



Washington State Transportation
Commission

DECEMBER 2010

WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION PLAN 2030



CONNECTING

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COMMUNITIES FOR A PROSPEROUS FUTURE



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Washington State Transportation Commission developed the Washington Transportation Plan 2030 (WTP 2030) as a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation policy plan that reflects the multi-faceted needs of the state's transportation system. WTP 2030 has been developed at a time of both uncertainty and acute need: uncertainty about economic conditions and federal policies, and pressing needs to identify new revenues to maintain our existing transportation infrastructure. In many ways, Washington is at a crossroads. Faced with uncertainty about future state and federal direction in several policy arenas, including energy and climate change, the state still must push ahead to provide critical leadership and investment in the transportation system.

INTEGRATION WITH BROADER STATE POLICY OBJECTIVES. WTP 2030 was developed to be a concise, useful policy plan, one that directly addresses the challenges and opportunities facing the state's policymakers. Given the Legislature's interest in potential investment needs and transportation funding options, the Plan is organized to help inform future policy discussions by state leaders.

Towards that end, WTP 2030 embraces a set of goals, principles, and policies that support larger policy outcomes for the state beyond the transportation system. The urgency of job creation and improving the economy, supporting safe and healthy communities, reducing energy consumption, and addressing climate change are all desired outcomes that are woven into the Plan.

THE CHALLENGE OF ADEQUATELY PRESERVING AND MAINTAINING THE SYSTEM. The state faces a backlog of critical projects and mounting needs to adequately preserve and steward key parts of the transportation system. The fundamental problem is that transportation infrastructure is aging, with needs that far outstrip available local, state, and federal funding, all of which have decreased. Fuel tax revenues – the primary source of transportation revenue in our state – are declining as vehicles become more fuel efficient, people find new ways of traveling, and some choose to drive less. As currently structured, new state policies encouraging people to drive less and consume less fuel undermine the viability of the gas tax, the primary funding source for transportation. This is a structural problem that needs to be addressed: funding sources must be adequate to sustain the state's policy objectives.

While recent state and local investments in the transportation system have been significant, much more is needed. The 14.5 cents of additional gas tax authorized by the Nickel and Transportation Partnership Act funding packages were 100% bonded and tied to a specific project list, so those revenues are unavailable for any other uses for the next 25-30 years. By conservative estimates, at least \$175 billion to \$200 billion in funding is required to meet statewide needs over the next 20 years.¹ Immediate action on funding is necessary to ensure responsible preservation of our existing system, as well as construction of strategic improvements and protection and expansion of transit to meet the state's growing population and evolving needs.

¹ The existing Washington Transportation Plan 2007-2026 estimated a total need of \$67 billion and an unfunded need of \$38 billion. This Plan does not attempt to identify how much of the need is currently unfunded.

Big Ideas in this Plan

WTP 2030 was developed with the participation of a broad and diverse group of interests from around the state, with the understanding that the Plan will serve as a 20-year policy and investment guide. WTP 2030 involved an extensive outreach process, in which hundreds of individuals and organizations participated, sharing how they use today's transportation system and what they will need in the future. As we listened, it became apparent that how the system functions depends not only on steel, concrete, and vehicles, but on the choices people make – how and when they travel, their willingness to pay for faster or easier travel, their willingness to commute long distances – and the options available to them.

To a remarkable degree there was consensus statewide about the following issues, which are reflected in the Plan's foundational themes and strategies:

- WTP 2030 reflects the **beginning of a new era in transportation**, bringing new challenges and requiring decisive action. Although the foundation of our state and local transportation system is strong in many respects, without additional investment, travel will become more difficult as infrastructure deteriorates, congestion increases, and public transportation service is cut. Accelerating investment and adopting a system wide view that integrates transportation across modes and jurisdictions, and considers the whole trip from first to last mile are necessary to meet future demand.
- Our top priority must be to **maintain the capacity of the existing transportation system**. Like anything that was built in the last century, our aging infrastructure needs ongoing maintenance, upgrades, and replacement to ensure continued safety and improve mobility.
- **Mobility of people and goods is critical to our economy**. A reliable and well-functioning transportation system provides a return on investment through job creation, shared prosperity, and enhanced competitiveness. Given the global nature of today's world, continuous investment in the transportation system is a critical economic development requirement for retaining and attracting companies to locate in Washington.
- Establishing a **stable funding mechanism** is essential to continued mobility and the economic health and quality of life that come from an integrated and connected transportation network. Current revenues will not sustain the current system, let alone add to or upgrade it. Because new taxes are controversial and difficult to enact, the state and local governments are becoming increasingly reliant on user fees to help pay for highways, ferries, buses, and trains. While user fees are appropriate in some cases, they are not the best or most efficient way to pay for the transportation system.
- **Ensuring environmental sustainability** by reducing emissions and mitigating transportation-related impacts is important to maintaining the quality of life in our state. Balancing the need for investment and job creation with environmental protection objectives will continue to be both a challenge and an opportunity for the state.
- **Performance outcome measures** are essential to ensure value for dollars spent. As with any major investment, the public wants to know that a given project achieved the desired outcomes. Performance measures are tools that enable agencies to effectively track and communicate their results.

Strategies, Recommended Actions, and Implementation

WTP 2030 presents strategies and recommended actions organized by policy goal (pages 20-44). The policy goals are listed in the order they appear in RCW 47.04.280 and are not prioritized. The Commission sees overlap among the transportation policy goals and many strategies easily fit under more than one policy goal.

Implementation of the strategies and actions in this Plan will help move the state toward meeting the objectives of each policy goal. While the six policy goals apply statewide, the specific implementation strategies to make the goals a reality will vary across the state. Implementation of the strategies will require the involvement of state agencies, local governments, the Governor, and the Legislature. However, government alone cannot solve the state's transportation challenges. Individual choices and decisions also have an impact, making outreach and education necessary on both the urgency and benefits of investment.

Funding Recommendations

Given the immediate need for additional revenue to meet Washington's long-term transportation needs, the Commission endorses the funding recommendations made to the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) and outlined in the report: *Implementing Alternative Transportation Funding Methods*. These recommendations serve as a starting point for action that should begin in the 2011-13 biennium. The report to the JTC identifies specific steps for the Legislature and state agencies to begin implementing viable mid-term and long-term transportation funding approaches. The detailed funding recommendations are found on pages 14 through 19.

Specifically, the Commission endorses those near-term revenue recommendations from the JTC report that it views as most viable, including increasing the motor vehicle fuel tax through indexing or other means, increasing licensing and permit fee revenues, increasing weight fees, and adopting in-lieu-of fees for electric and other high mileage vehicles (pages 15-16).

The Commission also supports local funding options recommended by the JTC report and notes that the recommendations did not address pressing revenue needs for transit. The Commission recommends additional revenue authority be provided for transit operations and capital. Building on recent studies and the state's current experience with tolling, the Commission recommends the state increase the use of tolling to supplement declining gas tax revenues (page 17).

Finally, for a sustainable ferry system, the Commission advocates funding long-term ferry capital needs with a vehicle excise tax or similar source, set at a rate to eliminate the need for administrative transfers; increasing ferry fares and other operating revenues to close the operating gap; and imposing ferry fuel surcharges when warranted (pages 18-19).

Given that this is a 20-year plan, the Commission also considered long-term revenue options that should be explored. Technology is moving at a rapid pace and can support increasingly sophisticated tolling and pricing systems. While the JTC did not recommend a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) charge, the Commission suggests that work should begin to explore the feasibility of a VMT-based assessment system.

Policy Recommendations

The Plan is grounded in three **Foundational Themes**, the big ideas that matter most. Five **Strategic Drivers** are the major influencing factors that have shaped the Plan’s policy strategies and recommendations. Details on the specific policy goals, strategies, and recommendations are found on pages 21-44.

Foundational Themes

- Washington Faces a Structural Transportation Funding Problem and Additional Revenue is Essential
- The State’s Transportation System Needs to Work as an Integrated Network, Effectively Connecting across Modes and Jurisdictions
- Preservation and Maintenance of the Existing Transportation System is the Most Critical Need

Strategic Drivers

- Transportation Policy Should Support and Reinforce Other State Policy Objectives
- The Relationship between Land Use and Transportation Is Key
- There are Significant Differences across Regions and One Size Does Not Fit All
- It Is Critical to Educate, Inform, and Reach Out to the Public
- Continue the Evolution to Performance-based Programs

Transportation Policy Goals (RCW 47.04.280)

ECONOMIC VITALITY	To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy
PRESERVATION	To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services
SAFETY	To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customer: and the transportation system
MOBILITY	To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State
ENVIRONMENT	To enhance Washington’s quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment
STEWARDSHIP	To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system

Next Steps

WTP 2030 is submitted to the Governor and the Legislature. The Plan frames and proposes new or revised statewide transportation policies and funding recommendations that will require state or local action to implement and sets the table for important dialogue and policy decisions in the coming years.

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1. INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW

Introduction

A Time of Change

Washington Transportation Plan 2030 (WTP 2030) is a transitional plan, crafted at the beginning of a new era. The next four years¹ are likely to see broad changes and policy transitions. Federal transportation policy is evolving, as are environmental and economic policies that will influence the direction of transportation and funding investments. These policies will have significant impacts on how people travel and goods move over the next 20 years. Because we are in a time of transition, it is more difficult than ever to accurately predict what our transportation network will look like in 2030 or how quickly people's behaviors will change.

Investment in Our System

Although Washington has made significant investments in the state transportation system since 2003 – \$15.5 billion in state funding on highway, rail, ferry, transit, and freight projects – we know that much more is needed. Washington State faces tremendous transportation needs statewide; it is estimated that at least \$175 billion to \$200 billion is needed to meet statewide needs over the next 20 years.² To meet these challenges effectively an integrated, systemic view of the state's transportation network is required. This systemic view recognizes the central role that transportation plays in our economic and social well-being and establishes a policy framework against which projects and investments can be assessed and prioritized.



The state faces a backlog of critical projects and mounting needs to adequately preserve and steward key parts of the transportation system. As shown in Exhibit 1, the state's road network is extensive, requiring ongoing maintenance and preservation. However, fuel tax revenues – the primary source of transportation revenue in our state – are declining as vehicles become more fuel efficient, people find new ways of traveling, and some choose to drive less. These needs cannot be addressed without new revenue. Any new revenue package will require accountability for funds expended if it is to pass.

Focus on Preservation

Immediate state action on transportation funding is necessary to ensure responsible preservation of the existing system, as well as construction of improvements to meet the state's evolving needs. Further, taking action to preserve and improve the transportation system has direct economic benefits. As a trade dependent state, Washington's economic competitiveness is intertwined with its transportation system. Investing in the transportation system is especially important at a time when new jobs are very much needed.

¹ State law requires the WTP to be updated every four years.

² The existing Washington Transportation Plan 2007-2026 estimated a total need of \$67 billion and an unfunded need of \$38 billion. This plan does not attempt to identify how much of the need is unfunded.

Exhibit 1

Summary of Road Miles and Vehicle Miles Traveled

Jurisdiction	Centerline Miles [3]		Lane Miles		Daily Vehicle Miles Traveled (1,000s)	
	Miles	%	Miles	%	Miles	%
State Total [1]	7,061.66	8.5%	18,571.44	10.6%	86,179	55.7%
Interstate	764.27	0.9%	3,984.61	2.3%	41,937	27.1%
City	17,696.69	21.2%	37,795.34	21.6%	41,522	26.9%
County	39,868.65	47.7%	80,618.36	46.2%	24,928	16.1%
Other [2]	18,877.85	22.6%	37,738.55	21.6%	2,030	1.3%
TOTAL	83,504.85	100%	174,723.69	100%	154,689	100%

Notes:

[1] Interstate figures are included in the State total.

[2] Other includes State Parks, Other State, Port Districts, Indian, U.S. Forest Service, and National Parks.

[3] Centerline miles are the actual length of the roadway in one direction of travel.

Source:

WSDOT, Highway Performance Management System Database, 2009.

About WTP 2030

At the direction of the State Legislature, the Washington State Transportation Commission developed WTP 2030 as a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation policy plan.³ It is the overarching state policy framework intended to provide policy guidance and recommendations across all transportation modes and regions in the state. WTP 2030 serves as a policy update to the federally compliant 2007-2026 Washington Transportation Plan, reflecting recent changes and new challenges.

WTP 2030 was developed with engagement and input from a diverse stakeholder Advisory Group and other partners around the state. Throughout the two-year planning process, the Commission listened and integrated into the Plan the issues, accomplishments, and needs of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and other state agencies, regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), counties, cities, tribal governments, transit agencies, ports, businesses, economic development agencies, and the general public. The Commission held five regional listening sessions and made presentations throughout the planning process to groups around the state, directly interacting with more than 700 people. In addition, individuals and organizations around the state submitted letters and emailed comments communicating their support, suggesting improvements or new content, and articulating their priorities.

WTP 2030 is submitted to the Governor and the Washington State House of Representatives and Senate standing committees on transportation. Given the Legislature's interest in potential investment needs and transportation funding options, this Plan is organized to help inform future policy discussions and decisions by state leaders. The new or revised statewide transportation policies proposed in this Plan will require state or local action to implement.

³ RCW 47.01.071 requires the Commission to prepare a statewide transportation plan.

WTP 2030 Vision

By 2030, Washington's transportation network connects people and communities, fostering commerce and operating seamlessly across boundaries and modes as an environmentally and financially sustainable system.

Plan Framework

WTP 2030 is intended to be a useful policy plan, one that directly addresses the challenges and opportunities facing the state's policy makers. The Plan is grounded in three **Foundational Themes**, the big ideas that matter most, and five **Strategic Drivers**, the major influencing factors that have shaped the Plan's strategies and recommendations.

Foundational Themes

Three major themes serve as the foundation upon which WTP 2030 has been developed:

Theme #1: Washington Faces a Structural Transportation Funding Problem and Additional Revenue is Essential

Statewide transportation system needs continue to grow while revenues are declining. As a result, the ability to effectively maintain and operate the statewide transportation system is at risk. New road projects and maintenance of the existing system are threatened by reductions in gas tax revenue. Transit agencies are struggling to meet record demand for services with a revenue base that is largely tied to sales tax revenues which declined with the economic downturn. Air, rail, and water-borne transportation are largely market-driven. The bottom line is that additional revenue is needed to maintain the state's existing transportation system.

Theme #2: The State's Transportation System Needs to Work as an Integrated Network, Effectively Connecting Across Modes and Jurisdictions

A fundamental goal of the statewide transportation system over the next 20 years must be to work towards achieving system connectivity and integration. The system includes modes (aviation, rail, roads, trails, waterways), facilities (airports, ferry terminals, bus shelters, rest areas, information technology systems, weigh stations, etc.) and services (aviation fuel, charters, emergency response, traffic alerts, traffic cameras) that are owned, operated, or managed by transportation providers in both the private and public sectors. As part of this objective, we must focus on moving people and goods in the most efficient and cost-effective manner, with system connectivity and strategic capacity investments in critical corridors and facilities factored into investment decision-making.

Theme #3: Preservation and Maintenance of the Existing Transportation System is the Most Critical Need

A safe and effective transportation system is fundamental to a sustainable economy and livable communities and so must be made a top priority. Washington's economy depends on moving goods in and out of the state and within the state, and making our recreational and cultural opportunities available to visitors. With limited resources, the focus should be on preservation and maintenance, with a lower priority placed on building new facilities. Maintaining transit service will also help to improve capacity and utilization of the existing system.

Strategic Drivers

Five strategic drivers inform this Plan. These are the influences that reflect the current political, policy, and economic environment within which this Plan was developed:

- **TRANSPORTATION POLICY SHOULD SUPPORT AND REINFORCE OTHER STATE POLICY OBJECTIVES.** A strategic transportation policy plan must embrace goals, principles, and policies that support broad policy outcomes for the state beyond the transportation system. Creating jobs and improving the economy, supporting safe and healthy communities, reducing energy consumption, and addressing climate change are all broad policy outcomes influencing WTP 2030.
- **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION IS KEY.** The transportation system is a direct reflection of the way in which land is developed and used. The movement of people and goods changes in relation to residential, commercial, industrial, and other land uses as the land use provides the reason for movement. The availability of transportation in turn often influences development and land use plans. WTP 2030 acknowledges this critical relationship and recommends strengthening linkages between desired outcomes in both land use development and the transportation system.
- **THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCES ACROSS REGIONS AND ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL.** WTP 2030 recognizes that transportation needs and challenges vary across the state, between urban and rural areas, and based on the size of a community. While the Plan takes a systems approach to addressing statewide needs, it is expected that local jurisdictions and agencies should approach local planning and decision-making in a way that best meets the unique needs of their communities within this statewide framework for funding and priorities.
- **IT IS CRITICAL TO EDUCATE, INFORM, AND REACH OUT TO THE PUBLIC.** The success of this Plan depends on public understanding of the importance of transportation to almost any aspect of our state's well-being. Broad community outreach and efforts are needed to raise awareness about the critical role that transportation plays in our economy and our daily lives and the need to ensure continued investment in the system.
- **CONTINUE THE EVOLUTION TO PERFORMANCE-BASED PROGRAMS.** WTP 2030 supports the state's focus on performance-based investments, using measurable results and outcomes. This direction follows from the Priorities of Government process and the performance measurement approach of the Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) framework. It is also consistent with the evolving federal focus on performance-based funding. Continued development of a performance-based investment approach should position Washington well for emerging federal programs and funding.



2. ECONOMIC, FINANCIAL & POLICY CONTEXT

Introduction

WTP 2030 has been significantly influenced by current economic conditions, as well as shifts in federal priorities and funding. There is uncertainty about future policy direction at both the state and federal levels in many public policy arenas, in particular related to energy and climate change. In the two years leading up to this Plan, the price of a barrel of oil has ranged from a low near \$40 to a high of \$140. Recent experience in Washington and the nation demonstrated that the price of gasoline has impacts on transit demand and automobile use. When gasoline prices exceeded \$4 per gallon for a period of time, operating costs for transit systems increased and revenue for state, federal, and local transportation programs dropped substantially. WTP 2030 was developed in the context of challenging economic conditions and competing needs.

This section presents an overview of Washington’s transportation revenue situation as context for the Plan’s strategies. It describes transportation revenues and needs at the state and local government levels, and the challenges associated with the recession and associated declines in revenues. This section also explores the history of the state’s major transportation revenue sources, identifies current state laws regarding revenue sources, and assesses future revenue risks. Funding recommendations to ensure preservation of the existing system and pay for future transportation investments complete this section.



Transportation Needs

At a minimum, the statewide transportation need of transit providers and state, county, and city governments for the 2011–2030 time frame of WTP 2030 is in the range of \$175 to \$200 billion. Although an estimate, this range is consistent with a constrained 30-year need (\$189 billion) identified in *Transportation 2040* adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council and the 2008 constrained plan developed by the Spokane Regional Transportation Council (\$7.5 billion). Due to the difficulty of identifying needs so far in the future, the Commission asked WSDOT, the Association of Washington Cities, the Washington State Association of Counties, and the Washington State Transit Association to help estimate the statewide 20-year transportation needs. As shown in Exhibit 2, WSDOT estimates the 20-year need for the state transportation system alone is \$63.8 billion.

Exhibit 2
WSDOT 20-Year Needs Estimates by Mode Rollup

Mode	20-year Needs Total
Aviation	\$ 2,832,700,000
Ferries	\$ 10,561,800,000
Freight Rail	\$ 1,930,000,000
Passenger Rail	\$ 6,748,000,000
Highway System	\$ 35,100,000,000
Bike and Pedestrian	\$ 1,600,000,000
Public Transportation	\$ 5,083,800,000
TOTAL ESTIMATE	\$ 63,856,300,000

Source:
WSDOT, 2010.

REGIONS. The Legislature requested the Commission compile and review priority lists of up to 20 projects from each MPO and RTPO to help identify statewide transportation needs.⁴ Projects could be anything related to transportation including roads, bridges, and multi-modal facilities, such as transit and aviation. Projects could belong to any governmental jurisdiction and were not limited to state highway projects. The Commission advised the MPOs and RTPOs that mega projects identified by the Legislature are already high priority state projects and did not need to be included in their priority lists.⁵ Based on the submittals from the regions, the priority need for the 12 of the 15 regions that submitted a list of 20 projects totals \$8.65 billion.⁶

⁴ Section 205(8), Chapter 247, Laws of 2010 states “As part of its development of the statewide transportation plan, the commission shall review prioritized projects, including preservation and maintenance projects, from regional transportation and metropolitan planning organizations to identify statewide transportation needs. The review should include a brief description and status of each project along with the funding required and associated timeline from start to completion. The commission shall submit the review, along with recommendations, to the house of representatives and senate transportation committees by January 2011.”

⁵ The specific mega projects are: the SR 520 bridge replacement; Alaskan Way Viaduct replacement; I-405; Columbia River Crossing; Spokane North/South Freeway; Tacoma HOV; Snoqualmie Pass; and the SR 167 extension to the Port of Tacoma. Funding for Washington State Ferries also is a high priority and need not be included in the priority list.

⁶ The Commission’s 2010/11 *Regional Priority Projects* report has more detail on each submission.

Because preservation is such a critical need and often is budgeted separately from projects, the Commission also asked each region to submit a separate need estimate for preservation. The total 10-year preservation need for roads and bridges submitted by 13 of the 15 regions totals \$6.38 billion.

The regional need estimates generated by the priority project and preservation need lists are subsets of the aggregate 20 year need estimates in this section by the state, counties, cities, and transit agencies, providing a different yet consistent perspective on transportation needs.

COUNTIES. Counties estimate the funding need for maintenance and preservation of the county road system, ferry capital needs, and fish passage improvements to be \$1.4 billion per year. For 20 years, assuming 4% inflation, the statewide county need totals \$40.9 billion. Although the county estimate does not identify funding needs for capacity-related projects, most county road projects will be maintenance and preservation; due to requirements of the Growth Management Act, most new development is sited within cities and not in unincorporated areas. Note that the county estimate does not address future needs for non-motorized transportation or for county-owned airports.⁷

CITIES. On average, cities invest approximately \$1 billion in transportation annually. Assuming 4% inflation, the estimated 20-year city need is at least \$28.7 billion. The existing city street systems will continue to be the backbone of cities' transportation system. The primary growth in city street miles will occur through annexation of areas with existing county roads or infill on the existing network. However, the condition of cities' transportation system is in peril. Pavement ratings show the statewide average declined from an average score of 72 out of 100 in 2006 to 69 in 2010.



Cities will continue to invest in the existing street system. Larger economic centers will need to make significant and costly improvements related to congestion relief, freight mobility, and earthquake protection. Cities with populations of less than 5,000 will continue to cobble together limited local resources with state assistance to preserve their system. "Main Street" for many of these cities is a state highway which is primarily the responsibility of the state.

TRANSIT. Transit agencies currently spend nearly \$2 billion a year on capital and operating expenses. Because such a large part of the transit need forecasts depend on fuel and labor costs, it is more difficult to forecast than capital construction needs. Accounting for current spending and anticipated shortfalls, the 20-year public transportation need is conservatively estimated at \$49 billion to maintain 2010 service levels. If transit systems are to maintain pace with population growth and accommodate an aging population, additional funding will be required.

⁷ King, Snohomish, Spokane and Yakima Counties all own airports with commercial operations.

Transportation Revenues: State Sources and Trends

The revenue analysis presented below is based on work done for the Washington State Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) in 2009, which used the Transportation Revenue Forecast Council's (TRFC) November 2009 projections for its analysis.⁸ The Washington State Legislature has developed a 16-year transportation financial plan for the 2009-2025 period with estimated revenues of \$46.7 billion.

As shown in Exhibit 3, the motor vehicle fuel tax is the largest source of transportation revenues for the 16-year period on average, comprising 38% of total funding and more than half of total direct revenue. Other sources of revenue include licenses, permits, and fees (21%); bond sales (14%); federal funds (12%); ferry revenues (7%); tolls (3%); vehicle sales tax (3%); and miscellaneous revenues (2%). Because debt service on bonds is repaid from the fuel tax and most federal transportation funds are generated from the federal fuel tax, it is noteworthy that approximately 64% of current transportation funding is dependent on how much fuel cars and trucks consume.

Exhibit 3
State Transportation Funding: 2009-2025 Sources and Amounts

Source	2009-25 Totals (billions)	% 2009-25 Funding	% 2009-25 Direct Revenue*
Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax - 37.5¢ per gallon**	\$17.7	38%	52%
Licenses, Permits and Fees**	\$9.7	21%	28%
Bond Sales	\$6.4	14%	–
Federal Funds	\$5.7	12%	–
Ferry Revenues	\$3.4	7%	10%
Tolling (Tacoma Narrows Bridge/SR 167)	\$1.5	3%	4%
Vehicles Sales Taxes	\$1.2	3%	4%
Miscellaneous/Interest	\$1.1	2%	2%
TOTAL FUNDS/REVENUE	\$46.7 billion	\$46.7 billion	\$34.1 billion

* Excludes bond sales, federal funds, and interest which are not direct revenues.

** Excludes revenues distributed to local governments.

Source:

Joint Transportation Committee, *Implementing Alternative Transportation Funding Methods*, 2010.

⁸ Joint Transportation Committee, *Implementing Alternative Transportation Funding Methods*, 2010.

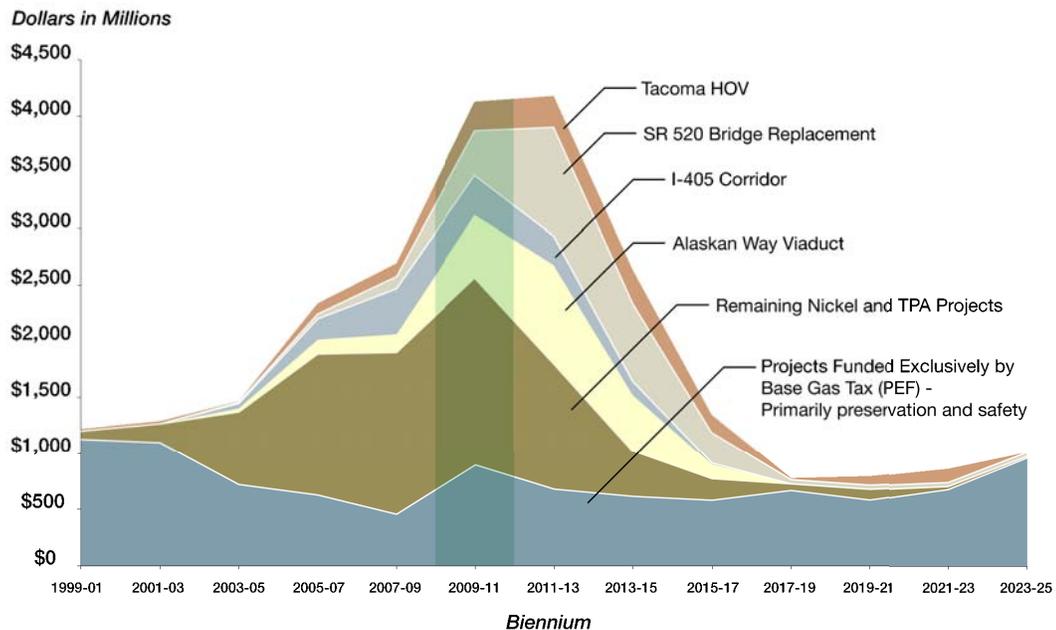
HISTORICAL TRENDS: DECLINING FUEL CONSUMPTION AND REVENUES. The reliance on the fuel tax as a primary revenue source makes state transportation funding vulnerable to decreases in fuel consumption. A number of factors have and could decrease demand for fuel in the future, including fuel price increases, greater fuel efficiency of vehicles, shifts to hybrid and all electric vehicles, and a decline in vehicle miles traveled.

In recent years, motor fuel tax revenue projections have trended downward. Based on recent consumption patterns, the 16-year total motor vehicle fuel tax revenue projection released for 2009 by the TRFC and included in the 2010 JTC Study was \$1.6 billion less than the 16-year projection estimated in 2007. Fuel tax, licenses, permits, and fees are set as flat rates, meaning that 80% of the state’s direct transportation revenues do not grow with inflation. Under these current flat rate taxes and fees, the state will collect substantially less revenue in 2025 than it did in 2009. In contrast, if rates were to be adjusted for inflation, total revenues would increase by approximately \$10 billion over the 16-year time period.

REVENUE INCREASES IN THE LAST DECADE. The most recent statewide transportation revenue packages were enacted by the Legislature in 2003 and 2005. In those years, the state raised the motor vehicle fuel tax and other fees and charges to support two WSDOT capital programs: the 2003 Nickel Funding Package and the 2005 Transportation Partnership Act Funding Package. Together, these funding packages invested \$15.5 billion in highway, rail, ferry, transit, and freight projects across the state. By the end of 2010, 347 of 421 projects will be complete or under construction.

Future revenues from these two funding packages have been bonded and committed to the 421 projects, which will soon be delivered as shown in Exhibit 4. WSDOT estimates that basic preservation, safety, and environmental needs for the next twenty years will require an additional \$14.8 billion. Exhibit 5 illustrates the growing share of the transportation budget that debt service will account for in future biennia.

**Exhibit 4
Project Delivery – Major Projects**

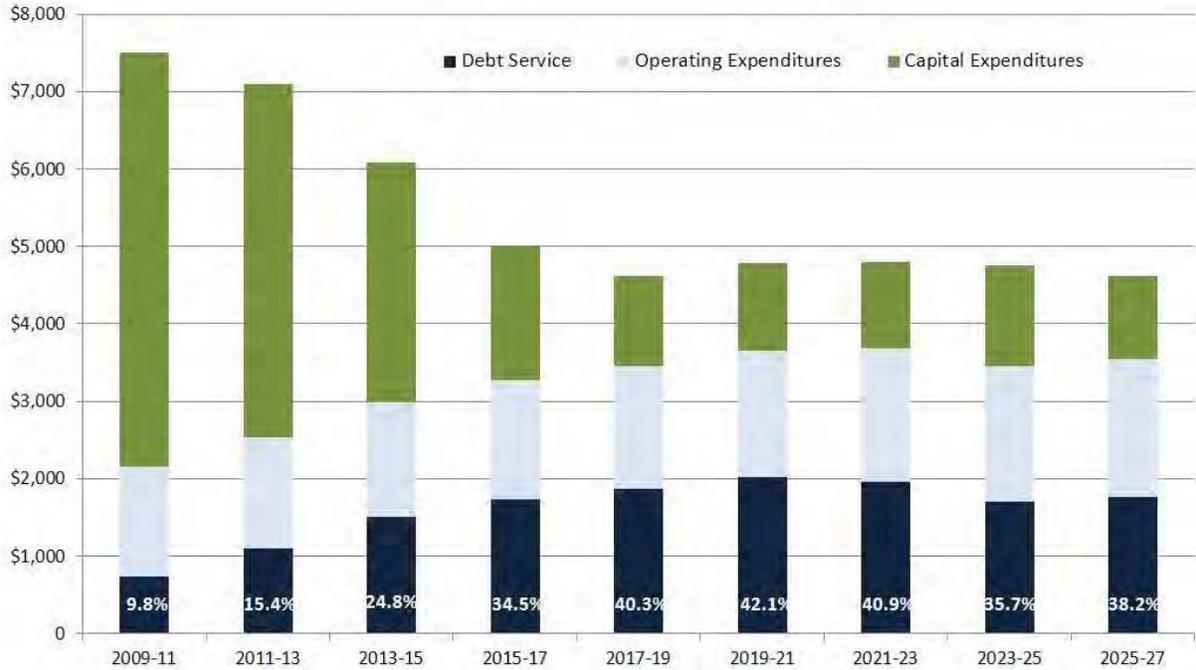


Source:
WSDOT Capital Program Development and Management Office, 2010.

Exhibit 5

Debt Service is a Significant Share of the State 2010 Enacted Transportation Budget and Legislative 16-year Financial Plan

Dollars in Millions



Notes:

2011-27 expenditures are based on Legislative expenditures and debt services assumptions.

Source:

WSDOT Budget and Financial Analysis, 2010.

STATE LAW AND RESTRICTIONS ON TRANSPORTATION REVENUES.

- **Legislative action is required to set taxes and fees.** With the exception of tolls and ferry fares, transportation tax and fee rates are set by state law and require legislative action. Tolls and ferry fares are set by the Washington State Transportation Commission, subject to legislative direction. Initiative 1053, which took effect December 2, 2010 requires future legislative action on tolls and fare increases.
- **The use of funds is restricted by the 18th Amendment.** The 18th Amendment, approved in 1944, requires motor vehicle fuel taxes and vehicle registration fees collected for highway purposes to be used exclusively for highway purposes. The Legislature has also imposed additional restrictions on the use of most transportation revenue.

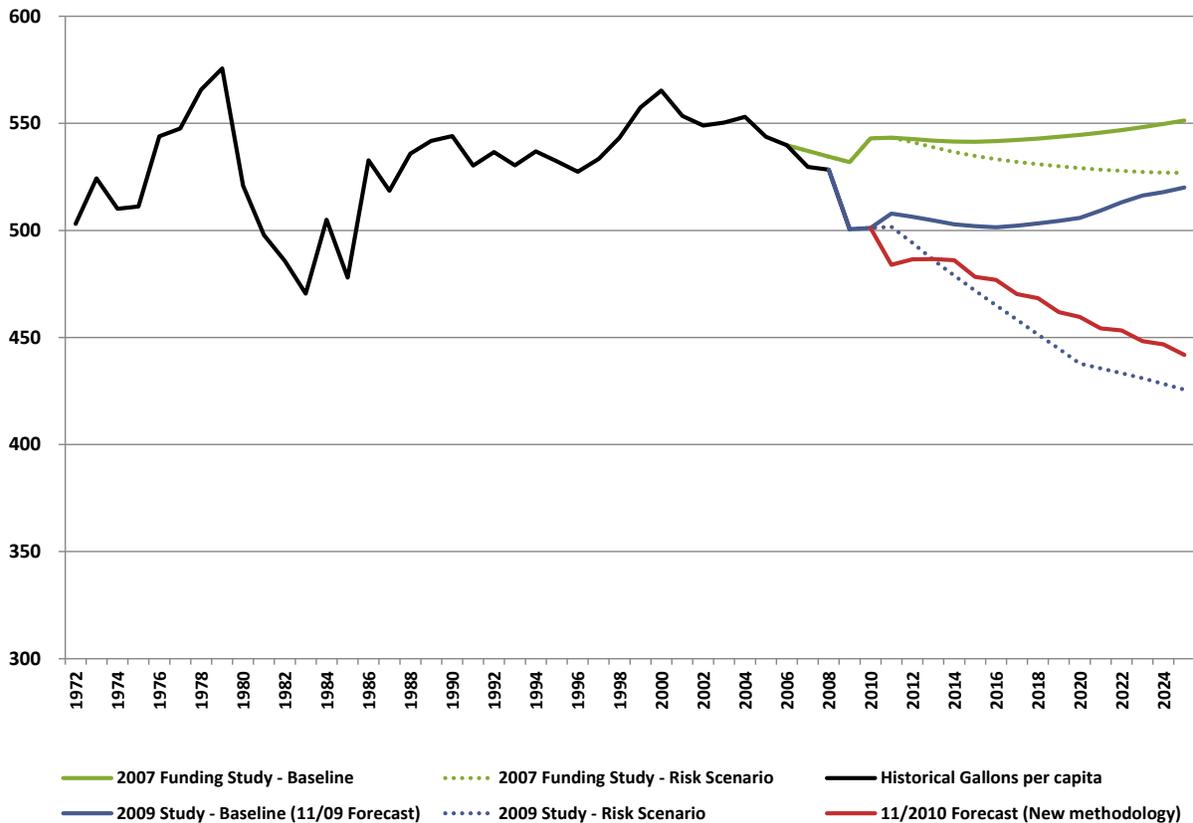
These legal parameters limit the state’s ability to increase transportation revenues and direct transportation funds to non-highway purposes. Legislative restrictions also limit the revenue that counties may raise through the road levy and that transit agencies may raise through locally imposed sales taxes.

ASSESSING FUTURE TRANSPORTATION REVENUE RISKS. To obtain a picture of potential transportation revenues given the changing dynamics of fuel consumption and vehicle purchases, the JTC report *Implementing Alternative Transportation Funding Methods* included a risk assessment of changes to the status quo. The risk assessment scenario estimated future state fuel tax revenues based on a number of assumptions, including integration of the newly updated corporate average fuel economy standards, increases in the purchase and use of electric and hybrid vehicles, and no change to other variables that affect fuel consumption over time, such as vehicle miles traveled per capita.

Under this risk scenario, total revenues from the fuel tax would equal \$19.4 billion over the 16-year plan, a reduction of \$2.2 billion, or 10%, compared to the November 2009 forecast.

Since the 2010 report was released, recently revised fuel consumption forecasts show significant projected declines in projected fuel consumption. Exhibit 6 presents these projections and highlights the potential significant revenue impacts resulting from decreasing consumption. The new forecast *11/2010 Forecast (New methodology)* estimates much lower consumption over the long run than previous projections (shown in the solid blue and green lines). It is similar to *2009 Study-Risk Scenario* created for the JTC report, which was intended to present a worst case scenario.

Exhibit 6
Historical and Projected Gallons per Capita



Source:
WSDOT, BERK & ASSOCIATES, 2010.

Transportation Revenues: Local Sources and Trends

Cities, counties, transit agencies, and port districts also share responsibility for the funding of local transportation systems. Like the State of Washington, these entities are experiencing significant reductions in revenues due to the downturn in the economy. Cities and counties rely on sales and property taxes for a significant proportion of their operating revenue, funding debt service, and concurrently financing local transportation infrastructure. While cities and counties receive some funding from gas tax revenues, all revenue sources have declined significantly in recent years due to the economy and initiatives limiting tax increases. Except for county road funds, no local sales and property tax revenues are dedicated to transportation. Transportation projects and maintenance needs must compete with other general purpose government needs within the budgets of cities and counties.

Transit agencies are generally dependent on sales tax revenues for a significant share of their non-federal revenues. As sales tax revenues declined during the downturn, transit agencies made significant cuts in projects, services, and staff. Almost every transit agency in the state increased fares – some multiple times – during the 2008-2010 downturn.

Exhibit 7 summarizes the 2008 revenue data for public transit authorities. Seventy percent of transit revenues come from local sales tax collections and fare revenue; federal sources, which provide transit capital funding adds another 17%; and the state contributes 2%.

Exhibit 7
Public Transit Authorities (2008 Revenues)

Revenue Source	Operating	Capital	Total	% of Total
Local	\$1,359,097,591		\$1,359,097,591	70.4%
Federal	\$103,331,429	\$224,622,539	\$327,953,968	17%
State	\$18,819,979	\$24,326,489	\$43,146,468	2%
Other	\$76,060,666	\$124,705,609	\$200,766,275	10%
Total	\$1,557,309,666	\$373,654,637	\$1,930,964,303	100%

Notes:

Other includes Sound Transit operating, as well as other items for all authorities, such as interest income, advertising income, and rental income.

Source:

WSDOT and WSTA, 2010.

Port districts use property tax revenues and operating revenues to build and operate critical seaport and airport infrastructure. Many ports have seen revenue decreases due to the slowdown in the global economy.

Like the state, all of these local governments are making changes to their plans and projects, reducing funds, and prioritizing scarce resources to meet only the most critical transportation needs. Some local governments have been unable to invest in transportation at all. These local government's primary responsibilities and revenue sources are described in more detail in the *Attachments* to this Plan.

A Structural Funding Problem at the Federal Level

The federal government faces a significant revenue problem. Because the federal gas tax has remained at 18.4 cents per gallon since 1993, revenues have not kept pace with costs and system needs, and the Highway Trust Fund cannot meet its commitments. According to one comprehensive study, the funding gap is estimated at \$400 billion for the 2010-15 period and \$2.3 trillion for 2010-35.⁹ In 2009 and 2010, Congress transferred \$7 billion and \$13 billion respectively from the General Fund to the Highway Trust Fund to pay for obligated transportation projects. These transfers were initiated to address the shortfall from motor vehicle fuel taxes, which declined in response to higher fuel prices, increases in vehicle fuel economy, and the recession.

When the Interstate Highway System was built, the federal government provided 90% of the money and required states to match the remaining 10%. To expand capacity, states must now typically provide a match at 20% of project cost.

Emerging Federal Policy

Authorization of current federal surface transportation policy – the 2005 Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) – which encompassed \$287 billion in approved funding, has been extended to December 31, 2010. Congress is currently scheduled to consider reauthorization in 2011. Regardless of the timeframe for reauthorization, there are significant indications that transportation policy will change with new federal action. In addition, Washington Senators Cantwell and Murray recently sponsored the new FREIGHT bill, which underscores freight transportation as essential to national prosperity and international competitiveness and calls for development of a national freight transportation policy, the creation of an Office of Freight Planning and Development, and a freight infrastructure grant program.



Overall, it appears likely that there will be important shifts in the nation's transportation policy goals, including a broader focus on outcomes tied to other policy objectives.

⁹ *Paying our Way: A New Framework for Transportation Finance*. Final Report. February. 2009. Surface Transportation Infrastructure Financing Commission. pp. 3-4.

Funding Recommendations

A Call to Action

This Plan reflects the multi-faceted needs of Washington's statewide transportation system. The state faces a backlog of critical projects and mounting needs to adequately preserve and steward key parts of the transportation system. Immediate action on funding is necessary to ensure responsible preservation of our existing system, as well as construction of improvements to meet the state's evolving needs. Further, taking action to preserve and improve the transportation system has direct economic benefits. Washington's economic competitiveness is intertwined with our transportation system and ability to effectively move goods and people. Investing in the transportation system is also an important economic stimulus at a time when new jobs are very much needed.

Alignment with JTC Funding Recommendations

Given the immediate need for additional revenue to meet Washington's transportation needs, the Commission endorses the funding recommendations made to the JTC and outlined in the report *Implementing Alternative Transportation Funding Methods*. These recommendations serve as a starting point for action that should begin with the 2011-13 Legislative session. The report to the JTC identifies specific steps for the Legislature and state agencies to begin implementing viable mid- and long-term transportation funding approaches.

Specifically, the Commission endorses the following recommendations from the JTC report, which it views as most viable for early action. Commission comments follow the summary of the recommendation. The estimated revenues shown come from the JTC report, which used 16-year revenue projections based on the November 2009 Transportation Revenue Forecast. These revenue estimates do not reflect recent revisions to the forecast models which have significantly lowered gas consumption (see Exhibit 6) and are contained in the November 2010 Transportation Revenue Forecast.¹⁰

HOW TO STRETCH TRANSPORTATION REVENUE

Given the difficulty of raising new transportation revenue, the Legislature should consider providing WSDOT and local governments with more options to use efficient, proven construction management and finance techniques to stretch limited resources.

In previous years, the Commission has made the following recommendation to more efficiently use transportation dollars:

Design-build. WSDOT already uses design-build contracting extensively with great success. Expand opportunities to use contracting approaches that secure design flexibility, improve price certainty, allocate risk, and complete projects faster.

Alliance contracting. This approach expands on design-build by making the contractor and the government "partners," sharing project risks and benefits.

Streamline the state's public-private partnership law to make it more attractive to private equity investors, especially for non-highway projects.

Extend finance terms on large, long-term projects. Since the lifespan of many large projects exceeds bond repayment terms, the Legislature should consider giving the state the same authority cities and counties have to issue 35-40 year bonds.

¹⁰ The 2009 estimates of revenue from the proposed fuel tax increases overstate revenue projections. In addition, these fuel tax increase proposals were estimated separately, so the enactment of multiple fuel tax increase proposals would result in different revenue projections than presented below.

1. Maintain the viability of the fuel tax by indexing it to the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Indexing would allow fuel tax revenues to grow with inflation, maintaining the purchasing power of these revenues

- *Estimated Revenue: \$4.4 to \$4.6 billion 2009-25¹¹*

Commission Comments: *The Commission notes that WSDOT recommends linking the fuel tax to the Construction Cost Index rather than the CPI to better maintain the purchasing power of the tax.*

2. Offset declines in fuel consumption resulting from more fuel efficient vehicles by implementing one of two options:

A. Increase the fuel tax rate annually

- *Estimated Revenue: One cent per gallon annual increase \$3.4 to \$3.9 billion 2009-25*

B. Add a percentage-based transportation assessment fee of 2% (similar to a sales tax) to the price of fuel

- *Estimated Revenue: \$4.1 to \$4.6 billion 2009-25*

3. Maintain the viability of licensing and permit fee revenues through legislation that increases rates to 2012 purchasing power and then indexes them to maintain future purchasing power.

Through legislation, the affected agencies could be authorized to adjust fees annually through the budget process.

- *Estimated Revenue: \$3.8 billion 2009-25*

4. Modify weight fees by eliminating the registration deduction on passenger vehicles and adjusting truck weight fees.

Passenger vehicle weight fees are reduced by the registration fee, while truck weight fees are not. The Legislature could increase the vehicle weight fee by \$30.00, by eliminating the registration fee deduction for passenger vehicles and raising truck weight fees by a corresponding \$30.00.

- *Estimated Revenue: \$3.8 billion 2009-25*

PRICING AS A WAY TO MANAGE DEMAND

Pricing policies, whether taxes on fuel or other transportation goods such as parking or tires, can be a powerful tool for changing behavior.

In the U.S., we have seen that higher fuel prices moderate consumption; the impact at the pump of a \$30 to \$40 increase in the price of a barrel of oil is roughly equivalent to raising the gas tax by \$1 per gallon. Recent history shows that more expensive fuel, whether the result of higher taxes or market forces, increases transit ridership, reduces fuel consumption, and generates demand for smaller, fuel efficient cars.



Pricing strategies can help ease highway congestion and over time reduce maintenance costs as traffic lessens and lighter cars are built. In addition to raising revenues, pricing can be a less complicated, less bureaucratic, and less arbitrary way to achieve other desired outcomes than a web of regulations.

¹¹ Revised forecasting methodology first implemented in November 2010 shows decreased fuel consumption, which would reduce the estimates for Recommendations 1 and 2.

5. Adopt in-lieu-of fees for electric and other high mileage vehicles.

Consistent with fees adopted for natural gas and propane powered vehicles, the Legislature could adopt in-lieu-of fees for electric and other high mileage vehicles to make up for lost gas tax revenues

- *Estimated Revenue: \$1.0 to \$271 million 2009-25*

Commission Comments: *The amount of money raised will depend on the rate of adoption of alternative and high mileage fuel vehicles. While the Commission supports the move away from gas powered vehicles, user fees should help maintain the transportation system.*

6. Support Local Funding Options Recommended by the JTC Report.

Under existing law, cities and counties will receive increased revenues if the Legislature indexes and/or increases the state motor vehicle fuel tax rate. Depending on those decisions and the magnitude of the consequent distributions, the Commission also supports the following actions recommended by the JTC Report:

- Authorize cities to create street maintenance utilities
- Allow transportation benefit districts (TBDs) to impose license fees up to \$100 by councilmanic vote and provide flexibility in the use of the funds
- Amend authority for counties and cities to impose a fuel tax, allowing it to be set at cents per gallon, and providing councilmanic authority to impose the tax

Commission Comments: *Some counties, cities, and transit agencies have raised new revenue in the last two years through the creation of TBDs and voter approval of an increased transit sales tax. Although counties and cities prefer a direct allocation of new state revenue, the Commission recommends that additional investment of state-generated revenue in local transportation be tied to meeting established performance standards.*

The Commission also supports increased local authority for transit operations and capital, such as vehicle license fees or sales tax increases.

The Commission also has heard debate and discussion across the state regarding the desirability of a greater financial contribution from bicyclists. Given the increased demand for safe bicycle paths and facilities, it may be appropriate to implement a fee levied on bicycle users that is dedicated to bicycle facility improvements.



Additional Commission Recommendations: Tolling and Ferry Funding

7. Use Tolling to Supplement Gas Tax Revenues.

Throughout Washington's history, tolling has been used to fund construction of large-scale transportation projects. In light of aging infrastructure, increased demands and congestion, and inadequate funding for new transportation projects, the Commission recommends expanded use of tolling, including development and operation of tolled facilities as a system (see sidebar).

Consistent with its *2006 Tolling Study* and *2008 Exploration of Potential Tolling Opportunities*, the Commission recommends a phased, three-step approach to moving ahead with tolling projects:

Short Term (within 10 years)

- Accelerate implementation of high-cost/high-need projects such as Columbia River Crossing at Vancouver and Snoqualmie Pass.
- Use pricing as appropriate to make most effective use of the system.
- Convert high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes in congested corridors such as I-5 from Tacoma to Everett or on I-405 to HOV/tolled express lanes to optimize performance and maintain free-flowing service for transit, vanpools, and carpools.

Medium Term (within 20 years)

- Consider the potential for building additional capacity in congested corridors, such as tolled express lanes, through more extensive study of long-term costs and benefits.
- Consider broader use of tolling to optimize system performance.
- Implement needed improvements on the I-5 corridor.

Long Term (beyond 20 years)

- Consider more extensive use of tolls as the ability to build more capacity is constrained, traditional revenue sources decline, and technology advances.

POLICIES TO GUIDE DEVELOPMENT OF A SYSTEM OF TOLL FACILITIES

From the Commission's 2006 Tolling Study:

- 1. Overall Direction.** Washington should use tolling to encourage effective use of the transportation system and provide a supplementary source of transportation funding.
- 2. When to Use Tolling.** Tolling should be used when it can be demonstrated to:
 - Contribute to a significant portion of the cost of a project that cannot be funded solely with existing sources; and/or
 - Optimize system performance, such as with a HOV/Tolled Express lane.

Such tolling should in all cases:

 - Be fairly and equitably applied in the context of the statewide transportation system; and
 - Not have significant adverse impacts through diversion of traffic to other routes.
- 3. Use of Toll Revenue.** Toll revenue should be used only to improve, preserve or operate the transportation system.
- 4. Setting Toll Rates.** Toll rates, which may include variable pricing, should be set to optimize system performance, recognizing necessary tradeoffs to generate revenue.
- 5. Duration of Toll Collection.** Since transportation infrastructure projects have costs and benefits that extend well beyond those paid for by initial construction funding, tolls should remain in place to fund additional capacity, capital rehabilitation, maintenance, operations, and to optimize system performance.
- 6. State Authority to Set Toll Policy.** Following broad statutory direction, the Commission, as the currently designated State Tolling Authority, should develop policies and criteria for selecting the parts of the transportation system to be tolled; propose the study of potential toll facilities; recommend toll deployments to the Governor and Legislature; and set toll rates. The Authority should engage in robust and continuous coordination with state-authorized regional or multistate entities that may propose toll facilities to the Authority.
- 7. WSDOT to Implement Policy.** WSDOT should be responsible for planning, development, operations and administration of toll projects and toll operations within the State.
- 8. Toll Collection Systems.** Toll collection systems in Washington should be simple, unified, and interoperable and avoid attended tollbooths, wherever possible.

Funding for Washington State Ferries Needs

The unfunded capital needs of Washington State Ferries (WSF), estimated at \$4.2 billion over the timeframe of WTP 2030, cannot be met without a stable, significant source of capital revenue. As with the highway system, the state has a responsibility to maintain and operate the ferry system. However, the capital need is far too great to be funded through fares or a local funding district, and ferry riders already pay a significant cost to use the system. Viewing the current funding system as unsustainable, the Commission recommends that the Legislature initiate a short-term strategy to address the unfunded ferry capital needs.¹² This strategy should:

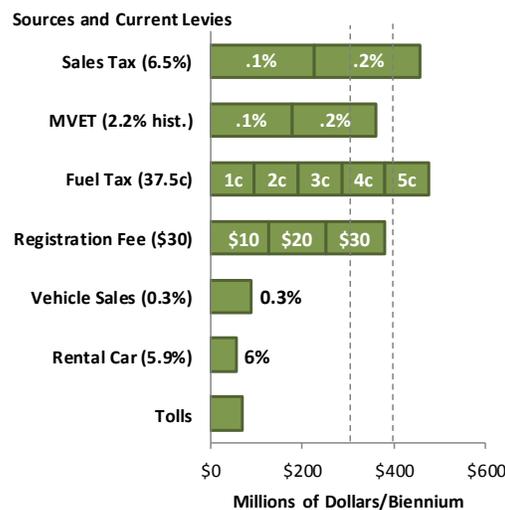
8. Fund long-term capital needs with a vehicle excise or similar tax. Set the tax rate to eliminate the need for administrative transfers.

An excise tax based on the value of motor vehicles appears to be the most viable mechanism for funding WSF long-term capital needs based upon the Commission’s 2009 *Long-Term Ferry Funding Study*. Unlike the motor vehicle fuel tax, a vehicle excise tax generates adequate revenue at a relatively low tax rate and is likely to be more reliable and stable over time.

Exhibit 8 shows the estimated sales tax rate, motor vehicle excise tax rate, fuel tax rate or vehicle registration fee per biennium necessary to generate adequate capital funding to maintain current levels of ferry service and replace several vessels between now and 2031. Exhibit 8 also shows the current revenue from the vehicle sales tax, rental car tax, and tolls. A tax rate that yields \$300 million per biennium would still require about \$100 million per biennium in transfers from other transportation funding accounts. To avoid transfers, a tax to raise ferry capital funds should yield \$400 million per biennium. The 2009 study concluded that a vehicle excise tax rate of about 0.21% would address most of the unfunded WSF need.

Exhibit 8

Potential Yield of State Funding Sources Relative to 22-Year Average Ferry Funding Gap (2008 Dollars)



Notes:

Figures are approximate. Assumptions used in calculations are documented in the *Part II Technical Memorandum– Initial Screening of Ferry Funding Sources* report, available on the Commission website.

Source:

Washington State Transportation Commission, *Long-Term Ferry Funding Study*, February 2009.

¹² The five counties that own and operate ferries also face the same ferry capital investment needs.

9. Increase ferry fares and other operating revenues to close the operating funding gap.

The Commission recommends incremental fare increases above the 2.5% per year assumed in the 2009-11 budget financial plan. Fare increases need to be sufficient to close the operating gap and eliminate the need for an operating subsidy above that already provided by dedicated state sources. Increasing fares also serves as a meaningful, locally based contribution to ferry funding to complement state sources. The Commission estimates 4%-6% annual fare increases will be needed for at least 5 years to accomplish this.

10. Impose fuel surcharges when warranted.

The Commission has worked with WSDOT to develop an automatic, formula-driven fuel surcharge strategy to prevent adverse impacts to WSF from unexpected increases in ferry fuel prices. The surcharge is one component of a strategy that includes improved fuel cost forecasting practices, price hedging for fuel, and conservation measures to reduce consumption. The surcharge mechanism would be based upon the per gallon price assumed in the transportation budget. If actual fuel costs rise above the price per gallon assumed in the budget, the surcharge mechanism would be triggered and a surcharge would be assessed.

Looking Forward: Use of Vehicle Miles Traveled Systems

The Commission makes these funding recommendations for legislative consideration in the near-term. As this is a 20-year plan, the Commission has also considered future revenue options that should be explored for future implementation. Technology is moving at a rapid pace and can support increasingly sophisticated tolling and pricing systems. While the JTC did not recommend a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) charge, the Commission suggests that work should begin to explore the feasibility of a VMT-based assessment system.

A revenue system based on VMT is similar to the user fee system that has been in place since the 1920s: the more one drives, the more one pays. However, the current system with the gas tax is losing its relationship between driving and paying as some cars get more fuel efficient and alternative fuel vehicles are introduced. Over time, the gas tax will be viewed as increasingly unfair to some system users. In a VMT approach, drivers pay directly for the distance they drive, putting all system users back on a level playing field.

While technologically feasible, a VMT charge faces political and geographic barriers to implementation. One approach that would allow time for development while keeping the idea moving forward would be to implement a federally funded pilot VMT-based project on the West Coast – perhaps an I-5 “Corridor of the Future” project. This idea has been jointly advocated by the California, Oregon, and Washington State Transportation Commissions.

3. WTP 2030 STRATEGIC POLICY PLAN

WTP 2030 Vision

By 2030, Washington’s transportation network connects people and communities, fostering commerce and operating seamlessly across boundaries and modes as an environmentally and financially sustainable system.

Summary of Policy Goals

WTP 2030 is organized around the six statutory transportation policy goals in RCW 47.04.280. The policy goals are listed in the order they appear in statute and are not prioritized. The Legislature added Economic Vitality to the goals in 2010.

- ECONOMIC VITALITY** To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy
- PRESERVATION** To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services
- SAFETY** To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system
- MOBILITY** To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State
- ENVIRONMENT** To enhance Washington’s quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment
- STEWARDSHIP** To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system

While the six policy goals are shared statewide, the implementation strategies to make the goals a reality may vary across the state. As the Commission views it, there is overlap between the transportation policy goals, and many strategies easily fit under one or more policy goals. Implementation of specific strategies will require the involvement of state agencies, local governments, the Governor and the Legislature. Accomplishing some goals – such as zero traffic deaths by 2030 or major reductions in greenhouse gas emissions – will depend more on individual actions than those of the government.

ECONOMIC VITALITY

To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy (RCW 47.04.280)

Background and Policy Context

THE ROLE OF TRANSPORTATION IN BUILDING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE. The transportation system plays an important role in fostering economic vitality and competitiveness in regional and global markets. Washington’s key clusters are a source of employment, job growth, innovation, and entrepreneurship. These industries have infrastructure and workforce needs that rely on an efficient, connected transportation system. Employers make location decisions based on a number of factors, many related to transportation, such as the ability to move goods quickly and reliably, access to airports, and transit options and commute times for employees.

TRANSPORTATION CREATES JOBS AND SPURS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. In 2008, transit invested \$1.7 billion in capital and operating improvements that generated both jobs and economic returns. For example, Sound Transit’s ST2 Plan is expected to create 69,000 direct jobs and 47,000 indirect jobs. Since February 2009, American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) projects have put 19,000 people to work, working 3 million hours and earning \$130 million. Additional infrastructure investments will help put unemployed construction workers back to work while strengthening the state’s transportation system and its competitive position.

THE ROLE OF TRANSPORTATION IN ACCESSING MARKETS. As a trade-dependent state, Washington relies heavily on an efficient freight transportation network. Forty-six percent of Washington jobs are in freight-dependent industries. Goods are shipped into, out of, and around Washington by truck, rail, air, pipeline, and water. Manufacturers and agricultural producers require an effectively networked system to get their goods to market. A well connected transportation system can also help the state’s economy prosper and grow, by providing access to new markets as they develop. Canada and Mexico are investing heavily in expansion of their port facilities to lure international cargo from U.S. ports. Washington must maintain and expand its place in the global economy by continuing to make local and state investments that support trade.

DIFFERENT REGIONS HAVE DIFFERENT NEEDS AND PERSPECTIVES ON ECONOMIC VITALITY. Economic vitality manifests itself differently across regions. In the state’s urban areas, transit is an important factor in both transporting workers to jobs and in attracting development around station areas. For the state’s island and peninsular communities, ferries and barges play a critical role in moving workers and goods across waterways. Across the state, access to airports and freight and passenger rail fosters and supports community economic development.

CLUSTERS & COMPETITIVENESS

Clusters Defined: A reinforcing network of companies, institutions, and supporting services that together create a critical mass and economic advantage for a region.

Supporting Washington’s clusters is an integral part of an effective Economic Vitality Strategy.

Washington’s Key Industry Clusters

- Aerospace
- Clean Energy
- Forest Products
- Global Health & Life Sciences
- Information & Communication Technology
- Manufacturing
- Marine Technology
- Agriculture & Food Processing
- Tourism

Source:

Washington State Department of Commerce,
www.choosewashington.com

Strategies

A. Improve Washington's Economic Competitiveness

Washington competes nationally and globally for the export and import of goods and services. Therefore, transportation policy and investment decisions directly affect the state's economic vitality when the cost of moving people and goods creates an economic advantage for Washington's businesses. The transportation system also contributes to economic competitiveness through improved connectivity and the efficient movement of people and goods on the ground or by water, rail, and air.

Recommended Actions:

- Prioritize improvements for major corridors, such as I-5 and I-90, the major north-south and east-west connections between Washington and the rest of the U.S.
- Keep moving forward with incremental high-speed passenger rail improvements to the Northwest Corridor, from Eugene, Oregon to Vancouver, British Columbia
- Invest in and support policies to increase use of the Columbia-Snake River barge system
- Streamline the state's public-private partnership law to allow for a wider range of financing opportunities and establish public-private partnerships for projects, such as ferry terminal improvements, partnerships to maximize the use of park and ride lots by public and private entities, and freight collection and distribution facilities for agriculture and other goods
- Partner with the military to prioritize transportation investments that support military-related economic activities
- Design, plan and fund transportation infrastructure that supports tourism, such as non-motorized trail networks, scenic byways, intermodal connections for travelers, and enhanced traveler communication systems

WASHINGTON'S MILITARY CLUSTER HAS UNIQUE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS

Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) is one of the state's largest single-site employers, and is now the third largest base in the lower 48 states. JBLM presents a growing challenge to I-5 mobility, in part because military facilities operate on fixed shifts and require secure entry and exit. As a result, traffic often backs up on I-5 during shift changes.

JBLM anticipates continued growth: an additional 14,000 soldiers and family members are expected to arrive back to the area in the next five years.

In addition to reliance on the Interstate System to move staff, material and munitions, many facilities also depend on Washington State Ferries for employee commutes (Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton) and for travel between military facilities (Whidbey Naval Air Station and the Kitsap naval bases).



C. Support the Coordinated, Connected, and Efficient Movement of Freight and Goods

Washington State's freight system has three components: Global Gateways (international and national trade flows); Made in Washington (regional economies that rely on the freight system); and Delivering Goods to You (the retail and wholesale distribution system). These components underpin our state economy, support national defense, directly sustain hundreds of thousands of jobs, and distribute the necessities of life to the state's residents. Washington's manufacturers, industrial producers, and farmers rely on the freight system to ship Washington-made products to local customers, major U.S. markets, and global markets.

Recommended Actions:

- Facilitate coordination to preserve freight capacity across jurisdictional boundaries in critical corridors
- Improve designated freight corridors by making connections with ports (such as completing SR 509 to connect with I-5 near Sea-Tac and SR 167 to connect with the Port of Tacoma) and assist in the development of freight modal centers (such as airports and intermodal facilities) to maintain Washington's competitive advantage for trade
- Establish an all-weather transportation system, prioritizing investments that minimize closures affecting agriculture, freight dependent industries, and tourism. Each region should define a core of all-weather state and local roads that meet designated state standards for weight and safety; this investment, based on regionally defined priorities, should be eligible for additional state funding to match local funding
- Implement incentives for freight carriers to travel on ferries during off-peak hours

FEDERAL INVESTMENT IN TRANSPORTATION

The federal Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) grants prioritized projects that contribute to the economic competitiveness of the U.S. and also improve the condition of existing facilities, public safety, energy efficiency, and living and working environments for people.

Washington State received five capital grants:

- US 395 North Spokane Corridor: \$35 million
- South Park Bridge Replacement: \$34 million
- Mercer Corridor Redevelopment: \$30 million
- West Vancouver Freight Access: \$10 million
- East Foster Wells Road Extension: \$1 million



D. Invest in the State’s Aviation System

The state’s aviation system, which includes 138 public use airports, is essential to the overall transportation system. The state’s largest airport, Sea-Tac International, has over 300,000 arrivals and departures each year, including five nonstop routes to destinations in Asia and five nonstop routes to Europe. However, the state’s *Long-term Air Transportation Study* completed in 2009 indicated that many public use airports do not meet performance objectives in areas such as pavement preservation, safety standards, land use compatibility, and airport facility infrastructure needs. The Study estimates needs of \$600 million to meet general performance objectives and \$2.3 billion to improve pavement and airport facility infrastructure over the next 20 years. Existing small community commercial air service has particular challenges; loss of this service could significantly impact the economic viability of communities locally and nationally.

Recommended Actions:

- Direct aviation taxes and fees to fund investments in airport infrastructure
- Treat aviation capacity as a resource and preserve, protect, and enhance such capacity through strategies focusing on airport operations, technology, safety, and land use
- Address additional growth needs with a special focus on the unique characteristics of four identified regional aviation Special Emphasis Areas: Puget Sound, Southwest Washington, Spokane, and Tri-Cities
- Invest in NextGen aviation technologies to meet future aviation needs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions

Airports in Washington State



Source: WSDOT and BERK & ASSOCIATES, 2010.

E. Ensure the Ability to Build and Expand Essential Public Facilities

Transportation facilities and services, such as interstate highways, airports, marine port facilities and services, and intercity passenger rail are designated as “essential public facilities” under Washington State’s Growth Management Act.¹³ Ports and airports receive special consideration under the port enabling statutes, Shoreline Management Act and Planning Enabling Act. Private transportation facilities, such as rail lines, are identified for special protection under federal interstate commerce laws and state laws designed to protect large container port operations. Protecting and preserving the essential elements of the transportation system (roads, rails, water, and air) is vital to their future use and to their ability to meet growing needs.

Recommended Actions:

- Encourage identification in local, regional, and state land use and transportation plans of key transportation corridors for the movement of people and goods, and connection of communities through multiple transportation modes
- Expand the definition of essential public facilities to include highways of statewide significance, including at least the megaprojects identified by the Legislature, such as SR 520 and the Columbia River Crossing
- Local transportation plans should specifically protect difficult-to-site facilities, such as airports and rail corridors, from encroachment by incompatible land uses. These plans should also provide for the future expansion of such facilities
- Participate in preserving and improving both the freight and passenger rail transportation system where there are sufficient public benefits to the State, its businesses, and communities, based on a systematic assessment and comparison of benefits and costs across users and modes



¹³ RCW 36.70A.200 and RCW 47.06.140.

PRESERVATION

To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services (RCW 47.04.280)

Background and Policy Context

Preservation of the capital assets of the statewide transportation network is the most critical need currently facing the state, one which will require additional revenue and new funding. Preservation needs differ across the state. While preservation needs vary, the fundamental challenge faced by transportation providers is the same — obtaining sufficient funding to reinvest in the existing transportation infrastructure.

DEFINING PRESERVATION. Preservation encompasses preventative and major maintenance and replacement of the assets that make up the statewide transportation network. This broad and diverse network encompasses all forms of transportation and all capital facilities and includes access to public transportation service.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PRESERVATION NEEDS. Much of the state’s roadway system was built between the 1950s and 1970s and is now at or near the end of its useful life. Statewide there are about 83,500 miles of state highways, county roads, city streets, and roads managed by other jurisdictions that require continuous preservation. Largely built by previous generations, many facilities across the state are in need of rehabilitation, reconstruction, or replacement. In addition to the existing backlog of preservation needs, future needs include the 421 projects WSDOT is delivering as a result of the Nickel and Transportation Partnership Account Capital Programs passed in 2003 and 2005 respectively. These projects are valued at over \$15.5 billion and preservation budgets have not increased to match this major new investment.



The need to invest in preservation extends across all modes and jurisdictions. Transportation providers across the state face similar investment needs and challenges related to roadways, ferries, airports, buses and shelters, port facilities, and other assets. Whether public agencies or private businesses, everyone in transportation is working to extend the life of their assets through the use of technology and targeted fixes to reduce or delay the need to build new infrastructure. In some cases, however, total replacement becomes inevitable.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Hood Canal Bridge replacement was completed, improving a vital connection between the Olympic Peninsula communities and the rest of Puget Sound
- The City of Spokane Valley used \$2.6 million of ARRA funds to resurface two miles of Sprague Avenue, the city’s major arterial. The project also upgraded the stormwater collection system and laid conduit for future interconnection of signals
- An Urban Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation to implement variable tolling on the SR 520 bridge will improve system performance and generate funds for bridge replacement
- The state used \$144 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funds to reduce a backlog of state and local road projects

Strategies

A. Focus on Preserving the Existing State and Local Transportation Network

The most critical preservation policy need is additional funding and new strategies to maintain the life, safety, and utility of the existing transportation assets. This preservation need extends to all modes and facilities across the state as many assets, especially bridges, are now vulnerable to damage or failure from earthquakes or other events. The state, cities, and counties all face similar preservation challenges and revenue needs. An added challenge for governments is the need to balance transportation funding with a broad spectrum of services. Where dedicated transportation funding exists, it is often insufficient to meet the preservation needs of the existing network.

NEW INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT & LOAN FUNDS

The Obama Administration has proposed an Infrastructure Bank that would pool tax dollars with private investment to finance major projects. The Bank would select projects using criteria reflecting regional or national significance, productivity, and economic benefit.

Since 1985, Washington has had its own successful infrastructure bank, the Public Works Assistance Account, a revolving loan fund that has financed billions of dollars of local infrastructure projects at below market interest rates. Regrettably, this Account and other state infrastructure programs have seen revenues decline due to the economic downturn and legislative budget solutions.

Grant and loan funds for transportation infrastructure are critical to ensure long-term economic success and competitiveness. The Governor and Legislature should encourage Congress to create a national Infrastructure Bank and here in Washington State, we should recapitalize existing infrastructure grant and loan funds.

Recommended Actions:

- Prioritize and dedicate an adequate stream of new transportation revenue to preserve and maintain the existing system
- Establish a long-term system reinvestment strategy that includes criteria to replace or remove infrastructure from service at the end of its life
- Use technology and research to reduce costs and improve and extend the life of infrastructure
- When adding new capacity, assess which mode will be most efficient



B. Explore New Funding Strategies for Public Transportation

Growing transit ridership provides many benefits, including reducing highway preservation costs, mitigating the need for roadway expansion, easing congestion, and reducing environmental impacts. However, across the state, transit districts are struggling financially due to their dependence on sales tax revenues, which have declined as a result of the recession. Transportation providers, including human service agencies, are grappling with the need to make service cuts and impose fare increases at a time of increasing demand.

Public transportation, whether bus, rail, ferries, or vanpools, requires subsidies in addition to fare revenues. Sound Transit, the state's only Regional Transit Authority, supplements a relatively diverse tax base with federal grants to provide commuter rail, light rail, and regional bus service in King, Pierce, and Snohomish Counties.

Private sector employers, including Microsoft and Seattle Children's Hospital, are increasingly taking a role in filling gaps in public transportation through employer-sponsored vanpools, private rideshares, and other services. Expanded public-private partnerships could help to leverage agency operating funds and expand routes.

Recommended Actions:

- Provide transit agencies with adequate revenue authority to preserve current rolling stock and infrastructure and maintain access to service, particularly where service is critical to managing demand on the state-owned highway system
- Work with local agencies to identify public transportation corridors of statewide significance. Designation would influence prioritization of the speed and reliability of transit service on designated corridors
- Explore value capture approaches to pay for public transportation corridor construction projects

JTC PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION STUDY

In 2010, the JTC commissioned a study to explore the state role in public transportation.

State's Interest and Role in Public Transportation:

- Integrating public transportation into regional and statewide planning
- Developing and promoting policies (and removing barriers) to encourage the use of all public transportation modes
- Assessing the adequacy of funding sources and developing new funding strategies to address statewide concerns (which may not be the same as the local concerns)
- Aligning reporting and data collection to provide a comprehensive and useful picture of transit
- Establishing a consistent set of measures to assess public transportation system performance



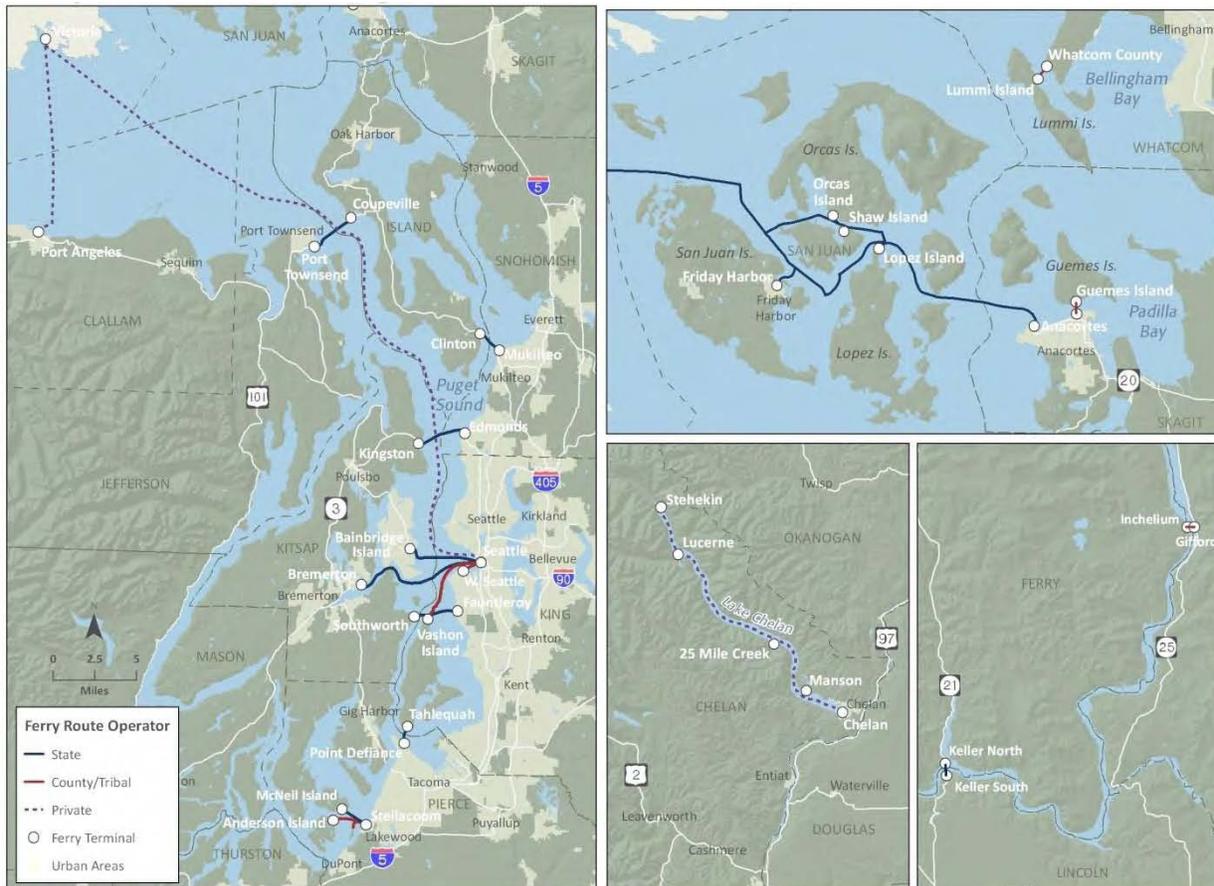
C. Invest in Preservation of Ferry Vessels and Terminal Infrastructure

Washington State Ferries (WSF), the largest ferry operator in the state, provides about 23 million passenger and vehicle trips per year across Puget Sound. WSDOT also operates the Keller Ferry, crossing Lake Roosevelt and connecting portions of SR 21. According to the 2009 *WSF Long-Range Plan*, the WSF fleet is among the oldest of any major ferry system, and significant recapitalization of aging vessels and facilities is needed. The Plan estimates needs of \$3.3 billion for preservation/acquisition of vessels and another \$1 billion for preservation of terminals for the period of 2009-2030.

Recommended Actions:

- Establish a funding source for capital preservation investment in the state and local ferry systems to effectively maintain existing levels of service quality
- Invest in vessels needed to meet service level objectives
- Support policies and fare structures that pay for the majority of operating and maintenance costs
- Move forward with replacement of the Keller Ferry and implement a fare to help fund its operations

Ferry Routes in Washington State



Source:
WSDOT and BERK & ASSOCIATES, 2010.

Notes:
The maps above show private, county, and WSDOT-operated ferry routes in Washington State, with the exceptions of the Ferry Wahkiakum on the Lower Columbia River operated by Wahkiakum County since 1962 and the Kitsap Transit passenger ferries between Port Orchard and Bremerton and Bremerton and Annapolis. In addition, there are other ferries in the state operated by private companies and tribes.

SAFETY

To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system (RCW 47.04.280)

Background and Policy Context

TARGET ZERO. Washington is a national leader in traffic safety and has achieved considerable success through development and implementation of the *Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Target Zero*.¹⁴ *Target Zero* is a comprehensive, data-driven plan to eliminate all traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries by the year 2030. The 2010 update was developed by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission and WSDOT in consultation with state and federal agencies, private and non-profit organizations, tribal nations, and local and regional agencies and organizations. The state is investing resources in projects and programs to address *Target Zero's* priority areas. These investments have yielded a high safety return on the public dollars invested.

However, challenges related to safety remain. While *Target Zero* concentrates on the road system, the state, along with counties, cities, and transit agencies focus on safety education and enforcement initiatives for waterways, aviation, transit, rail, and emergency preparedness.

RURAL ROAD SAFETY. Rural two-lane roads need greater focus regarding their capacity and condition. WSDOT data continues to confirm that these county and state rural roadways are the most dangerous in the state. Capital improvement options are limited for many reasons, not the least of which is the unavailability of sufficient funds. There are effective, less costly operational fixes that can enhance the level of safety on two-lane roads with known dangerous locations and segments.

Traffic Safety Data¹⁵ and Results: A Snapshot

- Traffic fatalities statewide have decreased from 637 in 1999 to 492 in 2009, a 23% decline
- The state's primary seat belt law, in combination with media campaigns and enforcement, has increased seat belt use to over 96%
- In 1971, Washington's roadway death rate was 4.1 deaths per 100 million miles of travel; the 2008 rate was 0.94 deaths per 100 million miles of travel, a 77% decrease. This is well below the 2008 national rate of 1.27 fatalities per 100 million miles of travel
- Data for 2006-08 shows an 11.2% decline in deaths on rural roads from the 2003-2005 period
- Sixty-four pedestrians were killed in 2008, up slightly from 62 in 2007, yet still lower than the 10-year average of 68 fatalities

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- In Southwest Washington, the I-5/SR-502 interchange project was completed in 2008, improving safety and access in and around north Clark County
- In Eastern Washington, several phases of the US 12 highway widening project were completed, reducing collisions in this corridor
- Benton County, concerned about traffic accidents and fatalities in the Roza agricultural area, developed and implemented a low-cost program of safety improvements, including oversized stop signs, "Stop Ahead" pavement markings, and rumble strips
- The Traffic Safety Commission has worked closely with tribal nations to increase traffic education and improve enforcement. The success of the Colville Traffic Safety Task Force, improving seat belt use to near the state average, is one of many efforts featured in the video *Protecting Our Future: Reducing Traffic Fatalities on Tribal Lands*

¹⁴ *Target Zero* meets the federal requirement for a Strategic Highway Safety Plan.

¹⁵ *Target Zero: Strategic Highway Safety Plan*, 2010.

Strategies

A. Foster Implementation of Comprehensive Safety Strategies Across All Jurisdictions and Transportation Modes

Target Zero establishes four priority levels based on the percentage of traffic fatalities associated with different factors. These priority areas help guide investment and policy decisions to achieve significant reductions in fatalities and serious injuries. Statewide, highly-visible safety campaigns that combine education and enforcement to raise public awareness and change behaviors that affect transportation safety should continue to be implemented.

Recommended Actions:

- Encourage agencies to consider the 4 E's of traffic safety (education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical services) when planning and implementing transportation safety projects
- Encourage other transportation modes to adopt a data-driven approach to prioritize and target areas that pose the greatest risks to safety
- Ensure public safety by periodically reviewing posted speed limits where areas have experienced changes in density, traffic volumes, or where safety concerns have been identified.
- Invest in sidewalks and other facilities to provide a safe transportation experience for pedestrians
- Invest in improved facilities for bicyclists, which may include separated bike lanes

TARGET ZERO PRIORITY AREAS

Priority One

Impaired Driving (48%)
Run off the Road Collision (41.9%)
Speeding (40.2%)

Priority Two

Young Drivers 16-25 years (37.9%)
Unrestrained Occupants (27.9%)
Distracted Drivers (24.7%)
Intersection Related (20.6%)

Priority Three

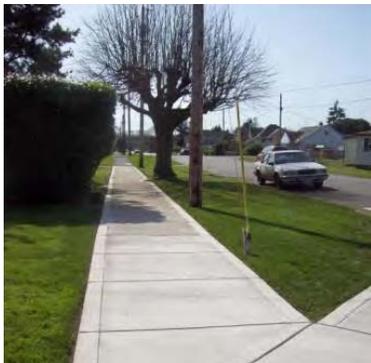
Unlicensed Drivers (20.4%)
Opposite Direction Multi-vehicle (18.7%)
Motorcyclists (13.0%)
Pedestrians (11.5%)
Heavy Trucks (11.5%)

Priority Four

Older Drivers (7.0%)
Drowsy Drivers (4.5%)
Bicyclists (1.7%)
Work Zone (1.2%)
Wildlife Involved (0.5%)
Vehicle - Train Involved (0.5%)
School-Bus Involved (0.1%)

Source:

Target Zero: *Strategic Highway Safety Plan, 2010*



INVESTMENT IN SIDEWALKS

From Omak to Spokane to Olympia, sidewalks are in demand. As increasing numbers of people walk to improve their health and to reduce their impact on the environment, sidewalks are essential for pedestrian safety. The City of Hoquiam created a Residential Sidewalk Partnership sending city crews to rebuild a sidewalk if the homeowner pays for the materials. Since 2008, Hoquiam has replaced over a mile of neighborhood sidewalks, at an average cost of \$500 per property - one-tenth of the usual cost of replacement.

B. Continue to Plan and Engineer Projects for Safety

Transportation providers at all levels should continue to prioritize safety in project-specific planning and design. Roads should be designed using best practices to prevent collisions, or reduce the severity if they do occur.

Recommended Actions:

- Accelerate efforts to reduce serious injuries and fatal crashes on the highest risk roads, including rural roads, by implementing low cost safety improvements that often combine engineering, enforcement, and public education
- Increase use of technology for all travel modes to reduce fatalities and serious injuries
- Use a risk-based assessment approach to continue to build and retrofit transportation facilities and services to withstand severe seismic events, flooding and other disasters
- Increase enforcement for running red lights, through use of cameras and other technology
- Continue to work with state agencies to explore ways to reduce airspace impacts due to wildlife and structural obstructions to critical airspace near airports

TACOMA NARROWS BRIDGE & THE SR 16 CORRIDOR

Since the Tacoma Narrows Bridge opened in July 2007, traffic has moved smoothly across the bridge and through the SR 16 corridor between Gig Harbor and Tacoma. Despite an anticipated reduction in crossings by those who want to avoid tolls, traffic volume is similar to pre-toll levels.

Successes Include:

Since opening, there have been no fatal or disabling injury collisions on the bridges. When incidents do occur, new roadway shoulders make it possible to clear incidents faster, reducing associated traffic backups.

The bridge and corridor improvements provide significant traffic-flow benefits. Average speeds during peak commute times are now double speeds before the new bridge opened.

C. Encourage Inter-Agency Collaboration and Cooperation on Emergency Preparedness and Response

Each year brings new awareness of vulnerabilities in our transportation system due to seismic activity, geological, or hydrologic conditions. Transportation agencies should explore ways to work with emergency management organizations on recovery planning and other evolving safety issues. Interoperable communications allow public safety agencies from all levels of government to coordinate efforts, collaborate on projects, and share resources to meet emergency response demands. Potential activities include assistance in prioritizing repairs for facilities; identifying alternate routes, when needed; and working with ports to develop transportation disaster plans.

Recommended Actions:

- Accelerate efforts for interagency and cross-jurisdictional disaster responses, such as communications systems that work with each other and agreed-to strategies and routes for evacuation of injured persons, and provision of emergency shelter, food, and medical supplies
- Continue to develop plans to facilitate the movement of goods and supplies in the event of a disaster that affects transportation infrastructure
- Enhance Regional Catastrophic Preparedness Planning by further defining and communicating regional approaches to coordination
- Recognize and support transit's role in emergency response efforts, such as evacuating large numbers of people or transporting those with special needs

MOBILITY

To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State (RCW 47.04.280)

Background and Policy Context

DEFINING MOBILITY. Mobility means different things to different people. Predictability in travel times and the ability to access needed goods and services, the investment of time and effort, and the expense and choice in how and when to travel or move goods are all linked to mobility. Mobility encompasses congestion reduction, as well as connectivity and access to other modes, access to information, and travel costs. Land use patterns and policies also have an impact on mobility options; greater density increases the feasibility of transit service. The ability to travel to jobs and other activities is an important contributor to quality of life and to the economic vitality of Washington's communities. These issues are important to people in both urban and rural areas and are overarching aspects of this goal.

PRICING CAN HELP MANAGE DEMAND. Congestion pricing improves mobility when demand outpaces capacity by assessing a charge to use the network during peak demand periods. The goal is to shift discretionary or peak period auto travel to other transportation modes or to off-peak periods. There are two types of congestion pricing in use in Washington:

Variable Tolling: Charges more for travel during peak periods than for other times on every lane. This strategy will be used on the floating bridge portions of SR 520.

Variably Priced Lanes: High occupancy toll (HOT) lanes charge vehicles that do not meet the minimum passenger requirements to use high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes. This strategy is being piloted on SR 167.

WSDOT's MOVING WASHINGTON PROGRAM specifically addresses mobility through three key strategies: strategically adding road capacity by building or altering lanes and roads, operating the existing system efficiently by taking steps to smooth traffic flows and to avoid and/or reduce situations that constrict roads, such as using congestion pricing, and providing choices that help manage transportation demand by promoting and sponsoring travel options for commuters (vanpools and telecommuting).

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Washington received \$782 million to improve high speed intercity passenger rail service (2010)
- On the Olympic Peninsula, the Olympic Discovery Trail, a non-motorized, multi-user shared pathway has been completed in the urbanized east end of Clallam County (2009)
- The first Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan to address the transportation needs of the elderly, people with disabilities, and low income populations in Clark, Klickitat and Skamania counties was adopted in 2007
- A pilot project for SR 167 HOT lanes, one of the first dynamically priced projects in the U.S., improves system efficiency while maintaining transit and HOV speed and reliability
- The Yakama Nation and People for People secured a Federal Transit Authority grant to begin rural transit service between Toppenish and White Swan (2007). The Pahto Public Passage has since added a second route, due to the success of the service
- I-5 HOV lane construction has increased system capacity and efficiency in this high demand corridor, reducing congestion at system chokepoints, and improving transit speed and reliability
- Community Transit launched Swift Bus Rapid Transit in November 2009. Now the most popular route in Community Transit's system, it has increased ridership on Highway 99 by more than 20%

Strategies

A. Support Mobility Options to Help Communities Meet the Public's Travel Needs

In the 2006-2008 period, 72% of Washington workers drove to work alone, 12% carpooled, 5% took public transportation, 5% used other means, and the remaining 5% worked at home.¹⁶ In dense, urban areas like Seattle, 13% of the workforce use public transportation, walk, or bicycle. Reliable transportation options that link home, school, work, and other destinations enable people who do not drive or choose not to drive to meet their needs without a car.

A key component of building transit markets and promoting alternatives to driving alone is a consistent emphasis on pedestrian and non-motorized safety, mobility, and access. When accompanied by land use policies that support compact, mixed-use communities, transit use, and increased walking and bicycling, these options can help meet environmental goals by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improve public health outcomes through increased physical activity.

Recommended Actions:

- Couple land use policy, siting decisions, demand management, and transportation needs to leverage the value of existing infrastructure investments and future transportation investments, such as:
 - Create incentives to concentrate jobs and housing close to transit hubs
 - Make corridor improvements holistically, including local multimodal street connectivity improvements that support bicycle, pedestrian, car, and truck travel to and from the corridor
 - Site selected government facilities, such as schools or social services offices, to be accessible by travel modes that meet the needs of the users
- Invest in and maximize the use and effectiveness of HOV lanes, HOT lanes, and transit lanes, to improve reliability of travel times. Coordinate with local and regional transit providers to understand operational needs
- Support alternatives to driving or driving alone, through promotion and sponsorship of efficient commuter travel options, including convenient bus service and incentives to carpool or vanpool or work from home and telecommute
- Develop and fund a strategy to maintain and improve connections from producers to distributors for freight and goods movement, regardless of the jurisdiction in which the improvement is needed
- Identify and improve gaps in inter-modal connectivity for freight movement (e.g. ship to rail or truck and air to truck)

MOVING WASHINGTON



Through Moving Washington, WSDOT hopes to create a balanced, efficient, and reliable transportation system to encourage economic vitality, improve personal mobility, and protect the environment.

Projects are underway to improve travel times, reduce collisions, increase commuter choices and insure reliable, efficient trips.



¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2006-2008. Numbers do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

B. Improve Connectivity to Facilitate Travel Across Modes and Communities



Better coordination between transportation providers is critical to ensure connectivity between modes, thereby improving the efficiency of the whole trip. For example, when bus or train schedules are not coordinated with ferry landings and departures, it adds time to the trip and passengers that might otherwise make the trip using transit continue to use their cars.

Addressing bottlenecks to relieve congestion is critical to ensuring the timely and reliable movement of people and goods. Private sector data providers are increasingly working with transportation agencies to address a range of mobility problems, including bus arrival times, traffic flow information, and real-time incident alerts.

Access, rather than congestion, is a greater transportation need for rural residents, who may be hours away from job sites, medical and social services, and higher education opportunities.

Recommended Actions:

- Encourage partnerships among the state, counties, cities, and transit to develop and implement strategies to manage and improve mobility within a corridor, such as the Urban Partnership Agreement between USDOT, WSDOT, King County, and the Puget Sound Regional Council
- The state, counties, and cities should collaborate on congestion relief where their facilities intersect
- Help local governments to solve congestion issues by focusing on ease of multimodal connections, such as connecting service areas and synchronizing schedules among different providers
- Continue to add capacity strategically for all modes, including public transportation, by completing the system improvements underway today, managing system demand, and operating the system efficiently
- Create additional separated grade crossings between trains and vehicles, where appropriate, to relieve congestion and improve access
- Integrate freight delivery into plans for livable communities

PULLMAN-MOSCOW CORRIDOR

This corridor is an important commute route between two university towns, Pullman (Washington State University) and Moscow (University of Idaho). The 8-mile corridor includes SR 270, a short-line railroad, and a trail.



Source:
City of Pullman, Parks and Recreation

The Bill Chipman Trail, a rail-to-trail investment completed in 1998, is a good example of public-private cooperation and multi-agency funding. The trail facilitates safe bicycle and other non-motorized transportation travel for hundreds of people each day.

Motorized traffic in this corridor now benefits from \$28.5 million of safety and capacity improvements completed by WSDOT in 2008.

C. Strategically Prepare to Meet the Needs of an Aging Population

By 2030, nearly 20% of Americans will be over the age of 65.¹⁷ In some Washington counties this age group may reach 40% of the population. One in five Americans age 65 and above does not drive.¹⁸ Consequently, as our population ages, many more people will require alternatives to driving alone. To make transit viable for a large population of aging adults will require policies that encourage levels of density to sustain ridership and provide sufficient fare revenue. At the same time, many older people will be unable to relocate to denser urban areas to access services and amenities and will need options that allow them to stay in their homes.



Statewide systems, similar to 511, could include special features for the elderly, such as assistance on reaching medical care or getting groceries. One challenge will be to provide education about available options and to increase the comfort level with those options.

Recommended Actions:

- Accommodate the needs of an aging population through universal design principles for all modes. For highways this includes larger font on signage, roadway markings, and lighting and design solutions. For transit and rail this includes easy-to-read schedules and terminal information and facilities designed with the elderly in mind
- Require regional coordination to efficiently and economically increase the productivity of elderly travel options

D. Support Transportation for Special Needs Populations

People need to travel to and from work and school, to shop, to visit friends and family, and to access medical care. As cars and fuel become more costly, the challenges of meeting these needs will increase for many people, putting related pressure on communities to meet the mobility needs of their population. Many low-income and disabled people, including retired members of the military, rely on transit to get around. The Americans with Disabilities Act requires curb-to-curb paratransit services for persons whose disabilities prevent use of accessible non-commuter, fixed bus route services. These services are intended to provide specialized public transportation service but are not intended to meet all the transportation needs of persons with disabilities.

Recommended Actions:

- Increase the use of small, on-demand transit vehicles, which may be more cost effective than large buses in many areas of the state
- Consider the needs of rural areas that currently lack transit, ride sharing, or vanpool options, by enhancing coordination opportunities with human service transportation, and possibly with school transportation providers
- Require regional coordination to efficiently and economically increase the productivity of travel options for people with disabilities
- Require transit agencies to provide educational opportunities to move people from paratransit services to public bus routes, where possible

¹⁷ Administration on Aging, *A Profile of Older Americans: 2009*. Available at: http://www.aoa.gov/AoARoot/Aging_Statistics/index.aspx

¹⁸ Linda Bailey, *Aging Americans: Stranded without Options*, Surface Transportation Policy Project, 2004. Available at: http://www.apta.com/resources/reportsandpublications/Documents/aging_stranded.pdf

ENVIRONMENT

To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment (RCW 47.04.280)

Background and Policy Context

The goal of Washington's transportation system is to move people and goods to support a strong economy, healthy communities, and a sustainable environment. However, maintaining and expanding transportation options can sometimes create conflicts with environmental and sustainability principles, resulting in a need for mitigation.

Washington State is still working to refine the approach and timing of its response to climate change, including the respective roles of the public sector, private sector, and individuals.



FOSTERING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES. Transportation plays an important role in supporting healthy communities. The way a community is designed and its proximity to amenities has an impact on transportation choices. Public health and environmental goals can be furthered by using public transportation, walking, or bicycling, especially for short trips.

INTEGRATING LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION. Infrastructure is an important determinant of land use choices. A continued focus on integrating land use and transportation decisions will improve the concentration of jobs and housing, reducing the need for some automobile trips, making public transportation more attractive, and leveraging existing infrastructure. New growth should be planned to maximize transportation choices. Public transportation services should be central to the development of new growth centers with sufficient density to support transit service.

MITIGATING IMPACTS TO THE ENVIRONMENT. Transportation investments and policies directly affect air and water quality, and many efforts are underway across the state to minimize and reduce impacts. Federal and state regulatory requirements to mitigate stormwater and other environmental impacts from transportation will continue to be a significant element of future transportation investments. For example, vegetation management practices along highways to reduce herbicide use, design of structural features such as infiltration ponds and wide grass swales, and regular maintenance to clear highways of sand, litter, and debris all help to control and manage the harmful effects of stormwater runoff.

ENSURING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY BY REDUCING EMISSIONS. Transportation currently accounts for 47% of the state greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. That share is projected to drop slightly by 2020, the first target date set by the Legislature for GHG reductions. Light duty vehicles (cars, pick-up trucks, sport utility vehicles, and vans) are estimated to generate about 70% of those emissions. Strategies to reduce on-road GHG emissions include changing land use development patterns to reduce transportation demand, implementing pricing strategies for vehicle and facility use, changing the technologies that power vehicles, and eliminating the need for some travel altogether. However, any significant reduction in emissions from the transportation sector will depend on collaborative and comprehensive actions by individuals, businesses, and regional and local governments.

Strategies

A. Transportation Investments Should Support Healthy Communities

Investments that support walking and bicycling for trips under two miles, which represent 40% of all trips taken in Washington State, should be encouraged. WSDOT's *State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan* is an award winning plan that identifies the potential for improved facilities to increase non-motorized transportation and support public health goals to increase physical activity. Land use decisions and community development affect the availability of non-motorized transportation options and the distance between destinations, which in turn affects the likelihood that people will walk or bike.

Recommended Actions:

- Promote “Complete Streets” and Safe Routes to Schools policies and implementation for arterials and collectors within urban growth areas, while being mindful of impacts on freight movement
- Continue to develop and promote Commute Trip Reduction programs to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and petroleum consumption
- Consider transportation demand management policies as a core element of state and regional transportation planning
- Promote bicycling and walking as viable transportation options and as a means to improve public health and maintain environmental quality by identifying and addressing multi-modal system gaps, such as sidewalk or trail connections

COMPLETE STREETS

Complete Streets policies are intended to improve safety and mobility for all users. Pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and bus riders of all ages and abilities are able to safely move along and across a “complete street.”

B. Manage The Transportation System To Foster Environmental Sustainability

Environmental impacts associated with transportation are particularly acute related to GHG production, water quality, and fish passage and wildlife barriers. Reducing transportation-related impacts is a function of improving transportation management and choices for roads, modes, fuel choices, and land use and transportation relationships.

Recommended Actions:

- Develop a funding source to help the state, counties, and cities manage stormwater runoff from streets, roads, and bridges, including collection and treatment from existing transportation facilities
- Reduce stormwater impacts on state waterways consistent with the Clean Water Act
- Implement a program statewide that allows purchase of credits in a mitigation bank or payment of mitigation fees to ensure the most efficient and effective mitigation of transportation project impacts on aquatic resources and habitat
- Couple land use policy, siting decisions, demand management, and transportation needs to leverage the value of existing and future transportation infrastructure investments



C. Accelerate Clean Transportation Options

The twin realities of climate change and foreign oil dependence mean that the world will need to transform its transportation systems and infrastructure. Alternative energy sources, including electricity, biofuels, and natural gas will power new technologies for transportation, but the consequences of new choices will need to be assessed to ensure that the solution does not create new problems. While it is difficult to predict which alternative transportation technologies will emerge as winners, an environment that adapts its capabilities for a wide range of options will improve its ability to respond. For example, the state's new electric highway infrastructure will enable electric vehicle drivers to travel the length of the state, from Canada to Oregon. These types of infrastructure investments also have economic benefits, creating jobs and spurring economic growth.



Recommended Actions:

- Make significant progress toward meeting statewide greenhouse gas reduction goals by developing and coordinating a mix of innovative transportation strategies, with a focus on alternative energy sources and technologies, while managing congestion through transportation demand management, land use policy and pricing, and providing transportation choices
- Lead the nation in providing smart charging infrastructure for plug-in vehicles and create incentives for the purchase and conversion of plug-in vehicles
- Partner with federal agencies, private sector and university researchers, and utility companies to develop energy efficient transportation systems that use advanced communication software and manufacturing techniques developed in our state

STATE GHG EMISSIONS REQUIREMENTS

- By 2020, reduce GHG emissions in Washington to 1990 levels
- By 2035, reduce GHG emissions to 25% below 1990 levels
- By 2050, Washington will do its part to reach global climate stabilization levels by reducing emissions to 50% below 1990 levels

Source:
RCW 70.235.020, RCW 42.330.370

GREENHOUSE GAS (GHG) REDUCTION STRATEGIES

The **Climate Action Team's Transportation Implementation Working Group** and the **Land Use and Climate Change Advisory Committee** 2008 reports identified strategies for GHG reduction in the transportation sector. Further review of these strategies by WSDOT and others, in response to **Executive Order 09-05**, statutory directives, and a federal grant, grouped the strategies in four categories:

Improving system efficiency. Strategies that smooth the flow of traffic and optimize fuel efficiency include ramp metering, incident response, signal synchronization, traveler information, travel management center operations, active traffic management, and roundabouts.

Vehicle technology. Strategies to improve vehicle efficiency and adopt lower carbon fuels are closely related. Vehicles powered by sources other than gas, or that can be utilized more efficiently, increase their fuel efficiency.

Improving fuels. Reducing the carbon content of fuels by instituting a low carbon fuel standard would reduce GHG emissions in the transportation sector. The Department of Ecology is evaluating whether a low carbon fuel standard should be adopted, examining the emission and economic effects of a 10% reduction in carbon intensity (as measured in carbon dioxide equivalent per unit of energy in the fuel), implemented over ten years.

Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Strategies include providing more options for making trips, building safe networks for bicycles and pedestrians, changing the way that basic services are accessed, and changing land use patterns.

STEWARDSHIP

To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system (RCW 47.04.280)

Background and Policy Context

Stewardship is about making wise management and investment choices for the future to ensure the system's continued safety, mobility, and connectivity. A key objective is to simultaneously preserve and maintain the existing system, while working to better manage it for optimum efficiency and effective movement of people and goods.

Stewardship encompasses accountability and performance measures, integration of land use and transportation policies, and protecting and preserving essential public facilities. Increasingly, technology is being employed to increase the efficiency of the existing system and pricing strategies are being explored to address congestion and improve the financial sustainability of the system.

RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- The Puget Sound's six transit agencies reduced demand on the highway system by operating the largest public vanpool system in the nation
- WSDOT launched a new electronic tolling program on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, and obtained initial authority for expanded tolling on other projects, subject to legislative approval
- In Yakima County, transit service has expanded into Selah and Union Gap. Following demonstration projects by Yakima Transit, both cities passed local sales tax measures to sustain the transit service

Strategies

A. Continue to Implement Performance Measures to Ensure Accountability

Performance measures are receiving increased attention at the state and federal levels, and WSDOT is already a national leader in using performance measurement to evaluate projects and system performance. While the need to establish targets and use performance measures to evaluate outcomes is widely accepted, there is disagreement about the next steps to design and implement a performance-based system for statewide transportation investments. Key questions include: how should the standards be set and who should set them?



Recommended Actions:

- Work with the Joint Transportation Committee, the Office of Financial Management, WSDOT, the County Road Administration Board, the Transportation Improvement Board, and other transportation partners to develop an implementable set of performance objectives for all state-funded transportation investments¹⁹
- Establish outcome expectations for new state and local transportation investments as part of a new transportation investment plan
- Encourage local jurisdictions to develop and improve performance measures for their facilities and transportation system services

¹⁹ WSDOT and others already track performance measures in the Gray Notebook and OFM Attainment Report. This strategy would build on the existing measures.

B. Leverage Available Technologies to Maximize Efficiency in the Transportation System

Using appropriate technologies to improve the efficiency of existing systems is critical, particularly when financial resources are scarce. Traffic management technologies can help relieve congestion and provide traveler information, which helps manage flow. Intelligent transportation systems (ITS) integrate advanced communications technologies into the transportation infrastructure, enabling variable speed limits to better manage traffic flow and providing drivers with real time traffic alerts and destination times by routes. Similarly, systems like NextGen use communication technology and navigation systems to improve the aviation system.



Recommended Actions:

- Continue to develop and implement ITS improvements, such as signal coordination, integrated traveler information, and customized scheduling and trip planner information
- Maintain and expand HOV and HOT lanes in major highway corridors, and optimize their speed and reliability performance
- Encourage transportation agencies to make data available to software application developers to develop and improve real time travel and scheduling information
- Complete implementation of Washington State Ferries' reservation system and implement variable pricing to help manage demand, spread peak vehicle traffic, improve asset utilization, and reduce wait times

C. Support Tolling as a User-Based Funding Mechanism

Throughout Washington's history, tolling has been used to fund construction of large-scale transportation projects. Tolling is a user-pay funding mechanism that generates revenues that can help pay for construction of new facilities and fund preservation and maintenance, increasing the financial sustainability of the system.

Recommended Actions:

- Use tolling, where appropriate, as a way to fund projects
- Maintain tolling on roadways and bridges after project completion to fund preservation, maintenance and traffic management
- Expand HOT lanes to major highway corridors, where appropriate, to make more efficient use of highway capacity
- Use pricing as a tool to manage the use of scarce transportation resources and to provide funding for increased travel choices



D. Review Regulations That Require the Same Standard and Performance Level for All Transportation Improvements

Given the constrained funding environment, some communities question the need for uniform standards. New predictive tools from the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and the Federal Highway Administration can help advance this discussion, along with a variance process to allow exceptions to the regulations that could better tailor solutions to specific facilities and communities, realizing potential cost savings at the same time.

Recommended Actions:

- Review and offer recommendations for acceptable levels of preservation and maintenance for city streets and county roads; use available and recognized performance measures to assess network performance and new investment needs²⁰
- Explore options for applying differential design criteria based on community and roadway characteristics and accommodation of all users within the right of way

E. Strengthen the Integration Between Land Use and Transportation Decision-making

Responsibility for land use planning is spread widely among hundreds of local jurisdictions with different priorities, making it difficult to harmonize all the divergent plans in a region. Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have a major planning and coordination function, and they adopt regional plans to which local plans are expected to conform. Local transportation agencies need to work with local government planning departments in the design, planning, and permitting of development to ensure that the linkages between land use and transportation planning are well explored and connected.

State law requires appropriate infrastructure to be provided at the time of new development and that new development not degrade local service standards for current residents. This requirement is called “concurrency.”

Recommended Actions:

- Improve integration of transportation and land use planning, such as supporting infill and redevelopment in transit-supported corridors, with the goal of reducing vehicle miles traveled and GHG
- Strengthen the authority of RTPOs to certify the transportation and land use elements of comprehensive plans and development regulations
- The Legislature should evaluate and reconsider the concurrency requirement to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the state and local governments and expand it to include highways of statewide significance²¹
- Require use of multi-modal concurrency approaches, where possible, to promote density and reduce the development costs of infrastructure to the public
- Limit access to state highways to improve traffic flow and safety. Strategies to accomplish this may include closing and consolidating multiple access points in urbanized areas, and requiring access through frontage roads in urbanizing and rural areas

²⁰ WSDOT, cities, and counties have standards for preservation and maintenance and some existing performance measures that could be used in implementing this strategy.

²¹ In 2006, two studies were completed on this issue *The GMA Concurrency Goal and the State Transportation System* and *Options for Making Concurrency More Multimodal*.

F. Address Tribal Transportation Needs

Washington's tribal governments have unique and complex transportation issues. Reservation lands are often in rural areas, far from job centers and social services, and thus need public transportation services. Tribal enterprises, including destination resorts, employ significant numbers of tribal and non-tribal workers generating traffic and requiring parking. Collaboration between local governments and tribal governments has solved some transportation needs; however, many remain.

State and federal transportation funding both pose challenges. Transportation funding from the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) depends on the Indian Reservation Road inventory done by each tribe.

Recommended Actions:

- An accurate inventory of Indian Reservation Roads is essential for tribal road funding. In the near-term, the Commission recommends that the state and federal governments assist tribes with this inventory. In the long-term, Congress could evaluate the current approach by the BIA and Federal Lands Highways to tribal transportation funding and consider whether this task should be reassigned within the USDOT
- Funding processes for transportation improvements on or connected to tribal lands are too numerous and complex. Simplification of federal and state funding for tribal transportation needs must be a priority



4. CONCLUSION

As noted at the start of WTP 2030, we are in a period of change with significant challenges related to preservation and the ability to raise sufficient revenues to maintain our existing transportation system. A growing population and evolving needs necessitate continued investment in the whole system. Every government and business engaged in transportation should seize the present opportunity to make transportation investments that will position Washington for success in the next twenty years and beyond. Taking action to preserve and improve the transportation system has direct immediate and long-term economic benefits, in the form of job creation, competitive freight movement, and productivity. Failure to act not only threatens our economy, but our quality of life.

This plan presents a range of strategies and actions that the Commission believes will position Washington for future growth and prosperity. Implementation of WTP 2030 will require the support of state and local governments, businesses and institutions, and individuals.

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