An aerial photograph of a wide river valley. A large city is visible on the right side of the river, with a bridge crossing the river. The river flows from the top left towards the bottom right. The surrounding landscape is a mix of urban development and natural terrain.

*LEGISLATIVE STUDY  
INTERIM REPORT*

*COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING  
ACCESSIBILITY STUDY*

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

*PREPARED FOR THE  
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PREPARED FOR:  
LEGISLATIVE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

PREPARED BY:  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL RESOURCE CENTER

IN COOPERATION WITH:  
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION,  
DISTRICT 4 AND HEADQUARTERS  
PARSONS, BRINKERHOFF, QUADE, AND DOUGLAS, INC.

# *EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*

## **AUTHORIZATION AND PURPOSE**

This report was authorized by the Washington State Legislature and is defined in the Supplemental Transportation Budget, HB 1701, State of Washington, 1988 Regular Session. The duties set forth by the 1988 Washington State Legislature read: "... a study of the economic feasibility of constructing a bridge across the Columbia River to Oregon..."

The findings of this study are to be transmitted to the 1989 legislative session.

The purpose of the interim report was twofold. First, to provide an overview of the need for future travel accessibility across the Columbia River based upon currently available information. The second purpose is to present a proposed scope of work for a Phase II study which would evaluate the economic, environmental, and engineering feasibility of future accessibility across the Columbia River between Clark County, Washington, and the Portland metropolitan area in Oregon. Figure 1 illustrates the study area.

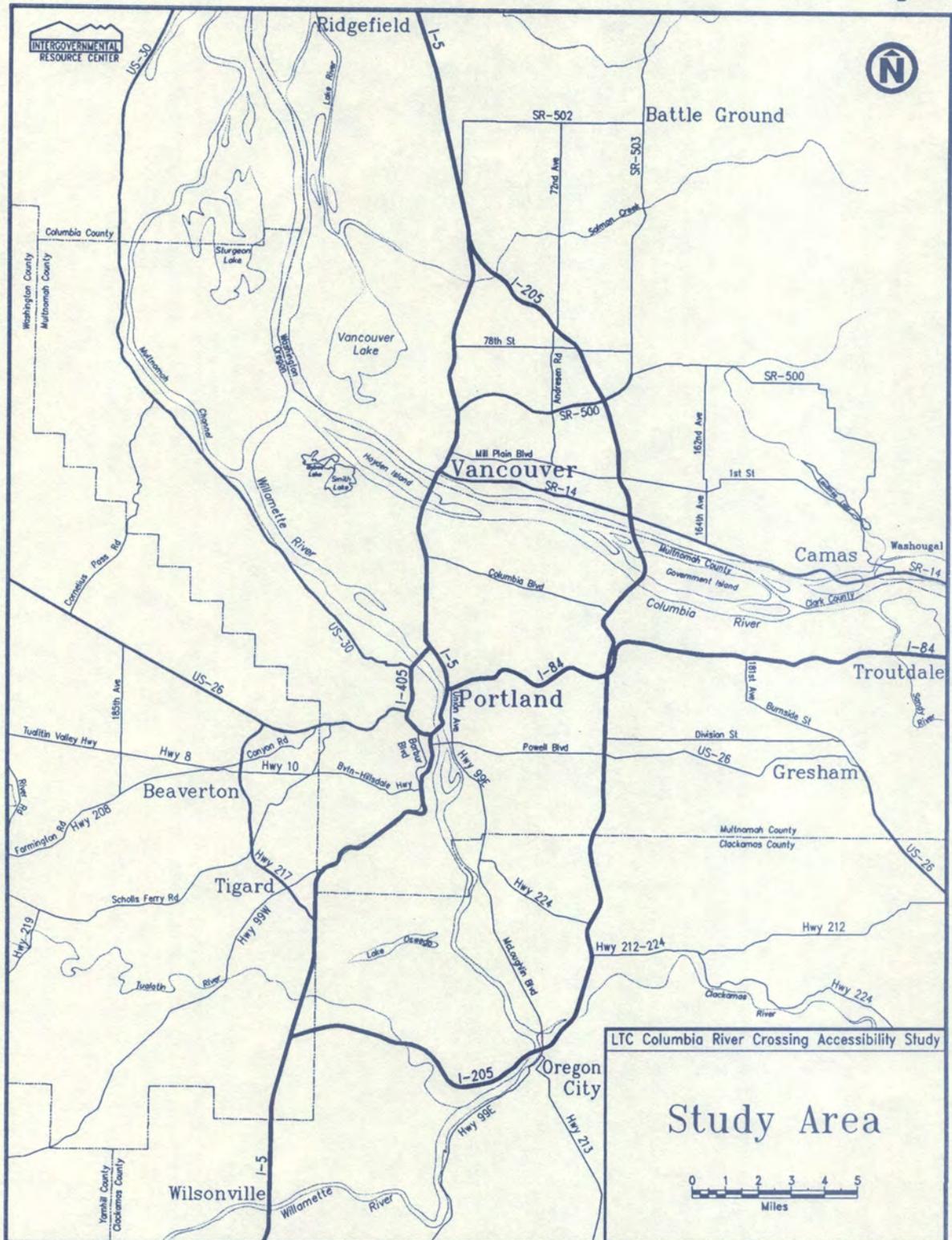
## **NEED FOR ACCESSIBILITY ACROSS THE COLUMBIA RIVER**

Good accessibility between the Vancouver and Portland regions has always been a key to the region's economy and quality of life. The first bridge across the Columbia River was completed in 1917, with its twin structure being completed in 1958. The Glenn Jackson bridge (I-205) was opened in 1982 and provided the second river crossing between the two metropolitan areas. Coordination and cooperation among the local governments and between the two states has resulted in the completion of these two major highway facilities which provide the interstate mobility for the movement of people and goods.

The I-5 corridor is the major highway corridor connecting interstate travel north and south along the west coast. The corridor provides a vital link between freight distribution centers and port facilities that serve not only the the western United States, but markets for trade worldwide.

Continued economic development in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area has resulted in steady increases in travel across the Columbia River (5.3 percent per year averaged over the last 10 years). The increase in traffic volumes are causing major congestion problems on I-5 during the morning and evening peak travel hours. The traffic volumes on I-205 are not causing immediate congestion problems, but are increasing at a very rapid pace. In fact, the traffic is greater today on I-205 than the 1979-80 studies predicted for the Year 2000. Transit volumes crossing the Columbia River are also growing at a fast rate (45% increase from 1985 to 1988 on C-TRAN routes #5, #134 and #76).

Figure 1

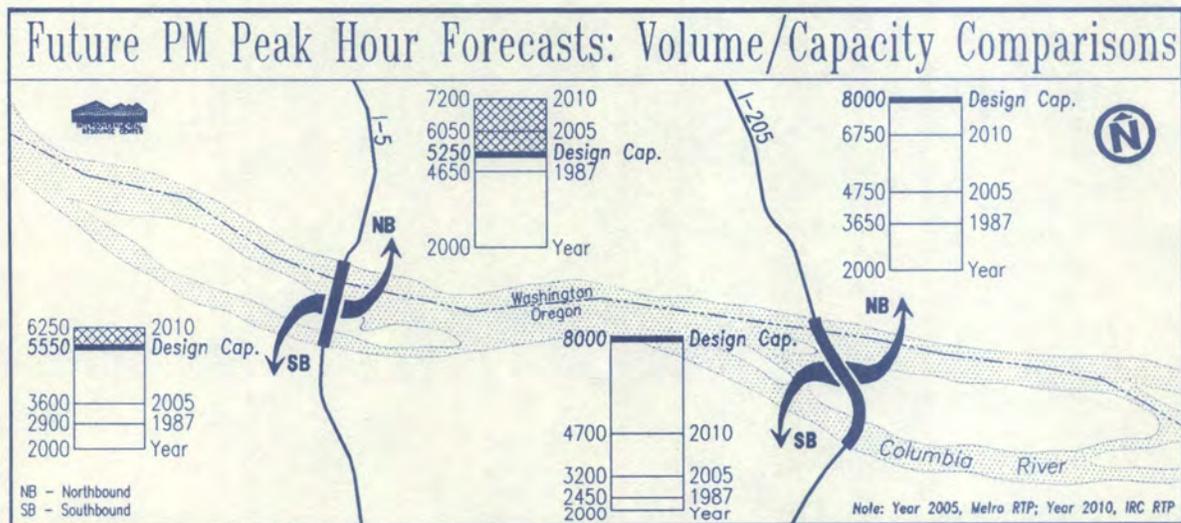


If the historical rate of traffic increase is projected forward, northbound evening peak hour capacity on the I-5 bridge would be reached by the year 1991, and on the I-205 bridge, northbound evening peak hour capacity would be reached within a 20 year horizon.

More conservative forecasts based on the Intergovernmental Resource Center's (IRC) and the Metropolitan Service District's (Metro) travel forecasting models indicate that before the Year 2005, traffic on the I-5 bridge would exceed design capacity. Even if the evening peak traffic demand could be spread, the peak congested, stop-and-go traffic period in the Year 2010 would extend for long periods of time (see Figure 2).

The current traffic congestion problems and the future year travel projections identify the need for a solution to maintaining accessibility across the Columbia River. Today's traffic congestion levels are symptoms of a growing transportation system imbalance between the Washington and Oregon portions of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. The congestion problems also point out the need to develop a truly integrated future regional transportation system for maintaining mobility across the Columbia River. A better balance between moving vehicles and people must be developed in concert with a future vision for the economic development of land use throughout the metropolitan region, or today's traffic problems will continue to increase into the foreseeable future.

Figure 2



## PROPOSED PHASE II WORK SCOPE: COLUMBIA RIVER CROSSING ACCESSIBILITY STUDY

The purpose of Phase II of the Columbia River Crossing Accessibility Study would be to evaluate the economic, environmental, and engineering feasibility of providing future accessibility across the Columbia River between Clark County, Washington and the Portland metropolitan area in Oregon.

Phase I of the study effort documented the need for further investigation of how future accessibility might be provided over the long term. The establishment of need was based on existing and forecasted traffic volumes as well as demand to capacity relationships in the Interstate 5 and Interstate 205 corridors.

The Phase II study would be accomplished in two parts. The purpose of Part A would be to identify future major transportation corridors based on both 2010 and longer-range (30-40 year) land use forecasts. The long range vision would be based not only on current trends and forecasts, and adopted plans and policies, but on an evaluation of where the communities in the region would like to be and how they would define "quality of life" in the future. The second element of Part A would include a detailed segmentation of needs, including those pertaining to truck, auto, and transit traffic, intraregional versus through (or "interstate") movements; and an analysis of the ability of the existing and committed transportation system to meet these needs. It would also include an assessment of the impact of congestion on economic development in the region both now and in the future.

Other objectives of Part A include: to establish a strong community and agency involvement program; to develop appropriate data bases and technical tools needed for the Part B analysis; and to document environmental land use, economic development and travel constraints and opportunities that will aid in both developing and evaluating alternatives in Part B of the study.

In Part B of the study, alternative approaches to providing future accessibility across the Columbia would be developed and evaluated. It is anticipated that alternatives in corridors to the west of I-5 and to the east of I-205 would be identified. Concepts which include both highway and transit modes, including passenger rail, would be developed. The definition of the alternatives include both the river crossing itself and the supporting arterial street and transit systems on each side of the river.

Figure 3 summarizes the proposed work scope for Phase II and illustrates the flow of work for the study.

The proposed Phase II study would be a bi-state planning study and include the participation of Washington and Oregon jurisdictions. The total cost of the bi-state study is estimated at \$785,000, broken down as \$265,000 for Part A and \$520,000 for Part B. It's anticipated that the multi-year project would be jointly funded by Washington and Oregon.

Figure 3

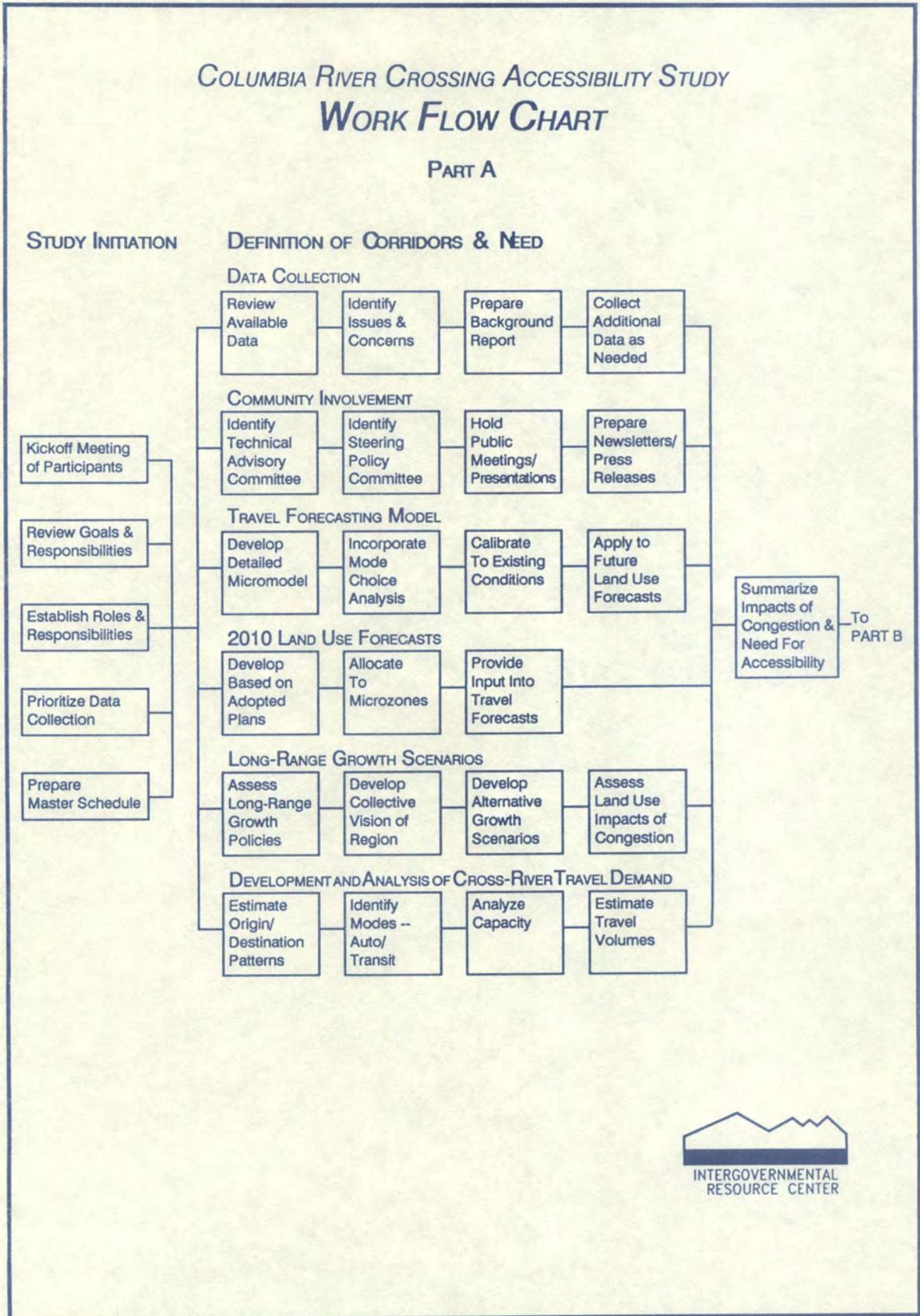
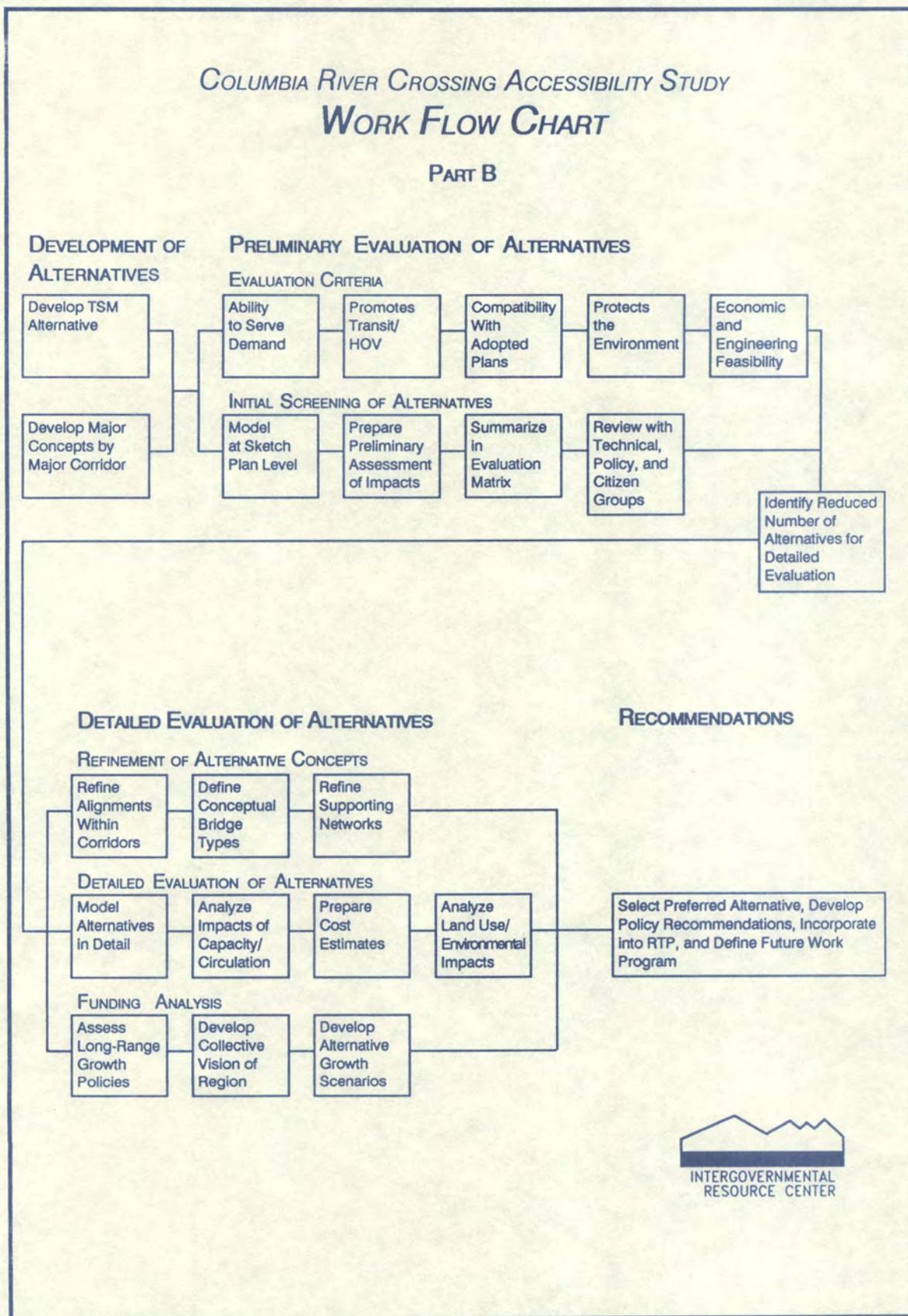


Figure 3 (cont.)



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the interim report was to provide an overview of the need for future travel accessibility across the Columbia River based upon currently available information and to present a proposed scope of work for a second phase study which would evaluate the economic, environmental, and engineering feasibility of future accessibility across the Columbia River between Clark County, Washington, and the Portland metropolitan area in Oregon.

Continued economic development in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area has resulted in steady increases in travel across the Columbia River. The increase in traffic volumes are causing major congestion problems on I-5 during the morning and evening peak travel hours. The traffic volumes on I-205 are not causing immediate congestion problems, but are increasing at a very rapid pace. Transit volumes crossing the Columbia River are also growing at a fast rate. Depending on the travel forecasting technique, traffic volumes on the I-5 bridge will reach or exceed capacity within the next 3 to 10 years.

These increasing congestion problems are symptoms of a growing transportation system imbalance between the Washington and Oregon portions of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. The conclusion of Phase I is that additional resources should be invested now in order to identify appropriate and acceptable alternatives for maintaining mobility between the greater Vancouver and Portland regions. The proposed scope of work for Phase II presents a bi-state planning study to develop a long range plan for balancing and integrating the transportation system between the two metropolitan areas.

It is also recommended that Phase II should be jointly funded by Washington and Oregon during the 1989 Legislative Session with a report on recommendations to be presented to the two legislatures in January 1992.

