



Washington Transportation Plan 2035



Executive Summary

Public Review Draft

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Purpose of the WTP 2035 Update

The Washington Transportation Plan 2035 (WTP 2035) informs statewide transportation policy across different travel modes and jurisdictions. It provides an overview of Washington’s entire transportation system and proposes strategies and actions that would preserve and expand the system. WTP 2035 serves to update WTP 2030, the previous statewide plan developed by the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC), and reflects changes that have occurred over the past several years. WTP 2035 draws from a range of existing policy plans and seeks to align with and support broader state policy objectives in areas including the environment, economy, and energy.



Critical Messages for Decision-Makers

Transportation professionals from state and local agencies and stakeholders representing a broad cross-section of Washington's public and private sector organizations have provided a range of ideas to help shape this public review draft of WTP 2035. A Steering Committee, composed of a Transportation Commissioner, a Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) executive, and a person representing the Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) across the state, met frequently to process this input and direct development of the Draft Plan. Through this year-long process, a few key messages emerged as particularly important for the state's decision-makers to consider:

- Washington's future economic vitality and quality of life depend on a multimodal transportation system that is safe and well-maintained, and operates efficiently to serve a growing economy and population. An integrated and coordinated planning process supported by best management practices is necessary to meet these demands, whether moving harvest from farm to market on roads, waterways, rails and air, or getting children safely between school and home using sidewalks, bicycles and buses.
- Establishing a more defined role for the State in multimodal transportation, including air, public transportation, and special needs transportation is important for Washington communities across the state. Service providers must have the financial resources and authority to ensure they can deliver efficient services that meet the unique needs of their respective areas.
- Statewide, there is an identifiable need for secure, sustainable, long-term sources of funding for transportation. Continuing the funding status quo will result in declining condition and performance of Washington's transportation system, due to inadequate maintenance and preservation, as well as failure to address growing demand.

State of the Transportation System

The following trends reflect the most important factors affecting the status and trajectory of Washington's transportation system, and provide context for recommended actions in WTP 2035.

- **Demographic changes:** Washington's population is aging as well as growing, raising new challenges for addressing the different needs of an older generation of transportation system users.
- **Changing preferences:** While the majority of Washington's commuters continue to drive alone, individuals on average are driving slightly fewer miles and consuming less motor fuel. In the state's urban areas, an increasing number of people are biking, walking, and using public transportation for commuting and other trips.
- **Aging infrastructure:** Overall, Washington's roadways experienced moderate declines in condition since WTP 2030. Across all travel modes, maintenance and preservation needs exceed available transportation revenues. There is a growing backlog of past-due paving and bridge rehabilitation, as well as equipment repair and replacement needs.
- **Shifts in state funding sources:** The state motor fuel tax remains the single largest source of transportation funding in Washington State. Revenue from this source will continue to lose value over time because of inflation, and is vulnerable to possible decreases in total fuel consumption in the long run. Tolling now generates a larger portion of state project financing than it has in the past.
- **Increasing reliance on local funding:** Local governments are shouldering an increasing proportion of transportation expenditures. Local governments rely more heavily than ever on property, sales, and other fees or taxes to meet transportation needs.



- **Growth in freight:** The critical role of freight and ports in the Washington economy is well-understood. Freight tonnage has increased post-recession, and as operators seek to stretch the capacity of a range of modes, including roadways, waterways, rail, and air, freight system maintenance and expansion needs are growing.
- **Environmental protection:** Policy-makers and citizens have reaffirmed the importance of reducing environmental impacts from transportation, and making the transportation sector more energy efficient.
- **Technology:** Rapid technological innovations in communications, manufacturing, energy and other sectors have a growing and ever-shifting impact on both transportation demand and supply. There are promising opportunities to extract more capacity from the existing transportation system, but also great uncertainty for system planners, managers, and operators.

Policy Goals and Emerging Themes

To address these challenging trends, WTP 2035 contains general strategies and more specific actions to help achieve the state's statutory policy goals.¹ While the policy goals remain unchanged from 2010, several important themes have emerged through the planning and stakeholder outreach process which should guide policy-makers in implementation of WTP 2035 draft recommendations. The existing six policy goals and the more recent emerging themes are:

Economic Vitality: *To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.*

- Support economic vitality through more efficient freight and passenger mobility and accessibility.
- Work to maintain and expand flight offerings from smaller commercial airports.

Preservation: *To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services.*

- Establish a higher priority for maintenance and preservation of transportation system components.
- Develop sustainable funding sources that allow a more cost-effective, proactive approach to system maintenance, preservation and eventual rehabilitation or replacement of critical infrastructure including transit vehicles and ferries.

Safety: *To provide for and improve the safety performance and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.*

- Improve safety and security for all transportation modes and users on the complete system including state, local and tribal infrastructure.



¹ RCW 47.04.280.

- Enhance transportation security through identifying and maintaining redundant critical routes.

Mobility: *To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State.*

- Anticipate and work to address the implications for changing travel patterns and preferences to accommodate Washington's changing demographic picture.
- Prepare for impacts and benefits of constantly evolving technology through more rapid adoption of innovative technologies, review and revision of system plans every few years, direct support for applied research, and development of cost-effective proposals to address future transportation needs
- Reduce obstacles to multimodal travel and increase the number of realistic travel choices for any given trip

Environment: *To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.*

- Reduce transportation system's impacts on the state's natural environment and decrease associated carbon-based greenhouse gas emissions.
- Improve the energy efficiency of the entire transportation sector.

Stewardship: *To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.*

- Integrate land use policy and transportation planning, including clear linkages between WTP 2035 and the goals of the state's Growth Management Act.
- Extend mobility and accessibility to all user groups, and distribute costs more equitably.

These themes are discussed more fully in the full draft WTP 2035 , and are answered with a range of both previous and potential strategies and actions.

Delivering Results

Throughout the stakeholder outreach process there were repeated suggestions for improving the financial health of Washington's transportation system. The concerns expressed addressed nearly every mode of transportation – highways, local roads, rail and bus transportation, non-motorized transportation, ferries, aviation, freight railroads and waterways – and every jurisdictional level. Two parallel themes emerged, both of which must be recognized as essential to achieving this desired sustainable financial health.

Efficiencies and Reforms

Washington should expand the accountability of transportation service providers by linking agency budgets to performance targets, and placing continued emphasis on improved efficiency in the planning, delivery and operation of passenger and freight transportation systems and services. Through improved accountability for expenditures, performance management, practical design methods, and technology-based efficiency gains, all transportation partners need to seek to extract the maximum possible benefit from existing funding sources and levels.



Revenue Enhancements

Even with improved efficiency and effectiveness of transportation-related expenditures, there remains a real need to address challenges that include an aging infrastructure, future increases in travel demand to support a growing population and economy, uncertainty of federal funding, decreases in the real purchasing power of gasoline tax revenues, and potential future decline in proceeds from the gas tax as fuel economy continues to improve. The state should consider a range of options for enhancing the variety and size of alternative revenue sources, as well as innovative financing mechanisms to increase the leverage of available funds. WTP 2035 assesses the current status and future outlook for Washington's transportation funding, readopts the WTP 2030 funding recommendations and highlights several additional funding options.

Next Steps

After releasing the draft WTP 2035 for public review, the Commission will host a series of public meetings throughout the state to gather public comment on the Plan's recommendations. Comments also can be made on-line through www.wtp2035.com, by writing to TransC@wstc.wa.gov, or by mail. A revised and final version of the Plan, with recommendations for implementation and monitoring of progress on policy goals, will be submitted to the Governor and the Legislature by January 2015.

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