resulted in the bypassing of Mount Vernon with some runs which used to stop there. As noted above, few or insufficient intercounty transit services exist. Persons who must travel in the North Sound region are more and more becoming dependent on automobile travel, thus exacerbating traffic problems.

The Multi-Modal Grant: Funding and Framework

In 2002 the North Sound Connecting Communities Project (NSCCP) was awarded a federal grant to study a number of multi-modal options for North Sound. The Offices of Cong. Rick Larsen and U.S. Senator Patty Murray were instrumental in securing the appropriation for this

grant. The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) elected to administer the grant on behalf of the NSCCP. Details of the grant were not made final by WCOG until late summer 2003. The grant made possible the formation of committees to pursue initiatives in

- Intercounty Transit
- Rail Improvements
- Passenger Ferry
- Collaboration with Western Washington University in the compilation of a regional compendium of planning studies and technical assistance with data compilation for the Intercounty Transit Committee.

Scope of ITC Work:

The Scope of Work for the Intercounty Transit Committee was defined as follows:

Intercounty Transit Working Group:

A stakeholder committee, comprised of the region's transit and para-transit providers, public and private sector interests, and possibly major employers will be formed to develop a preliminary plan for intercounty transit as well as a framework for funding implementation of the plan's recommendations. Multiple areas of emphasis will be a part of this project:

- Investigate bus rapid transit options for regional connections including those among intermodal stations such as Fairhaven Station, Mount Vernon Station, and the Everett Multi-modal Station.
- Assess inter-county and inter-region transit interconnections and inter-operability along with transit connections to other modes including rail, water- and air-borne travel.
- Assess effectiveness, and examine opportunities for improvement and enhancement of rideshare activities such as van and car-pooling.
- Consider opportunities for multi-agency and possibly multi-modal sharing of capital facilities and equipment as a potential source of needed services to clients outside of the specific systems they now serve.
- Transit-based work products will include reports of fact-finding and analyses of commuter mode viability, legal issues and special uses in the region along with connections to other modes including rail, water, and airborne transportation. Included will be an action plan for implementing the findings of the work.

Current State of ITC

One of the first efforts of the ITC coordinator, Preston Schiller, was to undertake a documentation of the insufficiency or lack of intercounty and intermodal public transportation connections in North Sound. This was done by analyzing the "Transportation Connections Map" which was being developed by the "Kiosk Project" parallel to the ITC effort, as well as

analyzing the level of public transportation services offered at or connecting with each of the region's intermodal-multimodal facilities such as Amtrak-Greyhound Stations, major transit centers, and Washington State Ferries (WSF) terminals.

Formation and Format of the ITC

The next effort entailed the formation of an Intercounty Transit Committee. Martha Rose, Director of Island Transit, graciously offered to serve as chair of this committee. Preston Schiller then proceeded to draft a master list of potential candidates for the committee. The list was compiled from the extant NSCCP data base, as well as a regional list of transportation-related persons identified by a WCOG summer intern hired by matching funds which had been raised by the NSCCP to support the Multi-modal grant application. The master list of several hundred names was then pared to approximately 100 names. Schiller, in consultation with Martha Rose, then pared the list further. Criteria included geographic distribution, participation by all of the region's transit providers, private sector transportation providers (shuttles/airporters), planners from key regional and state agencies, major employment and institutional interests, and citizens involved in transit issues.

During the fall and early winter of 2003, Schiller and Martha Rose conferred several times on the structure of the committee. At first the possibility of including elected officials was explored but then rejected because it was felt that their presence at the table might influence the ways in which persons with agencies under their direction might react. Finally it was agreed that the committee should be constituted from a mix of persons representing public transportation providers, planning agencies, and concerned citizens.

By late fall 2003, a final screening resulted in a list of approximately 40 persons invited to participate in the Intercounty Transit Committee. A total of 35 persons agreed to serve on the committee, beginning in January 2004. Attendance at ITC meetings ranged between 25 and 33 persons at each meeting. Additionally four persons attended in a staff capacity. Meetings had a duration of between 4 and 5 hours. Meeting agendas as well as a summary of the previous meeting's minutes and discussion were distributed at least a week prior to each meeting. One of the greatest challenges for meetings was the establishment of a date amenable to most of the 35 participants. The high rates of attendance at meetings reflect the enthusiasm of the committee members and the value of the material presented in meetings to them. Whenever possible Schiller attempted to assist committee members in forming carpools to and from meetings. (A roster of committee participants is presented in Appendix III.)

Meetings and Special Presentations

The first meeting of the ITC was held in Mount Vernon at the Skagit Council of Governments conference room on January 21, 2004. The dates, topics covered and guest presenters for all ITC meetings between January and December 2004, were as follows:

Jan. 21: (Mount Vernon) Topics; overview of ITC, NSCCP, and USDOT/FTA grant (Gordon Rogers), structured discussion about (a) the current state of intercounty transit in your region, improvements needed, barriers to improvements; (b) current state of intermodal connections in your area, improvements needed, barriers to improvements; (c) what could be done by the federal, state, and local governments as well as public and private providers and major employers.

Feb. 26: (Mount Vernon) The meeting centered on a presentation about a wide range of intercounty transit issues, from planning to technologies, presented by consultant Eric C. Bruun, Ph.D. Following a morning presentation the committee broke into several small groups to discuss over lunch the presentation and formulate questions to present for discussion with Dr. Bruun and others when the whole committee reconvened. Dr. Bruun's report is included as Appendix IV. Below. (<http://www.wvu.edu/nsccp> → Intercounty Transit Committee)

March 30: (Mount Vernon) The morning half of this meeting was devoted to a presentation by and discussion with Jim Slakey, the recently retired head of WSDOT's Public Transportation and Rail Division. The second half of this meeting was devoted to a candid discussion with Slakey and State Senator Mary Margaret Haugen (Senate Transportation Committee) about what the State's interest in intercounty transit was and how we should pursue it.

April 30: (Farmhouse Inn, LaConner) The meeting focused on the preliminary presentation of cross-county commuting based on the first findings of the WWU-Huxley College research assistants. A significant level of intercounty commuting was established. Structured discussion then followed about the issues and details surrounding the establishment of intercounty services. Several important issues and problems were identified.

May 17: (Farmhouse Inn) This was a "roll up your sleeves" meeting which focused on the intercounty commute and travel data obtained to date as well as the nuts and bolts of where services might be established and who might offer them.

June 22: (Farmhouse Inn) This was the final meeting of the ITC preparatory to gathering more data and technical information to assist the development of a draft report and recommendations. There was further presentation of intercounty travel data from Steve Rybolt, WWU-Huxley research assistant, as well as a very valuable presentation by Robin Phillips of WSDOT-PTR about Oregon's experience with a ThruBus program designed to connect outlying cities and towns with the nearest Amtrak station. Matt Shelden of Community Transit also presented a revised version of a cost estimate for a Mount Vernon-Everett Station express bus service (see Appendix V.).

November 15: (Farmhouse Inn) The ITC met to review the Draft Report and Recommendations as well as to hear from State Sen. Mary Margaret Haugen about her thoughts about prospects for demonstration project funding in the 2005 Legislature.

December 9 (Farmhouse Inn): A subset of the ITC met as a working group to frame the issues surrounding a demonstration project proposal to the 2005 Legislature for intercounty transit.

Collaboration with WWU's Huxley College of the Environment

Before presenting the findings of the ITC, the data compilation, and the committee's recommendations the collaborative relationship between the NSCCP-ITC and Western Washington University's Huxley College of the Environment needs to be described.

In August 2003 the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and Western Washington University (WWU) entered into a collaborative research agreement involving a grant received from the Federal Transit Authority addressing the need for an Intermodal Connections and Commuter Study within the northern Puget Sound.

The grant, administered through Dean Brad Smith and Huxley College of the Environment, funds two graduate students within the Environmental Studies program to investigate and research transportation issues relating to commuting concerns in Island, Skagit, Whatcom, San Juan, and north Snohomish Counties. Preston Schiller, adjunct faculty in Canadian-American Studies and member of the North Sound Connection Communities Project acts as the primary liaison between the two entities and directs the research focus of the graduate students.

Western Washington University

Huxley College of the Environment

- Brad Smith, Dean Huxley College of the Environment
- Preston Schiller, Liaison between NSCCP and Huxley College
- Steve Rybolt, Graduate Assistant (2003-05)
- Jill Leonetti, Graduate Assistant (2003-04)
- Cari McMullin, Graduate Assistant (2004-05)

The principal activity areas of the NSCCP-WWU collaboration have been:

- Assistance in the compilation of a master list of potential ITC members
- Assistance in the compilation of an NSCCP master list of contacts and potentially interested parties.
- Development of a Compendium of North Sound Planning-Related Documents (this has included a fair amount of literature about transit planning and practices related to the ITC effort)
- Development of a website, currently underway, for posting of ITC documents
- Collection and organization of intercounty commute and travel data in formats accessible to the ITC.

III. Findings: Issues and Data

There are two levels of findings to be reported from the ITC. First, there are the issues raised and explored by the ITC. Second, there are the findings of the WWU-Huxley research team.

III.A. Among the several issues raised by ITC participants were:

1. Who should provide the services?
 - a. Transit agencies?
 - b. Private providers?
 - c. A mix of public and private providers?
 - d. WSDOT through its Amtrak Cascades ThruBus program?

While there was general consensus that intercounty services were needed, there was a range of opinion in the ITC on who should best provide these. While a specific poll was not taken, the discussion in the ITC seemed to indicate that most of the transit and planning agencies represented appeared to favor the provision of these services, in the main, by a public transportation agency. While there was not a rejection of the notion of participation by private providers, it appeared that the overall orientation of the ITC was towards the public transportation services taking the lead in planning and provision and trying to include private providers in a service plan. Within this orientation opinion ranged from public transportation providers who were open to contracting with private providers for intercounty services to public transportation providers who believed that the issues around labor, equipment, training and service standards were too significant or complex to warrant a simple contracting out of services. Private providers seemed interested in intercounty services to the extent that public agencies would subsidize fares for private services. To a limited extent some of the private providers are providing intercounty services, although they do not generally schedule service to most of the region's intermodal facilities, thus limiting their integration with public transportation services.

One issue which came to the surface in ITC deliberations was the potential for antagonism between transit providers and private providers holding a WUTC (Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission) license allow them to service a corridor or a part of a corridor. One possible solution to this dilemma is for the region's transit agencies to take the lead in implementing intercounty services and include a plan for a regional transit pass program which could allow for pass holders to travel on a variety of modes; when regularly scheduled transit services were not available they might be able to ride Amtrak or private intercity providers, including shuttle services.

Another possible approach to creating intercounty services was discussed by the committee following a very illuminating presentation by Robin Phillips of WSDOT-PTR about the Oregon experience with a ThruBus/Amtrak service connecting smaller cities and rural areas with Amtrak stations along the I-5 corridor. The use of existing Amtrak ThruBus services in the I-5 corridor in Washington for the transport of passengers between Amtrak facilities between Vancouver, BC, and Everett, WA, was explored. At present Amtrak contracts with Trailways of Canada to provide connections between the Main Street Terminal in Vancouver, BC, and the King Street Station in Seattle, in the absence of connecting trains. Several years ago these buses also stopped at other Amtrak stations between these two terminals. It was felt that with growing volumes of Amtrak riders in the North Sound, as well as the opening of the Mount Vernon Multi-Modal

Station conveniently located adjacent to I-5 and the many services offered at Everett Station, that such an arrangement might be of benefit to both Amtrak and intercounty travelers.

After discussion with Amtrak and WSDOT Rail Division representatives it appears that there are a number of problems with this approach which include the disinclination of Amtrak to reorient its ThruBus services to accommodate such intermediate stops as well as restrictions under the federal Jones Act which hinder the transport of passengers to an in-country destination through an international connection. Relevant correspondence about this matter is included in Appendix VI.

2. Where should intercounty services be instituted?
 - a. In the I-5 Corridor?
 - b. In the SR-20 Corridor?
 - c. To serve intermodal facilities such as ferry terminals as well?

In regards to this issue, there was consensus that intercounty services were needed in both the I-5 Corridor, between Bellingham, Burlington-Mount Vernon, and Everett Station, and in the SR-20 Corridor connecting Whidbey Island directly with Mount Vernon. At present there is a service from Oak Harbor provided by Island Transit which connects with Skagit Transit's service to Burlington at the March's Point Park and Ride lot a few miles east of Anacortes on SR-20. From Burlington a passenger can transfer to a bus to Mount Vernon. There was agreement that a service which directly connected Whidbey Island to Mount Vernon more directly and seamlessly was desirable.

While all the region's transit agencies serve the Washington State Ferry terminals in their respective service areas, and WTA serves the Bellingham Cruise Terminal from which both regional recreational marine services and the Alaska Marine Highway ferry embark, there was not a great deal of interest in designing intercounty services emphasizing these destinations. While some ferry terminals, such as those at Mukilteo and Clinton attract robust levels of transit and walk-on passengers, many of the others do not and are at a substantial distance from town centers. Amtrak stations are well located in Bellingham, Mount Vernon and Everett and in the case of Mount Vernon and Everett could easily be served by intercounty I-5 Corridor services. If Bellingham's Fairhaven Transportation Center (Amtrak), less than five minutes from I-5, could not be directly served by an intercounty service sufficient local transit services exist which make a transfer to a local route practical.

Bellingham's Western Washington University appeared to be a destination which attracted a considerable level of intercounty travel, especially between Whatcom and Skagit Counties, and it appeared that an intercounty service should consider it for direct service.

3. How should the services be structured?
 - a. How much will the services cost?
 - b. Who will contribute to these costs?

With the assistance of Dr. Eric Bruun's presentation and paper a number of ways of structuring and funding or allocating costs of intercounty services were explored. (see Appendix IV For Dr. Bruun's paper as well as his presentation to the ITC) The principal choices for providing intercounty services and intermodal connections are:

- Connecting different transit services at service area boundaries (as defined by the Public Transportation Benefit Areas or PTBAs) or at an intermodal facility close to the boundary (such as a ferry terminal or Amtrak station) This would probably not involve the transfer of funds between agencies; each agency would simply budget for the costs of the service to the connecting point.
- Having one service cross service area boundaries and connect centers or key facilities in each of the service areas along a key corridor such as I-5 or SR-20. Arrangements for such services would have to be negotiated between participating PTBAs. Options include delegating responsibility to one provider, alternating service runs (thus avoiding cost delegations), or contracting to a third party.

A hypothetical cost estimate (see Appendix V.) for a service connecting Mount Vernon’s Multi-Modal facility with Everett Station was prepared by committee member Matt Shelden of Community Transit. Comparing different operator costs (Skagit Transit, Community Transit, and CT-contracted) a variety of cost estimates were generated by service type; peak hour, midday, evening, and weekend. For a full service (“all of the above”) costs could range between \$770,000 and \$1,100,000 per annum, exclusive of capital needs (bus purchases, etc.). By extension of these estimates connecting Bellingham and Mount Vernon with Everett could come close to doubling the figures for Mount Vernon-Everett. Later estimates by WTA and Island Transit were considerably lower than these (for services connecting Bellingham and Mount Vernon as well as a service connecting Oak Harbor, Mount Vernon, and Stanwood—but not Everett directly) and it appears that a demonstration project proposal will seek less than \$1,000,000 per annum for most of these costs.

The response of the Intercounty Transit Committee members to these options will be discussed below in the “Recommendations” section.

III.B. Data-based findings:

As part of this effort Schiller and the WWU research assistants, especially Steve Rybolt, gathered several types of data and travel information pertinent to the committee:

- Information about intercounty commuting to work and college
- Information about intercounty travel for health services
- Information about the types and frequencies of transportation and transit services available in the North Sound region and at the region’s multi-modal facilities

III.B.1. Intercounty Commuting (work and college)

The study team examined data about intercounty commuting to work and college derived from a survey which they undertook of the region's major employers, defined as employers of 100 full-time-equivalent (FTE) employees. The methodology of the survey is described below in Appendix VII. Every major employer in the North Sound region (North Snohomish, Skagit, Island, and Whatcom Counties; San Juan County has no major employers that we were able to identify) was contacted and asked to participate and share information with us about their total number of employees and the proportion commuting to work from other counties. Over half (53 percent) of those identified and contacted agreed to participate in the study.

More travel data is collected about the trip to work than any other aspect of travel in the U.S. The trip to work, or commute, is important for several reasons:

- It is generally the most important trip of the day for employed persons
- It is generally the time of peak demand for transportation facilities
- It is one of the easiest trips to document and analyze
- It is generally the longest of daily trips, which means that cumulatively it has the greatest impact on transportation facilities
- It is often the trip around which viable programmed alternatives to driving can be most easily created or encouraged (car-vanpool/transit/etc.)

A good source of commute information is the U.S. Census Report. Table 1 (below), based on census data, indicates both a large number of intercounty commuters in the North Sound, 22,366 in the year 2000, but also a rapidly increasing growth trend between the years of 1960 and 2000. Table 2 and Figure 1 (below) as well as Table 3 and Figure 2 (below) also demonstrate this increasing growth trend in absolute numbers as well as in rate of increase.

Table 1 presents data for the total numbers of commuters, intracounty and intercounty, for each North Sound county. Commuters to counties south of Snohomish County were not identified because the committee is essentially charged with investigating issues of transit between North Sound communities. Table 1 indicates a considerable growth of North Sound jobs as well as intercounty commuting, especially between years 1970 and 2000.

Figure 1A depicts the population growth trend for North Sound by county. The largest and most spectacular increase has been for Snohomish County, although our data does not separate North Snohomish from the rest of the county. All the other counties show significant, though less spectacular population growth.

Figure 1A—Total Intercounty Commuters by County of Origin

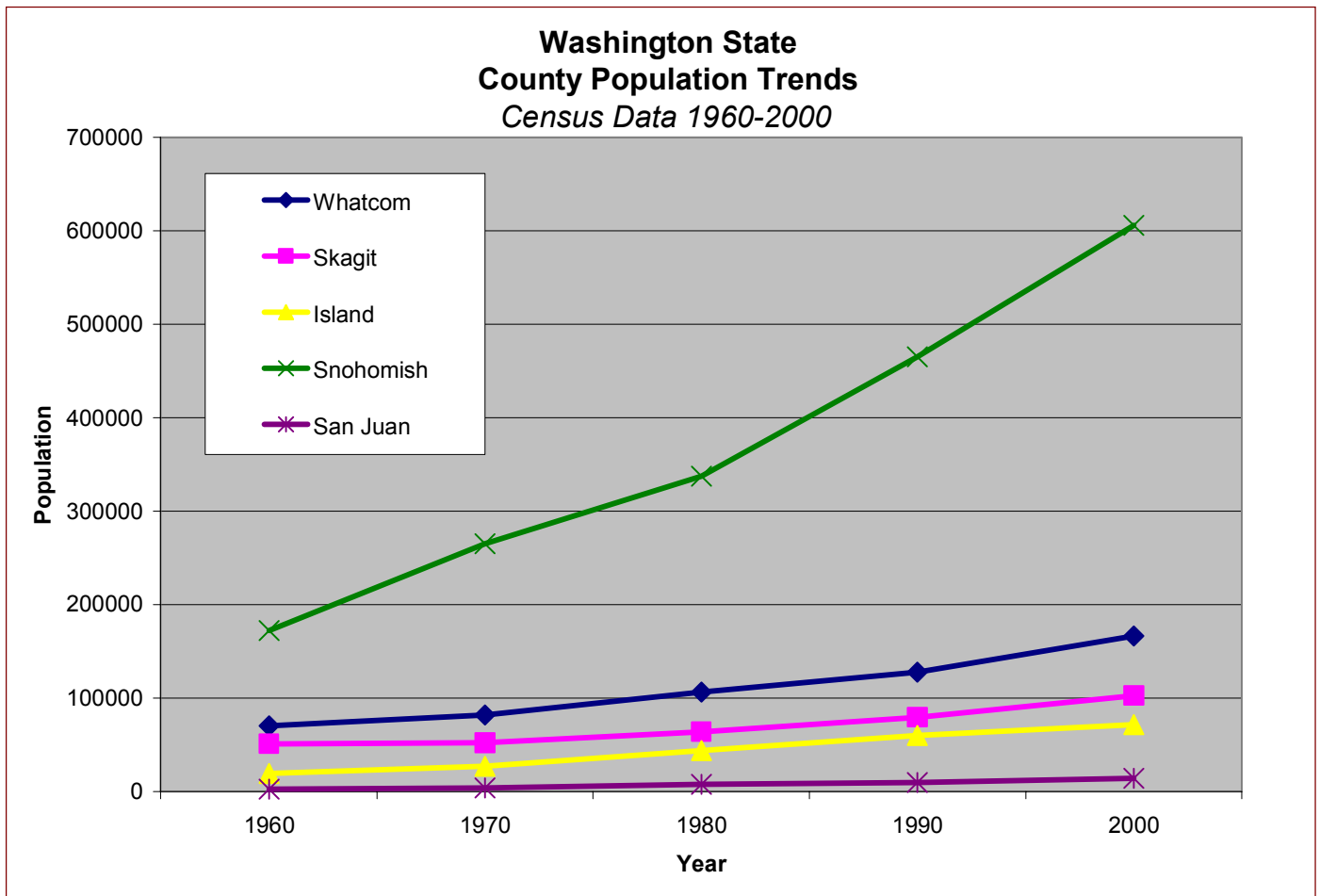


Table 2 and Figure 1B depict the total numbers of North Sound intercounty commuters derived from census data by county of origin between the years of 1960 and 2000. Increases in intercounty commuting grew significantly in Snohomish and Whatcom County and even more dramatically in Skagit and Island Counties. Very few persons are commuting from San Juan County. In general, North Sound follows national trends in that the rate of job increase has been somewhat greater than the rate of population increase. In part this also reflects the greater integration of women into the job market. The intercounty commute figures also indicate that intercounty commuting is increasing more rapidly than population growth.

Table 3 and Figure 2 depict the percent increase in North Sound intercounty commuting by county of origin for years 1960-2000. The rates of increase have been greatest in Skagit and Island Counties, increasing significantly in Whatcom County and North Sound on average, and increasing very little for Snohomish and San Juan Counties.

Table 2 summarizes the intercounty commute data collected by the WWU-Huxley team through its survey of major employers in the North Sound. Its totals are somewhat at variance with those reported in Census data due to its focus exclusively on major employers (100+ FTEs) and the 53% participation rate in the survey. Even given these limitations a robust number of intercounty

commuters were identified originating in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties. Data from Island County is particularly weak given the non-participation of its largest employer, the Whidbey Naval Air Station. In the case of Island County planning should be guided by the relatively robust number of intercounty commuters identified in census data.

Table 1 – Individual Intercounty Commuting Patterns.

Individual Intercounty Commuting Patterns					
<i>Census Data 1960-2000</i>					
County (From) - County (To)	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Whatcom →Whatcom*	21774	25530	40755	56512	74048
Whatcom →Skagit	345	404	864	1303	3005
Whatcom →Snohomish	61	76	275	489	899
Whatcom →San Juan	4	8	0	56	82
Whatcom →Island	36	41	39	103	246
Intercounty Total**	446	529	1178	1951	4232
Skagit →Skagit*	15009	14613	20948	27939	35590
Skagit →Whatcom	447	389	810	1526	1848
Skagit →Snohomish	215	611	1055	2245	4447
Skagit →San Juan	8	35	0	63	110
Skagit →Island	554	478	488	628	958
Intercounty Total**	1224	1513	2353	4462	7363
Snohomish →Snohomish*	38368	58924	93930	141802	188327
Snohomish →Whatcom	50	132	400	441	484
Snohomish →Skagit	362	322	715	1517	2265
Snohomish →San Juan	0	62	0	33	56
Snohomish →Island	108	13	165	275	510
Intercounty Total**	520	529	1280	2266	3315
San Juan →San Juan*	796	1129	3108	4004	5951
San Juan →Whatcom	0	9	9	22	0
San Juan →Skagit	3	6	27	42	63
San Juan →Snohomish	0	0	0	21	15
San Juan →Island	0	0	0	0	22
Intercounty Total**	3	15	36	85	100
Island →Island*	6563	8188	14821	21135	22103
Island →Whatcom	9	21	151	84	211
Island →Skagit	94	139	677	1434	2094
Island →Snohomish	176	569	1581	2856	5022
Island →San Juan	4	0	14	23	29
Intercounty Total**	283	729	2423	4397	7356
TOTAL **	2476	3315	7270	13161	22366

* Depicted as “intracounty,” those who travel within their given county to their place of employment/institution.

** This total does not include intracounty travel.

Table 2—Total Intercounty Commuters by County of Origin

Total Intercounty Commuters by County of Origin					
<i>Census Data 1960-2000</i>					
County	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Whatcom	446	529	1178	1951	4232
Skagit	1224	1513	2353	4462	7363
Snohomish	520	529	1280	2266	3315
San Juan	3	15	36	85	100
Island	<u>283</u>	<u>729</u>	<u>2423</u>	<u>4397</u>	<u>7356</u>
TOTAL	2476	3315	7270	13161	22366

Figure 1B—Total Intercounty Commuters by County of Origin

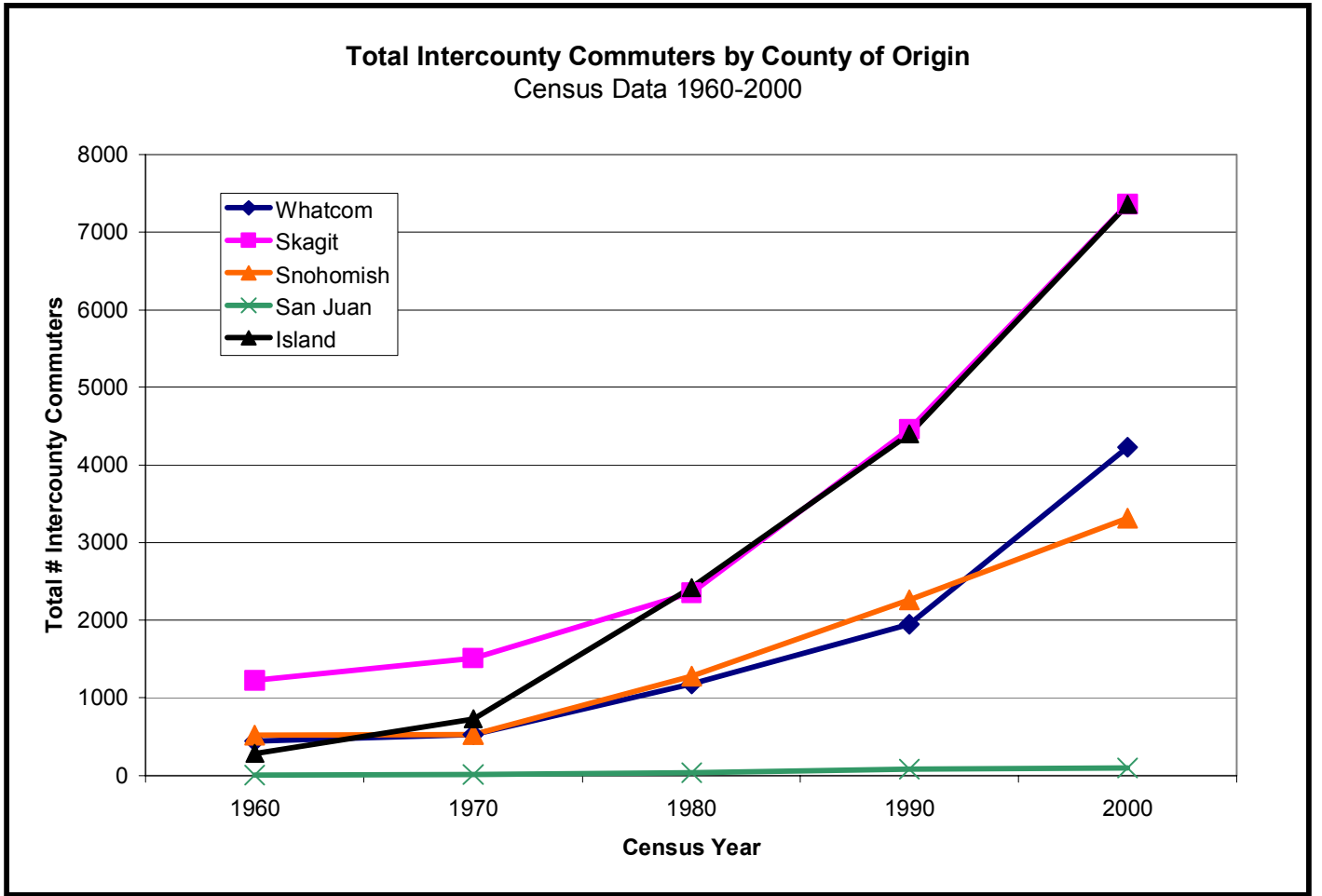
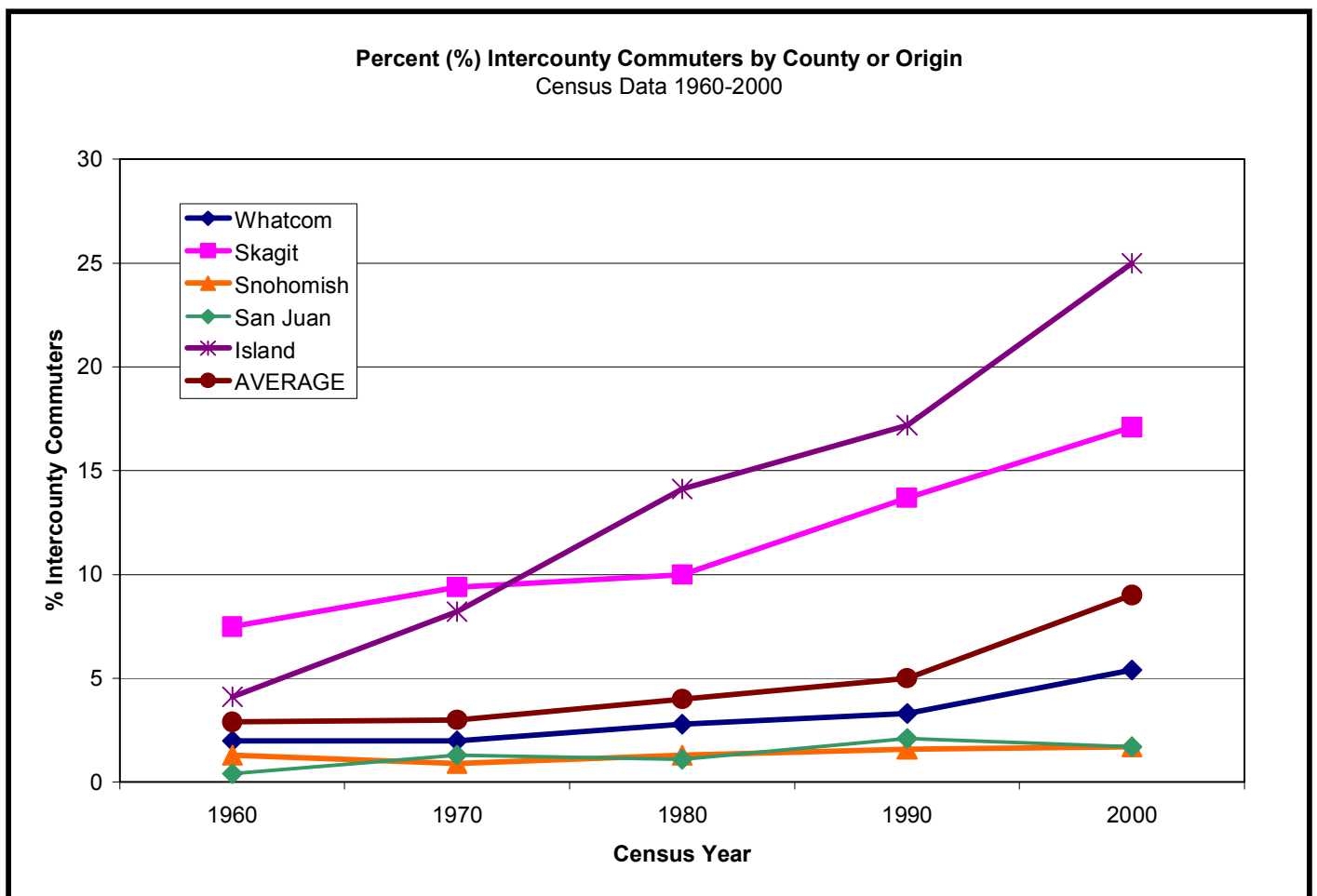


Table 3—Percent (%) Intercounty Commuters by County of Origin

Percent (%) Intercounty Commuters by County Origin					
Census Data 1960-2000					
County	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
Whatcom	2	2	2.8	3.3	5.4
Skagit	7.5	9.4	10	13.7	17.1
Snohomish	1.3	0.9	1.3	1.6	1.7
San Juan	0.4	1.3	1.1	2.1	1.7
Island	<u>4.1</u>	<u>8.2</u>	<u>14.1</u>	<u>17.2</u>	<u>25</u>
AVERAGE*	2.9	3	4	5	9

*Average percentage is derived from the total intercounty commuters divided by the total commuters.

Figure 2—Percent (%) Intercounty Commuters by County of Origin



As previously indicated the study team identified virtually all major employers in North Sound as well as gathering information on employees and students at Western Washington University (Bellingham) and Skagit Valley College (Skagit and Island Counties) . Each of these was contacted and asked to furnish us with data about the total number of employees as well as data on county of residence for intercounty commuters. A little more than half of the major employers agreed to participate. The issues surrounding participation and non-participation are discussed in Appendix VII.

Table 4 (below) summarizes the data collected by the WWU research team. With a 53 percent rate of participation from major employers, a total of 4255 commuters from North Sound counties to other North Sound counties were identified. This probably represents less than half of the North Sound intercounty commuters due to the lack of participation by almost half of North Sound major employers and, especially, Whidbey Naval Air Station (NAS) in Island County, which may employ as many as 7000 persons. With at least 620 daily commuters from Snohomish County to Island County it is reasonable to estimate a figure several times that for commuters from Island to Snohomish County. There are, perhaps, as many as 10,000 North Sound intercounty daily commuters.

Table 4—Total Commuting Data Based on Individual Employers/Institution

Research Data – North Sound Connecting Communities Project/Western Washington University	
County (From) to County (To) Commuting	
County (From) – County (To)	2004
Whatcom →Skagit	918
Whatcom →Snohomish	146
Whatcom →San Juan	---*
Whatcom →Island	89
Total	1153**
Skagit →Whatcom	887
Skagit →Snohomish	585
Skagit →San Juan	---*
Skagit →Island	469
Total	1941**
Snohomish →Whatcom	62
Snohomish →Skagit	344
Snohomish →San Juan	---*
Snohomish →Island	619
Total	1025**
San Juan →Whatcom	15
San Juan →Skagit	38
San Juan →Snohomish	1
San Juan →Island	2
Total	56**
Island →Whatcom	3
Island →Skagit	66
Island →Snohomish	11
Island →San Juan	---*
Total	80**
Data is current as of May 31,2004	
Note: Data is not fully complete	
*No major employers in San Juan County.	
**Data was collected from 53% of all major employers in the five counties (60% Whatcom, 75% Skagit, 61% Island, 17% Snohomish). Data not available from Naval Air Station Whidbey.	

Table 5—King County/North Sound Intercounty Commuting (Individual/Census Data)

		1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
TO:	<i>From King County (Residence)</i>					
	Whatcom	156	155	189	524	311
	Skagit	159	121	141	282	566
	San Juan	0	0	78	53	61
	Snohomish	1936	17464	16740	28328	30951
	Island	52	62	114	153	358
	Sub-Total*	2303	17802	17262	29340	32247
FROM:	<i>To King County (Employment)</i>					
	Whatcom	157	207	324	750	1239
	Skagit	114	185	251	818	1689
	San Juan	3	31	55	140	173
	Snohomish	15283	27795	51905	84722	103334
	Island	125	195	795	1451	2152
	Sub- Total*	<u>15682</u>	<u>28413</u>	<u>53330</u>	<u>87881</u>	<u>108587</u>
	TOTAL*	17985	46215	70592	117221	440834
*Does not include intracounty travel.						

This table examines intercounty commuting between King and North Sound counties derived from U.S. Census Data. One must bear in mind that census data only records declared county of residence and declared county of employment. Some of the longer distance commutes, such as those between San Juan or Whatcom and King may, in fact, not be daily commutes but may reflect telecommuting, flex-schedules or second residences. Many, if not most, of the commutes between King and Snohomish Counties probably involve South Snohomish County, where a fair number of transit services already exist, rather than North Snohomish County and are not as relevant to the planning of North Sound intercounty transit services as are the commutes between Snohomish and other North Sound counties. Still the large numbers of persons who might be commuting from North Sound counties to King County underlines the need for better transit connections between North Sound counties and Everett Station in order to facilitate those commuting to King County.

The research project mapped the location of major employers in the North Sound counties of Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish and Island. San Juan County, as previously mentioned, does not appear to have an employer of 100+ FTEs. Figures 4 through 7 (below) illustrate the location of major North Sound employment sites by county. The size of the dots indicates the magnitude of intercounty commuters to each site. The thick line indicates I-5, the smaller lines indicate local transit routes. The overwhelming majority of major employment sites are located in the cities of Bellingham, Mount Vernon, Anacortes, Sedro Woolley, Oak Harbor and Everett. They are on or near existing local transit service routes. Most are in either the I-5 or SR-20 corridors. Those located in rural areas or in very small towns could still be served by local transit connecting with intercounty services at regional transit centers where commuters could easily transfer to a route serving their workplace.

Figure 3—Whatcom County – Number of Cross-County Commuters to each Employer/Institution

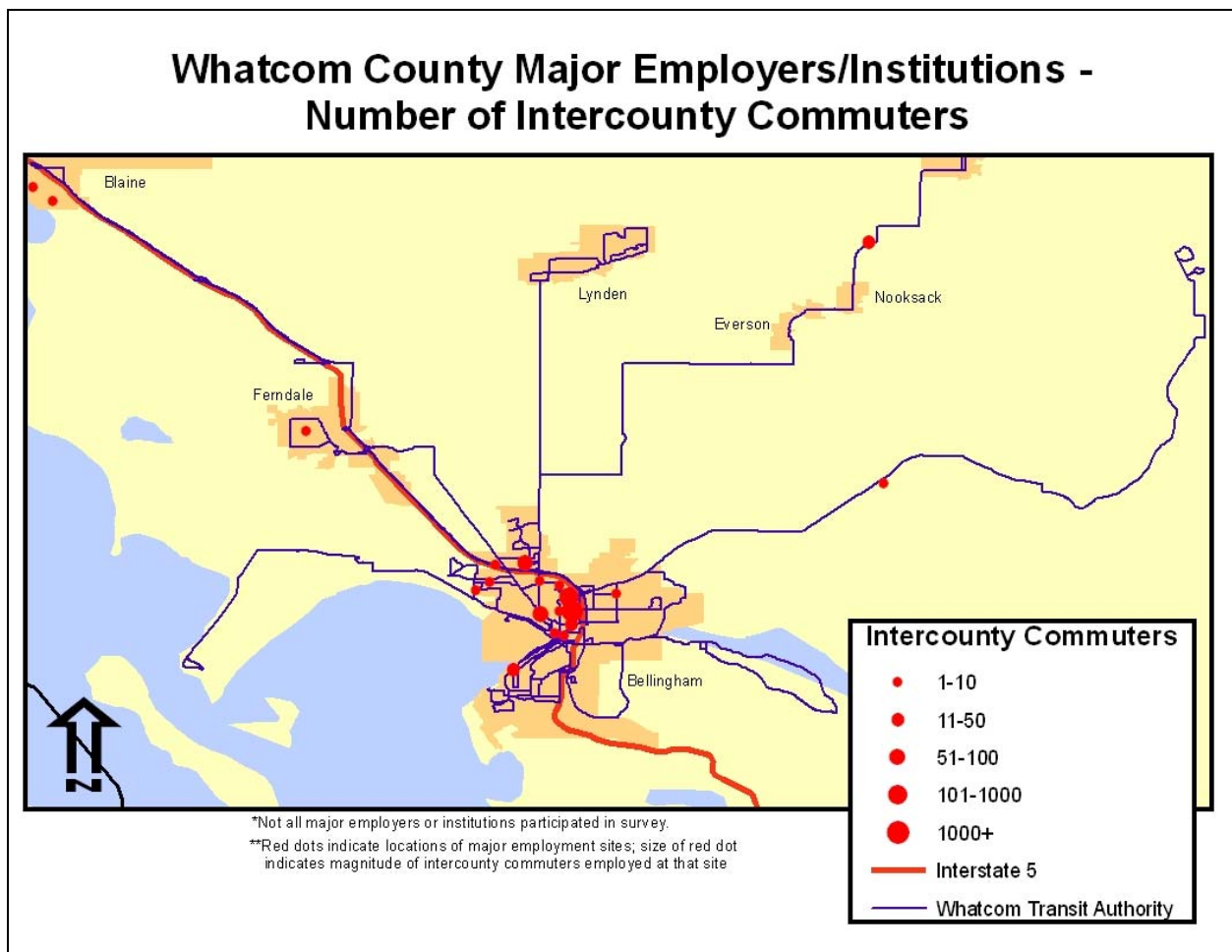


Figure 4—Skagit County – Number of Cross-County Commuters to each Employer/Institution.

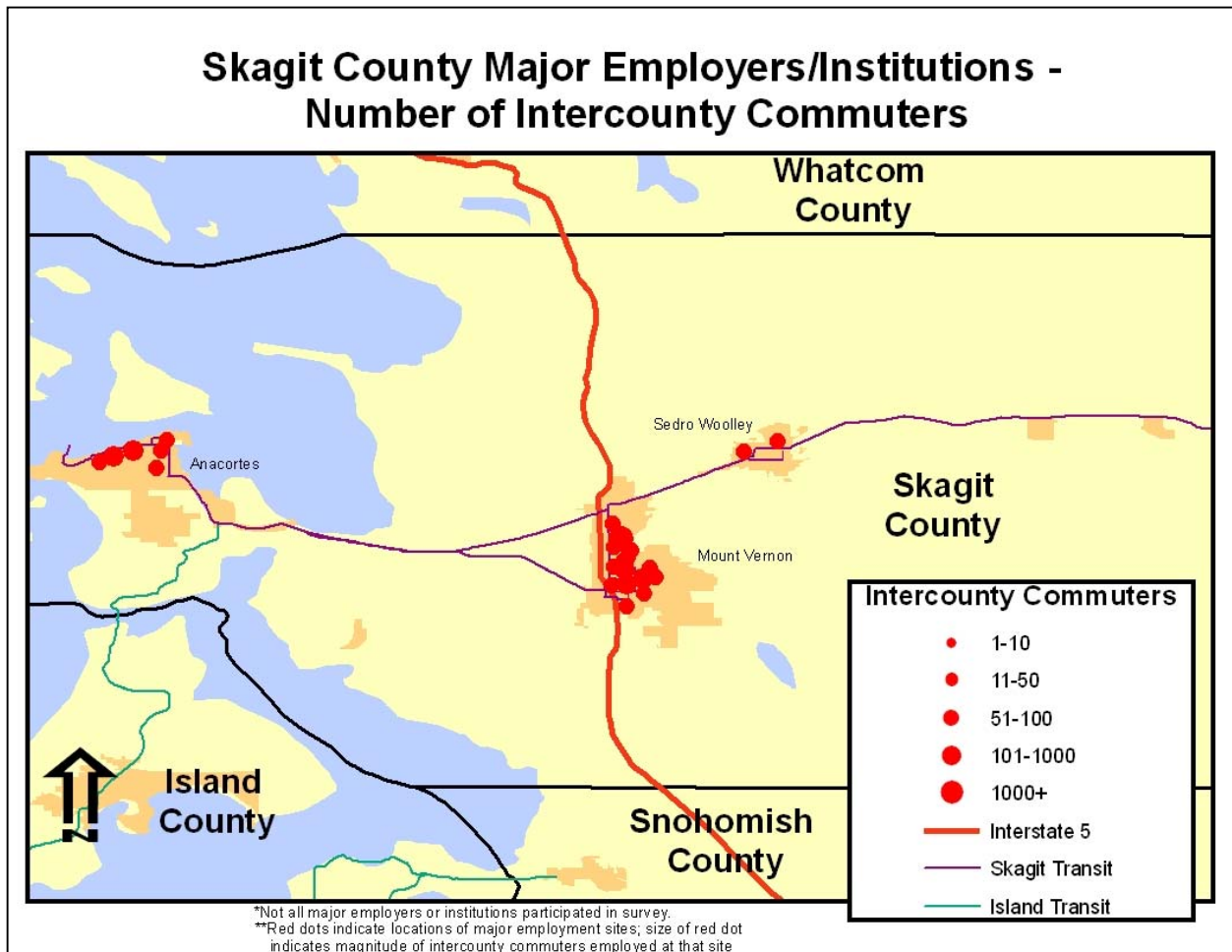


Figure 5—N. Snohomish County – Number of Cross-County Commuters to each Employer/Institution.

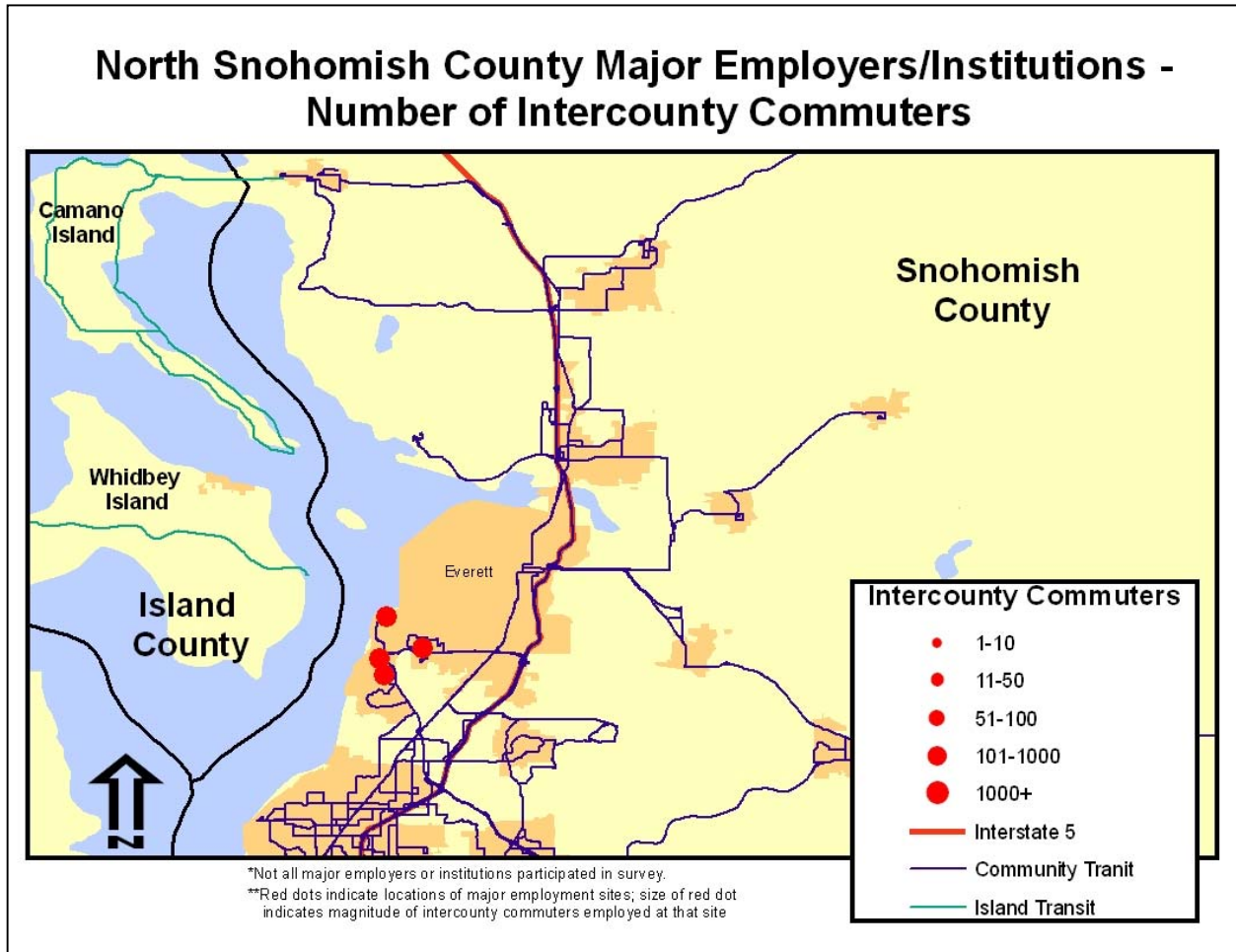
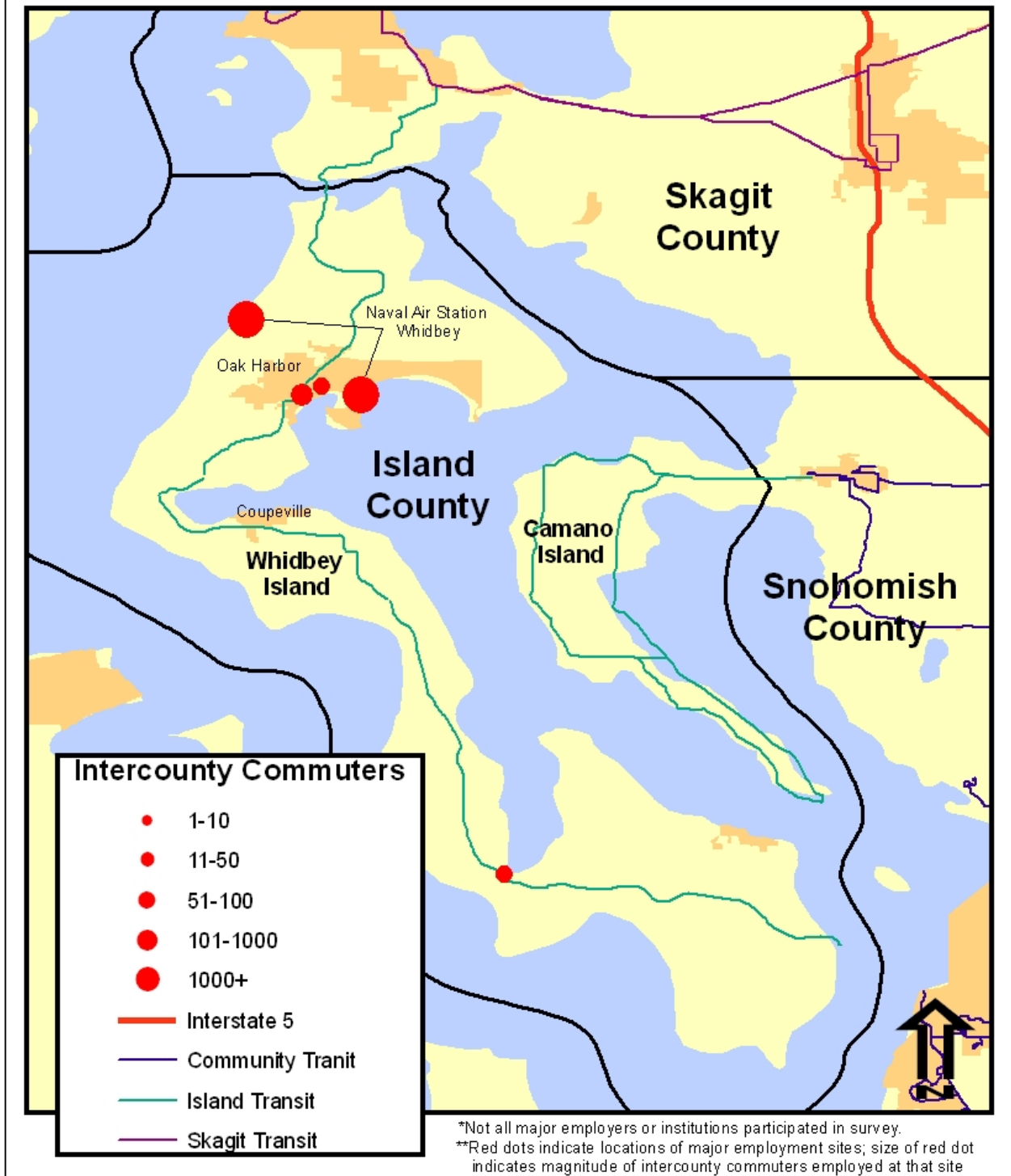


Figure 6—Island County – Number of Cross-County Commuters to each Employer/Institution.

Island County Major Employers/Institutions - Number of Intercounty Commuters



Since Tables 1 and 4 indicate that most intercounty commuting is between adjacent counties, and Figures 4 through 7 indicate that the locations of major employment sites attracting intercounty

commuters are well situated either for intercounty or local transit services, prospects would appear good for successful patronage of services which began to connect counties and weave together the region via transit.

The only North Sound county for which intercounty commuting, either as a place or origin or destination, is likely too small to be significant for consideration for a special transportation service (such as passenger-only ferries) is San Juan County. According to Year 2000 census data there are only 100 intercounty commutes originating in San Juan County (1.6% of its total workforce) and only 277 commuters to San Juan County from other North Sound counties. The WWU data found only 56 commuters from San Juan County to other North Sound counties. Since no major employers were located for San Juan County there is no data other than census data for commuting to San Juan County.

III.B.2. Intercounty Travel for Services

Interviewers for the “North Sound Connecting Communities Project Regional Transportation Governance Study (2002)” found anecdotal evidence that some North Sound residents, including some from San Juan County, were traveling to Bellingham for some of their health services, especially at St. Joseph Hospital, rather than travel to the Seattle area for specialist services. In order to explore this issue the member of the ITC representing St. Joseph’s Hospital was asked to investigate this issue. While it was not felt that very many inpatients or patients experiencing a serious medical problem or about to deliver a baby would take the bus, it was felt that at a significant level of service seeking persons traveling for routine or minor medical issues as well as some of those visiting inpatients might consider a transit option. A review of St. Joseph’s data for the years 2001, 2002 and 2003 revealed that somewhat over 1000 inpatients each year are from other North Sound counties, with about 60 per cent (a little over 600) coming from Skagit County and as much as 25 per cent (220-250) coming from San Juan County, with Island and Snohomish Counties each accounting for between 10 and 15 per cent. Data varied somewhat from year to year.

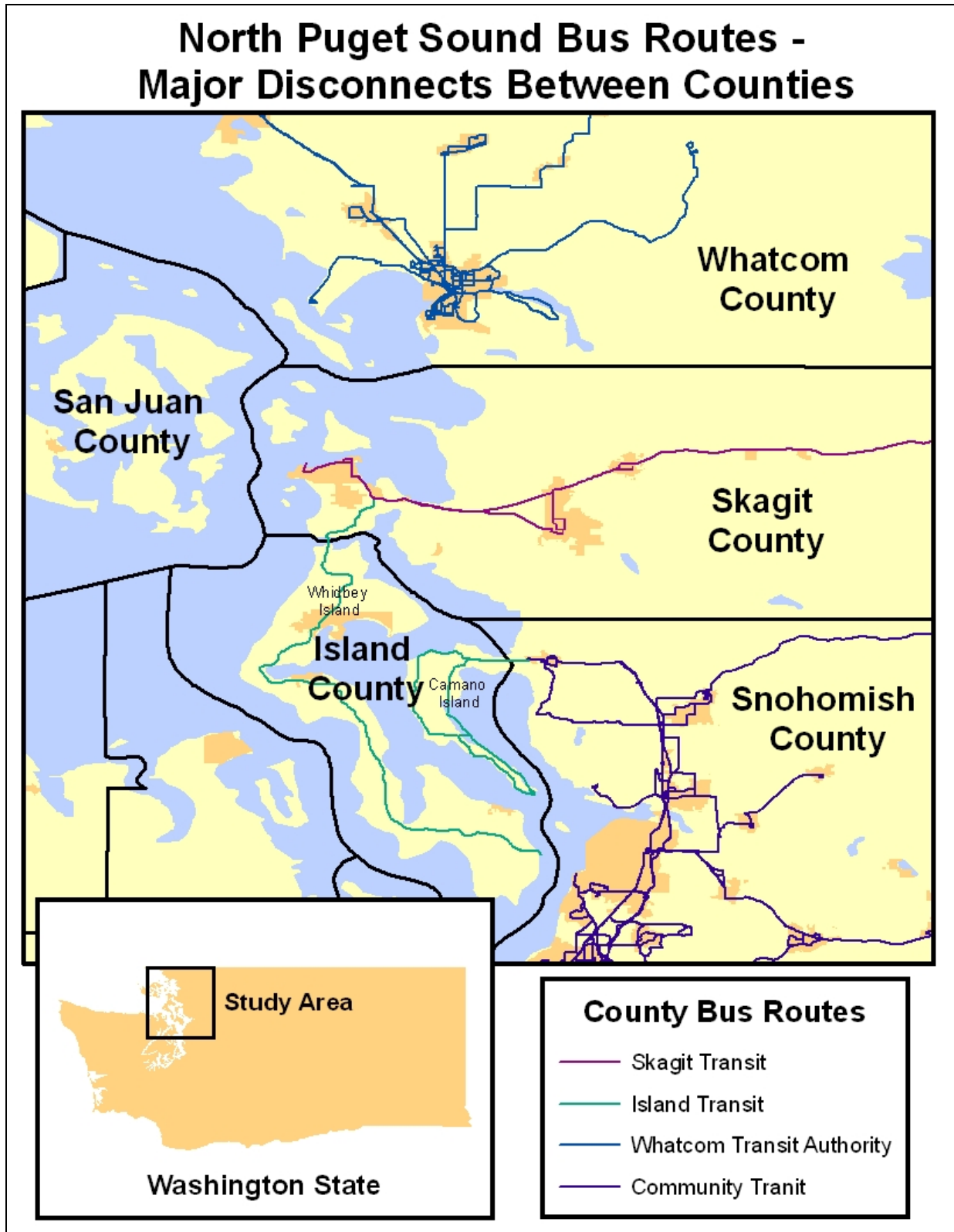
A review of St. Joseph’s outpatient data for the year June 2003-June 2004 found 4082 outpatients traveling from North Sound counties. Approximately 57 per cent were from Skagit County, 17 per cent from Snohomish County, 13 per cent from San Juan County, and 11 per cent from Island County. It is not clear from the St. Joseph data the extent to which students or staff associated with Western Washington University whose home address was out-of-county (including students who might be dormitory residents) were among those counted for these counties.

These data and would indicate a fair level of intercounty travel for health services. Similarly one would expect a fair level of intercounty travel for other services, social and mental health, reproductive planning, outpatient visits to private clinics, and a wide array of government and charitable services. These, and travel related to shopping and recreation, were beyond the ability of this study to estimate, but undoubtedly form a significant percentage of intercounty travel, especially when one keeps in mind the fact that the journey to work comprises only about 20 per cent of personal travel.

III.B.3. Intercounty Connections, Disconnections, Types and Frequencies of Services

Census data and data collected by the research team indicate a robust level of intercounty travel in North Sound. An examination of connections and disconnections between North Sound counties was undertaken as part of the project. Services between counties and connecting important multi-modal centers along with local transit services connecting with multi-modal facilities were examined in terms of the type of service offered as well as frequency. Only a limited number of transit agencies offer services which either cross a county line or connect with a transit service from an adjacent county. The connections and disconnections are illustrated in Figure 7 (below) which demonstrates that there are no public transit services between Whatcom and Skagit Counties and between Skagit and Snohomish Counties, despite high levels of commuting and discretionary travel).

Figure 7—Study Area and Major Disconnects between Transit Routes in the Northern Puget Sound.



The principal intercity transportation services in North Sound are:

- Amtrak
- Greyhound
- Bellair Airporter Shuttle (focus on SeaTac Airport)
- Whidbey-SeaTac Shuttle (focus on SeaTac Airport)
- Quick Coach Lines (Shuttle between Vancouver and SeaTac, cannot serve as intercity service within the U.S. due to the federal Jones Act)

Table 5 (below) describes the intercity and local services available at each of the region's multi-modal facilities. While local transit agencies serve each of the North Sound's multi-modal facilities, from the Lummi Island Ferry Dock at Gooseberry Point in Whatcom County to the Mukilteo Ferry Terminal in Snohomish County, the level of intercity and local connections, and the extent to which connections between modes are coordinated is highly variable. One also has the impression that the extent to which the services and their connections is publicized and marketed to the traveling public is similarly variable.

Table 6—North Sound Multi-Modal Connections

	Connections/ Services	Frequency	Intercounty?	Miscellaneous
WHATCOM COUNTY				
Bellingham Airport	BAS	N&S: 10 daily	Wh-Sk-Is- Sn-Kg	
	QCL	WINTER: 8 M-Th; 1 Fri only; 1 Sa only SUMMER: 5 M-Th; 1 FSaSu from July to September	Kg-Sn-Wh- BC	24-hour advance reservation required for pickup. No pickups going Southbound.
Lummi Island Ferry	WTA	Total of 1 route daily. Route 50 N: 8 M-F; 6 Sa; no Su. Route 50 S: 6 M-F; 6 Sa; no Su	No	Total Roundtrips for 1 route: 8 M-F; 6 Sa
	LIF	W&E: 38 M-F; 19 Sa; 18 Su	No	NO RUNS on alternate Thursdays - ferry re-fueling (~ 12:30 pm to 1:20 pm)
Fairhaven Transportation Center	WTA	Total of 5 routes daily. Route 1: 13 N&S daily (9 on Sa) Route 27: 12 N&S daily (9 on Sa) Route 61: 5 N&S daily (5 on Sa) Route 66: 12 N&S Su only; Route 97: 12 M- F	No	Total Roundtrips for 5 routes: 45 M-F; 23Sa; 12 Su. Note: Route 97 runs only when Western Washington University is in session.
	GRY	5 daily	BC-Wh-Sk- Sn-Kg	Service varies seasonally.
	AMT	N: 2 daily S: 2 daily	BC-Wh-Sk- Sn-Kg	
	AMH	FALL, WINTER, SPRING (N&S): 9-10 sailings per month (except 6 sailings in October) SUMMER: (N&S): 9-10 sailings per month (except 6 sailings in September)	No	
	VSJ	2 daily	Wh-Is	Summer only
	BAS	By Reservation only	Wh-Sk-Is- Sn-Kg	
SKAGIT COUNTY				
Mount Vernon Multi-Modal Station	SKT	M-F Only: Route 204/205: 14 N&S; Route 207: 24 N&S; Route 208N: 26; Route 208S: 25; Route 101: 4 each N&S; Route 615: W: 4, E: 5	No	Downtown shuttle circulates every 8-10 minutes. Total roundtrips for 5 routes: 98 M-F
	AMT	N: 2 daily S: 2 daily	BC-Wh-Sk- Sn-Kg	
	GRY	6 daily	BC-Wh-Sk- Sn-Kg	Service varies seasonally.
	BAS	By reservation only	Wh-Sk-Is- Sn-Kg	
Anacortes-WSF	WSF	SUMMER: 27 daily; 2 MTuWTh; 4 FSaSu; 1 Thu only; 1 Fri only; 2 SaSuM WINTER: 24 daily; 6 Fri only FALL: 25 daily; 1 Fri only; 2 FriSa; 2 Sun only; 1 Sa only; 2 M-Sa SPRING: 23 daily; 2 Fri only; 4 Sa only; 3 Su only; 2 M-Sa; 1 M-Th, Sa, Su	Sk-SJ	Service varies seasonally.
	SKT	Route 410: 4 M-F	No	Total roundtrips for 1 route: 4 M-F
	BAS	N: 9 daily; S: 8 daily	Wh-Sk-Is-	

			Sn-Kg	
March Point P&R	SKT	Route 410: W: 5 daily; E: 6 daily	Sk-Is	(inclWSFsummershuttle)
	IST	Route 4/411: 6 M-F	Is-Sk	Total roundtrips for 1 route: 6 M-F
	BAS	N: 11 daily; S: 10 daily	Wh-Sk-Is-Sn-Kg	
ISLAND COUNTY				
Oak Harbor	IST	Route 1 N: 15 M-F, 10 Sa; Route 1 S: 15 M-F; 13 Sa; Route 2: 13 M-F; Route 3: 6 M-F; Route 4: 9 Sa; Route 4/411 14 M-F; Route 6: 12 M-F; Route 10: 22 M-F 9 Sa	Sk-Is	Departs from Harbor Station. Total roundtrips for 7 routes: 97 M-F; 41 Sa
	BAS	N: 10 M-F; 13 Sa; S: 9 daily	Wh-Sk-Is-Sn-Kg	Best Western Harbor Plaza 33175 Highway 20
	WSS	N&S: 5 each daily	Is-Kg	Advanced reservations only. Departs from Harbor Station, NAS Whidbey and 7-11
Keystone WSF	WSF	LATE SPRING, SUMMER & EARLY FALL: 14 daily; 1 M-Th, Sa; 1 F,Su only LATE FALL, WINTER & EARLY SPRING: 10 Daily	Is-Jf	To Port Townsend
	IST	Route 1 S: 10 Sa; N: 9 Sa; Route 6 12 M-F	Is-Sk	Total Roundtrips for 2 routes: 12 M-F; 19 Sa
Clinton WSF	WSF	33 Daily; 4 M-F; 1 Sa; 1 Su, Hol	Is-Sn	Service varies seasonally.
	IST	Hourly. Route 1: N: 14 M-F; 9 Sa ; S: 19 M-F; 10 Sa Route 7: 17 M-F; Route 8: 11 M-F	Is-Sk	Total Roundtrips for 3 routes: 61 M-F; 19 Sa
SAN JUAN COUNTY				
Friday Harbor	WSF	SUMMER: 12 daily; 1 Fri only; 1 SaSuM only WINTER: 21 daily; 1 Fri only; SPRING: 10 daily; 2 Fri only; 1 Sa only; 1 Su only; 1 M-Sa only, 1 M-Th, Sa, Su Only FALL: 10 daily; 1 Su only; 1 Fri only; 1 M-Sa	Sk-SJ	Service varies seasonally.
	SJT	May 1-21: 7 daily, 10 SaSu; May 22 - June 25: 10 daily; June 26-September 5: 16 daily	No	Inter-island
	VSJ	2 daily	Wh-SJ	Summer only
N.SNOHOMISH COUNTY				
Stanwood P & R	CT	Route 247 E&W: 8 M-F; Route 422 N&S: 6 M-F	Is-Sn-Kg	Total roundtrips for 2 routes: 14 M-F
	IST	Route 1 E& W: 11 M-F; Route 3: 10 M-F; Route 4: 10 M-F	Is-Sk	Total roundtrips for 3 routes: 31 M-F
Everett Station	AMT	N&S Cascades: 2 daily E&W Empire Builder: 2 daily	BC-Wh-Sk-Sn-Kg	Puget Sounder offers special event scheduling.
	GRY	10 daily	BC-Wh-Sk-Sn-Kg	

	SES	By Reservation only	Is-Kg	
	QCL	WINTER: 8 M-Th; 1 Fri only; 1 Sa only SUMMER: 5 - M-Th; 1 FSaSu only from July to Sept	Kg-Sn-Wh-BC	24-hour advance reservation required for pickup. No pickups going Southbound.
	CT	Route 100/101: N: 8 M-F; S: 10 M-F; Route 200/201/202: N: 34 M-F, 25 Sa, 24 Su S: 60 M-F, 27 Sa, 24 Su Route 270: N: 30 M-F, 13 Sa, 12 Su S: 29 M-F, 14 Sa, 13 Su Route 280: N: 19 M-F, 12 Sa, 11 Su; S: 19 M-F, 11 Sa, 11 Su Route 510/513: N: 28 M-F, 19 Sa,Su; S: 31 M-F, 17 Sa, Su; Route 532/535: N: 21 M-F; S: 20 M-F Only	Sn-Kg	Total roundtrips for 6 Routes: 172 M-F; 79 Sa; 73 Su
	ET	Route 1N: 8 M-F; 9 Sa; 5 Su; Route 1S: 8 M-F; 9 Sa; 4 Su; Route 4 Circulator: 24 M-F; Route 5 Shuttle: Continuous 7am-12pm; Route 8: 9 M-F; Route 9 Airport: 54 M-F, 29 Sa; 19 Su; Route 9 EVCC: 29 M-F, 30 Sa, 20 Su; Route 20 (2): 20 M-F, 11 Sa, 4 Su; Route 24: 2 M-F, 5 Sa; 5 Su	No	Total roundtrips for 10 Routes: 174 M-F; 104 Sa; 61 Su
	ST-Sounder	2 daily	Sn-Kg	
	ST-Exp-bus	Route 510 N: 27 M-F; 17 SaSu; S: 24 M-F; 13 SaSu; Route 513: 4 M-F; Route 530 15 M-F; Route 532: 7 M-F	Sn-Kg	Total roundtrips for 4 routes: 77 M-F; 30 SaSu
	TWY	4 daily	Sn-Kg	To/from Eastern Washington
Mukilteo-WSF	WSF	33 daily; 4 M-F Only; 1 Sa only; 1 Su, Hol	Is-Sn	Proposed multimodal ferry terminal . Service varies seasonally.
	CT	Route 112 S: 43 M-F, 43 Sa, 14 Su; N: 45 M-F, 23 Sa, 14 Su; Route 177 N&S: 4 M-F; Route 190 S: 4 M-F; N: 9 M-F; Route 417 S 5 M-F; 417 N 7 M-F Route 880/881 S: 4 M-F; N: 6 M-F	Sn-Kg	Total roundtrips for 5 Routes: 131 M-F, 66 Sa, 28 Su
	ET	Route 23: 17 M-F	No	Total roundtrips for 1 route: 17 M-F

*Please note that schedules change frequently. Check the agency website for the most current time table.

Key to Services:

AMH - Alaska Marine Highway System (www.alaska.gov/ferry)
AMT - Amtrak (www.amtrak.com)
BAS - Bellair Airporter Shuttle (www.airporter.com)
CT - Community Transit (www.commtrans.org)
ET - Everett Transit (www.everetttransit.org)
GRY - Greyhound Lines (www.greyhound.com)
IST - Island Transit (www.islandtransit.org)
LIF - Lummi Island Ferry (www.co.whatcom.wa.us/publicworks/ferry/index.jsp)
QCL - Quick Coach Lines (www.quickcoach.com)
SES - Shuttle Express (www.shuttleexpress.com)
SJT - San Juan Transit (www.sanjuantransit.com)
SKT - Skagit Transit (www.skagit.org)
ST - Sound Transit (www.soundtransit.org)
TWY - Western Trailways (www.cantrail.com)
VSJ - Victoria San Juan Cruises (www.islandcommuter.com)
WSF - Washington State Ferries (www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries)
WSS - Whidbey Sea-tac Shuttle (www.seatacshuttle.com)
WTA - Whatcom Transportation Authority (www.ridewta.com)

Key to Counties:

BC - Vancouver BC area
Is - Island
Jf - Jefferson
Kg - King
SJ - San Juan
Sk - Skagit
Sn - Snohomish
Wh - Whatcom

IV. Summary and Recommendations

The above analysis and discussion creates the basis for a recommendation for the establishment of intercounty transit services in North Sound where currently services are lacking as well as the bolstering of the few existing intercounty services in the I-5 and SR-20 corridors.

The NSCCP Intercounty Transit Committee identified a number of issues, which need to be addressed in the planning and implementation of intercounty transit services in North Sound. There was strong consensus that all North Sound contiguous counties should be connected by public transportation services.

The WWU-Huxley team furnished data to the ITC which documents several of the issues and problems explored by the ITC as well as indicating a significant pool of commuters from which transit riders could be attracted.

Details of the Report's Recommendations are to be found in the Executive Summary at the beginning of this Report.

NSCCP-ITC Final Report

Appendix I: North Sound Connecting Communities Project (NSCCP) Overview

The **North Sound Connecting Communities Project (NSCCP)**, is a forum for government officials, planners, and citizen and private sector transportation interests. It was inaugurated in 1996 as a collaboration between the Cascadia Project of the Discovery Institute (Seattle), interested citizens and private sector transportation providers, elected officials and governmental and planning bodies in the North Puget Sound area. Under its auspices between 40 and 80 participants have met regularly at LaConner's Farmhouse Inn between Mount Vernon and Anacortes--and the NSCCP has become affectionately known as "The Farmhouse Gang."

The Mission of NSCCP includes:

--Assessing regional needs and exploring cooperative public and private cooperation to foster and enhance a seamless transportation system for passengers and freight in North Puget Sound.

The Goals of NSCCP include:

- Improved intercity passenger rail service between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.
- Improved intercity and intercounty public transportation, including better connections between trains, buses, ferries and private providers.
- Improved information for persons traveling by various modes.

The NSCCP is guided by a Steering Committee consisting of local elected officials, planners, and transportation providers (<http://www.wvu.edu/nsccp> → NSCCP-WWU → About → Organization)

North Sound Connecting Communities Project Steering Committee 2005

Todd Carlson	Planning & Ops Manager	WA St. Dept. of Transport.
Nancy Conard	Mayor	City of Coupeville
John Dewhirst	Transportation Specialist	Snohomish County
Wally Gillette	Councilmember	Town of Friday Harbor
Jim Jorgensen	Commissioner	Port of Bellingham
Dennis Kendall	Mayor	City of Marysville
Jim Miller	Executive Director	Whatcom Council of Governments
Kelley Moldstad	Executive Director	Skagit Council of Governments
Mike Morton	Transportation Planner	Island/Skagit RTPO
Dan Pike	Transportation Director	Skagit Council of Governments
Gordon Rogers	Deputy Director	Whatcom Council of Governments
Martha Rose	Executive Director	Island Transit
Barbara Ryan	Councilmember	Bellingham City Council
Preston Schiller	Coordinator	NSCCP/WWU
Mike Shelton	Commissioner	Island County Commission
Bill Thorn	Former Commissioner	Island County Commission
Larry Wickkiser	President	Airporter Shuttle/Bellair Charters

History and Chronology of NSCCP and related efforts:

1996: NSCCP launched.

1996-1999: Cascadia Project, Whatcom Council of Governments, Skagit Council of Governments, and Island-Skagit Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) provide in-kind support for NSCCP forums, grant writing, etc.

1999-2000: Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) and Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) contributed towards the planning and administration of the NSCCP for 1998-99. Cascadia Project (Seattle) furnished considerable in-kind services.

Cascadia, WCOG and others work to obtain a small congressional appropriation for NSCCP work which resulted in a \$50,000 Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant administered by SKAT to support forums, administration, SCOG research, and development of the Intermodal Information (kiosk) Project. Local matches were furnished by Snohomish County, Island County, Skagit County and the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA). The grant is administered by Skagit Transit (SKAT) and was completed in January, 2001.

2001-Present:

- NSCCP meets regularly and becomes a highly respected transportation voice in the North Sound.
- Plays a key role in preserving the 2nd Amtrak Cascades train service which had been threatened by funding cuts.
- Sponsors several workshops and meetings focused on specific transportation proposals, issues, or initiatives.
- Plays a key role in several studies and projects which include:

--Intermodal Information Project--Enhancement Grant:

(<http://www.wcog.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=128>)

NSCCP Grants and Studies

Intermodal Information Project--Enhancement Grant:

2001-2002: WCOG with assistance from other NSCCP partners applies for and is awarded a Statewide Competitive Enhancement Grant (Fed. "ISTEA,") for the construction and siting of Intermodal Information Kiosks and Displays in North Puget Sound in the amount of \$70,000 which is matched by local pledges of from the City of Bellingham, the City of Mount Vernon and Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), Island Transit, and Skagit Transit (SKAT), as well as pledges by owners of sites and facilities where such displays will be placed. By late 2004 kiosks or information displays had been installed at the following locations:

- Bellingham Cruise Terminal
- Fairhaven Transportation Center (Bellingham)
- Washington State Ferries Terminal, Friday Harbor
- Washington State Ferries Terminal, Keystone
- Mount Vernon Multi-Modal Station, Bus Bays
- Everett Station Ticket Information Office
- Western Washington University, Haggard Hall Bus Shelter
- Western Washington University, Viking Union Bus Stop

Plans for installing displays or kiosks are in process for the following sites:

- Washington State Ferries Terminal, Anacortes
- Washington State Ferries Terminal, Clinton
- Everett Station, main passenger waiting area
- Mount Vernon Multi-Modal Station, main waiting area

his project will be completed in early 2005. The total project cost is \$115,000.

Commuter Rail Feasibility Study—State/WSDOT Study:

The 2000 Washington State Legislature, responding to requests from NSCCP, allocated \$50,000 to its WSDOT Rail and Public Transit Division for a Commuter Rail Feasibility Study for North Puget Sound. This was matched by both a cash contribution from Snohomish County and a considerable amount of in-kind services in project management and oversight provided by Public Works transportation planner John Dewhirst. The study was completed by HDR, Inc. Engineering in August of 2001.

(http://www.wvu.edu/nsccp/History_files/Rail_Feasibility_Study.pdf)

North Sound Transportation Governance Study:

The 2001 Washington State Legislature, because of the work and multi-jurisdictional nature of NSCCP, appropriated \$150,000 to the WCOG to administer a study of possible regional governance needs. This amount has been matched by a considerable in-kind contribution from the Cascadia Project. The study by a team of consultants led by Gary Lawrence was completed in the fall of 2002.

(<http://www.wvu.edu/nsccp/> → NSCCP-WWU → About → History)

North Sound Intermodal Connections and Commuter Study:

A federal grant in the amount of \$392,000 through the USDOT Secretary's Office of Planning and Research and the Federal Transit Administration was awarded to the NSCCP in 2003. Local cash matches were also received from the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County. The grant is being administratively supervised by the Whatcom Council of Governments. Much of its work is being done under contract with the Cascadia Center in Seattle. A portion of the grant is being done under contract with Western Washington University's Huxley College of the Environment.

The grant was awarded with considerable assistance and support from the offices of Senator Patty Murray and Congressman Rick Larsen. The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) administers the grant which provides funding for comprehensive commuter research and recommendations for North Puget Sound including follow-up to the WSDOT rail study.

The major components of its scope include:

- A study of the feasibility of improving intercounty transit connections
- A study of the feasibility of passenger-only ferry services
- A study of possible passenger rail improvements
- A collaboration with Western Washington University's Huxley College of the Environment

-- Intercounty Transit Committee Final Report: (<http://www.wvu.edu/nsccp/> → ITC Draft Report)

Preliminary reports and recommendations from the rail and passenger studies are available at (<http://www.discovery.org/scripts/viewDB/index.php?command=view&id=100&program=Cascadia-NSCCP&isEvent=true>).

A general description of NSCCP and Connections and Commuter Study, as well as links to the Intermodal Information-Kiosk Project and the Transportation Connections Map is available at <http://www.wcog.org/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabid=130>

(for a brief description as well as links to relevant media coverage)
<http://www.discovery.org/cascadia/northSoundProject/>

Appendix II: Glossary of Abbreviations and Acronyms

NSCCP	North Sound Connecting Communities Project
WCOG	Whatcom Council of Governments
SCOG	Skagit Council of Governments
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
RTPO	Regional Transportation Planning Organization
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation
WSF	Washington State Ferries
NAS	(Whidbey) Naval Air Station
WTA	Whatcom Transportation Authority
SKAT	Skagit Transit
WWU	Western Washington University
WUTC	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

Appendix III: Intercounty Transit Committee Roster:

Martha Rose (Chair)	Island Transit
Preston Schiller (Coordinator)	NSCCP/WWU-Huxley/Cascadia Ctr.
Christine Abbey	Goodrich Aviation Tech.Servs.
Roland Behee	Community Transit
Carol Berry	WWU Parking & Transport.
Stoney Bird	SKAT-Advis. Comm.
Seija Blaylock	WSDOT-PTR
Shelly Brown	Cascadia Center consultant
Mary Bryson	Island Transit
Kim Cederstrom	WTA
Tom Curtis	Design Stanwood
Saranell DeChambeau	Island Transit-CAC Chair
John Dewhirst	Snohomish Co. Public Works
Mary Margaret Haugen	WA State Senator
Joe Heineck	Community Transit Advis. Comm.
Tom Hingson	Everett Transit
Steven J. Jones	Design Stanwood
Rick Kiesser	SKAT-CAC
Ed Knight	Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
Mike Lauver	Whidbey-SeaTac Shuttle
Jill Leonetti (staff)	WWU (Huxley College)
Dan Mahar	NW Air Pollution Authority
Carolyn Martin	St. Joseph Hosp. Safety Dept.
Richard McKinley	City of Bellingham Public Works
Cari McMullin (staff)	WWU (Huxley College)
Mike Morton	Island /Skagit RTPO
Alan Muia	Skagit Valley College
Rick Nicholson	WTA
Dale O'Brien	SKAT-Skagit Transit
Robin Phillips	WSDOT-PTR
Dan Pike	Skagit Council of Governments
Gordon Rogers	Whatcom Council of Govts.
Steve Rybolt (staff)	WWU (Huxley College)
Barbara Seitle	Island Transit CAC & LWV
James Shaw	WWU Public Safety
Matt Shelden	Community Transit
Eric Shjarback	Mt. Baker Area, WSDOT
John Solin	Whidbey-SeaTac Shuttle
Dan Ward	San Juan Transit
Wendy M. Weaver	The Boeing Co.
Larry Wickkiser	Airporter/Bellair Shuttle

Appendix IV.

Planning for Inter-County Transit Services:
A Discussion and Resource Document for the North Sound Connecting Communities Project

Eric Bruun, Ph.D.
Delta Services Group
930 S. 49th St.
Philadelphia, PA 19143
ericbruun@earthlink.net

April, 2004

This information can be found at <http://www.wvu.edu/nsccp/> → Intercounty Transit Committee

Appendix V. Estimate of an I-5 Express Service

Prepared by Matt Sheldon, Community Transit, for the Intercounty Transit Committee, June, 2004

Skagit - Snohomish Intercounty Fixed Route Bus Service										
<i>Preliminary Cost Estimates -- For Illustrative Purposes ONLY</i>										
Operations										
Route: Everett Station - Mount Vernon Express via I-5 (35 miles; 45 mins. each way)										
Stops: Everett Station, Stanwood/I-5 P&R, Mount Vernon Transit Center (assumes bay capacity is available)										
Deadhead costs assume 20 min. travel from base to start of route and back										
Capital										
Assumes maintenance base capacity is available at no cost										
Maximum buses needed (incl. spares): 3 @ ~ \$300,000 = \$900,000										
Estimated Fully-Allocated Annual Operating Costs in 2003 \$										
<i>Period</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Annual Platform Hours</i>	<i>CT Contracted @ \$71.64 / hr.</i>	<i>Cum</i>	<i>CT In-House @ \$87.19 / hr.</i>	<i>Cum</i>	<i>SKAT @ \$??./hr.</i>	<i>Cum</i>	<i>Private @ \$??./hr.</i>	<i>Cum</i>
WEEKDAY										
Rush Hours (6 hrs + deadhead)	Hourly	3,388	\$242,716	\$242,716	\$ 295,400	\$295,400		\$ -		\$ -
Both Directions										
Midday (6 hrs)	Hourly	3,048	\$218,359	\$461,075	\$ 265,755	\$561,155		\$ -		\$ -
Evening (3 hrs)	Hourly	1,524	\$109,179	\$570,254	\$ 132,878	\$694,032		\$ -		\$ -
SATURDAY										
Daytime (9 hrs + deadhead)	Hourly	1,005	\$72,022	\$642,276	\$ 87,655	\$781,687		\$ -		\$ -
Evening (3 hrs)	Hourly	312	\$22,352	\$ 664,628	\$ 27,203	\$808,891		\$ -		\$ -
SUNDAY										
Daytime (9 hrs + deadhead)	Hourly	1,139	\$81,622	\$746,250	\$ 99,338	\$908,229		\$ -		\$ -
Evening (3 hrs)	Hourly	354	\$25,361	\$771,611	\$ 30,865	\$939,094		\$ -		\$ -
WEEKDAY PEAK PERIOD, PEAK DIRECTION ONLY										
Rush Hours (6 trips + deadhead)	3 s/b trips									
AM south only; PM north only	3 n/b trips	2,201	\$157,704	\$157,704	\$ 191,934	\$191,934		\$ -		\$ -

Appendix VI. Correspondence RE: Amtrak ThruBus:

From: "Fredrickson, Kirk" <FredriK@wsdot.wa.gov>

Date: October 12, 2004 3:59:33 PM PDT

To: "Preston Schiller" <preston@cc.wvu.edu>

Cc: Gay Banks Olson <olsong@amtrak.com>, Martha Rose <rose@islandtransit.org>, Shelly Brown <shelly@shellybrownassociates.com>, "Phillips, Robin" <PhilliR@wsdot.wa.gov>, "Bruce Agnew (E-mail)" <bagnew@discovery.org>, "Pike, Dan" <danp@scog.net>, "Hugh Conroy (E-mail)" <Hugh@WCOG.org>

Subject: RE: Amtrak ThruBus for Intercounty Connections?

Preston:

I've done some preliminary research and I'd like to share my findings with you and the others included in this correspondence regarding the possible use of "Amtrak" buses traveling between Seattle and Vancouver, BC for inter-county trips. I'll try and answer your questions in the order you presented them.

1. The bus service that runs to and from King Street Station in Seattle, Surrey, the Delta Hotel near Vancouver International Airport, and Pacific Central Station near downtown Vancouver is owned and operated by Western Trailways of Canada (WT). Because it is a Canadian carrier, it cannot be used for US domestic travel, under the provisions of the Jones Act.
2. My limited research indicates that similar types of service cost approximately \$1.80 to \$1.90 per mile to operate. Because this is a private operation, the actual operating costs for Western Trailways are not known.

Amtrak has what is known as an interline agreement with WT. Amtrak and WT honor each other's tickets for travel between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. WT offers this international service as an extension of their Canadian network.

Even if WT were legally entitled to pick up and drop off people at Edmonds, Everett, Mount Vernon, and Bellingham, the extra time added to the schedule designed to carry people connecting to VIA cross-Canada trains and Amtrak trains would most likely drive away their core business between the major population centers, thereby eliminating their profits, as the demand for intercity travel is very price and time sensitive. And when the profits go away, the private sector cancels the service. In other words, your proposed service, whether operated by the private or public sector, will likely require some amount of public subsidy.

3. The Jones Act trumps all. Your proposal simply cannot be done with the current service provider under existing federal law.
4. I suspect that there are a number of empty seats per trip, but just like the trains and the ferries, there are fewer seats on the weekends and fewer seats in the summer.
5. Again, your proposal to use Canadian Western Trailways buses for domestic, intra-state travel cannot be done under existing federal law.
6. Amtrak Cascades currently offers multi-ride tickets between Seattle and Bellingham. Ten Trips in

45 Days Passes are good for ten one-way Amtrak *Cascades* trips. All travel must be completed within 45 days of purchase. Unlimited Monthly Passes are good for unlimited Amtrak *Cascades* trips within the multi-ride ticket area. This is a great value for anyone planning multiple one-way trips, especially students on limited budgets.

I believe your proposal to start an intercity transit service north of Seattle has some merit, but I think a lot more research and planning will be required before anyone will be willing to take the risk and attempt your pilot project. If you intend to move your proposal forward and seek state or federal funding assistance, I think you and your team will have to answer some important questions:

A. You say you have data that indicates there is a demand for an intercity transit service. People will want to know how you acquired this data, what it says, and if it includes the distribution of the demand. Do people want to go to downtown Everett? Paine Field? Seattle? Bellevue? Redmond? This will be important, because the number of transfers people have to make can significantly reduce the attractiveness of public transit for many people.

B. Would Whatcom Transit Authority, Skat Transit (and perhaps Community Transit or Sounder Transit) be willing to work together to operate the service, like Pierce Transit and Intercity Transit do between Olympia and Tacoma? Have these transit agencies investigated the demand and merits of such a service? If not, why not?

If one uses the operating cost figures of \$1.80 to \$1.90 per mile, then one-way operating costs for a Bellingham to Everett bus service (63 miles) would be somewhere between \$113 to \$120 per trip. If we just assume one peak-hour weekday trip south and one peak-hour weekday trip north with connections at Everett Station to regional express buses and Sounder commuter trains, the cost would be somewhere around \$60,000 per year to operate the one daily round trip between Everett and Bellingham. The number of riders multiplied by the fares, of course, will reduce this operating cost.

I would suggest that your first step would be to perform a full, scientifically valid investigation of rider demand. Then I would suggest that a professional transit planner develop transit schedules best suited to meet the level of demand, determine the total costs (capital equipment and operations, including insurance, regular maintenance, etc) subsidy requirements, and the governance structure to make it all work. This is a big undertaking, but the expenditure of precious public funds will require this type of effort. People (citizens, business leaders, legislators) will want a good foundation of research and a well-developed business plan before moving forward.

It is not my intent to dampen your spirit or dissuade you from trying to make this work. I know you thought that a demonstration project with Western Trailways of Canada would have been a simpler and more immediate way to start this type of service. However, because of the legal constraints listed above, this won't be possible. But I encourage you to keep looking for a way to get this thing going.

Kirk Fredrickson
Planning and Policy Coordinator
WSDOT Rail Office
360.705.7939

-----Original Message-----

Sept. 29, 2004

TO: Kirk Fredrickson, WSDOT-Rail Division

Gay Banks Olson, Amtrak-NW Passenger Services

FROM: Preston Schiller, NSCCP Intercounty Transit Committee

RE: Issues regarding Amtrak ThruBus potential for intercity services

cc/Martha Rose (Island Transit), Shelly Brown

Thank you for meeting with me at the recent IMTC meeting in Bellingham.

As I indicated, one of the ideas which has come out of our Intercounty Transit Committee is the possibility of taking advantage of existing services, such as Amtrak's ThruBus between Seattle and Vancouver (BC), for intercity travel between Bellingham, Mount Vernon, Everett, and (possibly) Seattle. Our research efforts have identified a fairly large number of persons commuting between North Puget Sound counties for employment and education and, no doubt, many more travel between counties for other purposes.

I understand that the financial situation of your respective programs is quite constrained. We would seek funding from State and Federal sources to cover the expenses of any demonstration program which might come out of our efforts.

Our understanding of the potential of the Amtrak ThruBus would be furthered considerably if you could furnish us with information about the following issues:

- What barriers do you perceive to the use of existing Amtrak ThruBus services between Seattle and Vancouver, BC (and between Vancouver, BC, and Seattle) for passenger pick-up and drop-off at Amtrak facilities at Bellingham, Mount Vernon, and Everett?
- How much extra would it cost to make these stops?
- What are some of the legal and regulatory constraints?
- Are there capacity issues? Weekdays? Weekends?
- What would some of the financial and/or legal-regulatory issues be in regards to adding extra ThruBus runs?
- What are your thoughts about a possible demonstration project, possibly targeted at a specific population (i.e. North Sound college students) who might be able to purchase a weekday pass for travel in the Cascades Corridor north of Seattle via either Amtrak Cascades services or ThruBus services.

I look forward to your thoughts on these matters.

Appendix VII. Methodology for Data Collection

Commuting patterns can be analyzed in a variety of different ways. This study relies on two sources of data; the United States Census Bureau and primary data collected by Western Washington University. In addition to the quantitative data collected, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) was used to analyze the data spatially.

The study area is characterized as the Northern Puget Sound and is defined by county boundaries in Whatcom, Skagit, San Juan, and Island Counties. Snohomish County is defined by the area north of Everett.¹

2000 United States Census Bureau Data

The data available through the 2000 United States Census looked specifically at *Populations Census Data → Commuting Patterns*. Data was available dating to 1960 for each county within the state of Washington. By compiling the data for each county, commuting patterns could be produced, specifically examining the number of individuals that are employed outside of their residing county. This analysis show where people are commuting to.

Western Washington University

Data assembled from major employers and institutions looked specifically at the current status of intercounty commuting as of May 31, 2004.² This data while similar to the 2000 United States Census Bureau Commuting Patterns data provides a more individualized assessment on where individuals are commuting to (i.e. employment or institution center), county of origin (i.e. the county the individual is coming from), a current estimation of the number of individuals commuting cross-county, and individuals commuting to institutions.

The process for compiling this data consisted of accumulating a list of major employers in the five county area and calling each employer or institution to determine the number of individuals that commute cross-county to their workplace/institution.³ The major components of this data collection for each employer/institution consisted of:

- Agency/Company
- Location
- Contact Person/Information
- Total Number of Employees
- Total Number of Employees that Commute Cross-County
- Total Number of Employees from Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, San Juan, and Island County

¹ The 2000 United States Census Commuting Patterns data addressed *all* Snohomish County.

² An institution can be defined as, but is not limited to, a place of higher or continued education. This can include Western Washington University or Skagit Valley Community College.

³ A major employer is defined as any business that employs 100 or more full-time employees arriving at work between 6:00 and 9:00 a.m.