

VEHICLE MILES TRAVELED (VMT) PER YEAR

Outcome: Improve Air Quality

Countywide Planning Policy Rationale

"All jurisdictions, in coordination with Puget Sound Air Pollution Control Agency* and the Puget Sound Regional Council, shall develop policies, methodologies and standards that promote regional air quality, consistent with the Countywide Policy Plan." (CA-14) "The land use pattern for King County shall protect the natural environment by...concentrating development" (FW-6) "The land use pattern shall be supported by a balanced transportation system which provides for a variety of mobility options....(FW-18) "General capacity improvements promoting only single-occupant vehicle traffic shall be a lower priority." (T-8)

*Now the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency

The transportation sector is responsible for about half of all greenhouse gas emissions. This indicator measures all vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in a given year on the streets and highways of King County.

VMT includes commercial and private vehicles, so both economic activity and personal travel patterns influence the total. Therefore, factors that influence total VMT include trends in population, economy, fuel cost, land use, employment, and investment in the transportation system.

The total VMT in King County for 2007 was nearly 16.5 billion miles. With the population growing over 17% from 1993 through 2007, VMT in King County has increased by more than 2.6 billion miles. As shown in Figure 12.1, total VMT has leveled off recently, declining slightly in both 2006 and 2007 despite population gains.

Figure 12.1

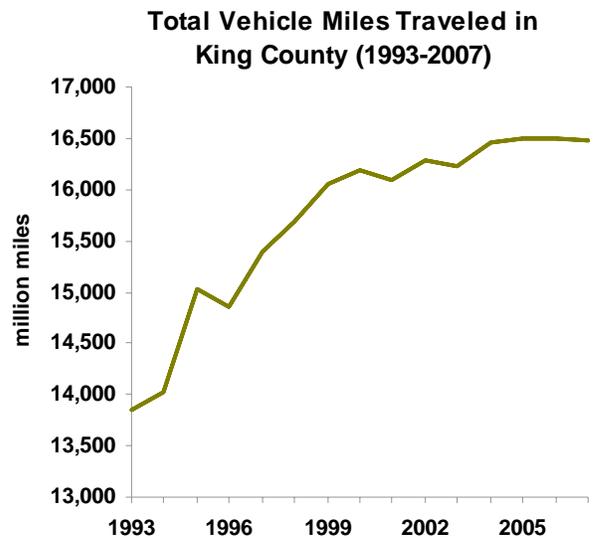
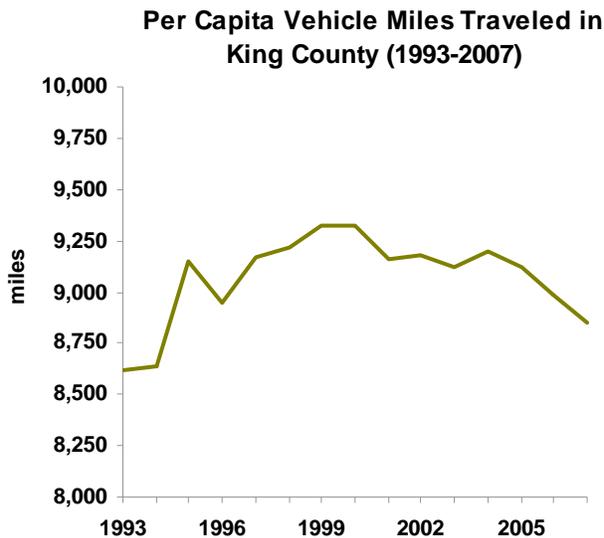


Figure 12.2



Accounting for population growth, a recent drop in annual VMT per capita is noticeable, declining 479 miles (5%) from its peak in 1999 to 2007. In that period, VMT per capita experienced a decline in six of the last eight years.

In contrast, the mid- to late-1990's were characterized by increasing vehicle use. Figure 12.2 shows per capita VMT for the 15 years from 1993 through 2007. Over that period, the average per capita VMT is 9,068 miles per year.

Factors influencing recent declines in per capita VMT may include rising gas prices, particularly as experienced in 2005 through 2007. The continued high cost of gas into 2008, combined with the weakened economy, will likely have a dampening effect on VMT as higher unemployment and decreased commerce take vehicles off the roads.