

# Pierce Transit's Spring 2010 REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY



You might not think that difficult economic times are when businesses should take progressive approaches to employee transportation. But any company seeking real estate in suburban locations, with “free” parking would do well to talk with CEO Kurt Carlson and Director of Human Resources Patti Sutton of Propel Insurance. This is a company that wants to be at the heart of the business community, so is supporting a strong Downtown Tacoma environment.

## “Safe. Available. Easy!”

Those are the three words Patti Sutton uses to describe public transportation in and out of Downtown Tacoma. Patti is Director of Human Resources for Propel Insurance, Tacoma’s largest insurance broker. Long headquartered in a suburban Tacoma location, the company made the decision to relocate in 2003. “We like being Downtown. Everything is close. Hotels, restaurants, transit.”

“When we moved,” explains Patti, “we paid for parking.” As Propel grew, they became affected by Washington State’s Commute Trip Reduction Efficiency Act, which dictates that companies with more than 100 employees need a plan to reduce single occupant vehicle commuting. “I’ll admit we did it because we wanted to comply with the law. But I felt it was made a law for a reason.”

Propel’s approach was exemplary. “We gave one year’s notice. We said we would no longer pay for parking, but would give out free bus passes. Now when we hire a new person we don’t even mention parking. We say, ‘What kind of ORCA would you like?’”



ORCA, which Patti Sutton refers to, is the new regional “smart card” bus pass. It allows companies to furnish transportation benefits. “It’s easier, a lot less hassle. Our folks love their ORCA cards. They can go anywhere in the region, like when they go to a Seahawks game. With ORCA there are no excuses. It breaks down barriers.”

Propel Insurance takes advantage of the complete menu of public transportation services. “We have two Pierce Transit vanpools from Bonney Lake and Graham. The Link light rail is great!” A frequent Pierce Transit rider herself, Patti adds, “And what I’d really like is a bus stop in front of our building.”

Businesses wanting assistance on commute programs should contact Pierce Transit’s Business Partnerships. Coordinator Sharon Stockwell (SStockwell@PierceTransit.org) is an expert on both effective commute programs and on ORCA business accounts.

**Individuals and companies can learn more about ORCA at [www.orcard.com](http://www.orcard.com).**



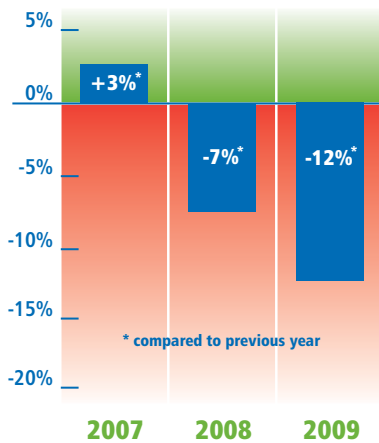
**Patti Sutton**  
Propel Insurance  
Director of Human Resources

# Pierce Transit is facing its own economic challenge.

As a result of the recession, Pierce Transit faces a funding gap of \$68 million by the end of 2012. In spite of an aggressive strategy of spending cuts and increasing operational effectiveness, the loss of sales tax revenue is proving insurmountable.

## The Decline of Sales Tax Revenues

70% of Pierce Transit's funding comes from sales tax revenues.



Consistent with the growth in our region, Pierce Transit's local sales tax revenues rose an average of 6% a year over the last 25 years. It is anticipated that 2010's revenues will be down 20% compared to 2007. As bad as that number sounds, revenues are actually down 44% compared to what historical trends would have predicted.

## Draft Service Plans

These system maps show Pierce Transit service at three different levels. They were created with the goal of providing the best service to the most people. PT's Board will be reviewing these plans this spring.



### Plan 1 Current Funding: 23 Routes, 265,000 Service Hours 0.6% Local sales tax (6¢ on a \$10.00 purchase)

With today's funding, Pierce Transit cannot continue to operate the existing level of service, which is 51 routes and 622,000 hours of buses on the street. Plan 1 is financially sustainable but only because it includes major reductions throughout our service area, including cuts in SHUTTLE (paratransit) service.



## Last fall the public helped influence Pierce Transit's future.

Pierce Transit is celebrating 30 years of service and planning has begun for the next 30. Last Fall Pierce Transit engaged the public to solicit their opinions regarding the future of public transportation. Nine community workshops were held throughout the county, as well as dozens of presentations to community groups and meetings with business leaders.

Opinions varied by community and by interest, but were nonetheless connected by common values. Here's what Pierce Transit heard:

### Social Service

**Goal:** Serving people who can't drive because they can't afford to or have impaired mobility.

**Possible future investments:** Service to a wide array of people to many destinations including jobs, schools, medical centers and social services. Ensuring that transit is affordable for all income levels.

**Results:** Downtown Tacoma workshop participants rated this as the number one value. Many workshops ranked it number two most important value.

### Economic Development

**Goal:** Fostering job growth in Pierce County, getting people to their jobs, and saving people time and money.

**Possible Future Investments:** Frequent, convenient and direct service connecting population, retail and employment centers, as well as regional connections.

**Results:** Top-rated value with Leadership Summit, the Planners Summit, and North and West Tacoma Community Design Workshop attendees.

# What should PT look like in the future?



## Schedule of Public Meetings Please join us.

The time is now. Pierce Transit is redesigning its service based on available funding. Your participation is critical in helping create a system we can all be proud of. If you can't attend the meeting in your area, you are welcome at any location.

### LAKEWOOD/UNIVERSITY PLACE

**Tuesday, March 23, 2010, 6-7:30pm**

Pierce Transit Training Center, 3720 96th St SW, Lakewood 98499  
Served by Routes 48, 300

### GIG HARBOR/KEY PENINSULA

**Monday, March 29, 2010, 6-7:30pm**

Gig Harbor Civic Center, 3510 Grandview St, Gig Harbor 98335  
Served by Route 100

### PARKLAND/SPANAWAY

**Wednesday, March 31, 2010, 6-7:30pm**

Paradise Village Bowl, 12505 Pacific Ave S, Tacoma 98444  
Served by Routes 1, 444

### TACOMA (Two meetings are offered)

**Thursday, April 1, 2010, 3-4:30pm and 6-7:30pm**

Evergreen State College, 1210 6th Ave, Tacoma 98405  
Served by Routes 1, 16, 28, 57

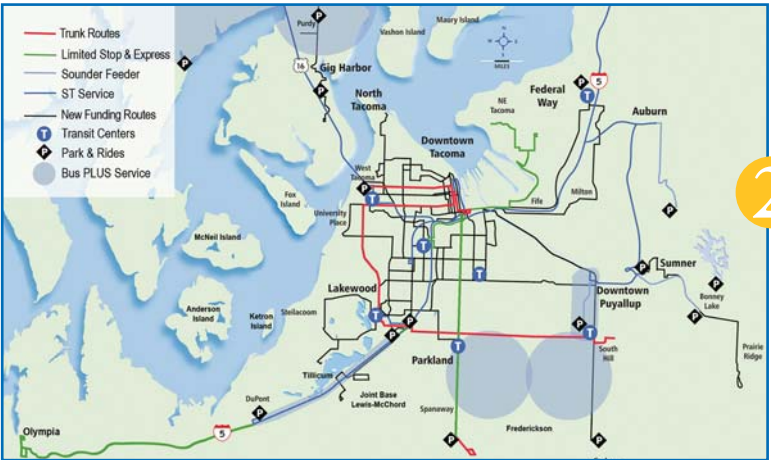
### PUYALLUP/SOUTH HILL/SUMNER/BONNEY LAKE

**Monday, April 5, 2010, 6-7:30pm**

Puyallup Library, 324 S Meridian, Puyallup 98371  
Served by Route 402

Registered SHUTTLE customers may obtain specialized transportation to and from a public meeting by calling SHUTTLE at 253.581.8100 from one to five days in advance of the meeting. An interpreter for the hearing impaired will be provided upon request with a minimum notice of two weeks.

**Follow our progress!**  
Give your suggestions and sign up to get the latest updates at  
**PTtomorrow.org**



## Plan 2 New Funding: 50 Routes, 638,000 Service Hours 0.9% Local sales tax (9¢ on a \$10.00 purchase)

This option addresses the most pressing needs of the entire service area. It also prioritizes service that is most cost-effective. This funding level allows for modest growth in the future.



## Plan 3 The Vision: 55 Routes

This plan captures the aspirations and desires of the community for the next 20 years. We would have to seek additional funding from multiple sources to implement the growth envisioned in this plan.

### Safety and Security

**Goal:** Ensuring the safety and security of our riders, operators and service-area communities.  
**Possible future investments:** More transit officers on the streets and on buses. Lighting at bus stops and Park & Rides. Cameras on buses and at facilities. Continued outstanding maintenance of our buses and training of our drivers.  
**Results:** South Hill, downtown Puyallup, and Lakewood workshops rated this number one.

### Environment

**Goal:** Improving air and water quality and reducing CO2 emissions by providing people with good alternatives to driving.  
**Possible Future Investments:** Convenient, direct bus service to population centers plus options like vanpooling and carpooling.  
**Results:** Many participants thought this was an important issue but no group thought this was the most important priority.

### Geographic Coverage

**Goal:** Providing service to everyone in our service area.  
**Possible Future Investments:** Rural, suburban and urban communities all get some service. Lower frequency but still practical.  
**Results:** Parkland/Spanaway, Gig Harbor, and South Tacoma community workshops thought this was extremely important.

### Livable Communities

**Goal:** Transit investments promote safe, healthy, vibrant communities.  
**Possible Future Investments:** Safe walking and biking routes to transit. Transit that supports bike use. Retail and housing integrated with transit centers. Clean and quiet buses.  
**Results:** Sumner/Bonney Lake workshop attendees thought this value was the most important.



253.581.8000 Customer Services  
 TTY for hearing impaired: 711  
 piercetransit.org



## Downtown: On the Go! Tacoma's transportation support for businesses fosters economic development

An efficient and accessible transportation system directly correlates to economic success, especially in a congested downtown core. How people move to and from work and leisure activities affects our economy, environment, and quality of life.

The Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber, the City of Tacoma, and Pierce Transit joined forces in 2009 to create the Downtown: On the Go! Transportation Partnership. It is an unprecedented collaboration with 23 private sector businesses and non-profit organizations in Tacoma's downtown. These partners are working together to increase efficient commuting to the Downtown. The partnership will achieve this goal by developing programs that benefit downtown employers and employees in the areas of transit, bicycling, walking, ridesharing, and alternative work arrangements.

## A Textbook Example

The University of Washington Tacoma campus has a staff and student employee transportation coordinator who works hard every day to promote commute options. Jennifer Burley has led the way as UWT's Employee Transportation Coordinator (ETC), including encouraging employees to pedal to school during national Bike to Work Week in 2009. Jennifer is a valuable member of the Downtown: On the Go! Transportation Partnership.

*32,000 people commute to Downtown Tacoma.*

Pierce Transit Business Partnerships Specialist Karen Henderson (KaHenderson@PierceTransit.org) works with businesses of all sizes throughout Pierce County, personalizing transportation programs. For more information on how your company can join Downtown on the Go! contact Julia Petersen (juliap@tacomachamber.org) at the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber. Julia is particularly effective working with small and medium size businesses. Metropolitan Development Manager Chelsea Levy coordinates a variety of transportation programs for the Chamber, and works with the City of Tacoma on Downtown parking issues.



UWT ETC  
 Jennifer Burley

Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber  
 Julia Petersen, Downtown: On the Go! Coordinator  
 Chelsea Levy, Metropolitan Development Manager

Pierce Transit  
 Business Partnerships Specialist  
 Karen Henderson

## A Board Guides Our Actions

A nine-member Board of Commissioners oversees the Agency. The Board is made up of elected officials representing Pierce County, Tacoma, Lakewood, Puyallup, University Place, and the small cities and towns of our service area.



Chair  
 Terry Lee  
 Pierce County Council



Vice-Chair  
 Claudia Thomas  
 Lakewood City Council



Commissioner  
 Dave Enslow  
 Small Cities and Towns



Commissioner  
 Tim Farrell  
 Pierce County Council



Commissioner  
 Jake Fey  
 Tacoma City Council



Commissioner  
 Don Malloy  
 Puyallup City Council



Commissioner  
 Spiro Manthou  
 Tacoma City Council



Commissioner  
 Pat McCarthy  
 Pierce County Executive



Commissioner  
 Marilyn Strickland  
 Mayor City of Tacoma