

DOT DISPATCH

DOT goes green

From offering free bus rides on Earth Day to announcing new biodiesel initiatives, the Department of Transportation has been taking its environmental message on the road this spring — all aimed at educating the public about how King County actions are helping to offset global warming.

During the fourth annual Earth Day Expo at Westlake Center April 20, County Executive Ron Sims

acknowledged efforts by the Department of Transportation — and the county overall — to reduce its carbon footprint, including:

- **A decision five years** ago to use clean-burning Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel in the Metro Transit fleet, which has cut particulate emissions by 90 percent.
- **The county's full embrace** of hybrid technology, including a fleet of hybrid buses and 136 hybrid passenger vehicles in its government motor pool — plus two heavy-duty hybrid trucks due to arrive this summer. Metro operates the largest fleet of hybrid buses in the world. These buses, which run on electricity and diesel, help Metro save 750,000 gallons of fuel and at least a half-million dollars a year.
- **The county's efforts** to purchase and support markets for biodiesel, a sustainable fuel that emits less greenhouse gases than regular diesel fuel. “Today, most



King County Executive Ron Sims outlines Transportation department initiatives during the Earth Day Expo.

of the Metro buses you see on the road are powered by a 20-percent blend of biodiesel and Ultra Low Sulfur Diesel,” Sims noted. “And it’s not just Metro. Our entire King County diesel fleet, including many of our semi-trucks, also runs on biodiesel.”

The Fleet Administration Division is heading up The Northwest Hybrid Truck Consortium, a group of local and state government agencies interested in taking hybrid vehicle technology to the next level with the purchase of medium and heavy-duty work trucks. “This consortium will help accelerate the production of hybrid trucks not only for government use, but also for the mainstream market,” said Windell Mitchell, the director of the Fleet Division.

The Fleet Division has been actively involved in promoting the use of biodiesel through local events such as the recently held Fifth

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AIRPORT



FLEET



ROADS



TRANSIT



DOT takes lead in fight against global warming

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Annual Northwest Biodiesel Forum and is sponsoring a major clean vehicle conference in Seattle this fall. (See *Events showcase alternative fuels* on next page.)

Under Sims' leadership, the Department of Transportation has become one of the greenest transportation agencies in the nation. In addition to using biodiesel and hybrid vehicles and buses, the Roads and Fleet divisions use biodegradable or re-refined lubricants on all heavy equipment vehicles. And the Road Services Division was recently honored with Excellence in Building Green Awards at the King County Green Building Summit. (See *Road Services wins Building Green awards* on next page.)

Turning biosolids into biodiesel

Sims also announced a new initiative that “closes the loop” on efforts to recycle King County biosolids — the byproduct of the sewage treatment process — on Eastern Washington canola crops that in turn can be used to produce biodiesel.

King County's wastewater treatment system produces nearly 115,000 tons of biosolids annually, and long-term research has shown this material can be used as fertilizer to make plants grow better. “Our scientists teamed up with Natural Selections Farms in Sunnyside to test the use of biosolids to grow the canola,” Sims said, and the results were clear: “Biosolids applications helped grow a quality canola crop that will be crushed to make vegetable oil and brought back to Seattle, where it will be processed into biodiesel to power our buses.”

While it's too early to say whether more canola crops will be planted in future seasons to ensure an ongoing supply of this seed crop, “it is a huge step in the right direction,” Sims said. “We are taking our commitment to fight global warming one step further — a step I hope will produce a new relationship between Eastern Washington farmers and Western Washington biofuel refineries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and our reliance on foreign oil. Now we are fulfilling the vision we started with when Metro buses starting using alternative fuels.”

As an environmentally friendly aside, many riders attending the Westlake event by bus were also served by quiet, clean, electric trolleybuses on routes 7, 10, 14, 43, and 49 on Pine Street and routes 1, 2, 3, 4, and 13 on 3rd Avenue.



Marketing communications specialists Linda Wraith, left, and Kelly Lindsey distribute information about Metro's many commute options at the Earth Day Expo.

Free rides on Earth Day

To further demonstrate the role that public transportation plays in protecting the environment, Metro Transit provided free bus rides in honor of Earth Day on Sunday, April 22.

“Earth Day is a great day to take one new action to protect our environment by generating less pollution and reducing global warming,” Sims said. “Leaving the car at home and taking public transportation is a way to make a difference that’s good for planet Earth.”

According to Bob Virkelyst, supervisor of marketing and service information, the ride-free day provided a chance for those who have never taken a Metro bus – or who ride infrequently – to explore the bus system at their own pace and experience a healthy alternative to their existing travel habits. And it was easy for Metro riders who needed to transfer to Sound Transit or Community Transit bus service, as both agencies joined King County in offering free rides.

The Metro Free Rides on Earth Day program directly responds to King County’s Climate Plan, which will create a specific timetable that incrementally reduces emissions to 80 percent below today’s levels by the year 2050. The plan calls for cleaner cars and fewer cars as the solution for reducing automobile emissions that account for more than half the greenhouse gas emissions in the Puget Sound region.



Award-winning teams—Front row, L-R: Kevin Chang, Dave Watson, Jim Eagan, Frank Overton, Lindsey Shepherd; and back row, L-R: Phillip Rutan, Dean A. Wilson, Dan Sahagun, Mark Wilgus, and Ronda Strauch. Not pictured: Don Bleasdale, Victor Dagg, Gail Sullivan, Jim Sussex, and Manuela Winter.

Road Services wins Building Green awards

Two Road Services Division projects were honored with Excellence in Building Green Awards at the King County Green Building Summit II on March 21. The awards recognize project teams that have been stewards for green building, including infrastructure projects. The projects recognized were:

The 148th Avenue NE Pedestrian Improvement project for the use of slag (a by-product of iron production) as a 50-percent cement substitute in the construction of curbs and gutters, reducing greenhouse gas emissions by about 14,300 pounds.

The Military Road South at South 272nd Street project for its implementation of “Low Impact Development” features consisting of porous concrete sidewalks and a bio-retention area (modified “rain garden”) for managing stormwater.

Events showcase alternative fuels, clean vehicles

From participating in a recent local biodiesel forum to planning a national clean vehicle conference, the Department of Transportation has been working to advocate the use of vehicles with low or zero emissions and alternative fuels.

On May 6, the DOT staffed an information table at the Northwest Biodiesel Network’s Fifth Annual Northwest Biodiesel Forum. DOT handouts highlighted the various ways that King County uses biodiesel — including King County Executive Ron Sims’ recent announcement of a biodiesel partnership with Yakima County canola farmers. The exhibit also included information on the full range of transportation choices that Metro Transit offers.

This fall, King County will host a one-day National Clean Vehicle Conference on Sept. 19 at Qwest Field, which will be followed by a two-day Heavy-Duty Hybrid Truck event hosted by WestStart, a Southern-California-based advanced transportation technologies organization.

The conference will showcase technological advances in vehicles with low or zero emissions and alternative fuels, with the goal of promoting their widespread purchase and use. Attendees will have a chance to see and drive the clean vehicles and learn how they contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions.



Green transportation options for DOT employees

King County offers many commute choices that reduce traffic congestion and air pollution

When it comes to commuting, Department of Transportation employees are in the same situation as most of the general public: They want to do their part to protect the environment, and they are also seeking flexible commute options that fit their work schedules and family commitments.

“King County is committed to offering a variety of commute choices that reduce traffic congestion and air pollution,” said Department of Transportation Director Harold Taniguchi. “Whether it’s taking the bus, joining a vanpool or carpool, or riding a bicycle, we encourage our employees take a closer look at the many convenient and flexible transportation options available to them.”

In the spirit of reducing the number of single-occupant vehicle trips in the region, the following are some of the county’s many “green” public transportation choices. For more

information about these and other employee transportation benefits, call the Employee Transportation Hotline at 206-263-4575 or visit the Employee Transportation Web site at <http://www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation>.

Home Free Guarantee

If you take transit or rideshare to get to work, you have a back-up plan for any unanticipated emergencies. Under the Home Free Guarantee program, eligible employees can catch a taxicab to get home fast—up to eight times a year.

Vanpooling and vansharing

Join a King County Metro Vanpool or Vanshare program and get a premium reward through the Fill It Up program. The program is aimed at new Metro Vanpool and Vanshare participants and for current riders who recruit others to form groups and fill empty seats. New riders and drivers, as well as new Vanpool primary bookkeepers, will earn a \$50 MasterCard gift card. Commuters who are new to all three can get \$150.

If you recruit a new rider, you can earn even more rewards — up to \$250 at \$50 per recruit. Just register as a commuter and then apply for your gift card. And don’t forget that eligible King County employees receive \$45/month toward their vanpool fare. Learn more and register for the program at www.rideshareonline.com/fillitup.

Carpooling

A carpool is a group of two or more people who commute to work or other destinations together in a private vehicle. Carpool members work out their own agreements on who drives and how often, schedules, and payments for gas and maintenance. King County Metro’s Rideshare Operations provides various services to help you start and support your commuter pool. Visit Metro Carpooling Made Easy at <http://transit.metrokc.gov/tops/van-car/carpool.html>. In addition, RideshareOnline.com is a free online self-serve ridematching service that—in a matter of minutes, day or night—helps you find others who want to carpool and have a similar commute.

Bike to work

And here's another very green commute option: bicycling. Bike racks are available at many Department of Transportation worksites, including the King Street Center in downtown Seattle.

Many employees took advantage of extra encouragement and incentives in May, which was "Bike to Work Month," but if you missed it you can still find lots of resources to help you plan your bike commute on the Employee Transportation Program Web site (follow the links to "Commute Options" and "Bike").

Flexcar

Flexcar features a network of vehicles parked in leased parking spaces in neighborhoods where members live and work. As a member, you reserve a car when you need it and return it to the original location. At the end of the month, Flexcar charges your credit or debit card and sends you a statement listing your usage.

Your King County bus pass/employee ID/keycard is good for a \$35 credit towards Flexcar usage when you become a member. To receive

Learn more

Employee Transportation Hotline: 206-263-4575

Employee Transportation Web site:
www.metrokc.gov/employees/transportation

this credit, enter "KCE" (not case-sensitive) in the Promo Code field on the online application. For more information about this offer, visit the Employee Transportation Program Web site and follow the links to "Commute Options" and "Flexcar." Applicants must meet program qualifications to be eligible.

Note: At press time, a new agreement had just been unveiled in which King County employees who sign up for Flexcar will also receive a waiver of their first year's annual fee of \$35. In addition, two Flexcars will be housed at the King Street Center garage beginning June 1, adding to the network of vehicles available to Flexcar users in Pioneer Square and downtown Seattle.



King County Department of Transportation Climate Team

The DOT Climate Team, drawn from all of the department's divisions, worked on the development of the King County Climate Plan and will now focus on implementing the plan and identifying new ways for the county to reduce its carbon footprint. If you have ideas or questions on climate change, bring them to (left to right): Ronda Strauch, Harold Taniguchi, Ron Quist, Matt Hansen, Frank Overton, Jim Sussex, Norton Posey, Cheryl Binetti, Noel Holley, Melody Bennett, Lindy Jenson, Gary Molyneux, Sue Osterhoudt, David Mark, or Gary Prince, or (team members not shown in photo) Christine O'Claire, Jim Boon, or Jerry Rutledge.

Metro getting ready to reopen transit tunnel later this year

Preparations are underway for reopening the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel to bus-only service later this year. Sound Transit's contractors now are finishing the retrofit project, which includes installation of the light-rail system and updating all the mechanical, communication and safety systems.

Most of the bus routes that were previously assigned to the tunnel will return, said David Hull, supervisor of service planning. "A few changes will occur both in the tunnel and on the surface to help improve the efficiency of transit operations," Hull noted.

Once the tunnel reopens, only buses will operate in it until late 2009, the year that

light rail will begin serving the area. However, light-rail trains may be in the tunnel doing training runs prior to that date, Hull said.

The tunnel will be open from 5 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday, and closed both Saturday and Sunday. All of the same stations and same entrances will be used, although Convention Place Station will be served by buses only when light rail begins operating. That's because the light rail line terminates south of Convention Place Station under Pine Street, and that will be the alignment that light rail follows when it is eventually extended to Capitol Hill and the University District.

To prepare for future joint bus and light-rail operations in the tunnel, Metro bus

drivers are learning a new set of rules focusing mainly on differences in train signal systems. The light-rail group is working closely with operations staff to ensure all bus operators receive training on rail signals and rail rules governing tunnel operations.

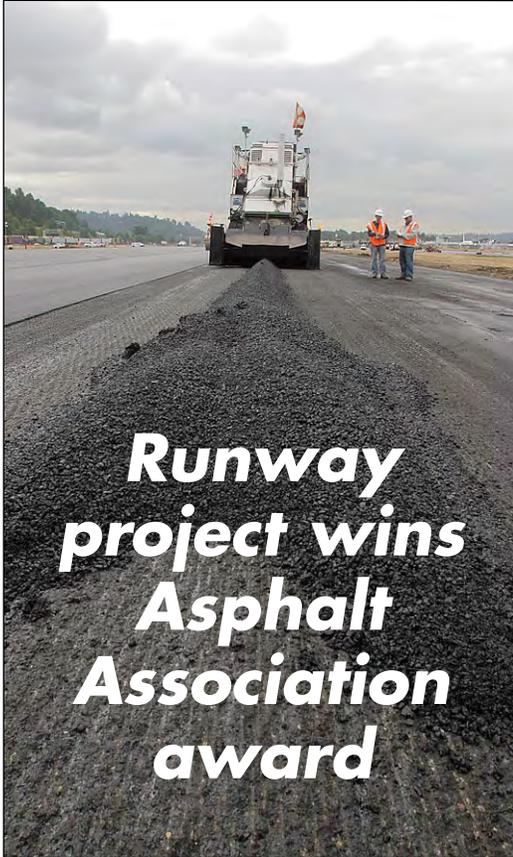
"When trains start operating with buses in the tunnel, we will be pioneering a system that

does not exist anywhere in the world that I know of," said Transit Light Rail Manager Austin Jenkins. "Trains and buses will share the same roadway, and that presents a multitude of challenges. Just like buses, the rail industry operates in an environment where customer and worker safety is our highest priority. As soon as we open the tunnel, everything has to be done the right way."



Work in progress

King County photographer Ned Ahrens took these photos in the Downtown Seattle Transit Tunnel in early May. Above, machinery is used to grind the rail surfaces. Below, two tracks meet in a diamond crossover (so called because of the shape in the center).



Runway project wins Asphalt Association award

Last summer's successful project to remove and replace 116,000 tons of hot-mix asphalt on the main runway at Boeing Field received a coveted National Asphalt Pavement Association Quality in Construction Award. The award, which recognizes exemplary hot-mix asphalt (HMA) pavement projects throughout the U.S., was presented to King County International Airport staff in San Francisco during the annual NAPA conference in March.

In addition to experiencing normal wear from more than 300,000 flight operations annually, the runway – last overlaid in 1985 – had been significantly damaged during the 2001 Nisqually Earthquake. While some repairs were made immediately following the quake, soil under the runway had liquefied, causing more cracking, depressions and grade changes that had to be fixed before more damage occurred.

Completed ahead of schedule and under budget in August 2006, the rehabilitation project was done in phases to keep full runway closures to a minimum. The runway was closed to all air traffic from Aug. 13-24, requiring tenants and other users to rely on other regional airports during that time.

"I want to express my appreciation to everyone involved for their sacrifices and effort," said KCIA Senior Engineer Rick Renaud, who oversaw the project. "This success belongs to everyone."

Traffic engineer applies CPR skills to save a life

Senior Traffic Engineer Dave Paul has a long history of saving lives. A 32-year King County employee, Paul spent the first 16 years of his career as a police officer. In 1990, he changed his career path and began working for the Road Services Division in the Traffic Engineering Section.

Around 8:30 a.m. on March 28, Paul was conducting a Neighborhood Traffic Safety Program field investigation in unincorporated King County. Driving northbound on Des Moines Memorial Drive S near S 107th Street, he noticed people surrounding an elderly man lying on the sidewalk. Paul got out of his car to investigate, and found the man ashen-faced, with no indication he was breathing or had a pulse.

Paul began administering CPR until a passing school bus driver arrived with a breathing barrier and took over. Not missing a beat,

Paul put on his orange traffic control vest and directed traffic until fire and aid vehicles arrived to transport the man to the hospital.

According to fellow DOT Traffic Engineer Jake Jacobovitch, this is not the first time that Dave has used his CPR skills to help save someone's life. "About seven years ago, he performed CPR on a man who had a massive heart attack at Lamonts," Jacobovitch said. "They have been friends ever since."

All 600 Road Services Division employees are required to be certified in CPR and first aid, and must renew that training every two years. Since their work takes them to all corners of King County, the Roads staff is always prepared to come to the assistance of a fellow employee or member of the public.

"My definition of a hero is an ordinary person doing extraordinary things. Dave fits the definition," Jacobovitch said.



Thanks to CPR training, Senior Traffic Engineer Dave Paul was able to help a man who had stopped breathing.

Acronym of the Month



William Powell correctly identified SAFETEA-LU.

Our Jan./Feb. competition was a battle of the titans, with Transit Administrator and previous AOTM champion William Powell edging out Transit Mural Coordinator Patt Comstock, who also has a win under his belt. Both answered correctly that SAFETEA-LU stands for "Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users."

Honorable mention goes to Roads engineers Tina Morehead and John Shields, who not only correctly identified the acronym but also explained, respectively, that it refers to federal transportation legislation passed in 2005 and that it includes funding for wildlife crossings, among other things, in road improvement projects.

Our new puzzler is:

EEI

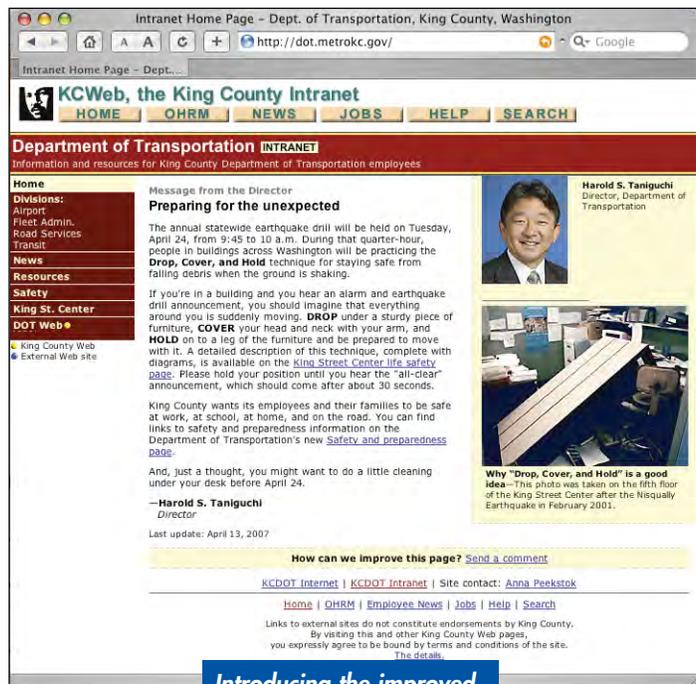
Put your thinking caps on and send your answers to anna.peekstok@metrokc.gov.

DOT intranet gets an upgrade

Have you visited the Department of Transportation's intranet lately? Designed just for employees, this Web site can only be accessed from a county-owned computer and is intended to help you do your job and find information more easily.

The site was upgraded in April with new navigation, an updated appearance, and new features such as a safety and preparedness page and a resource page with links to online directories, forms, employee benefits pages, and other useful items.

If you haven't checked it out, please take a minute and point your browser to <http://dot.metrokc.gov/>. And please tell us what you think. At the bottom of each page, you'll find a link to send a comment and let us know how we can improve the page.



**Introducing the improved
DOT intranet site.**

If you have questions, comments or story ideas, send them to *The DOT Dispatch*, KSC-TR-0824, call 206-263-6482 or write anna.peekstok@metrokc.gov.

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