Washington State Transportation Commission

DRAFT

Washington Transportation Plan

Vision 2050: Building the Future We Want, Together

Contents

Preface

The Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) Vision 2050 is a policy plan for Washington State that is designed to be operationalized and implemented by transportation agencies and transportation service providers across the state. The Transportation Commission has served to facilitate a planning dialogue, engaging the public and transportation providers to develop a long-term plan that supports the advancement of shared statewide priorities.

Today's Plan Creates Our Tomorrow

Supporting Quality of Life

Transportation is not just infrastructure. It is a public service that directly shapes our quality of life. WTP Vision 2050 is designed to guide efforts that improve the everyday lives of people across the state. A safe, accessible, and resilient transportation system enables more than just mobility, it supports vibrant communities, economic opportunity, and environmental stewardship.

Be Intentional

With rapid population growth, aging infrastructure, and increasing demands on public resources, it is more important than ever that Washington has a clear and unified transportation strategy. Through extensive listening sessions and ongoing partnerships, Vision 2050 serves as the statewide roadmap, identifying shared strategies to collaboratively address climate and resilience challenges and foster innovation in support of improved efficiencies, increased safety, and enhanced mobility. By keeping WTP Vision 2050 up to date through changing times, we are able to align efforts and maintain a strategic path forward.

Working Together Today & Everyday

Turning vision into action demands active and ongoing coordination across sectors, levels of government, and communities. WTP Vision 2050 is designed to guide the efforts of transportation agencies and service providers to align their policies, investments, and priorities. To implement this plan we must break down silos and foster stronger partnerships that lead to integrated solutions. Whether through regional corridor planning, smart infrastructure technologies, or new funding collaborations, the tools are in our hands.

The Future Starts Today!

The urgency in this moment cannot be overstated. Washington is at a turning point, facing challenges that will only intensify with time. Decisions made today about where we invest, how we build, and who we serve will shape the trajectory of our communities for decades. WTP Vision 2050 is not just a long-term vision. It is a call to action. Achieving our goals will require taking the long-view, sustained legislative leadership, and clear policy alignment. Our future mobility, economic vitality, and community wellbeing depend on the steps we take now.

Building The Future We Want

Washington state's transportation system is continually evolving as investments are made and projects are delivered at all levels of government. But how do we ensure we are collectively moving towards shared goals? We coordinate, communicate, collaborate, and plan together. The Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) serves as the blueprint, establishing a policy framework and shared vision that supports the transportation priorities in state law.

So, what we are building for? By 2050, we can expect roughly 2 million new neighbors, the equivalent of adding two more Seattle's to Washington state. Though much of the growth will be centered on the Interstate 5 corridor, communities across the state will feel the impact. By 2044, it is estimated we will need over a million new housing units, and 400,000 of these will need to be affordable to lower-income households. To support this growth and development, we must have a safe, connected, and resilient transportation system and use the following long-term vision as our northern star:

WTP VISION 2050

By 2050, Washington's transportation system is sustainably funded, seamlessly integrated, and built on a foundation of partnerships across all jurisdictions. It serves economic growth while meeting the urgent demands of climate and resilience– promoting public health and improving mobility and innovation to enhance the quality of life for all Washingtonians, now and for generations to come.

Complex Problems Require Big Ideas

WTP Vision 2050 unifies us and charts a collective path forward ensuring we stay on course toward a transportation system that works for our today and tomorrow. This plan sets forth a roadmap to achieve this vision, addressing pressing challenges and working to create a future that is safer, more connected, resilient, and prosperous. It includes recommended strategies that align with state policy goals supported by four core tenets:

A. Working towards a Clean Transportation Future

B. Harnessing Technology To Move Us

C. Expanding Public Private Partnerships

D. Recognizing We Are In It Together

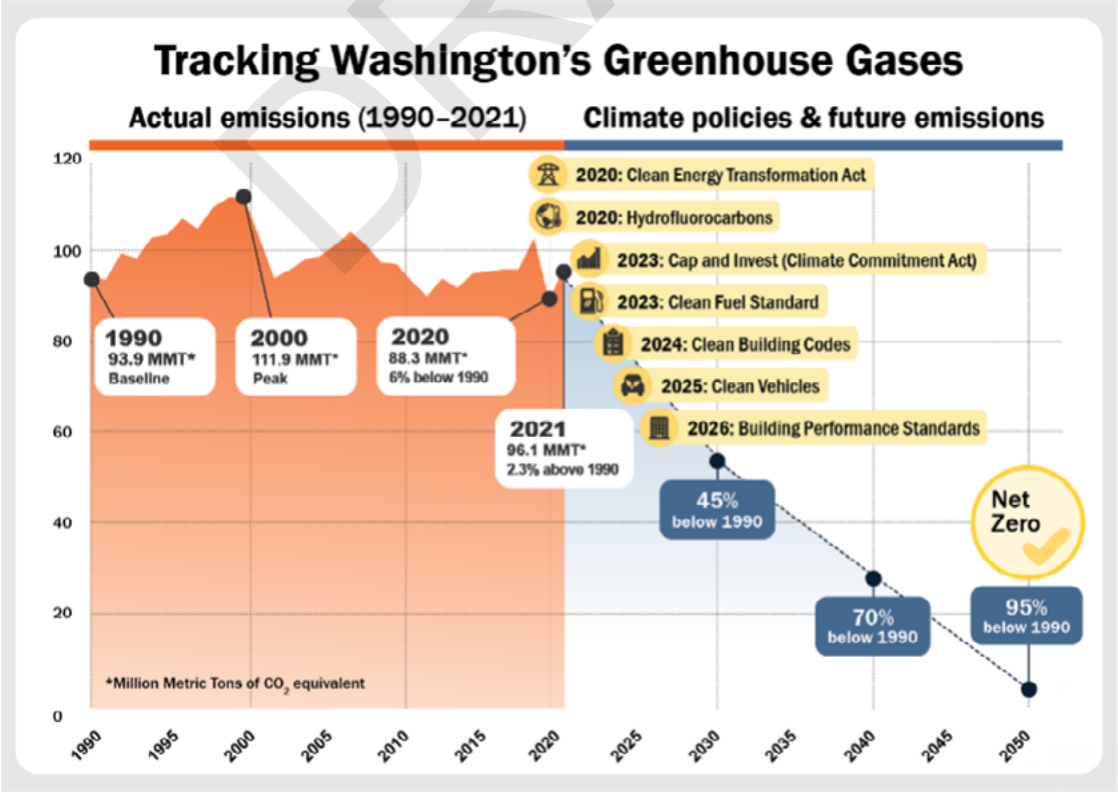
A. Working Towards A Clean Transportation Future

Investments in renewable energy sources and advancing clean, sustainable energy must grow across all jurisdictions to achieve current mandates. It will take partnership with private sector industry to meet our needs, like building alternative fuel infrastructure to support the diversified needs of the traveling public. Fleets must be incentivized to adopt and deploy zero-emission vehicles. Transit systems, whether composed of ferries, buses, or trains, must also be powered by renewable energy to achieve our statewide goals. WTP Vision 2050 builds on recent statewide efforts, such as the State Energy Strategy and Climate Resiliency Strategy, which lay out concrete steps for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector.

The transportation sector accounts for nearly 40% of Washington state's greenhouse gas emissions. Through collective action, we must reduce emissions by 95% by 2050 and this plan builds on the strong foundation of work the state has undertaken to meet this goal. Prioritizing projects with wide-reaching benefits, like reducing emissions and restoring natural ecosystems, not only improves public health but also strengthens the state's defenses against climate threats, such as floods and landslides. A renewed focus on maintaining and upgrading our existing system with the integration of resilience planning and new technology ensures that Washington state is better prepared for emergencies and advancing toward a more environmentally and economically sustainable future.

By working together to reduce emissions, advance technology, and expand access to sustainable mobility, we can collectively shape a future that meets the needs of all Washingtonians and delivers on our climate and equity commitments.

By 2050, Washington state will reduce overall emissions of greenhouse gases in the state to 95% below 1990 levels (RCW 70A.45.020).



Source: WA State Department of Ecology

B. Harnessing Technology To Move Us

Technology is not an end but a means. It is a powerful tool to achieve meaningful outcomes. Innovations in data, automation, and transportation technologies hold immense potential for increasing safety, reducing emissions, and enhancing mobility. To fully realize these benefits, collaboration between the public and private sectors is essential for making key investments in infrastructure to enable and support the advancement of tech tools.

To meet current law targets of reducing vehicle miles traveled by 50% by 2050, we will need transit systems that are centered on providing more flexible, on-demand service that works more to meet riders where they are and where they need to go. Technology can help deliver services to meet real-time rider demands, utilizing smaller vehicles that enable flexible and nimble access to riders in all types of locations. Technology must also support seamless and simple travel on transit between cities across the state, whether in urban, suburban, or rural areas to create an interconnected network that provides efficient and timely travel. With 20% of commuters in Washington state expected to rely on public transportation by 2050, it will be imperative to enable travelers to connect and move within modes conveniently and seamlessly. This will increase usage, reduce congestion, and support the availability of affordable, efficient and sustainable mobility options.

C. Expanding Public Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships (P3s) are proving to be a powerful catalyst for economic development. These partnerships are not only creating jobs and attracting investment, but they're also demonstrating how strategic collaboration can align transportation infrastructure with long-term economic goals. In areas like the West Plains, located just west of Spokane, public and private entities are working together to unlock the region's full potential.

One notable example is the collaborative effort between the State of Washington, Spokane County, the City of Spokane, and private companies such as Amazon, Selkirk Pharma, and Spokane International Airport. These partnerships have supported the development of key transportation infrastructure, such as the Geiger Boulevard interchange and improvements to U.S. Highway 2, which have significantly enhanced access to industrial and logistics facilities in the area. These upgrades not only improve freight mobility but also enable employers to more efficiently connect with national and global markets. The aerospace industry, long a cornerstone of Washington's economy, is also benefiting from this strategic focus.

These efforts embody the goals of WTP Vision 2050, using infrastructure investments not just to move people and goods, but to build equitable, thriving local economies. The West Plains is a model of how regional planning, when done in partnership with the private sector, can transform underutilized land into an engine of innovation, sustainability, and shared prosperity.

D. Recognizing We Are In It Together

An important step toward achieving WTP Vision 2050 is the development of new tools and incentives that promote true cross-sector and cross-jurisdiction collaboration. Competitive grant programs that prioritize multi-jurisdictional partnerships and co-funded corridor plans are essential. These programs can incentivize innovation by aligning transportation infrastructure with land use goals, such as housing and transit incentives that reduce parking requirements or allow for greater density in areas served by high-capacity transit. Shared data platforms and interagency performance targets will help track progress and ensure accountability across all levels of government, turning collaboration from a concept into a measurable reality and leading us to a financially sustainable system that ensures funding allocations match our shared investment priorities.

State Policy Goals Drive Our Future

Navigating Vision 2050

To guide the development of Washington's transportation system, state law outlines six statutory transportation policy goals that serve as the foundation for long-term planning and investment. These goals serve as the framework for this plan, helping to align decisions and actions across agencies, jurisdictions, and partners.

State Policy Goals

Preservation: To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services, including the state ferry system.

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

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

Mobility: To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility.

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

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

As you read on, note that WTP Vision 2050 presents objectives and strategies that support our state's six transportation policy goals. The objectives are set forth to bring specific focus to what we need to aim for to achieve the statutory policy goal. And the strategies are set forth to bring focus to how we can achieve the objectives and ultimately, the policy goals.

Three priority areas bring focus to this plan by nesting the six statutory policy goals withing them. The priority areas, and policy goals nested within them, are as follows:

Priority Area: Maintain Critical Transportation Assets. Washington state must work to adequately fund the preservation and maintenance of our essential transportation infrastructure, including roadways, bridges, railways, and transit assets, to ensure safety, reliability, and long-term efficacy of the transportation system.

State Policy Goals: Preservation & Stewardship

Priority Area: Develop Safe and Connected Communities. Washington state communities must be made safe and well-connected by prioritizing transportation infrastructure that enhances mobility, accessibility, and safety. We must build and maintain transportation systems that minimize collisions and provide equitable access to all Washingtonians.

State Policy Goals: Safety & Mobility

Priority Area: Establish Resilient and Reliable Systems. Washington State's transportation system must be capable of responding and adapting to increasingly frequent and severe weather events. Disruptions to travelers and freight routes must be minimized and delays, increased costs, and potential shortages associated with prolonged disruptions, reduced.

State Policy Goals: Economic Vitality & Environment

Turning Policy into Action

Priority Area:

Maintain Critical Transportation Assets

Washington state's transportation network is a vital component of its economy, supporting industries ranging from agriculture to technology. The 2025–2028 Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), a collection of state, regional, and locally sponsored projects, allocates $4.6 billion in federal funds to approximately 1,180 projects statewide. It focuses an increasing portion of resources on preservation to extend the lifespan of transportation assets; maintenance to address more routine repairs and prevent escalation in preservation needs; and stewardship to ensure longevity and sustainability of the transportation system through innovation, partnerships, and creative problem solving. This indicates a commitment across all transportation providers to preserve and maintain critical assets and underscores the importance placed statewide on ensuring safety, efficiency, and economic vitality.

State Policy Goal: Preservation

To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services, including the state ferry system

The transportation system is aging and in critical need of maintenance and enhancements. The transportation system is considered one of the most important assets in the state. Yet much of it was constructed during the period after World War II and into the 1960s, coinciding with the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 and the subsequent expansion of the Interstate Highway System. It is imperative that Washington invests the necessary resources to both operate and maintain the system on an on-going basis, while at the same time upgrading or replacing failing infrastructure and prioritizing projects that have lower costs to maintain over time.

The average age of the 3,412 bridges that WSDOT maintains is 51 years, and almost 10% of the bridges are over 80 years old.

In addition, counties and cities maintain over 6,000 bridges, about half of which are either poor or fair condition.

Objectives

- **Meet Preservation Needs First:** Make preservation and asset management of the existing state and local transportation network a primary priority and actively work to reduce the backlog of infrastructure maintenance before building major new highway and road capacity.
- **Bring Down Average Lifecycle Costs:** Promote optimal and systemic asset management strategies that keep life-cycle costs as low as possible.
- **Reduce Barriers to Implement Preservation Projects:** Reduce barriers in permitting, partnership, and increase funding for transportation agencies to deliver preservation projects more expeditiously and efficiently.

Strategies

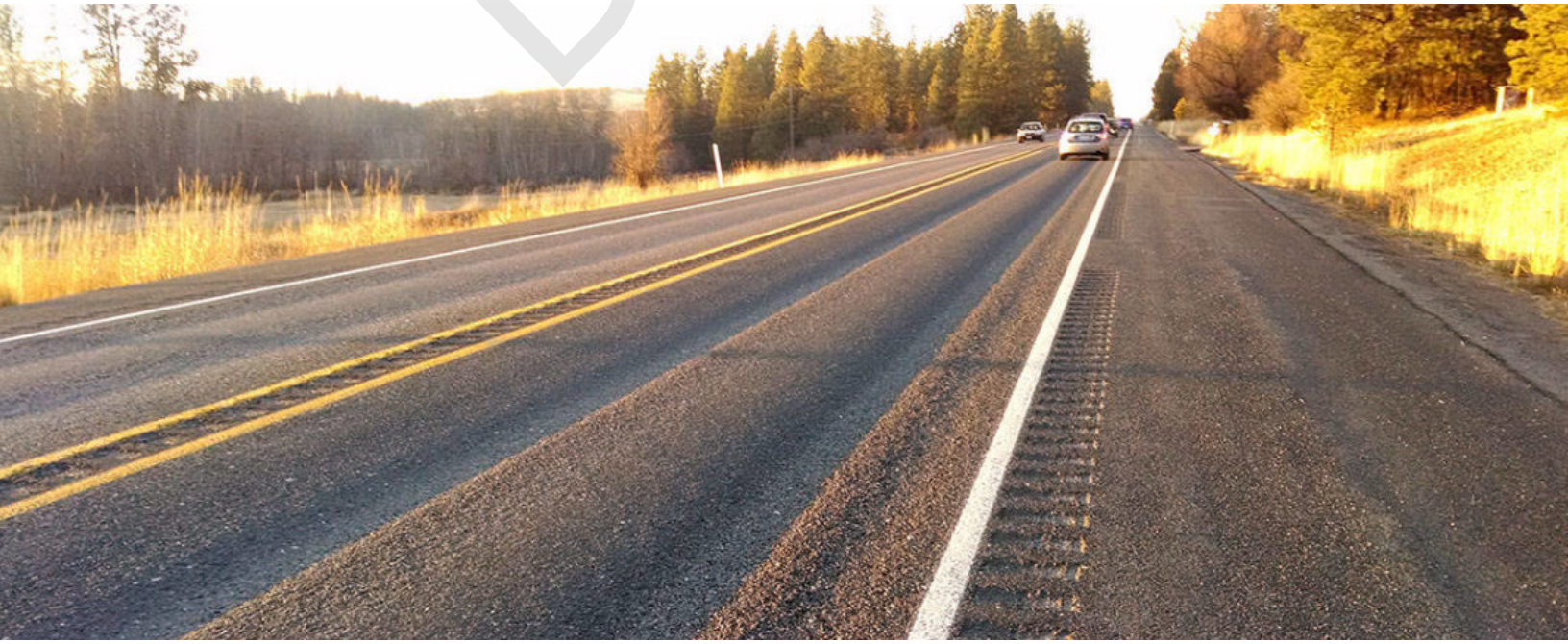
- **Ensure that funding levels for preservation and maintenance are adequate for meeting state, regional, and local targets, to address existing needs before building new capacity.** Ensuring there is adequate funding available for preservation and maintenance sets a "fix-it-first" approach for roads, bridges, and other transportation facilities, assuring facilities are kept in good repair, extending their lifespan and reducing the need for more costly replacements in the future. . WSDOT estimates that the current funding available for preservation is only 40% of their need and would need an additional $3 billion over the next 10 years. While the state does have established preservation targets, not all jurisdictions have the necessary data and resources to track preservation needs and determine targets. Therefore, state, regional, and local agencies will need to work together to establish shared preservation targets and associated funding needs.

- **Explore expansion of the federal fund exchange program to enable local agencies to swap federal funding for state funding on local projects where it is possible to improve project delivery efficiency and cost-effectiveness, including maintenance and preservation projects.** Washington state has piloted federal fund exchanges -- voluntary programs that allow local public agencies to trade their federal transportation funds, including both highway and modal funding, for state transportation dollars. The federal funding can then be applied to state administered projects that already have federal dollars and associated reporting requirements. The administrative and reporting burdens tied to federal funding can sometimes make it a less-efficient option for local transportation projects, with the added costs potentially outweighing the benefits, especially for smaller initiatives. Allowing for use of more familiar and less onerous funding programs can also lead to cost savings by tailoring funding sources to the specific requirements of local projects, especially for smaller maintenance and preservation efforts that might be less suited to federal funding guidelines.

- **Prohibit the use of studded snow tires on public roadways to avoid an estimated $30 million in damage to Washington's roadways annually.** While studded tires provide enhanced traction in icy conditions, they cause significant wear and tear on road surfaces, leading to increased maintenance costs for taxpayers. The availability of effective alternative traction devices, such as studless winter tires and chains, offers comparable safety without the detrimental impact on pavement. The current fee on studded tires of $5 has generated an average of $315,000 annually over the past five years, which is a fraction of the damage the tires cause to Washington state's roadways.
- **Evaluate and apply emerging technology to support real-time monitoring, predict system needs, and avoid failures.** Real-time monitoring systems can provide early warnings of potential problems, enabling timely responses and preventing costly emergency repairs or closures. Analyzing historical maintenance records and sensor data can help predict when infrastructure components are likely to fail, allowing for proactive maintenance interventions before critical issues arise. This data-driven approach to asset management enhances safety, improves efficiency, and maximizes the lifespan of Washington's transportation infrastructure
- **Increase the efficiency of permitting lower-impact projects, including those focused on rehabilitation and preservation, through pre-approved, programmatic environmental assessments and the use of digital tools for data collection and analysis.** Pre-approved environmental assessments for common project types can expedite reviews, while digital tools can improve the accuracy and speed of data gathering and analysis required for permit applications. Expanding the list of "Categorical Exemptions" for the State's Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) for rehabilitation projects can reduce costs and speed up preservation efforts.

Technology Spotlight:

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Data Analytics, and Predictive Maintenance. Data-driven technologies are transforming maintenance practices. Sensors embedded in roads and bridges generate real-time data that can be analyzed using AI to predict maintenance needs before they become critical. The Federal Highway Administration estimates that predictive maintenance could reduce road repair costs by up to 30%, while also extending the lifespan of infrastructure.



State Policy Goal: Stewardship

To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, resilience, and efficiency of the transportation system

We must face the reality that the needs of Washington state's robust transportation network consistently outpace available funding. Strategic investment demands a long-term perspective. This means not only addressing immediate maintenance needs, like bridge repairs and road resurfacing, but also embracing new approaches that help inform and anticipate future demands and unforeseen challenges.

Objectives

- **Use Data to Inform Investment Decisions:** Leverage a centralized performance measurement system to align investments with desired outcomes, prioritizing cost-effective solutions that enhance safety and system preservation.
- **Enhance Collaboration and Partnerships:** Prioritize partnerships between jurisdictions and sectors to increase collaboration between state, local, and regional agencies, as well as public-private partnerships to deliver projects and services more efficiently including co-funded corridor plans, housing and transit alignment incentives, shared data platforms, and interagency performance targets.
- **Ensure Transportation Investments Support Goals:** Improve integrated transportation and land use decision-making through targeted and strategic mobility and community resilience investments based on shared data platforms and performance management systems.

Strategies

- **Expand and streamline collaboration and partnerships between the state and regional planning organizations for infrastructure planning, and implementation, in order to gain efficiency and strengthen community resilience statewide.** Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations possess valuable local knowledge and are directly connected to community needs, making them essential partners in developing effective transportation solutions. By expanding collaboration and partnerships with regional governments, we can strengthen and align investments with local and regional priorities and streamline project delivery. This collaborative approach also promotes shared ownership of the system and enhances the ability to address unique local challenges, ultimately contributing to a more resilient statewide transportation system.

Strategies Continued

- **In support of advancing strategic investment decision-making, create a centralized transportation performance measurement and reporting system that provides regular status updates on progress related to infrastructure and service delivery.** A comprehensive system that tracks and reports key performance indicators across various transportation jurisdictions, modes and projects will provide increased transparency and accountability and enable identification of opportunities to make improvements and adjustments. This commitment to data-driven decision-making will lead to more efficient and effective use of transportation funds and better outcomes for Washington state communities. This effort would build upon current systems, such as WSDOT's Gray Notebook, the Transportation Attainment Report, and MPO/RTPO regional transportation plans.

- **Establish a state transportation equity committee to guide transportation planning and policy development that proactively considers ways to mitigate and limit negative impacts to historically overburdened communities.** An equity committee, or advisory panel, would bring representatives from diverse communities and advocacy groups together in support of considering and incorporating diversified perspectives into long-term transportation planning and investments. Such a committee would also promote equitable access and outcomes through meaningful engagement. This group could be compensated for its time and would complement activities required under the HEAL Act, providing important guidance on transportation policy as it is being developed.

- **Develop funding prioritization and project selection processes that advance safety and preservation projects as Washington's top priority, consistent with the state transportation policy goals.** Maintaining the existing transportation infrastructure in a state of good repair, both on and off the state highway system, and ensuring the safety of all users are the two highest priorities of the six transportation system policy goals in law. Investment decisions should be informed by, among other factors, prioritizing improvements that ensure the highest priority safety locations are addressed as well as including lifecycle cost assessments to ensure long-term maintenance and preservation cost savings.

- **Encourage public-private partnerships (P3) that can relieve long-term cost liabilities, such as lighting, bridge maintenance, snow removal, and other services.** Partnerships can bring private sector expertise and innovation to the delivery and maintenance of transportation infrastructure and services. By transferring certain responsibilities and associated financial risks to private partners, all public transportation agencies can potentially achieve cost savings and improved efficiency over the long term. However, careful consideration and transparent agreements are essential to ensure that these partnerships serve the public interest and provide value for money while maintaining accountability and quality standards.

- **Establish revenue sources that provide more financially sustainable, long-term funding to remove the reliance on the consumption of fossil fuels.** Traditional transportation funding mechanisms based on fuel consumption are not sustainable. Moving away from reliance on taxing fossil fuels supports environmental goals and creates funding stability. A Road Usage Charge will provide reliable long-term funding and create more fairness in taxation by ensuring all drivers pay their fair share for their use of the roads.

Priority Area:

Create Safe and Connected Communities

Safe and connected communities begin with transportation systems that allow everyone, regardless of ZIP code, income, or physical ability, to move freely, safely, and efficiently. Mobility is the foundation of equitable access to jobs, education, healthcare, and daily essentials. Yet, too many communities face barriers like crumbling sidewalks, inadequate transit, and inaccessible infrastructure. Investments in multimodal, inclusive transportation networks, paired with thoughtful urban development and mixed-income housing along existing and underused commercial corridors can help reduce fatalities, lower emissions, and ease cost burdens. Seamless trip planning, integrated transit payment systems, and smart infrastructure can knit our communities together, making them not only safer but more vibrant, resilient, and connected for generations to come.

In rural communities we must also ensure habitat connectivity to ensure safety of the traveling public as wildlife-vehicle collisions represent an ongoing danger. Between 2019 and 2023, WSDOT reported removing nearly 40,000 wildlife carcasses from state highways alone and wild-life vehicle collisions resulted in an average of over 150 serious injury or fatal crashes as well as many more collisions each year.

State Policy Goal: Safety

To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system

After historic lows, traffic fatalities have risen substantially over the past decade, with 2023 recording the highest number of fatalities since 1990, at 809 traffic deaths, and 2024 seeing a modest improvement to 731 traffic deaths. Achieving safer travel statewide requires a holistic approach that considers how different components of the transportation network interact. By prioritizing safety at every level and elevating the needs of disproportionately impacted communities, we can move closer to the goal of a transportation system that protects all who rely on it.

Traffic fatalities nearly doubled from 2013 to 2023, resulting in a 33-year high. This increase is attributed to several factors. Notably, speeding contributed to nearly 30% of fatal crashes. Vulnerable populations, such as members of Tribal Nations and pedestrians and cyclists, are disproportionately affected.

Objectives

- **Make annual progress toward zero roadway fatalities by 2030:** Adopt proven countermeasures and better integrate land use and transportation planning and improvements to reduce fatal and serious traffic crashes, especially for the most vulnerable road users.
- **Implement and evaluate new technology for enhanced safety:** Leverage new data and tools to embed safety into all transportation project planning, design, and operations.
- **Foster multi-agency and public-private partnerships:** Collaborate to enhance emergency response, reduce vulnerabilities, and ensure safe evacuation routes.

Technology Spotlight:

Connected and Autonomous Vehicle Technology: Autonomous vehicle (AVs) and Connected vehicle (CV) technology, where vehicles and the infrastructure can "talk" to each other, will be a major milestone in the acceleration of increasing travel safety and efficiency. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), up to 94% of all vehicle crashes are caused by human error—a statistic that connected vehicles could help reduce. By 2040, fully autonomous vehicles could prevent nearly 585,000 crashes annually in the U.S

Strategies

- **Implement the Washington State Highway Safety Plan "Target Zero," focusing on proven safety countermeasures that anticipate human error, and continue to measure and evaluate progress towards the goal of zero transportation fatalities by 2030.** Target Zero provides a comprehensive framework for reducing traffic fatalities and serious injuries through a combination of education, enforcement, engineering, and emergency medical services. It follows the safe system approach of addressing multiple elements in safety, including safer land use, safer road users, safer vehicles, safer roads, safer speeds, and post-crash care. Consistent and rigorous implementation of evidence-based strategies, such infrastructure improvements at high-crash locations, is crucial for achieving the ambitious goal of Target Zero, or the goal of zero transportation fatalities by 2030. Regular monitoring and evaluation of progress will allow for adjustments and ensure accountability.
- **Pilot and apply emerging technologies to improve the identification and assessment of safety risk areas across jurisdictions.** Powerful algorithms can analyze vast datasets of crash records, roadway characteristics, and environmental factors to identify patterns and predict potential high-risk locations that might be missed through traditional analyses. This proactive approach allows for the early identification of hazardous conditions and the targeted deployment of safety improvements before crashes occur. By leveraging the power of AI, transportation agencies can make data-driven decisions to improve road safety and allocate resources more effectively.
- **Ensure all transportation plans integrate consistent fatal and severe crash data to identify high-injury locations and help reduce future traffic crash exposure, likelihood, and severity. As communities grow, changes in land use patterns can impact traffic volumes and pedestrian activity, potentially increasing safety risks in certain areas.** By incorporating consistent crash data into land use decisions, local, regional and state governments can proactively design safer streets and implement mitigation measures in areas prone to collisions. This integrated approach ensures that safety considerations are at the forefront of community development.
- **Support the efficient operation of vital lifeline facilities, including highways, bridges, roads, and transit systems that are important for the efficient and safe emergency evacuation of at-risk populations, with an emphasis on communities in flood zones and areas prone to wildfires.** Transportation arteries are essential for moving people to safety during

natural disasters. Ensuring their structural integrity, maintaining clear evacuation routes, and investing in resilient transit options are vital for protecting populations who live in vulnerable communities. Special attention should be paid to the unique challenges faced by communities in high-risk areas, such as developing redundant routes and improving communication systems to facilitate timely evacuation

- **Increase access to comprehensive driver training, especially for young drivers, and expand requirements for people to continue their traffic safety education at key points throughout their driving years.** Comprehensive driver education that goes beyond the minimum requirements can equip new drivers with the skills and knowledge to navigate roadways safely. Washington state can modernize the current driver education program curriculum and exam as well as expand access and affordability of high-quality instruction. Ongoing refresher courses and updated safety information for experienced drivers can help reinforce safe driving habits and address emerging safety challenges. By investing in continuous driver education, we can cultivate a culture of safety on our roads.

- **Encourage rapid deployment of safety improvements in areas with high rates of collisions involving bicyclists and pedestrians, especially those in overburdened communities.** Lower-income communities often experience higher rates of pedestrian and bicycle crashes due to factors such as lower car ownership, inadequate bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and higher traffic volumes. Implementing quick and effective safety measures, such as installing high-visibility crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and protected bike lanes can have an immediate impact on reducing these collisions. Prioritizing these rapid deployments in areas that need it most can provide immediate and sustained benefits.

- **Support mixed-use development and safety improvements on underutilized commercial arterial corridors and implement safety improvements that encourage slower speeds and smaller vehicle sizes.** Transforming underutilized arterial corridors into work, retail and housing hubs that are pedestrian-friendly and serve all modes can enhance safety for all users. Implementing protected bike lanes, wider sidewalks, pedestrian crossing improvements, and traffic calming measures like narrower lanes and curb design, can reduce the severity of collisions and encourage safer driving behaviors. Mixed-use development can also reduce the amount of driving by providing residents with local access to amenities.

State Policy Goal: Mobility

To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility

Investing to create seamless and accessible transportation networks fosters economic competitiveness, enhances community well-being, and promotes sustainable growth, making cities and regions more resilient and livable for future generations. A well-connected transportation system enables efficient movement of people and goods, supporting businesses, job access, and regional development. Reliable public transit, walkable communities, and multimodal options reduce congestion, lower emissions, and improve mobility for all, including underserved populations. Accessibility ensures that individuals, regardless of ability or income, can reach jobs, education, healthcare, and essential services

While preserving and improving the safety of our system is a top priority, strategic multimodal system expansion must occur and be carefully coordinated with land use policies to ensure sustainable growth that addresses congestion, safety, and sustainability goals. Enhancing system management and operations is essential, but seamless multimodal integration—allowing smooth transitions between various travel modes—is equally important. The integration of emerging technologies, such as intelligent transportation systems, real-time traffic monitoring, artificial intelligence, and automated vehicle infrastructure, can further improve efficiency and reliability but must be planned for and incorporated deliberately to avoid potential negative impacts.

Washingtonians continue to rely heavily on private vehicles - in 2022, less than 10% of commuters used a different form of transportation

Technology Spotlight:

Various new and upgraded technologies are improving the mobility of Washingtonians:

Traffic Management Traffic management systems and centers, powered by AI and real-time data analytics, can optimize traffic flow, reduce congestion, and improve travel times. By integrating adaptive traffic signals and collecting real-time data, cities can improve overall mobility.

Mobile Phones and Mobility Apps Smartphones are revolutionizing the way we travel by providing widespread ability to seamlessly plan and pay for travel from ride-sharing to public transit.

Ride-Hailing, Micro-Mobility, and Micro-Transit Washington state has seen a surge in ride-hailing services, micro-mobility solutions like e-scooters, and on-demand transit options. In cities like Seattle, these alternatives are helping to complement existing transit networks, with micro-mobility offering last-mile solutions to and from transit hubs.

Objectives

- Enhance the efficiency of our existing transportation systems: Optimize current infrastructure and operations to move people and goods more effectively and reduce delays.
- Increase transit and active transportation mode share: Encourage the use of public transportation, walking, and cycling to decrease vehicle emissions and promote sustainability.
- Make multimodal travel easy, safe, and convenient: Prioritize the safety and leverage technology to provide more travel options.

Strategies

- **Include first- and last-mile improvements as a part of local, regional, and statewide project planning to eliminate barriers to accessing public transportation.** These connections, such as sidewalks, bike lanes, and local shuttle services, are crucial for making public transit a convenient and accessible option for more people. Integrating them into the initial planning stages of larger transit projects ensures seamless transitions between different modes of transportation. Prioritizing investments in these often-overlooked elements can significantly increase public transit ridership and reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, leading to lower emissions and improved community connectivity.
- **Support the establishment of a "one account" transportation payment system that is inclusive of various modes of transportation and services, including public transit, Washington state ferries, tolling, road usage charging, parking, and mobility services providers.** An interoperable transportation payment system would greatly simplify the travel experience for residents and visitors alike. Enabling the use of mobile wallets, planning, booking, and paying for transportation services can be collapsed into on simple app that enables travelers to avoid having multiple accounts linked to debit/ credit cards. By enabling the use of wallets, travelers can pay for services using "cash" as opposed to setting up accounts. This seamless integration would encourage multimodal transportation and make it easier for people to plan and transact each trip, ultimately reducing system operational costs and increasing access.
- **Increase interagency coordination on state and federally funded corridor studies throughout the state to identify priority corridors, develop shared goals, and find solutions that meet multimodal performance objectives.** Enhanced collaboration among state, regional, local transportation agencies, and other partners can lead to more comprehensive and effective transportation planning. By establishing shared goals for safety, efficiency, and sustainability along

key corridors, agencies can work together to identify the most impactful investments and avoid duplicative efforts. Clearly establishing performance objectives and metrics will ensure that funded projects advance state and local priorities. This coordinated approach will result in a more integrated and high-performing transportation network for the entire state.

- **Expand capabilities of Traffic Management Centers across the state that increase coordinated transportation operations, response coordination, traffic incident management, and future opportunities for systems maintenance.** These centers, currently located in Shoreline, Spokane, Tacoma, Vancouver, Wenatchee, and Yakima, are multijurisdictional partnerships and serve as critical hubs for monitoring traffic flow, detecting incidents, and coordinating emergency response. Investing in advanced technologies and increasing staffing levels, in addition to a base-level funding for ongoing operations, will allow for quicker identification and clearance of incidents, reducing delays and improving safety. Enhanced communication and collaboration between these centers and other agencies will also lead to a more efficient and coordinated statewide transportation management system.
- **Invest in passenger rail service aimed at enhancing the customer experience at rail stations, improving service reliability and frequency, and assessing opportunities for network and service expansion, including a future north/south high-speed corridor and additional east/west passenger rail service, while minimizing disruptions to freight rail.** Modernizing rail stations with better amenities and accessibility along with increasing the frequency and on-time performance of the existing Amtrak Cascades service will increase usage and provide a more reliable alternative to driving. Furthermore, exploring the feasibility of high-speed rail connections, like advancing the Cascadia Corridor High Speed Rail and exploring connecting eastern and western Washington, could transform inter-city and regional travel, and provide significant economic and environmental benefits.
- **Coordinate plans for mixed-use and mixed-income housing with investments in public and active transportation , especially on state and local commercial arterial corridors, to lower household transportation costs and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.** Creating walkable and bikeable communities with convenient access to public transit reduces the need for private vehicles. By strategically locating housing, jobs, and amenities along well-served transportation corridors, we can shorten commutes, decrease traffic congestion, and make it more affordable for residents to live and work. This integrated land use and transportation planning is essential for building sustainable and equitable communities.

Priority Area:

Establish Resilient and Reliable Systems

Resilient transportation systems are essential to Washington state's safety, economy, and quality of life, especially in the face of wildfires, extreme weather, and infrastructure failures. Diversification of modes, electrification, redundant routes, and adaptable infrastructure are key components of resilient systems. When systems are robust and adaptable, they safeguard critical services like healthcare, food access, and emergency response, while minimizing economic losses and protecting supply chains. For example, every $1 invested in disaster resilience saves $6 in recovery costs, and resilient infrastructure can reduce post-disaster disruptions by up to 50%. , Building this resilience requires coordinated planning that integrates transportation, land use, environmental science, and emergency preparedness to ensure communities can withstand and recover from disruption stronger and more connected than before.

State Policy Goal: Economic Vitality

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

According to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), the state's transportation system facilitates the movement of over $700 billion in goods annually. In key industries such as agriculture, manufacturing, and tech, 1.5 million jobs are directly tied to freight-dependent industries. Reliable transportation supports businesses by reducing shipping costs, increasing supply chain efficiency, and improving market access for manufacturing, agriculture, and other sectors, as well as supporting the growing tourism industry. When transportation infrastructure is compromised due to flooding, wildfires, or seismic activity, the economic costs can be staggering. Disruptions to transportation could ripple out, affecting businesses, jobs, tourism, and access to critical services.

Heavy rain and flooding can close highways, trigger landslides, and delay freight shipments. In 2007, flooding on I-5 caused $47 million in losses from the disruption alone.

Objectives

- **Protect freight-critical infrastructure:** Ensure key freight routes and associated infrastructure are insulated in the long-term from weather, seismic, and development pressures.
- **Increase transportation efficiency and capacity:** Enhance the reliability and volume of goods movement by reducing bottlenecks, supplying additional freight parking and rest locations, and supporting alternative fuels and electrification.
- **Invest in a future-ready workforce:** Provide the necessary training, skills assessment, and succession planning to equip our workforce to manage and maintain a 21st-century transportation system.

Strategies

- **Increase coordination in local land use planning processes to reduce encroachment on Essential Public Facilities, such as airports, marine terminals, freight rail lines, passenger rail, and other key infrastructure as defined in Washington's Growth Management Act.** RCW 36.70A.200 describes essential public facilities as those that are typically difficult to site, such as airports, state education facilities, and state or regional transportation facilities as defined in RCW 47.06.140, which outlines transportation facilities and services of statewide significance. Unplanned development near important transportation facilities can lead to operational conflicts, safety hazards, and limitations on future expansion. Anticipated growth across the state will increase conflict points and new strategies, partnerships and collaborations are needed that facilitate growth while protecting the functionality and capacity of these vital transportation assets.

- **Support technologies that increase the efficiency and sustainability of freight movement, such as queue management systems for trucks waiting to access ports, and solutions to address the challenges of last mile freight delivery.** Reducing congestion and wait times not only improves the flow of goods but also lowers emissions from idling vehicles. Implementing real-time information systems, appointment scheduling, and optimized gate operations can significantly enhance the efficiency of freight logistics. Investing in these technological solutions will contribute to a more competitive and environmentally sustainable supply chain. Furthermore, the increase in online shopping and expectations for ultra-fast delivery has made addressing last-mile freight delivery challenges vitally important. Innovative solutions to get packages to their final destination in urban areas may include smart lockers, smaller fulfillment centers, smaller electric trucks, autonomous delivery services, and other innovations.

- **Develop a West Coast Transportation Network Plan to integrate the long-range planning efforts of California, Oregon and Washington, with a focus on minimizing travel disruptions due to extreme weather and seismic risks.** A coordinated regional approach for the West Coast can identify critical vulnerabilities and develop shared strategies for enhancing the resilience of the tri-state transportation network, in the shorter term, as well as longer term solutions like West Coast high speed rail connections. A West Coast Transportation Plan would identify how the three states can work better together to test new technologies, identify common risks, and overcome challenges that extend beyond state boundaries. Collaborative planning will ensure a more reliable and resilient transportation system for the entire West Coast. The Washington State Transportation Commission is studying the potential benefits of different approaches.

- **Develop transportation career centers that support near-term and long-term transportation workforce training aimed at preparing workers to fill vital roles needed today, use emerging technology, and begin transition from legacy transportation related careers.** The transportation sector faces short-term workforce challenges, with fewer technicians available than are needed to maintain our system and operate our transportation vehicles, including bus operators. In the longer-term, the transportation industry is also undergoing rapid technological advancements, including automation, electrification, and data analytics, requiring a skilled workforce to implement and maintain these innovations. These career centers can provide training programs, apprenticeships, and upskilling opportunities to ensure a pipeline of qualified workers. By proactively investing in workforce development, we can support the adoption of new technologies and create high-quality jobs in the transportation industry.

- **Identify and support existing general use airports, including community and regional airports, that serve as a key transportation asset during times of emergency, prioritizing preservation needs, ensuring extreme weather preparedness, and exploring solutions for long-term financial viability.** Washington has over 100 general-use airports, which play a crucial role in facilitating the movement of emergency personnel, firefighters, and supplies, and supporting medical evacuations. Rural airports also provide important air cargo service for local agriculture and manufacturing industries. Airports' infrastructure must be protected from deterioration and ensuring they can continue to operate under adverse weather conditions is paramount. Exploring innovative funding mechanisms and partnerships can help secure their long-term sustainability and ability to serve as critical community resources.

- **Support the state's economic competitiveness in international trade by helping to ensure Washington's ports are equipped to handle larger ships, both non-cargo and cargo, through improved waterways, port operations, and supportive freight rail and trucking infrastructure.** Modernizing port facilities, deepening channels, and expanding storage capacity are essential to accommodate the evolving needs of global shipping. Simultaneously, investments in intermodal connectors, rail yards, and efficient trucking routes are necessary to move goods inland quickly and effectively. Washington state has the most trade dependent economy in the United States, with roughly 40% of jobs tied to international commerce. The Ports of Seattle and Tacoma are actively implementing improvements, with several channel deepening and terminal modernization projects. These strategic improvements will also allow for cruise ships and other vessels, strengthening Washington state's position as a key gateway for international trade and tourism and sustaining our vital industries.

State Policy Goal: Environment

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

As Washington state works toward its goal of becoming carbon neutral by 2050, resilient transportation systems play a crucial role in environmental sustainability. With transportation responsible for 40% of the state's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, the resilience of transportation systems must go hand in hand with decarbonization efforts.

Through smart design choices, green construction practices, and by encouraging more environmentally sustainable modes, our investments can create systems that support both mobility and long-term ecological sustainability. Environmentally responsible transportation policies prioritize sustainable infrastructure, energy-efficient transit systems, and smart land use planning to reduce sprawl and dependence on single-occupancy vehicles. Investments in clean technologies, such as electric vehicles, renewable energy-powered transit, and green infrastructure, help lower emissions and decrease resource consumption.

However, resilience in the context of environmental challenges is not just about reducing emissions. It is about adapting to the impacts of a changing climate. Flooding, wildfires, and rising sea levels threaten critical infrastructure, particularly along coastal areas and flood-prone regions.

Wildfires, worsened by hotter summers and longer fire seasons, lead to road closures, poor air quality, and evacuations. The area burned by wildfires in Washing has nearly tripled since the 2000s and may triple again by the 2040s.

Technology Spotlight:

Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure

The transition to electric vehicles (EVs) is one of the most significant steps Washington can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. To maximize the impact, investments in charging infrastructure will need to continue and grow over time. Washington State's Clean Energy Fund estimates that by 2030, Washington will need approximately 1,000 more fast-charging stations to meet the growing demand.

Objectives

- **Reduce the transportation sector's annual greenhouse gas emissions to achieve net zero emissions by 2050:** Support the transition to zero-emission and low-emission technologies, shift to lower emission modes, and transition towards renewable energy sources.
- **Bolster the resilience of the transportation network:** Identify vulnerabilities and support improvements to mitigate impacts of severe weather and other disruptions to infrastructure and communities.
- **Promote quality of life and environmental justice:** Address the unique environmental challenges and mobility needs of lower-resourced communities.

Strategies

- **Support projects that, in addition to meeting other state transportation goals, provide public health, resiliency, and habitat connectivity benefits.** Integrated projects offer a more efficient use of resources by addressing multiple needs simultaneously. For instance, restoring a coastal wetland can enhance natural flood protection while also creating valuable habitat and improving water quality. Proper vegetation, trees, and bioswales along roadway corridors can reduce urban heat island effects, create habitat for animals and insects, and limit stormwater runoff. Promoting habitat connectivity through wildlife crossings also improves roadway safety. By focusing on these synergistic solutions, we can maximize the return on investment and build more resilient and sustainable communities.
- **Support priorities contained in state, regional, and local resilience plans, and advance projects that address the most critical climate vulnerabilities and emergency preparedness needs.** Resilience plans present a consensus-driven understanding of the most pressing risks and outline locally tailored strategies for mitigating and adapting to the risks. Aligning transportation investments with these established priorities ensures that resources are directed toward the most urgent needs, such as protecting critical infrastructure from inland flooding or enhancing evacuation routes in wildfire-prone areas. This collaborative approach strengthens regional resilience and avoids duplication of efforts. Washington state, as well as Skagit County and other jurisdictions, are currently developing Resilience Improvement Plans.

- **Incentivize inter-jurisdictional collaboration to implement state, regional, and local climate mitigation and resilience plans.** Lower-income and rural communities often face disproportionate impacts from climate change and pollution due to historical development practices and limited resources. Providing technical assistance and funding for vulnerability assessments, climate action plans, and emergency preparedness planning can empower these communities to better understand and prepare for risks. Furthermore, supporting the development and implementation of localized greenhouse gas reduction strategies ensures that the transition to a cleaner transportation system is achieved in communities that need it the most.

- **Strengthen energy and transportation planning through expanded collaboration between transportation agencies and utility providers, in order to advance proactive solutions, such as the placement of renewable energy generation in public right of way.** Closer coordination can unlock opportunities for innovative solutions that benefit both the transportation and energy sectors. For example, transportation agencies can provide land for solar energy installations along highways, generating clean power and potentially reducing energy costs. Washington state is currently exploring policy changes needed to accommodate solar projects in highway rights of way. Electric vehicles can also be used as energy storage systems, providing grid stabilization in times of uncertainty and mobile charging stations during emergencies. This integrated planning approach can accelerate the transition to a cleaner energy system and enhance the sustainability of the transportation network.

- **Support approaches to transition heavy-duty trucks and freight rail to zero-emission technology, such as shifting from diesel-powered vehicles to electric or hydrogen fuel cell alternatives and developing in-state production and supply chain capabilities.** Decarbonizing the freight sector is crucial for achieving significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality. Strategies could include offering financial incentives for the adoption of zero-emission vehicles, investing in charging or refueling infrastructure along major freight corridors, and supporting research and development of advanced battery and fuel cell technologies. One example of this strategy, which could be expanded and continued, is Washington State's Zero Emissions Medium & Heavy Duty Vehicles Incentive Program. The Puget Sound Zero Emission Truck Collaborative released a blueprint containing 70 strategies to help eliminate seaport-related emissions by 2050. A focused effort in this sector, which accounts for significant portion of greenhouse gas emissions and pollutants that are harmful to human health, will yield substantial environmental and public health benefits.

The Road Ahead

WTP Vision 2050 embodies the understanding that the choices we make today will shape the reality of tomorrow. This plan's vision statement calls for a delicate balance between addressing urgent transportation needs while also keeping an eye on long-term goals. Some initiatives will deliver immediate benefits, while others will require sustained effort and investment. This plan is our blueprint for navigating present challenges while creating a future that is safer, more connected, resilient, and prosperous.

Reimagining Growth: Corridor Urbanism

Washington state is growing fast. By 2050, our urban cores and rural communities will experience demographic and economic shifts that demand a new model of development. This plan integrates housing and land use planning with transportation strategies to encourage growth along key transportation corridors with mixed-use, mixed-income housing within walking distance of high-capacity transit. It suggests reformed zoning to encourage flexible, mid-scale development that matches community context and transportation capacity. It offers strategies to streamline development and lower development costs, which promote affordability.

By linking where people live, work, and shop with how they move, we can reduce commute times, lower emissions, and support vibrant, walkable neighborhoods. This approach offers substantial potential benefits: increased housing density, reduced reliance on single-occupancy vehicles, and enhanced transit accessibility. Environmental advantages include decreased energy and water consumption and lower carbon emissions. Studies estimate that, compared with traditional suburban development, dwellings in mixed-income and mixed-use developments consume 39% less energy and 62% less water. Driving is reduced by 55%, and household costs by 53%. These developments can significantly boost the local tax base through increased property values. By strategically redeveloping existing corridors, we can create more sustainable, equitable, and economically vibrant communities, alleviating transportation pressures and fostering responsible urban growth.

It is Time for a Sustainable Funding Solution

Gas tax revenues are declining, and this decline will only accelerate each year as the vehicle fleet sees increases in fuel efficiency and alternative fuel use. The Washington State Transportation Commission predicts that by 2040, gas tax revenues will have decreased from $1.3 billion to $300 million per year due to increasing fuel efficiency and the shift to electric vehicles.

We must act now to avoid a crisis. A Road Usage Charge (RUC) is a proven approach to create sustainable long-term funding, and it is being implemented around the country. RUC not only enables funding stability, but it also reduces our reliance on the consumption of fossil fuels, supporting our environmental goals. RUC provides decision makers with policy levers to create a fairer and less regressive taxation structure, presenting opportunities to provide tax relief to the lowest-income households, while also ensuring all drivers pay their fair share for the use of the roads, regardless of what they drive or how far.

Planning for Uncertainty: Adaptability is Key

While predicting exactly what the world will look like in 2050 is nearly impossible, we do know that growth and change is inevitable. Rapidly growing populations in both urban and rural areas, advancements in technology, climate shifts, and evolving housing needs will all influence the future of transportation. The key is flexibility. The transportation sector is undergoing massive transformations, with electric vehicles potentially accounting for 50% of global car sales by 2030, and new mobility solutions like autonomous vehicles, on-demand transportation, and shared transportation becoming mainstream. WTP Vision 2050 aims to create a transportation system that is adaptable to unforeseen challenges. By building flexibility and redundancy into our systems, we can more easily adjust when inevitable change arrives.

Climate and resilience is an urgent priority. Washington state is already feeling the impacts of climate change, from wildfires to rising sea levels, and these threats will only intensify in the coming decades. It is estimated that by 2050, temperatures in the state could rise by as much as 4.5 degrees, putting even more strain on our infrastructure. Washington state must incorporate resilience into every aspect of planning ensuring that our transportation systems can withstand increasingly frequent and severe weather disruptions.

Integrating Emerging Technology

Building the future we want requires tackling multiple, complex and connected challenges, all while managing mobility effectively, preserving critical infrastructure, and prioritizing safety. This demands an integrated and coordinated approach across jurisdictions and sectors that pilots and explores emerging technology. For example, integrating emerging technologies, such as AI-powered traffic management systems, machine learning, and data-driven maintenance models, can significantly improve efficiency and reliability. Emerging transportation technologies like vehicle-to-infrastructure communication and smart traffic management systems are expected to significantly reduce congestion by optimizing traffic flow, improving safety, and enhancing real-time data analysis for better decision-making.

Tackling Inequities: Improving Quality of Life for All

Mounting research shows that lower-income and non-white communities are disproportionately impacted by limited access to reliable, affordable transportation. Average households in Washington state spend 31% of their income on housing and 23% on transportation, exceeding the traditional measure of affordability established by US Housing and Urban Development (HUD), recommending combined housing and transportation costs not exceed 45% of household income. Our transportation system must offer long-term solutions to give families more options for reducing this burden.

Investing in equitable access is essential for long-term success. Washington's future prosperity depends on ensuring that all communities, especially historically overburdened ones, have access to safe, affordable, and efficient transportation options. Research by the American Public Transportation Association (APTA) shows that public transportation generates $5 in economic returns for every $1 invested, highlighting the value of equitable access not just for individuals, but for the entire economy.

The Path Forward: Collaborating for a Stronger Future

Solving Washington state's transportation challenges will require unprecedented coordination. We must look for other successful models of cross-sector collaboration, like those of Challenge Seattle, an alliance of 23 organizations representing many of Seattle's major employers and others, so we can integrate insights from technology companies, freight and logistics leaders, housing advocates, climate scientists, and others.

By working together, government, businesses, and communities can implement systems-level thinking that considers all elements and delivers smarter, more durable outcomes. Collaboration can be incentivized at all levels of government through shared planning and visioning, shared investment, and shared accountability. Several examples include new competitive grant programs that prioritize multi-jurisdictional partnerships, co-funded corridor plans, housing and transit alignment incentives that waive parking requirements or allow for density bonuses, shared data platforms, and interagency performance targets. More combined efforts will result in a transportation system that not only meets the needs of today but also fosters a high quality of life for all Washingtonians for generations to come.

The choices we make today will determine whether Washington state's future is one of resilience or fragility, inclusion or inequality, congestion or connection. By embracing visionary planning, equitable investment, climate resilience, and funding innovation, we can build a transportation future that works for everyone.

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