

Unlocking Smart Growth: The Effects of Proposed Transit-Oriented Development Laws on the Puget Sound Region

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Abstract

During the 2024 legislative session in Washington State, two bills were introduced in both the House and the Senate aimed at promoting community and transit-oriented housing development. These bills, HB 2160 and SB 6024, propose mandating cities to permit developments of a specific scale within certain distances from high-capacity transit stops. This study evaluates the extent to which the proposed increases in development capacity under these bills exceed current allowances. The findings indicate a substantial enhancement in development potential for the majority of areas within walking distance of transit stops. Specifically, for land that is developable and presently zoned for lower development capacity than what the bills propose, the average increase in capacity is projected to be +1.35 in terms of floor area ratio (FAR).

Plain Language Summary

In 2024, the Washington State Legislature considered two new laws aimed at making it easier to build homes near public transit areas, like light rail stations and bus rapid transit stops. These laws would require cities to allow taller, denser buildings in these areas. Our study looked at how much more development could happen under these new laws compared to what's currently allowed. We found that, if these laws pass, there would be a lot more room for building new homes and apartments near transit stops.

Source: [Article Notebook](#)

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0.1 Introduction



Figure 1: Central Puget Sound | Photo courtesy of Clemens Vasters from Viersen, Germany, CC BY 2.0, via Wikimedia Commons

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Source: [Article Notebook](#)

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The Puget Sound metropolitan region attracts jobs and residents at some of the highest rates in North America. Between 2010 and 2022, the region's population grew by 620,979 people (17%).¹

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¹ Population statistic calculated by the author based on analysis of data from the US 2010 Decennial Census and the US 2022 American Community Survey.