

**City of Vancouver
Westside Industrial Area
Transportation Options
Program Assessment**

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Cover Photo: Courtesy of The Port of Vancouver

In 2016, the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) funded a request by the City of Vancouver to examine the potential implementation of a one-year commute options pilot program for businesses and employees located in the westside industrial area of Vancouver, Washington. The effort targeted businesses located in two primary focus areas: the Port of Vancouver and Fruit Valley Road. The City of Vancouver selected these areas due to the high concentration of businesses, including two affected by Washington's Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) law.

Alta Planning + Design, the firm hired by the City of Vancouver to conduct this analysis, completed an assessment of the transportation services and facilities in the Port of Vancouver and along Fruit Valley Road. To complement this effort, Alta led 22 interviews with representatives from identified businesses in both focus areas.

Key findings from the existing conditions analysis are summarized below:

- The Port of Vancouver is not directly serviced by transit, making transit a difficult transportation option for employees. Fruit Valley Road is served by C-TRAN's Route 6 (with 30 minute headways most of the day).
- Bike lanes exist along Fourth Plain Boulevard and a sidewalk is present along one side of the road. While bike lanes and sidewalks are available on Fruit Valley Road until 61st Street, there are few crosswalks. Employees of businesses in the Port and along Fruit Valley Road also commonly live far from their workplaces, making bicycling to work difficult.
- Land use in the Port of Vancouver and along Fruit Valley Road is primarily zoned for industrial use. Some open space, residential, and commercial land uses are also

present. Because of this land use pattern, many employees live far away from their workplaces, making commute trip distances longer.

Key findings from interviews with business representatives are summarized below:

- Constraints like parking costs and traffic congestion, that would typically be catalysts for a commute options program, are not currently present in the westside industrial area.
- Night shifts, swing shifts, and overtime needs make riding transit difficult for employees, particularly given the fact that C-TRAN Route 6 does not run during the late evening hours for Fruit Valley Road businesses.
- Of the 22 interviewed businesses, 18 said one to a few employees use transportation options like walking, bicycling, transit, and carpooling besides driving alone to and from work.
- Over half (59%) of the 22 interviewed business expressed some level of interest in a commute options program. Of these interested businesses, less than one-third (31%) said that some sort of reward system would motivate employees to use transportation options.
- Based on these findings, and as explained further in the Recommendations section of this assessment, Alta does not recommend that the City of Vancouver implement a commute options program in the westside industrial area at this time. Rather, the City should strategically build demand, capacity, and relationships with area partners like C-TRAN and businesses in an effort to develop support for increased transportation infrastructure and services, as well as a commute options program in the future when the need is stronger.

Background Information

As stated in the City of Vancouver’s Westside Mobility Strategy,¹ the residential, industrial, and commercial areas west of I-5 in Vancouver are expected to grow over the next 20 years. The Port of Vancouver is following this trend as it nears the completion of the 108-acre Centennial Industrial Park. In 2017, the Port of Vancouver expects to complete the construction of a 125,000-square-foot industrial building in Centennial Industrial Park with the hopes of developing five additional lots in the future. On an even larger scale, the Port of Vancouver expects to eventually develop the 530-acre Columbia Gateway property for industrial use.

To address the impacts this growth will undoubtedly have on Vancouver’s transportation system, the City of Vancouver took the opportunity to complete a transportation options program assessment of the westside industrial area. The City of Vancouver recognizes the value of programs that offer a wide range of mobility options to residents and employees, as demonstrated by the success of its Destination Downtown program. This program encourages employees and residents in downtown and uptown Vancouver to commute using shared and active modes of transportation. Over the past four years, the Destination Downtown program has measured an average 8 percentage point reduction in participants’ drive-alone commute mode share. A commute options program such as Destination Downtown can help businesses achieve employee transportation goals including:

- Increasing the numbers of employees walking and biking to work
- Reducing the number of drive-alone trips to work and increasing the use of shared-ride trips (e.g. carpooling)
- Reducing congestion and demand for parking

- Promoting the use of C-TRAN buses and vanpools
- Achieving health and sustainability goals
- Freeing up parking spaces for use by customers and visitors

Purpose

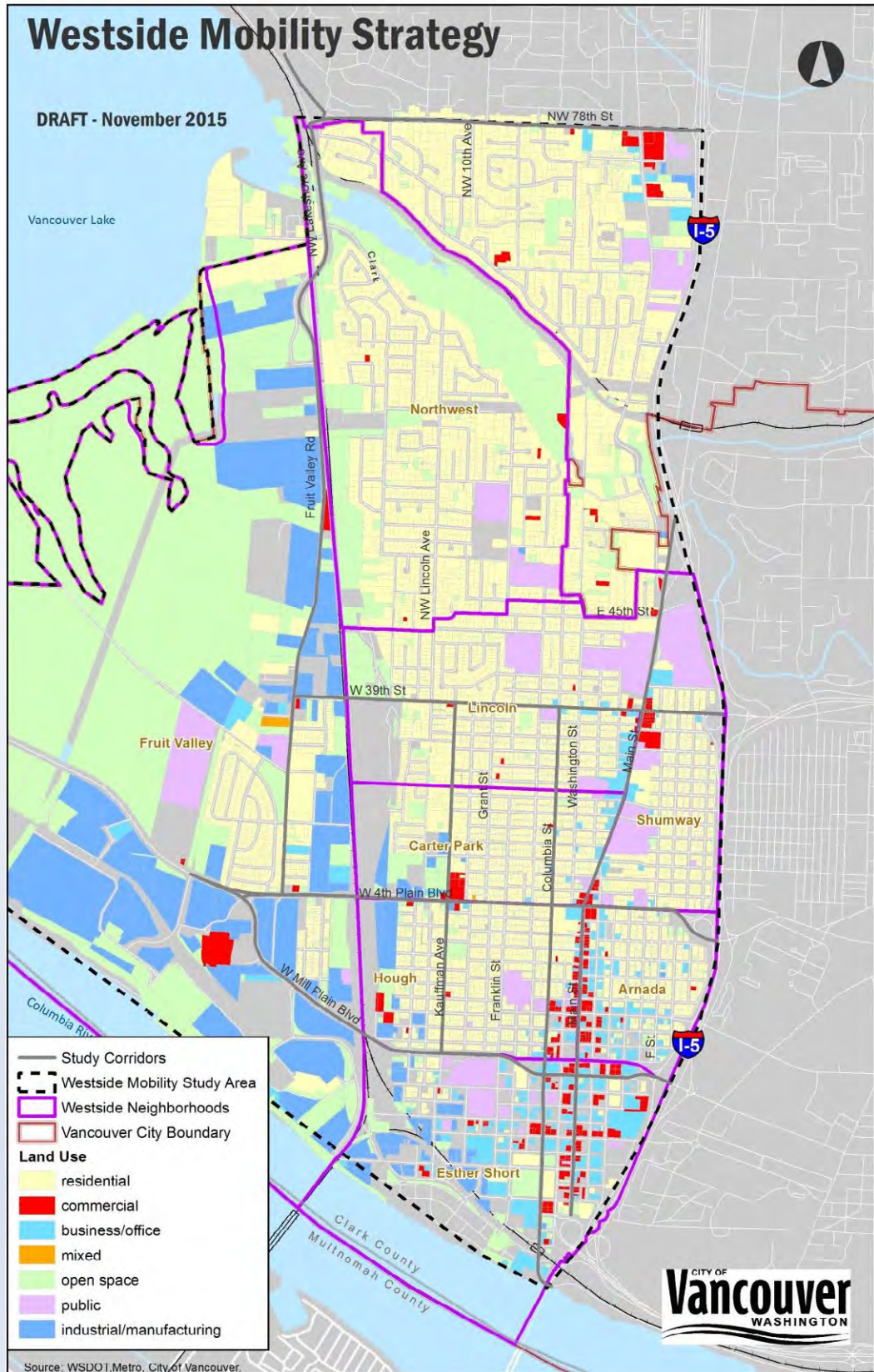
While the benefits of commute options programs are clear, due diligence is required to make sure the need for such a program exists. Constraints like paid parking and congestion spur demand for transportation options. When these constraints do not exist, there is less interest in commute options programs. In addition to these constraints, transportation options like walking, biking, riding transit, and carpooling must be accessible, feasible, and convenient. The overarching purpose of this assessment is to develop a recommendation about whether there is currently enough support for the implementation of a commute options program in the westside industrial area of Vancouver.

Assessment Methodology

To conduct the assessment, Alta completed an existing conditions analysis of the transportation options services and facilities in the Port of Vancouver and along Fruit Valley Road. This analysis included on-site observations and analysis of available data from the City’s Westside Mobility strategy. Alta also led 22 interviews with representatives from identified businesses in both focus areas. Through these interviews, Alta learned about existing on-site transportation facilities, employee transportation habits, and businesses’ levels of interest in a commute options program.

¹ http://www.cityofvancouver.us/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_and_economic_development/page/18092/16_07_18_final_wms_existing_conditions_appendix.pdf

Introduction



Port of Vancouver

The Port of Vancouver is located west of downtown and encompasses 2,100 acres of public property. The Port houses over 50 businesses which employ around 3,200 total employees. As seen in the map on page 5 the Port is zoned exclusively for industrial use and is bordered by open space to the north, the Columbia River to the south, and Downtown Vancouver to the east. Roads that provide access to and around the area are wide in order to accommodate truck traffic. However, the major thoroughfare through the Port, Fourth Plain Boulevard, has been converted into a two-lane roadway with a center turn lane and bike lanes from F Street to Kauffman Avenue.

While bike lanes are present along Fourth Plain Boulevard, pedestrian facilities are limited. For example, in some areas the sidewalk is only on one side of the road and people must walk long distances between marked crossing areas. The Port is also not served by a direct transit route. Some employees may walk from the nearest bus stop at the intersection of Fourth Plain

Boulevard and Mill Plain Boulevard, but the distance from this stop to other businesses is too far for most employees to walk.

Fruit Valley Road

The Fruit Valley Neighborhood is home to a mix of residential and industrial uses. As reflected in the Westside Mobility Strategy and observed by the project team, truck traffic and limited street connectivity along Fruit Valley Road have created mobility challenges for employees and residents. Fruit Valley Road also experiences heavy peak-hour morning traffic from drivers attempting to bypass I-5 southbound travel. Some improvements have been made in an attempt to slow speeds on Fruit Valley Road; bike lanes and sidewalks are present on the road.

Fruit Valley Road is served by C-TRAN's Route 6, which currently runs from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Park & Ride east of I-5, through Fourth Plain Boulevard to Fruit Valley Road, and then loops back on 39th Street. The route starts service around 6 am and ends service around 8 pm.



Pedestrians use crosswalks on Fruit Valley Road to access the local park and school.

The following section summarizes the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing a commute options program, as expressed by business representatives interviewed by the Alta team. The data collected from businesses interested in a commute options program are highlighted under the Interested Businesses Overview section.

During interviews, business representatives responded to a series of 15 questions regarding the following topics:

- Employee commute, work, and personal trip patterns
- Employee parking availability
- Transportation information for employees
- Current employee transportation habits and barriers
- Existence of carpool or vanpool programs, free or reduced-cost transit passes, and end-of-trip facilities like showers and bike parking
- Employer communication channels
- Whether incentives might motivate employees to change their transportation behavior
- General interest in and support for an employee commute options program

Challenges Summary

- Employees live far from work and have shifts outside of regular work hours, making transit and other options more difficult to use.
- Most businesses interviewed have a high supply of free parking, which makes driving easier and more appealing.
- Traffic congestion is limited in the area, making driving a more convenient and reliable option.

- Shift schedules and overtime make riding the bus difficult. The nearest stop is also too far for many employees to access.
- No employers offer employees a free or reduced-cost transit pass.
- Many employees do not have at-work email access.

Opportunities Summary

- There may be high potential for encouraging carpooling, as some employees are commuting to and from similar locations.
- Only two employers offer transportation information to employees, but many would be willing to offer information.
- Some employers have implemented carpool programs. There is potential to provide support to these services through Rideshare Online, a free online carpool matching and trip logging site maintained by partners in Washington and Oregon.
- Most employers offer some form of bike storage and a few have showers.
- Employees can be reached through bulletin boards, flyers, orientations, and meetings. Email communications are not a reliable way to reach all employees at businesses in the focus areas.
- While some employers mentioned incentives would not be effective, one said a discounted transit pass may appeal to some employees and incentivizing carpooling would be the best option.
- There are opportunities to provide additional support to CTR-affected employers.

Port of Vancouver

The project team interviewed 17 out of 48 identified businesses (35%) in the Port of Vancouver. The project team called 34 out of the 48 businesses (55%), but was unable to reach all of them. The following sections summarize interviews from the nine businesses that expressed interest in a commute options program.

Interested Businesses Overview

BREWCRRAFT USA

- Employees live fairly close to work in Vancouver, Camas, and Portland and start work between 7 am and 8:30 am. They do not make work-related trips, but they make personal trips throughout the day.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. Some employees currently carpool, ride the bus, and bike to work. Barriers include unexpected overtime.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. Bikes can park inside but there are no showers.
- Communication channels include a bulletin board and weekly meeting.
- There is uncertainty around whether incentives would motivate transportation behavior change, but there was general interest in a commute options program.

CADET MANUFACTURING

- Employees live in Vancouver and work between 6 am to 4:30 pm and 9 am to 5 pm. They do not make work-related trips, but some make personal trips to nearby locations.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered, although a ride-share bulletin board used to be available. Multiple employees currently carpool and bike to work. The biggest barriers to using transit are a) long walking distances to the stop, and b) the bus arrival time is not early enough.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. Bike racks are available outside.
- Communication channels include some email and bulletin boards in the lunchroom.
- Incentives would possibly encourage transportation behavior change and there was general interest in a commute options program.

GREAT WESTERN MALTING COMPANY

- Employees live in Vancouver, Portland, Battle Ground, and Camas, and work between 9 am and 5 pm, with additional shifts starting at 5 am, 7 am, and 11 am. They make work-related trips (a company truck is available and personal vehicle trips are reimbursed) and personal trips during the day.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. Five or six employees currently bike to work. A barrier to carpooling is that only one person per car is allowed through Gates 2 and 5 in the Port of Vancouver.
- The business representative was unsure if a carpool, vanpool, transit pass program or end-of-trip facilities exist at the business.
- Communication channels include in-person meetings and email.

- There is uncertainty around whether incentives would encourage transportation behavior change, but there was general interest in a commute options program.

IMS ELECTRONICS RECYCLING

- Employees live in northwest Clark County along the I-5 corridor, as well as Portland and Camas, and work from 6 am to 4:30 pm, Monday through Thursday. They do not make work-related trips but have a company truck. Some make personal trips to nearby locations.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. Two employees who live close to work bike, six to ten carpool, and one or two take the bus. The biggest barrier is that the bus schedule does not mesh with work schedules.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. Bike racks are outside; there are no showers.
- Communication channels include meetings and emails for health benefits and payroll.
- Incentives are unlikely to work, but there is general interest in a commute options program.

NUSTAR ENERGY, LP

- Employees live in Vancouver, Portland, Camas, and Washougal and work three shifts starting at 3 am, 7 am, and 11 am. They make work-related trips with a company truck. They can leave for lunch, but most do not.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. All employees drive alone, although some bike in warmer months. The bus does not work with schedules due to shift timing and overtime.

- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. Bike racks and showers are available.
- Communication channels include emails, screens, conference calls, and skype.
- Incentives would not work, but there is possible general interest in a commute options program.

PORT OF VANCOUVER

- Employees live in Vancouver, Ridgefield, Salmon Creek, Camas, Washougal, and Portland and work 9 am to 5 pm (with a few different security shifts). They make work-related trips (fleet vehicles are available and personal vehicles are reimbursed) and personal trips to nearby locations.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is offered. Most employees drive alone, five bike, a few carpool, and one rides the bus. The bus does not fully serve the Port and there is plenty of free parking.
- A vanpool was attempted, but there was no interest. The Port is working on funding for incentives, including an annual transit pass program. Bike storage, lockers, and showers are available.
- Communication channels include new hire orientations, meetings, email, and boards.
- Incentives haven't been successful in the past, but they are working on a monetary incentive. The Port is CTR-affected, but there is interest in additional support to promote commute options.

SUNLIGHT SUPPLY, INC.

- Some employees live in the Portland Metro region and work varying shifts. They make work-related trips with fleet vehicles and personal trips to nearby locations.
- Free parking spaces can be tight. They are moving to a new building with 250 spaces (still tight). Transportation information is not offered. Two employees ride the bus, two bike, and the rest drive alone. The bus does not work with work schedules and buildings are spread out.
- A past carpool program ended due to growth and turnover. No transit pass program exists. End-of-trip facilities are not offered, but the new building will have a gym, showers, and bike parking.
- Communication channels include in-person, bulletin boards, and email.
- Incentives might work, especially with parking supply issues. There is general interest in a commute options program and they would distribute information to employees.

TRIMAC PANEL PRODUCTS

- Employees live in Clark County and work 6 am to 3 pm, Monday through Friday, with some overtime. They make work-related trips with fleet vehicles and personal trips to nearby locations.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. Half of employees drive alone. In addition to the nearest bus stop being far away from the business, a

change in the bus schedule made riding the bus more difficult for employees.

- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. No showers are available; bikes can go inside or be locked to a fence.
- Communication channels include meetings and bulletin boards.
- A discounted transit pass may be an attractive incentive, but not a gift card. There is general interest in a commute options program.

VANPORT TRUCKING

- Employees live in Clark County, Hillsboro, and Gresham and work from 7 am to 5 pm Monday through Friday, with drivers working different schedules. They make work-related trips with personal vehicles and make some personal trips nearby.
- Free parking is available, but sometimes it is a little crowded. Transportation information is not offered, but would be if employees asked for it. The owner sometimes bikes, but everyone else drives alone. The bus does not work with employees' schedules and the nearest bus stop is far.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. No showers are available; bikes go inside.
- Communication channels include meetings and email.
- Incentives would not be effective. There is possible interest in a commute options program.

Fruit Valley Road

The project team interviewed 5 out of 13 (38%) of identified businesses along Fruit Valley Road. The project team called 10 out of the 13 businesses (76%), but was unable to reach all of them. Two of the businesses that the Alta team did not contact did not have a working phone and one did not have employees who worked on site. The following sections summarize interviews from the four businesses that expressed interest in a commute options program.



Bike parking is available near the entrance to the Frito-Lay building.

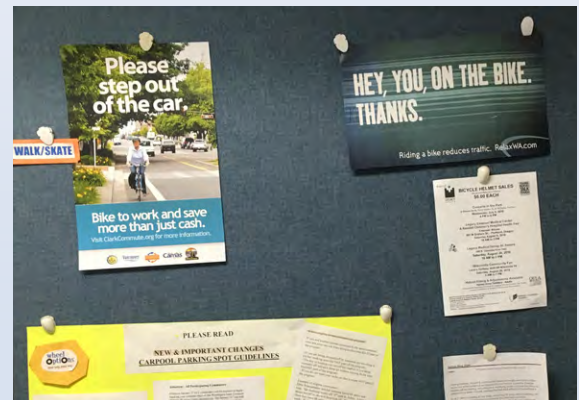


Frito-Lay offers preferential carpool parking for employees.

Interested Businesses Overview

FRITO LAY

- Employees live in Battlefield, Ridgefield, Camas, and Portland and work three shifts starting at 3 am, 7 am, and 11:30 am. They make work trips with reimbursement for using personal vehicles. They make personal trips nearby.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is offered. Two employees bike, one runs, four carpool, and none ride the bus. Transit is not a feasible option with work schedules.
- Twelve employees participate in the carpool program and some vanpool from Battleground. No transit pass program exists. Showers and indoor bike parking is available.
- Communication channels include boards, new hire packets, and some email.
- Free items such as water bottles may be good incentives. Frito Lay is CTR-affected, but there is interest in more support.
- Frito Lay participates in the Clark County Green Business Program, so they are making steps to improve sustainability.



Information about transportation options is posted on a community bulletin board.

KIC

- Employees live in Vancouver, Ridgefield, Woodland, Kalama, and Portland. They work from 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday, with some overtime. They make work trips during the day with fleet vehicles and are reimbursed for using personal vehicles. They make personal trips to nearby locations.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. A few employees bike to work and the rest drive alone. The biggest barrier to using transportation options is preference to drive.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. Showers are available; bikes can go inside.
- Communication channels include email and fridge postings.
- Incentives would likely not have a big impact on travel habits. There is general interest in a commute options program, as the executives are bicyclists.

GALE CONTRACTOR SERVICES

- Employees live in Vancouver, Milwaukie, and Gresham and work 7 am to 5 pm from Monday through Friday, with some overtime. They make work-related trips during the day with fleet vehicles. They make personal trips to nearby locations or downtown.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. Some employees carpool and bike. Employees can work overtime, making riding the bus difficult.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. No showers are available; bikes can be locked near the front of the building.
- Communication channels include meetings and email.
- Incentives may be effective. There is general interest in a commute options program.

TETRA PAK INC.

- Employees live in Vancouver and Portland and work three shifts from Monday through Friday. They make work trips during the day with fleet vehicles. They make personal trips nearby.
- Free parking is available and transportation information is not offered. Two bike, but night shifts make transportation options difficult to use for commutes.
- No carpool, vanpool, or transit pass program exists. Showers and bike parking are available.
- Communication channels include boards, flyers, and email.
- Incentives may be effective for some, especially to encourage carpooling. There is general interest in a commute options program, as the company is environmentally conscious.



Transportation options infrastructure along Fruit Valley Road includes sidewalks, bike lanes, and a C-TRAN bus stop.

Recommendations

As stated previously, the Alta team does not recommend the implementation of a commute options program in the westside industrial area at this time. This recommendation is based on the following four factors:

1. Constraints like parking costs and traffic congestion that would typically be a catalyst for a commute options program are not present.
2. Businesses generally expressed low interest in a commute options program and were uncertain if incentives would motivate employees to change their transportation behaviors.
3. Barriers to using transportation options, especially transit, are high (e.g., transit is not easily accessible for Port employees and transit schedules do not work with shift times).
4. Employees live across a broad geographic area and many are quite far from the worksite, making transit, carpooling, and active transportation difficult.

While the Alta team does not currently recommend the implementation of a commute options program, such a program will likely be needed in the future due to growth and new development. In the interim, the City of Vancouver should focus on the following strategies to support businesses in the short term. These actions will help better define a future westside industrial area commute options program when the timing is right.

Build Demand for Transportation Options

As the westside industrial area experiences growth, the City should encourage businesses to adopt transportation demand management strategies like encouraging carpool matching, biking, walking, and transit.

Increase Capacity and Support for Transportation Options

The City should reach out to area businesses to provide transportation information like bus schedules and bike maps. The City can also inform business representatives of transportation-related events and activities in downtown and uptown Vancouver.

Form Relationships

Potential partner businesses (i.e. those that expressed interest in a commute options program) include:

- BrewCraft USA
- Cadet Manufacturing
- Great Western Malting Company
- IMS Electronics Recycling
- NuStar Energy, LP
- Port of Vancouver
- Sunlight Supply, Inc.
- Trimac Panel Products
- Vanport Trucking
- Frito Lay
- KIC
- Gale Contractor Services
- Tetra Pak, Inc.

Leverage Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)-Affected Businesses

As businesses grow their workforce, they must comply with CTR laws and designate an Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC) to disseminate transportation options information to employees. The City of Vancouver should continue to track employee growth to ensure companies are compliant with the law and have the information they need as CTR-affected businesses.

Conclusion

Many businesses in the westside industrial area are growing and adding new employees; however, current land use patterns (e.g. industrial zoning, large geography) and auto-centric employer transportation policies (e.g. free parking, lack of commuter information and rewards programs) do not support viable commute options in the area. One C-TRAN bus route serves the community and some employees along Fruit Valley Road, but the stop is considered too far for Port of Vancouver employees to consider riding transit to work. Furthermore, swing and graveyard shifts make carpooling to work a challenge. Bike lanes are present on main arterials and a multi-use trail exists along a portion of NW Lower River Road; however, only a handful of employees commute by bike at each interviewed business. These

constraints—coupled with a lack of traffic congestion that makes driving to work appealing—indicate westside industrial area business are not yet ready to implement a commute options pilot program.

It is important to note that a commute options pilot program will likely be needed in the future due to business growth, new development, and changing land use policies. In the interim, the City of Vancouver should support businesses in the short term by building demand, capacity, and support for transportation options programs and by leveraging CTR-affected businesses through ETC networking and distribution of transportation resources. These actions will help westside industrial businesses understand the importance of employee transportation issues and take small steps to encourage more frequent use of commute options.