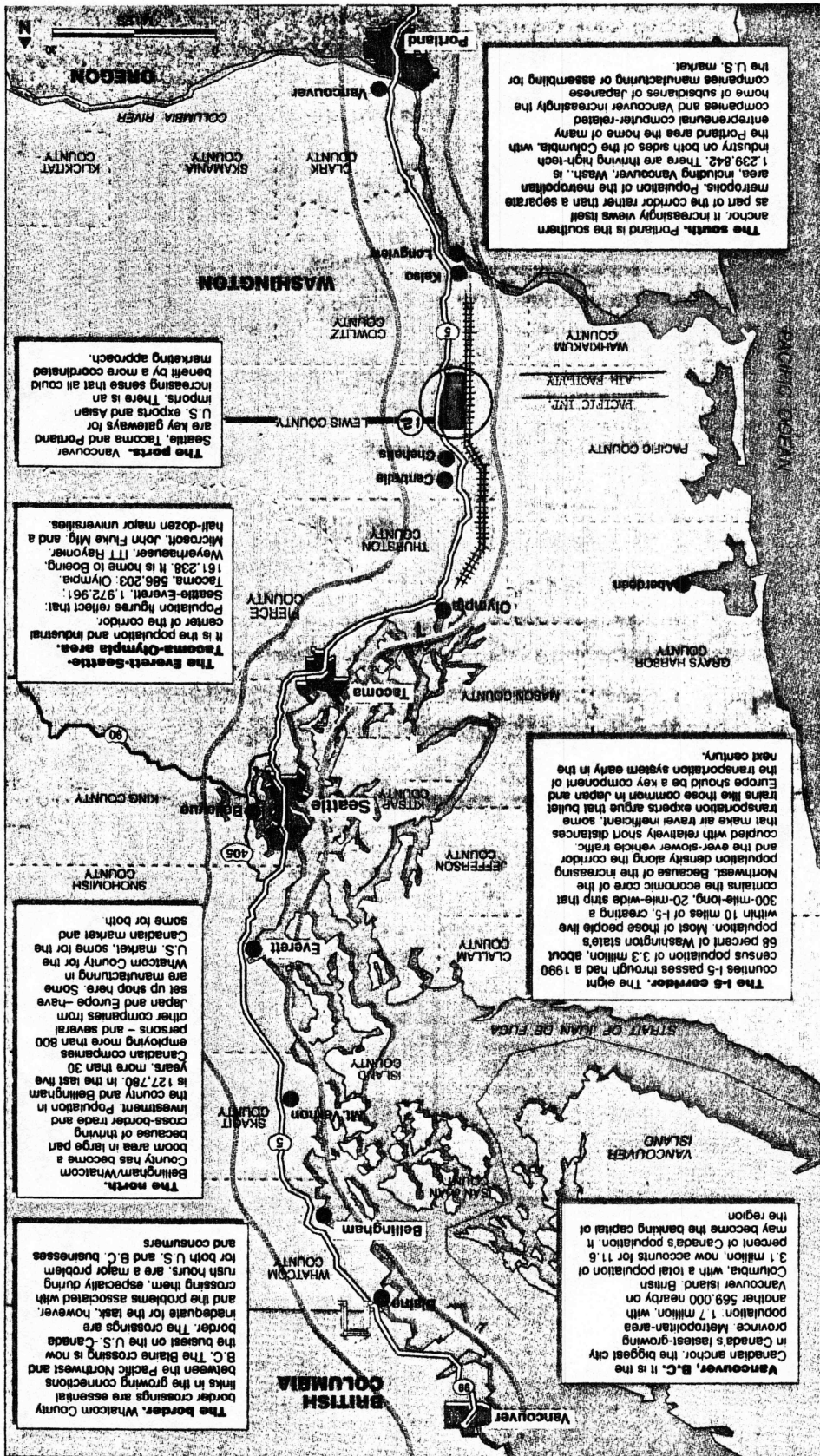


Link to the world

THE PACIFIC RIM



The border. Whatcom County links in the growing connections between the Pacific Northwest and B.C. The Blaine crossing is now border crossings are essential. The crossings are based on the U.S.-Canada border. The crossings are inadequate for the task, however, and the problems associated with crossing them, especially during rush hours, are a major problem for both U.S. and B.C. businesses and consumers.

The north. Bellingham/Whatcom County has become a boom area in linking cross-border trade and investment. Population in the county and Bellingham is 127,780. In the last five years, more than 30 Canadian companies have employed more than 800 persons - and several other companies from Japan and Europe - have set up shop here. Some are manufacturing in Whatcom County for the U.S. market, some for the Canadian market and some for both.

The Everett-Seattle-Tacoma-Olympia area. It is the population and industrial center of the corridor. Population figures reflect that: Seattle-Everett, 1,972,961; Tacoma, 586,203; Olympia, 161,238. It is home to Boeing, Westair, TIT, Rayonier, Microsoft, John Fluke Mfg. and a half-dozen major universities.

The ports. Vancouver, Seattle, Tacoma and Portland are key gateways for U.S. exports and Asian imports. There is an increasing sense that all could benefit by a more coordinated marketing approach.

Vancouver, B.C. It is the Canadian anchor, the biggest city in Canada's fastest-growing province. Metropolitan-area population 1.7 million, with another 569,000 nearby on Combu Island. British Columbia, with a total population of 3.1 million, now accounts for 11.6 percent of Canada's population. It may become the banking capital of the region.

The I-5 corridor. The eight counties I-5 passes through had a 1980 census population of 3 million, about 68 percent of Washington state's population. Most of those people live within 10 miles of I-5, creating a 300-mile-long, 20-mile-wide strip that contains the economic core of the Northwest. Because of the increasing population density along the corridor and the ever-slower vehicle traffic, that make air travel inefficient, some transportation experts argue that bullet trains like those common in Japan and Europe should be a key component of the transportation system early in the next century.

The south. Portland is the southern anchor, it increasingly views itself as part of the corridor rather than a separate metropolitan area. Population of the metropolitan area, including Vancouver, Wash., is 1,239,842. There are thriving high-tech industry on both sides of the Columbia, with the Portland area the home of many entrepreneurial computer-related companies and Vancouver increasingly the home of subsidiaries of Japanese companies manufacturing or assembling for the U.S. market.

Trade, traffic on I-5 corridor raise vision to global level
 By Tom Brown
 Times Pacific Rim reporter

Any half joking, British Columbia trade official Mitchell Clark likes to tell people that he represents Vancouver, "a city of 6 million that is 300 miles long and includes the important suburbs of Seattle, Bellingham and Portland." From the Fraser River to the Willamette, software houses, subdivisions and shopping.

Spurred by the Expo '86 world's fair in Vancouver, the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, economic "globalization" and ever more people, the Vancouver-to-Portland corridor is gradually knitting itself together into a regional, transitional economy, with the Seattle-Bellingham-Tacoma-Everett metropolitan area at its center.

"I foresee a 21st Century of increased prosperity and wonderful changes that are only a dream right now," says Owen Anderson, a widely traveled former Canadian government official who now is a management consultant for the Vancouver, B.C., office of the accounting firm Dunwoody & Co. Achieving this expansive vision requires surrounding major challenges, he quickly adds: overhauling education, sorting out the "structural mess" of economically inappropriate boundaries and, perhaps above all, recognizing that, "We can both use some of what the other guy has."

That change is under way and new ties are forming.

The governments of Washington and British Columbia have formalized the Pacific Northwest Economic Partnership and Gov. Booth Gardner last month signed legislation entering Washington into the Pacific Northwest Economic Region, an alliance with Alaska, Alberta, British Columbia, Idaho, Montana and Oregon, designed to promote export trade and tourism.

Lawyer, accountants and bankers have formed the Pacific Corridor Enterprise Council, or PACE, to stimulate contacts among businesses. Legislators have initiated the Northwest Leadership Forum. Businesses and academic groups are exploring new areas of cooperation.

There also are budding efforts to market the concept of an integrated Northwest economy to trading partners abroad.

Singly, Vancouver, Seattle and Portland are too small to make a major splash in a global economy dominated by such megalopolises as Tokyo, Los Angeles, New York and London. But if the three economies are seen as linked, says Clark, the B.C. trade official, "Suddenly, instead of two or three world-class universities you've got six or eight. Then San Francisco has nothing on us."