# 2016 Reflections and Recommendations

Washington State
Transportation Commission

# Message from the Chairman

After enactment of the 16-year, $16 billion Connecting Washington package, the Transportation Commission asked, "What's Next?" We recommended more attention to preserving and maintaining the transportation system, continued reforms to ensure effective and efficient delivery of projects and services, building more resiliency in the system, and a renewed focus on the transportation workforce.

Those recommendations are more important than ever before, both for today and for tomorrow. From our visits to communities around the state, and our observations in Olympia, we heard repeatedly: "Get Ready. The Future is Coming."

The big challenge is that we don't know today just what tomorrow will bring.

We know that retirements, demographics, and automation are transforming the transportation workforce. We have become aware that the seismic risk to our transportation system is very high. A magnitude 9.0 earthquake off the Northwest Coast is certain to occur someday and a devastating tsunami is likely to follow.

We see vehicles themselves becoming more automated, more fuel efficient, and safer. At the same time, an increasing number of drivers are distracted and impaired. Fuel choice and fuel efficiency eventually will cause the state gas tax to become an unreliable and unsustainable revenue source. The federal gas tax, stuck at 18.4 cents per gallon since 1993, already is undependable.

We don't know when these disruptive events will occur or how each will unfold. For instance, the ownership, market penetration and utilization of fully automated vehicles will influence whether urban roadway congestion grows or declines. An autonomous vehicle in a shared network that functions like a taxi will impact traffic differently than an autonomous vehicle owned and garaged by one individual.

In addition, each community the Commission visited in 2016 is approaching the future differently. All are growing but some are keeping pace with growth better than others. Partnerships, whether between governments or with private sector partners, are valued and essential to achieving economic and community goals. Rural areas are struggling to maintain the transportation infrastructure they have and urban areas are working at developing walkable downtowns and providing more transportation options.

On the revenue front, while the fuel tax is strong today, consumers and car manufacturers both are trending increasingly toward more fuel efficient vehicles. With federal funding, the Commission is moving forward with a pilot project to test whether a road usage charge could someday replace the fuel tax as a primary transportation funding source.

Since the timing, scope and pace of coming change is unknown, keeping the existing transportation system in good shape must be our first priority. The uncertainty of the timing, scope and pace of the change that is coming requires that in moving forward we are flexible in discovering – and funding – solutions that fit the unique needs of different communities.

Sincerely,

# Table of Contents


**Recommendations** . . . . . 2

- Revenue and Cost-Savings . . . . . 2
- Improve Transportation Safety and Access . . . . . 4
- Address Difficult Mobility, Security, and Resiliency Challenges . . . . . 5

**Overview of 2016 Transportation Commission Work and Activities** . . . . . 8

- Tolling and Ferry Fare Actions . . . . . 8
- Road Usage Charge Assessment . . . . . 11
- Joint Work with California and Oregon . . . . . 12
- Surveys on Public Preferences and Opinions . . . . . 12
- Naming Transportation Facilities . . . . . 13

**Partners in Transportation** . . . . . 14

- Kennewick . . . . . 14
- Marysville . . . . . 15
- Moses Lake . . . . . 16
- Vancouver . . . . . 17

**Snapshot of Regional Priorities** . . . . . 18

**Commission Facts** . . . . . 23

**Commissioners** . . . . . 24

# Recommendations

**The Transportation Commission proposes policies to the Governor and Legislature to assure the state has a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation system.**

**RCW 47.01.071 and 47.01.075 mandate preparation of a statewide transportation plan and policy guidance to the governor and the legislature in key issue areas, including but not limited to the following:**

- **Transportation finance;**
- **Preserving, maintaining, and operating the statewide transportation system;**
- **Transportation infrastructure needs;**
- **Best practices for adoption and use by transportation-related agencies and programs;**
- **Efficiencies that will improve service delivery and/or coordination;**
- **Improved planning and coordination among transportation agencies and providers; and**
- **Use of intelligent transportation systems and other technology-based solutions.**

**This section of 2016 Reflections and Recommendations provides near-term and long-term policy guidance and recommendations for the Governor and Legislature.**

*Improving I-90 at Snoqualmie Pass will speed farm products to markets around the world and improve safety for everyone traveling through the Cascades.*

## Revenue and Cost-Savings

### Develop Sustainable Funding Dedicated to Preservation and Maintenance

Year after year, in statewide surveys done by the Commission and in meetings with local officials and citizens around the state, residents of our state prioritize maintenance and preservation as the most important investments in the transportation system. But these priorities continue to be underfunded by the state, and by many cities and counties. WSDOT estimates that the 10-year unfunded preservation need for state highways exceeds $2.387 billion and the unfunded 10-year maintenance need is estimated to be approximately $600 to $650 million.

Because the state relies heavily on the 49.4 cent fuel tax, as vehicles achieve better mileage and fuel tax revenue declines, it will need other revenue sources to fund highway needs. The funding toolbox may need to rely more on existing sources such as vehicle licensing fees, vehicle excise taxes, and weight fees, or on new revenue sources such as a road usage charge. As long-term funding discussions take place, **we suggest that a sustainable and dedicated funding source be identified to plan and fund long-term asset preservation – a best practice that will ensure efficiency and accountability in preserving and maintaining the existing transportation network.**

## Test Drive the Road Usage Charge

In 2012, the Legislature directed the Commission to work with a steering committee to evaluate whether a road usage charge could eventually replace the gas tax. A road usage charge (RUC) is a per mile charge drivers would pay for the use of the roads, rather than paying for them by the gallon of gas. It is called a usage charge because it works like other public utilities, where people pay different amounts based on how much they use. Not only will a RUC generate revenue, it will do so more equitably. Today, less fuel efficient vehicles, that get less than 20 MPG, are paying significantly more in gas taxes than hybrid and electric vehicles. With a RUC, everyone pays their fair share.

After several years of researching, assessing, and analyzing the concept, including conducting a detailed review of the costs and benefits of a road usage charge, the Commission and its steering committee have determined that it is feasible and could produce the revenue needed to fund Washington State's long-term transportation needs.

**Now it's time to put the concept and options for a road usage charge to the test. Washington has been awarded a $3.847 million federal grant to prepare for a live pilot test, scheduled to begin in fall 2017. The pilot project will begin to answer:**

- **Will it enable us to better fund our transportation system into the future?**
- **Will it work in real world terms? Are there fatal flaws the conceptual study missed?**
- **What does the public think? How does it work for drivers?**

Developed in partnership with WSDOT and the Department of Licensing, the pilot project will allow 2000 participants from five regions across the state to experience RUC and give feedback. The pilot will include electric vehicle owners, a small pool of participants from Surrey B.C. to test the international border crossing, and volunteers from Vancouver who commute into Portland, Oregon to test interstate interoperability.

The Commission and its RUC steering committee has held as a foundational priority that drivers have a choice in how they report mileage under a RUC system. Instead of mandating a single reporting method, the pilot project will offer volunteers a choice of mileage reporting, ranging from pre-paid mileage that requires no in-vehicle technology to options that include using smartphones and GPS-enabled technology.

## Phase Out Studded Tires

Studded tire technology is outdated, creates safety hazards and causes road damage that is costly to repair. On state highways alone, damage from studded tires is estimated at $20 to $29 million a year. They also create ruts that reduce road safety for all motorists due to ponding and water on the roadway, including hydroplaning, excessive spray, and steering problems. Although studded tires perform better on glare ice than non-studded tires, research shows they are not as effective as snow tires in snow, slush, or wet pavement. Studs reduce contact between rubber and pavement, requiring a longer stopping distance on wet or dry pavement than regular tires.

*Ruts from studded tires damage roads throughout the state.*

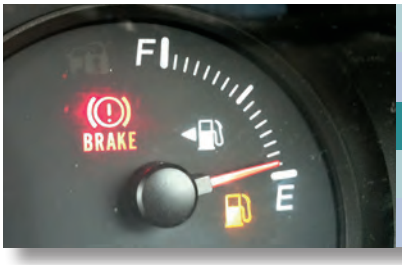
**The commission recommends the Legislature prohibit sale of studded tires and phase out their use within five years after they are no longer sold. As an alternative, the studded tire fee should be increased to a level that will produce the revenue needed to fund repairs to the damage they cause.**

## Develop a Long-Term Tolling Policy Plan

Over the last 10 years, tolling has successfully been implemented on four facilities and WSDOT recently completed a strategic operations plan for tolling. An additional four tolling projects are now underway or in the planning stages. Although the state wisely uses only one tolling technology, each of the current facilities uses tolling in a different way and with some variation in rules. While we look at the more immediate impacts to neighboring routes and communities, we do not conduct systemwide assessments that look at the bigger picture in terms of the economic, social, and operational implications a new tolled facility or expanded toll system may have.

In order to better ascertain how our urban highway system fits together and functions in the world of high demand and fixed capacity, **the Commission recommends the legislature direct development of a strategic tolling policy plan that sets a path forward on tolling into the future.** For example, the tolling policy plan could begin to evaluate the potential and purpose for a limited application of tolling of the HOV lanes on I-5 in the Central Puget Sound, during peak hours to ensure a reliable trip for transit and HOV vehicles.

Additional reflections and recommendations from the Commission on tolling can be found in the Commission's 2017 Tolling Report.




| | |
|---|---|
| Washington State vehicle fleet current average: | MPG: 20.5 MPG |
| Existing Federal CAFE Standards: | 54.5 MPG by 2025 |
| **The Federal Energy Information Administration conservatively predicts:** | |
| All NEW cars in 2040: | 48 MPG |
| All cars (new and old) in 2040: | 37 MPG |

## Ensure Land Use Decisions are Supported with Adequate Transportation Facilities and Services

In most of the growing areas of the state, the transportation system does not adequately support current and future population densities. Passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) more than 25 years ago raised expectations that appropriate infrastructure would be provided concurrent with new development. Although GMA has improved planning and coordination, many land use decisions continue to add to infrastructure demands and costs. Too often, cities and counties have adopted land use plans and permitted new development without adequate street and transit provisions, and often are implemented with little to no coordination with the state and adjacent jurisdictions.

**The commission recommends regional transportation planning organizations and the state use all existing authority to require and ensure adequate transportation facilities and services are in place concurrent with growth expectations. In addition, land use plans and local permitting strategies should be designed to thoroughly consider transportation impacts at all jurisdictional levels and include strategies to address them if increased impacts cannot be avoided.**

## Expand the Funding Toolbox for City and County Transportation Systems

As counties and cities receive an increasingly smaller share of gas tax revenue, their reliance on and need for a variety of revenue sources grows. Not every funding tool fits the circumstances and needs of every jurisdiction. Just as rural issues differ from urban problems, rural areas often have fewer revenue options and a smaller tax base. Also, some existing tools can be improved to work better.

**The Commission endorses the following tools and programs recommended by communities around the state:**

- **Authorize creation of street utility programs.**
- **Authorize tax increment financing.**
- **Facilitate creation of regional Transportation Benefit Districts (TBD); currently a single city can veto a countywide TBD.**
- **Better balance grant funding for maintaining versus building new infrastructure.**
- **Enable cities and counties to swap federal funds for more flexible state funds.**
- **Encourage infrastructure projects that manage growth in a comprehensive way by creating a single account for multi-purpose infrastructure projects.**
- **Renew funding for the Public Works Assistance Account.**
- **Create better ways for rural communities to compete for funds.**

# Improve Transportation Safety and Access

## Involve and Engage the Public to Improve Transportation Safety

Traffic fatalities statewide rose to 568 in 2015, a 22% increase. The Washington Traffic Safety Commission indicates that traffic fatalities in 2016 will not decrease. Impairment, speeding, and all forms of distraction are the leading causes of traffic fatalities. Additionally, fatalities affect some populations disproportionately. Pedestrian fatalities, which increased to 87 in 2015 and remained high in 2016, are most common in poor and low-income areas, and among communities of color.

WSDOT also has a growing concern for the safety of construction zone workers. It is using social media to discourage unsafe driving practices in work zones and sharing personal stories to make construction workers more real to the constituents they serve. **The Commission recommends the legislature take action to reduce distracted driving and better fund traffic safety enforcement. The state also should consider expanding the collaborative, focused approach it has taken with tribes on traffic safety to improve traffic safety in other disproportionately impacted communities.**

## Improve Public Transportation

The state has a variety of interests in public transportation, including maintaining the mobility and safety of people who use it, ensuring transit can play an impactful role in relieving congestion, maximizing the value of infrastructure investment by offering modal choices, reducing the number of vehicles on the road, thus total emissions, and improving the health of citizens and communities. In addition to WSDOT's collaborative work with transit agencies to optimize efficiency in congested corridors, three areas of public transportation deserve additional attention.

### Efficiently grow passenger rail service.

The state's economy and environment both will benefit from adding new long-distance passenger and commuter trains that provide reliable service. The long-term investment in frequent Seattle-Portland passenger train service is near the point where the train offers a modal alternative to driving or flying between the two cities, at a substantially lower carbon footprint and cost to consumers. Given the investment and lead time required, **the state should begin planning and identifying strategic ways to enhance, improve and expand rail service, such as adding future daily round-trip rail service between Seattle, Spokane and the Tri-Cities, and other corridors with a high ridership potential.**

*Amtrak Cascades service provides an alternative to driving or flying.*

**Connections within and between cities.**

Transit provides connections between population and employment centers, across travel modes, and between communities. Recognizing that public transportation issues may be different in rural and urban areas, **the state should continue investing in regional mobility grants, intercity bus connections, commute trip reduction and other programs that connect communities, improve access to employment and schools, and facilitate ridesharing and carpooling.**

**Special needs transportation.**

The cost of providing transit service under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and to Medicaid recipients challenges almost every transit agency. **The state should increase funding for all special needs transportation and better leverage federal funding for this population.**

## Transportation for All

Transportation is a means to an end: to work, to school, to the grocery store, to the doctor, and to visit friends. From investments in sidewalks to the successful ORCA LIFT program that provides reduced transit fares, many communities across the state have invested in transportation modes and programs that increase travel options for all people. As housing costs increase in many parts of the state, frequently adding to long commutes, and as the gap between the wealthy and poor grows, **the Commission recommends that affordable transportation options be made available and accessible for all people.**

*Seattle, and most of Washington west of I-5, is vulnerable to major earthquakes.*

# Address Difficult Mobility, Security, and Resiliency Challenges

## Improve I-5 Mobility – Border to Border

A strong economy, a backlog in infrastructure investment, and housing demand have spread congestion throughout major corridors in Puget Sound and Clark County. Gridlock and reduced travel time reliability results in economic loss and social disruption. By addressing urban congestion in a systemic, corridor-based way WSDOT, cities, counties, and transit agencies are optimizing the capacity of existing infrastructure, but growth is still outpacing the capability of the existing transportation network.

As the increased congestion negatively impacts transit on-time performance, as well as passenger vehicle traffic, options to avoid congestion are in high demand. In King County, Link light rail weekday ridership grew 71 percent in the third quarter of 2016, averaging 67,893 riders, and now exceeds Sound Transit Express Bus ridership. With added capacity, Sounder commuter train ridership is expected to grow by 16 percent in 2017 over 2015.

With growth and congestion moving farther from core urban centers, **the commission recommends the state establish an I-5 Corridor Mobility Master Plan to address the mobility needs of commerce, tourism, and commuters on the entire I-5 corridor from the Canadian border to the Columbia River. A long-term, multi-modal integrated strategy should, at a minimum, include establishment of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)/ HOV 3+ lane during peak hours; enhanced passenger and commuter rail services; and expanded capacity across the Columbia River; and should consider congestion pricing during peak hours.**

## Complete I-405 Express Toll Lanes

The Commission has monitored traffic volumes, costs and revenues, and the performance of the I-405 Express Toll Lane (ETL) operations through the first year. While demand for the ETLs has exceeded projections and generated higher than expected toll revenue, the ETL system is not working optimally due in part to the chokepoint that is created where the ETL's go from two lanes to one lane and the limited capacity that creates between Bothell and Lynnwood. Although the peak-use shoulder lane now under construction will help improve northbound flow, the **Commission recommends the Legislature direct excess toll revenues to building the second ETL lane between Bothell and Lynnwood.**

## Increase Preparations for Seismic Events, Storms and Climate Impacts

As recognized by the Governor's creation of a *Resilient Washington* subcabinet in November 2016, a 9.0 magnitude seismic event off the Washington coast would devastate the state's transportation system, impacting the local economy and the nation. In 2011, FEMA estimated a $49 billion economic impact from a 9.0 Cascadia Subduction Zone (CSZ) quake in our state. Damage to transportation infrastructure would significantly multiply these impacts and exacerbate loss of life. In the event of a major CSZ seismic event, the earthquake and related events such as tsunami and landslides will result in major failures and losses of our state's roads and bridges.

Preparations and investments in Washington State fall far short of meeting the known (and growing) seismic risk. Over a quarter of the road infrastructure west of the Cascade Range will experience medium to high damage and large sections of highway will be completely unusable until major repairs are made. This may include up to half of I-5,

*Martin Way Landslide Damage.*

with damage most severe in the Seattle-Tacoma region. A major CSZ event also may isolate the coast with high damage to much of US 101 and roads connecting the coast to I-5, severely limiting commerce and thwarting evacuation efforts. Of the bridges across the Columbia River, only the I-205 bridge is expected to survive a major quake.

Areas east of the Cascade Mountains also would be affected economically by damage to western roads, bridges, and ports. Blockage of the Columbia River navigation system would restrict the export of agricultural products and the shipment of fuel upriver. Airports east of the Cascades, such as Spokane and Moses Lake, are likely emergency response staging areas.

Although the state has invested more than $166 million since the early 1990s in retrofitting over 300 bridges, nearly 600 more need work, with an estimated price tag of $1.4 billion. Given this, **the commission recommends investments be made to prevent landslides on unstable slopes and preserve and protect key life line routes such as US 101.**

**Similar long-range and short-range planning and retrofit must occur to address erosion, flooding, landslides, and similar impacts of storm events and long-term climate change on our transportation infrastructure.**

*In 2010 the City of Bellingham voters approved a sales tax increase to form a Transportation Benefit District (TBD) which provides dedicated funding for non-motorized improvements. Today, over six percent of Bellingham trips are by bicycle.*

## Consider the Health Impacts of Transportation When Making Investments

Transportation impacts health in many ways:

- Physical activity: Opportunities for walking and biking
- Air quality: Emissions and pollutant impacts on respiratory health
- Safety: Injuries and fatalities from vehicle and motorcycle crashes
- Access to basic needs: Reliable access to health care, healthy food, and services
- Mental well-being: Stress related to long commutes and limited access to transportation

Many transportation professionals underestimate how the built environment shapes and affects community health. Fifty years ago, 89% of K - 8 students walked or biked to school. Today, only 35% do so. To reverse this trend, communities across the state are investing in sidewalks and bike lanes, revising land use plans, and adopting active transportation policies. Investments in promoting active transportation can reduce health care costs, both short-term and long-term, and have the added benefit of reducing vehicle emissions, traffic-related fatalities, and wear-and-tear on our roads. **The Commission recommends the state take a more active role in providing expanded public education and information about health impacts and benefits.**

## Maintain Commercial Aviation Service in Rural Washington

Airports are vital to the economic health of many small communities. Access to general aviation airports, a valuable resource for pilot training and emergency response, has declined as airports have closed. With the changing structure and economics of commercial aviation, several areas of rural Washington are at risk of fewer commercial flights or none at all.

The Port of Seattle has provided incentives for airlines to maintain daily flights to Sea-Tac Airport from some small rural communities in the state. The state also should step up and **foster partnerships between airlines, ports, economic development organizations, and businesses to maintain and enhance commercial aviation service in rural Washington.**

## Better Utilize Waterways

Built on inland seas, lakes, and rivers, our state is home to the nation's largest public ferry system and the birthplace of floating bridges. While our waterways constrict the transportation network, they potentially offer improved mobility. The Water Emergency Transportation Authority in the San Francisco Bay Area has expanded passenger ferry service to improve system resiliency when bridges fail.

King County has successfully operated water taxi service from West Seattle and Vashon Island to downtown Seattle. In November 2016, Kitsap County voters approved a 3/10 of a cent sales tax to begin fast ferry service to King County from Bremerton, Kingston, and Southworth.

*King County water taxi.*

**Given the demand for fast passenger ferry service, the Commission recommends the state consider how locally-supported passenger ferry service fits with Washington State Ferries (WSF). And, considering the long time frame to plan and finance ferries, the state also should begin to consider whether and how passenger ferries may have a place in the WSF system.**

## Plan and Prepare for Technological and Behavioral Change in the Future

**It is too early to know the specific ramifications of major changes in transportation that are likely to occur due to technological advances. In some instances, government may wish to assist or partner with the private sector to spur change, and in some cases government may need to review policies and fiscal practices in light of technological or behavioral changes. The Commission therefore recommends that policymakers at the state and local level begin by informing themselves of the challenges and opportunities presented. The future may involve new roles and responsibilities for both the public and private sectors.**

### Autonomous (self-driving) vehicles

Cars and trucks are in the midst of an automation revolution. High-end vehicles already stay within lanes, maintain a safe distance from the car ahead, and park themselves. Vehicles that are completely autonomous are being tested on public roads. This development is an opportunity to eliminate collisions and reduce deaths and serious injuries. It also offers enhanced mobility for people who, due to age or disability, cannot get around independently.

*Autonomous and connected vehicles will communicate with each other, and with the human and built environment.*

On the other hand, these benefits may not be available to everyone due to cost, cultural barriers, geographic limitations, or required improvements to public infrastructure. **The Commission recommends convening a diverse stakeholder group to begin a multi-dimensional discussion around all things related to autonomous cars – from infrastructure needs to state laws and regulations regarding licensing, driver education, insurance, and traffic enforcement to allow for responsible advancement of a major technology.**

### Mobility as a service

As vehicles become smarter and more automated, they will communicate not only with each other and the driving environment, but with other technology, such as smartphones and parking lots. The traditional ownership of personal vehicles may wither away due to the cost and efficiency of vehicles loaded with technology. Also, private vehicles are parked about 95 percent of the time, a practice economists view as inefficient.

If you could use your phone to order a ride from a shared fleet — a vehicle appropriately sized to the nature and distance of your trip — there would be little incentive to take on the cost and responsibilities of owning a car. Over time, everyday transportation may evolve to this kind of a pay-for-service model, as it is now in the case of train and air service.

Shared fleets could reduce the total number of vehicles on the road, but also could increase congestion when each vehicle is used many more hours of the day. If the cost and efficiency of shared vehicle fleets compares favorably to public transit, the rise of on-demand service also will shape the ridership and structure of public transit systems.

### Expand opportunities for public private partnerships

Technological advances and lessons learned from other states demonstrate that collaboration between public agencies and private businesses in transportation must expand beyond the traditional construct. **The Commission recommends a new look at partnerships between the public sector and the private sector.** This redefinition should include cooperatives, co-developments, operational service provisions, and consistent service coordination on an on-going basis. For those transportation problems that concrete and steel cannot solve, government, community and business leaders should examine systemic, on-going, long-range partnerships which may include contributions that are financial, or involve property, services, data or access.

One such area for potential partnerships involves access to public transportation. Between Thurston and Whatcom counties, there are 232 park and rides with approximately 46,500 vehicle spaces. In many of these, demand is outpacing supply, and Sound Transit and Metro are experimenting with small fees to guarantee a carpool space. In addition to this interagency partnership, there are partnership opportunities for the state and private sector to improve access and increase capacity which may include:

*Space is at a premium in many Park-and-Ride facilities.*

- offering online, dynamically priced reservations;
- allowing private transit providers access to publicly owned lots in exchange for increased parking capacity;
- co-developing park and ride lots with housing, private businesses and a variety of transportation modes (public and private) to create a mobility hub; and
- providing dedicated electric vehicle (EV) parking spots and EV charging infrastructure.

# Overview of 2016 Transportation Commission Work and Activities

## Tolling and Ferry Fare Actions

Tolls and ferry fares are projected to generate nearly $745 million during the 2015 - 17 biennium. This is a small, but significant portion of WSDOT's budget. Tolling is necessary to raise revenue for major capital improvements, toll operations and maintenance, and to improve traffic flows at peak hours. Ferry fares provide over 70% of the ferry system's operating costs. However, the Commission recognizes tolls and fares can have a real financial impact on residents who rely on ferries and toll facilities on a regular basis.

*The Coupeville ferry terminal provides easy access to Pt. Townsend and the Olympic Peninsula.*

Whenever called upon to revise toll rates or ferry fares, the Commission carefully reviews traffic and revenue projections and listens to affected members of impacted communities. It seeks to ensure customers are treated fairly, and to help them understand how tolls and fares are being used to build and operate the transportation facilities they use.

This section of the Report summarizes the Commission's activities in setting tolls and ferry fares and satisfies RCW 47.56.855, which directs the Commission to provide the Legislature an annual report regarding changes in toll rates.

### I-405 Express Toll Lanes

The I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETL) between Lynnwood and Bellevue opened in September 2015. This included conversion of the existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane to an ETL, and the addition of an ETL in each direction between SR 522 to Bellevue. Rates range from $0.75 - $10.00 and vary automatically depending on traffic volumes and speeds. This kind of tolling is referred to as "dynamic tolling" and the rates are displayed on overhead electronic signs. The 17 miles of ETLs gives drivers the option of a faster and more predictable trip, and toll revenue generated by them is dedicated in law to funding future I-405 corridor improvements.

Before the ETLs opened, this corridor experienced some of the state's worst traffic. The existing HOV lanes were often as congested as the general purpose lanes, and failed to reliably reduce traffic congestion. For example, the previous HOV lane, on average, moved traffic at 45 mph 60% of the time. Now the ETLs, on average, move traffic at 45 mph 85% of the time.

ETL use, and therefore revenue, has been much higher than expected. During the first year, nearly 14.5 million ETL trips were made, 20% more than expected. The average toll during peak hours was $2.50, with about 80% of trips costing $5.00 or less. The minimum $0.75 toll was charged for 56% of the trips and the maximum $10 toll was reached for 3% of peak hour trips. Peak hour ETL use continues to rise.

Responding to higher than expected use, WSDOT made operational adjustments that changed striping and access points, refined the variable toll rate algorithm, and added pavement markings and signage. The single-lane section between Bothell and Lynnwood, with its limited capacity, is a chokepoint that has held back overall performance.

General purpose lane peak hour performance has improved southbound compared to the prior year, and was nearly maintained in the two-lane ETL northbound. However, general purpose lane performance decreased significantly in the northbound single-lane ETL section compared to the prior year, with average travel times about 5 minutes slower.

In March 2016, upon legislative request, and after consultation with WSDOT and gathering public input, the Commission modified the hours of operation for the I-405 ETLs, going from a 24/7 operation to limiting tolling operations to 5am - 7pm on weekdays only and opening up the lanes to all vehicles on evenings, weekends, and major federal holidays. The Commission did so to maintain faster and more reliable trips for transit, carpoolers, and toll-paying customers during the busiest days of the week, while balancing traffic across all lanes on evenings and weekends when traffic volumes are much lower. These changes, which were permanently put into place on July 1, 2016, also improve consistency of HOV policies with I-405 south of Bellevue, and on SR 167.

The Commission has monitored ETL operations and tolls monthly through the first year and worked with WSDOT to identify operational problems and prioritize solutions. Although a peak-use shoulder lane project now under construction will help improve northbound flow, the Commission supports continued use of surplus revenues to complete the second ETL through to I-5 in Lynnwood.

## SR 520 Floating Bridge

On April 25, 2016, the new SR 520 Floating Bridge opened for traffic. With the opening, WSDOT shifted traffic and tolling from the old to the new bridge. Tolls will contribute $1.2 billion towards construction of the SR 520 Floating Bridge Project and will help manage congestion. To lower overall project costs, tolling began on the old bridge in December 2011 as construction began on the new bridge. Rates vary by day of week and time of day to maximize revenue and vehicle throughput, and minimize diversion to other routes.

In May 2016, after extensive review and analysis, and following public input meetings in the Puget Sound region, the Commission enacted two 5% toll rate increases effective July 1, 2016 and July 1, 2017 (FY 2017 and FY 2018), and approved an overnight (11pm – 5am) toll of $1.25 to take effect on July 1, 2017. The Pay by Mail fee was also increased to $2.00 (from $1.50) and took effect on July 1, 2016, aligning this fee for the SR 520 Floating Bridge with the other tolled facilities.

*The new SR 520 floating bridge is meeting traffic and revenue forecasts.*

**The rate increases enacted by the Commission in May 2016, resulted in the following toll rates for the SR 520 Bridge:**

| *Good To Go!* Rates | July 1, 2016 (FY 2017) | July 1, 2017 (FY 2018) |
|---|---|---|
| Peak period weekday rates (7am - 9am; 3pm - 6pm) | $4.10 | $4.30 |
| Off-peak weekday rates | $1.90 - $3.25 | $2.00 - $3.40 |
| Weekend rates & specified holidays | $1.30 – $2.50 | $1.40 - $2.65 |
| Overnight rates (11pm – 5am) | $0.00 | $1.25 |

## SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge

Scheduled increases in debt service payments require the Commission to regularly review traffic volumes and revenue collections on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB). These reviews ensure TNB tolls generate adequate revenue to make debt service payments, and to maintain and operate the facility. Debt service payments increased by 16% in FY 2016, and 15% in FY 2017.

*Traffic and congestion on the Tacoma Narrows have disappeared and safety has improved since the eastbound bridge opened 10 years ago.*

In May 2015, the Commission adopted $0.50 increases to take effect on July 1, 2015 and on July 1, 2016. However, the second year's rate was subject to review by the Commission and the TNB Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) in 2016 to consider whether the rate increase remained necessary.

The Commission consulted with WSDOT and the CAC in winter 2016. After input from the CAC and additional public comment, in May 2016 the Commission rescinded the $0.50 increase for July 1, 2016. This action was supported by higher than expected traffic volumes, a one-time $2.5 million toll subsidy approved by the Legislature to assist with FY 2017 debt service payments, and a desire to keep toll rates as low as possible while meeting obligations to cover annual costs.

In an effort to minimize toll rate increases and continually improve and advance toll policies that support fairness and equity, the Commission also has developed a proposed revision to the Sufficient Minimum Balance (SMB) policy for the TNB fund. In 2017, the Commission will work with the Legislature, Office of the State Treasurer, WSDOT, and the TNB Citizens Advisory Committee to arrive at an agreed to SMB policy.

**As approved by the Commission, the TNB toll rates that took effect on July 1, 2015 and remain in effect:**

| Toll Payment Method | Toll Rate |
|---|---|
| Transponder *Good To Go!* toll | $5.00 |
| Cash toll at the tollbooth | $6.00 |
| Pay-By-Mail rate | $7.00 |
| For all payment methods, the toll charge increases with each additional axle. | |

## SR 167 High Occupancy Toll Lanes

A pilot project begun in 2008 allows drivers of single occupancy vehicles equipped with a transponder to "buy into" the HOV lanes on SR 167 between Renton and the City of Pacific in Pierce County (12.5 miles southbound and 9 miles northbound). The toll rate is posted on electronic signs and varies based on traffic flow. The Commission has maintained the original minimum and maximum toll rates of $0.50 and $9.00.

Use of the High Occupancy Toll (HOT) Lanes continues to increase and the Legislature has extended the pilot project through the 2015-2017 biennium. The Commission supports continuing to operate the HOT lanes as a way to reduce congestion and to provide drivers a reliable trip in the SR 167 corridor.

*The price solo drivers pay to use the SR 167 High Occupancy Toll Lanes varies depending on the amount of congestion in the HOV lane.*

**Future Projects: Commission Action Summary**

| Project | 2016 Commission Engagement | Future Toll Purpose | Expected Tolling Date |
|---|---|---|---|
| SR 99 Tunnel | Traffic & Revenue Study Technical Committee | Generate $200m for project costs; cover tolling operations costs; traffic management | March 2019 |
| I-405 ETLs: Bellevue to Renton | Interagency Working & Executive Advisory Groups | Traffic management; help fund future corridor improvements | 2024 |
| SR 167 Completion (Gateway Program) | SR 167 Steering & Executive Committees | Generate $180m for Gateway Program costs; traffic management | about 2030 |
| SR 509 Completion (Gateway Program) | SR 509 Steering & Executive Committees | Generate $180m for Gateway Program costs; traffic management | about 2030 |

## Tolling Operations: Oversight and Planning

In May 2016, the Washington State Auditor's Office (SAO) released a performance audit of WSDOT's Toll Division which included recommendations on improving WSDOT's toll collection system. These recommendations followed a review of tolling operations that began in early 2015.

The SAO report included a recommendation to improve communication and engagement with key stakeholders, such as the Commission. This recommendation is in alignment with the Commission's role as the State Tolling Authority and current law which requires the Commission to "review toll collection policies, toll operations policies, and toll revenue expenditures on the eligible toll facilities and report annually on this review to the legislature." (RCW 47.56.850(1)). Following this recommendation and subsequent discussions with WSDOT's Toll Division staff, there has been improvement in the completeness and timeliness of information provided to the Commission, leading to more informed rate setting decisions.

Commissioners and Commission staff also engaged earlier and in more depth with project development for future tolling projects. This includes the SR 99 tunnel, the SR 509 & SR 167 completion projects (Gateway Program), and the proposed extension of I-405 ETLs from Bellevue to Renton.

*The Tokitae is the first of four Olympic Class ferries.*

## Ferry Fares

Ferry fares increased 1.0% on general passenger fares and 2.5% on general vehicle fares on May 1, 2016 as the second part of a two-step fare increase plan the Commission enacted in August 2015. Step two repeated fare increases implemented on October 1, 2015, in response to a 2.5% revenue increase assumed from ferry fares in the state transportation budget. Fares are projected to generate the estimated $357.2 million in ferry fare revenue required by the Legislature for the 2015-2017 biennium.

The Commission also enacted a few small changes to exemptions that took effect with the fare increases. First, the over-height surcharge was eliminated for vehicles less than 22 feet long, and the over-height waiver for qualifying disability vehicles 22 to 30 feet long extended to include any feature that may add height, as necessary to accommodate a disability. Step two reduced the over-height fare threshold for vehicles 22-30 feet long from 7 feet 6 inches to 7 feet 2 inches.

WA RUC

# Road Usage Charge Assessment

Since the Connecting Washington Task Force's 2011 recommendation that the state investigate a pay-by-the-mile funding system to eventually replace the gas tax, Washington State has invested five years and $2.7 million in legislative appropriations to support research and development of a potential Road Usage Charge (RUC) system. For more detail, see: www.waroadusagecharge.org

After determining a RUC is feasible and a viable potential revenue source, in 2015 the Commission recommended to the Legislature a demonstration (pilot) project be funded. The Legislature funded pre-implementation work in 2015 and again in 2016, and directed the Commission to actively pursue federal fund sources.

In December 2015, as part of the FAST Act, Congress created a new federal grant program as an incentive for states to test new transportation user-fee systems. The Surface Transportation System Funding Alternatives (STSFA) grant program is administered by FHWA and provides funding for up to 50% of a state's pilot project costs. For federal fiscal year 2016, a maximum of $15 million could be granted to states on a competitive basis. Over the five-year federal reauthorization period, a total of $95 million will be available for the STSFA grant program.

On August 30, 2016 FHWA granted $14.235 million in awards, with direct funding to six states (WA, HI, OR, CA, MN, MO) and two multi-state consortia (Western RUC Consortium, and I-95 Corridor Coalition). Washington received $3.847 million for FFY 2016. This amount represents 100% funding for all Stage 1 work (pilot preparation and set-up). Main features of the pilot include:

*Interoperability across the Washington and Oregon border (shown here with the Glenn L. Jackson I-205 Bridge) will be one of many aspects tested in the Road Usage Charge Pilot Program.*

- Up to 2,000 drivers from five regions in Washington State will test four different methods of recording miles (including a pre-paid mileage permit for those that don't want to report any mileage data).
- The nation's first test of international interoperability with a RUC system (City of Surrey, British Columbia has agreed to participate).
- The nation's first exchange of real money between RUC systems in Oregon and Washington State. A small number of Washington drivers will be provided a stipend to test RUC system financial interoperability.
- Special recruitment of Electric Vehicle drivers, to test RUC as an alternative to paying the current $150 flat-rate, annual vehicle registration surcharge.
- Exploring partnerships with licensing subagents to conduct manual odometer reads and reporting.
- Co-development of the RUC pilot in parallel with deployment of the Department of Licensing's new vehicle licensing IT system, allowing DOL to better map and accommodate changes for a future RUC system, and thus inform FHWA and the nation on licensing system needs.
- A "hackathon" event to develop a smartphone application capable of deducting miles driven out of state from a driver's RUC account.

The federal grant will fund all pilot design and set-up activities, enabling Washington State to move into a live pilot test in fall 2017 with additional federal funding. To carry out the pilot project and post-pilot evaluation requires further federal funding of approximately $3.6 million.

### Payment options to be tested in the Road Usage Charge Pilot Project

| Road Usage Charge Options | How miles are reported | How RUC is calculated | How RUC is paid |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mileage Permit** | Certified smartphone photo or in-person verification of vehicle odometer by authorized rep | RUC based on number of miles driver chooses to purchase, in 1,000 mile increments, reconciled with actual miles driven every 3 months | Paid up front, at time of purchasing miles |
| **Odometer Charge** | Certified smartphone photo or in-person verification of vehicle odometer by authorized rep | RUC invoice based on exact mileage driven | Pay upon receipt of invoice, after mileage driven |
| **Automated Mileage Charge** | Plug-in mileage meter records anf reports vehicle's actual mileage.<br><br>Drivers choose either GPS-enabled or simple mileage meter<br><br>TBD: Smartphone app to automatically report mileage | RUC invoice based on exact mileage driven<br><br>GPS-enabled meters automatically deduct non-taxable miles.<br><br>Smartphone app could also deduct non-taxable miles | Pay upon receipt of invoice, after mileage driven |

## Joint Work with California and Oregon

In June, the three West Coast Transportation Commissions met jointly for the first time since 2009. The three states, the leaders nationally in developing and testing the road usage charge (RUC), discussed the current status of RUC as a sustainable funding source in each of the three states. Other topics of mutual interest and concern included the testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles, and preparation and response to seismic events.

*Former Governor Gary Locke inspecting road damage in Olympia after the 6.8 magnitude Nisqually quake in 2001.*

With the joint meeting taking place only a week after Washington and Oregon participated in the Cascadia Rising simulated disaster exercise, two harsh realities became apparent: a major Cascadia Subduction Zone quake will become a national concern, and California is far better prepared for major seismic events than its neighbors to the north. The Oregon and Washington Commissions decided to jointly advocate for additional federal funds to improve seismic resiliency.

## Surveys on Public Opinions and Preferences

The Commission conducts surveys each year to provide the Governor, the Legislature, the Commission, and WSDOT clear and accurate information on public attitudes about the statewide transportation system, including perspectives on ferry operations by the people and businesses that use the ferry system.

The Ferry Riders' Opinion Group (FROG) is an online community which provides Washington State Ferry (WSF) riders an ongoing opportunity to weigh in on ferry issues through surveys and quick polls. About 8,000 people and 100 businesses participated in three Ferry Riders' Opinion Group (FROG) surveys conducted during 2016. Another 6,300 individuals responded to a statewide survey seeking to understand how residents who live on the east side of Puget Sound, the west side of Puget Sound, and who live elsewhere in the state use the WSF system.

*Sailing the Edmonds-Kingston route.*

A comparison of the results from 2016 surveys with past years indicates that customer satisfaction with WSF is stable. Overall, the reservation program is becoming more acceptable in the San Juan's (except for the ½ hour prior to loading check-in), and the state could charge more for freight shippers without losing business.

### Statewide Survey

The statewide survey, conducted in June 2016, revealed that nine in ten citizens statewide perceive WSF to be important to the general Puget Sound economy and tourism. Although non-Puget Sound residents are more likely (39%) to say that "riders only" should pay for daily operations costs, two-thirds of respondents from the entire state (67%) say daily operations should be paid for by a mix of ferry riders and everyone statewide.

### Winter Ferry Performance

An online survey in spring 2016, collected data from 3,134 ferry riders. Most respondents who ride the ferries during the winter months commute to work (28%) and visit family and friends (17%). Overall satisfaction (74%) with WSF service is strong (37% Satisfied/ 36% Extremely Satisfied) and the intensity of dissatisfaction remains very low. As in 2015, addressing "terminal bathroom cleanliness" and "clear loading crew directions" offer the greatest opportunities to improve satisfaction ratings system-wide. Comparing all routes, Fauntleroy/Vashon riders have the highest dissatisfaction level (39%).

Three-fourths of riders have used the WSF website and 83% are satisfied with their experience. Only one in ten riders have contacted WSF by phone. Most rank their experience as satisfactory.

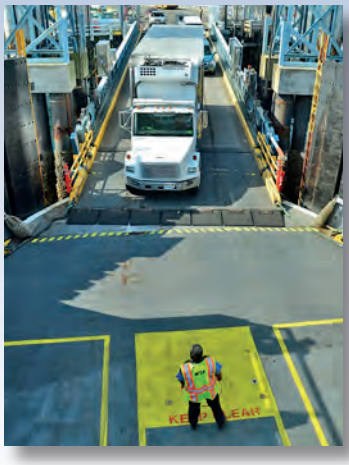
### Ferry Reservation Policy

Nearly 80% of 3,905 reservations system users are satisfied with the system, and only 13% are dissatisfied. This is a large improvement over June 2015 (67% satisfied / 21% dissatisfied). Of those who used the reservation system, 86% had no problems completing their reservation, up from 81% reporting no problems in 2015.

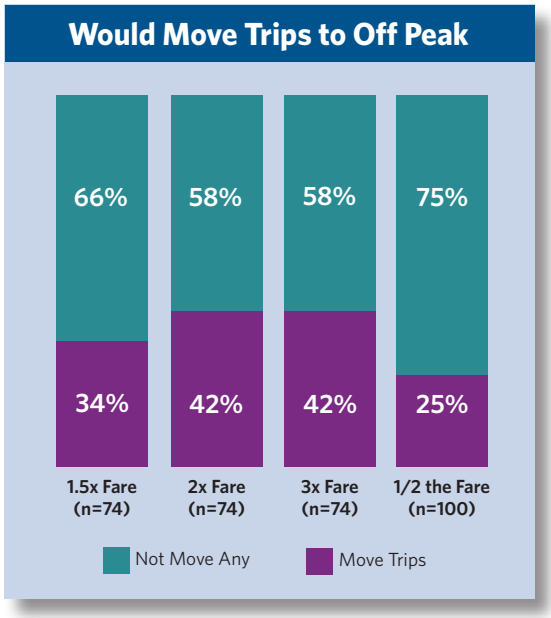
### WSF Freight Shippers Survey

Executive interviews of 100 freight shippers who use the WSF system reveals that 88% of the companies consider WSF to provide good value, and the perception of WSF as a good value has steadily increased from 2012 to 2016. In addition, more companies find WSF to be a "very good value" and none consider it a "very poor value."

Of the freight customers who use the reservation system, 89% are satisfied. Among freight customers who use Central Puget Sound ferry routes, 63% would not change their ferry usage if a reservation system for those routes were enacted, however 16% said they would increase their WSF usage.



*Washington State Ferries gets very high marks from its freight customers.*




About four in ten freight customers who travel in peak hours say they would shift trips to off-peak times if current freight vehicle fares were 1.5 to 3 times greater. A quarter of all customers indicate they would move trips to overnight if evening fares were cut in half. Most who would not take advantage of cheaper fares say they lack the flexibility to change their travel.

## Naming Transportation Facilities

The Commission is authorized to name or rename state transportation facilities, including highways, bridges, and ferries. During 2016, the Commission adopted resolutions naming a new ferry and four state highways.

In January, the Commission designated the section of State Route 16 from milepost 18 to milepost 28 the "WSP Trooper Tony Radulescu Memorial Highway." Trooper Radulescu was tragically killed during a traffic stop on February 23, 2012 while on duty on State Route 16 near Port Orchard, Washington. He left behind a son, many relatives, loved ones, friends and colleagues.

In March, the Washington State Transportation Commission named the fourth new Olympic Class 144-car ferry, the "Suquamish." This name recognizes the rich cultural and maritime history of the Suquamish Tribe in the Salish Sea. Virtually all of the contemporary Washington State Ferry system routes traverse the historically documented Suquamish canoe travel corridors.

In May, the Commission named two segments of state highways for trailblazing Washingtonians. State Route 509 in the City of Tacoma was named the "Philip Martin Lelli Memorial Highway" between Pacific Avenue and Taylor Way. This naming honors the work and commitment of the longshoreman, union activist, local philanthropist, and past president of the International Longshore Warehouse Union Local in Tacoma, who helped transform the port into the fifth largest container port in North America.

State Route 99 was designated the "William P. Stewart Memorial Highway." William P. Stewart volunteered and served honorably in the 29th US Colored Infantry Regiment during the Civil War and afterwards in Texas where his unit was deployed in response to instability in Mexico due to French intervention. He moved to Washington to farm in the late 1800s, and became a highly respected pioneer in the City of Snohomish, where his house still stands. He is buried in the Grand Army of the Republic cemetery in Snohomish along with two hundred other Civil War veterans who founded the cemetery.

*This stretch of I-5 is now a part of the "Boulevard of Remembrance" honoring those who served in World War I.*

In October, the Commission named Interstate 5 the "Boulevard of Remembrance" from milepost 116 (Mounts Road exit) to milepost 125 (McChord exit). This action commemorates the planting of 500 English, northern scarlet, and red oak trees beginning in 1928 along the Pacific Highway adjacent to Fort Lewis. Initiated by the Tacoma Garden Club, and joined in by many citizens and organizations, each tree memorialized an individual, organization, or military unit that served during World War I.

# Partners in Transportation

**While each community has unique transportation needs, challenges and successes, the consistent and pervasive need is revenue to maintain existing transportation systems and meet new needs of a changing populace. This section presents key findings from the Commission's visits to Kennewick, Marysville, Moses Lake, and Vancouver during 2016.**

## Kennewick

**1.** The Tri-Cities region is growing rapidly and evolving as an urban center for the 21st century; its population is expected to reach 458,000 by 2040. Local officials boast that the transportation system puts one, "14 minutes away from everything."

**2.** Nearly 20% of the Tri-Cities' workforce commutes 50 miles or more.

**3.** Kennewick built infrastructure for its Southridge development using Local Revitalization Financing. Southridge had a 500% return on investment in the first 5 years after construction.

**4.** Kennewick, Pasco and Richland are all working to make their communities more walkable and bike-friendly and to keep young people in the Tri-Cities. The City and Port of Kennewick are beginning the redevelopment of Vista Field, a 103-acre former airfield in the middle of the Tri-Cities. In Richland, a street design retrofit to create a connection between downtown and the riverfront may require reducing lanes on George Washington Way. Pasco adopted an ADA transition plan in 2015 and a complete streets policy in September 2016.

**5.** In Benton County, 138 miles of its 858 road miles, and in Franklin County, 85 of its 821 road miles, are built to an all-weather standard. An all-weather road system is critical for farming and agricultural processing, involving field to storage, storage to process/package, and process/package to distribution. Farming today is a year-round business with asparagus harvest in late March, pruning lasting into November, and processing and shipping throughout the year. Over 40 food processors operate in the region.

**6.** The elderly community is growing by 5% per year and Ben Franklin Transit Dial-a-Ride boardings are increasing. In 2015, Dial-a-Ride provided nearly 400,000 trips at an average cost of $35.86, compared to fixed route at $5.43. New vans must be able to carry heavier people and more riders.

*New terminal under construction at Tri-Cities Airport.*

**7.** Ben Franklin Transit has 248 vanpools in service. Of these 185 serve Hanford, saving 17.2 million road miles a year.

**8.** Freight logistics was identified 10 years ago as a growth sector for the Tri-Cities area. The Port of Benton, in partnership with the City of Richland, used $9 million Local Revitalization Financing to extend broadband, and improve the road network in North Richland. This helped to attract Preferred Freezer Services and other freight logistics businesses.

The Port of Pasco expects freight rail demand between Spokane and Portland through Pasco to nearly double by 2035. BNSF has a rail classification yard in Pasco and opened a coal spraying facility this year to apply a second sealant coat on coal trains heading into the Gorge.

*Southridge roundabout art.*

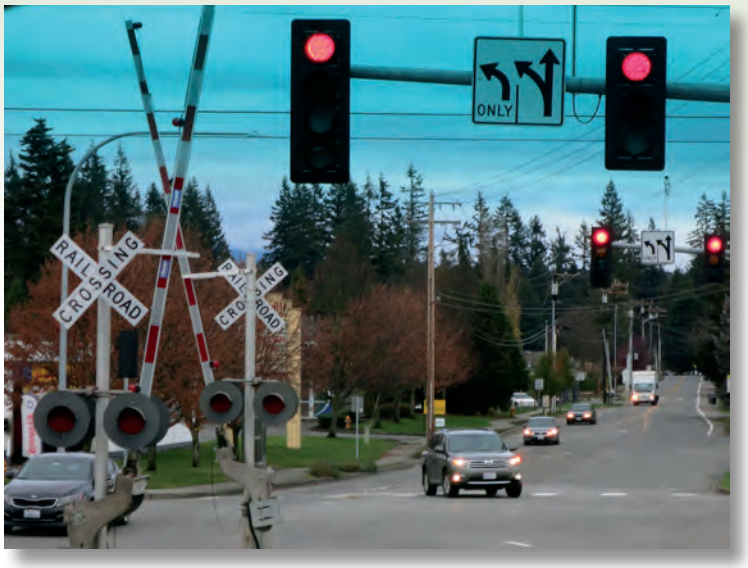
**9.** Tri-Cities Airport (PSC) is the fourth largest commercial airport in state, serving 350,000 passengers a year. The port is spending $57 million to add 3 new gates and double the size of the terminal.

**10.** The Manhattan Project National Historic Park accentuates the need for regional wayfinding. Dedicated by the National Park Service in December 2015, the historic park covers much of the Hanford Reservation and offers tours of the B Reactor, which produced plutonium used in the first atomic bombs. Attracting 12,000 - 15,000 visitors in 2016, by 2021, up to 100,000 visitors are expected. Wayfinding benefits the economy, creates a sense of place, and enhances the visitor experience.

## Marysville

1. Housing costs in King County are driving people north for homes and to find jobs. More than 80% of the workforce in North Snohomish County commutes to work. The most common work destinations are Everett and Seattle

2. Arlington and Marysville have proposed a Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC) for the area between the two cities and to the east of I-5. Served by SR 530, SR 531, and mainline rail service, the 4,100-acre area includes Arlington Airport and currently hosts 7,000 jobs. It could house 25,000 jobs by 2040. Local officials believe future jobs in the MIC would steer traffic northward, rather than sending commuters south and adding congestion.



*Multiple grade crossings pose safety and mobility challenges in Marysville.*

3. Connectivity and safety in Marysville is impacted heavily by 17 public at-grade railroad crossings and 9 private at-grade railroad crossings which currently average 18 trains per day and 70 minutes of gate down time. Up to 43 trains per day and 145 minutes of gate down time are projected by 2035. There are no grade separated crossings.

4. Every morning, drivers face a mile-long backup to get onto the SR 2 trestle westbound. The City of Lake Stevens suggests opening the road below the trestle to HOV traffic.

5. Arlington is an employment center hosting 12,000 jobs, a rate of 2.2 jobs per household. Its employers are concerned about freight mobility and employee access to work.

*Arlington's airport contributes to the strong manufacturing economy of north Snohomish County.*

6. Revenue from the Tulalip Tribes tribal fuel tax and hotel tax provides a lot of the funding for Quil Ceda village roads and the new I-5/116th Street interchange.

7. The Sauk-Suiattle Tribe began offering fixed-route bus service from the reservation to Darrington and Concrete in 2016. Stillaguamish Transit is now providing 16,000 trips a year through a Demand-Response service transporting Tribal members, clients and others in the community for a variety of trip purposes and a Vanpool/Rideshare Program offering employees a low cost, shared ride system to get to work.

8. In 2013, the Stillaguamish Tribe added SR 530 to its Indian Reservation Road (IRR) inventory.

   When the Oso mudslide occurred, because SR 530 was in the IRR inventory, the Federal Government paid 100% of the rebuild costs, saving the state and county $3 million.

9. Community Transit (CT) carries 11,000 people to Seattle each morning. Reliability and predictability of travel time is a big problem. Travel time variability from Marysville ranges from 52 minutes to 130 minutes. CT values the I-405 Express Toll Lanes, which now provide much better travel reliability for its buses traveling to Bellevue and Redmond.

10. Snohomish County Parks and Recreation provides regional trails that connect communities. The north-south Centennial Trail has been funded entirely from local funds. Seven miles of the Whitehorse Trail has been developed near Darrington and another 20 miles are coming on line.

## Moses Lake

1. The BNSF rail line bisects Ephrata. An average of 25 trains a day move through at 50 mph or more. The rail traffic poses a challenge to mobility and raises concerns about safety, hazardous materials, and disaster mitigation.

2. Grant County is responsible for 2,507 road miles, of which 1,465 miles are paved and 1,042 miles are unpaved. Pavement preservation consumes 30% of the county transportation budget.

3. Unanticipated events can disrupt local transportation movement and budgets. When a dam/road crossing built in the 1920's failed in September 2013, major economic and traffic impacts required quick action. Important to recreation and tourism activities, the road also allows large and slow moving farm equipment to avoid a 46-mile detour in moving around Moses Lake. Grant County installed a sheet pile cutoff wall at the front of the dam structure to reduce the water flow that was creating sinkholes and began design of a new dam in October 2013. Grants and partnerships helped to open a new $2.5 million bridge in May 2015.

*Grant County International Airport, operated by the Port of Moses Lake, is an economic engine for the entire state.*

4. Adams County is focused on preserving the road system it has. Although fuel tax revenue increased by 13.8% from 2002 to 2014, the inflation rate rose by 31.4%. Sealcoat oil, used in preservation projects, cost $135/ton in the late 1990's was $562/ton in 2014. After recently reviewing its entire paved road system, the county has converted 3 miles back to gravel.

5. Access to the Puget Sound ports is critical to businesses in the Moses Lake area.
   - Two large food processors in Quincy move 600 to 700 million tons of product through downtown Quincy each year. Much of it goes to Asia, through the Port of Seattle.
   - SGL Automotive Carbon Fibers runs 13 trucks incoming and 5 outgoing each week with goods coming from Japan to the Port of Tacoma to Moses Lake and back to the Port for shipment to BMW in Germany.
   - About 1/3 of all U.S. potato exports come from Washington.

6. Two-lane county roads are the most dangerous in the state with a fatality collision rate of 1.28 per 100 million vehicle miles traveled. The fatality rate for state highways is 0.58 and for city streets 0.63.

7. Grant Transit Authority (GTA) serves Moses Lake, Warden, Quincy, Ephrata, Coulee City, and Grand Coulee, and provides workers transportation to dams and food processors.

8. Built during WW II, the Port of Moses Lake airfield is among the top 60 airports in the world with a 13,500' runway and 240 acres of ramp. Boeing uses the facility for commercial flight testing and certification, aircraft and parts storage, and military aircraft flight-testing. The US Forest Service uses the airport as its forest fire attack base.

   Other tenants include:
   - Aviation Technical Services, an Everett-based company which performs aircraft maintenance and service, recycling and demolition, and interior upgrades.
   - AeroTEC, a Seattle-based aerospace testing, engineering and certification company which is testing the Mitsubishi MRJ 90 commuter jet.
   - Big Bend Community College aeronautics program.

9. Columbia Basin Railroad moves 10,000 carloads a year of inbound and outbound product, and serves 5 different Port Districts. The short line hauls commodities including frozen french fries; canola seed, canola oil, and canola meal; fertilizer; paper industry processing material; cattle feed; wheat; and container materials.

10. Sensitive to the region's tourism and agricultural economy, WSDOT schedules road work around community festivals and harvest (apple trucks delayed too long can damage the apples).

### Local Problem-Solving at Its Best

Grant County created its "Gravel to BST Priority Program" in 2001. The program contracts for earthwork, gravel surfacing, and uses county forces for BST surfacing (also known as chip seal). Under a first-come first-served cost share program, initiated by a petition from the public, over 78 miles have been completed since 1995.

The cost share portion, including liquid asphalt and cover stone, averages approximately 25% of the project cost and costs about $23,000 to $32,000 per mile. Grant County budgets $250,000 per year for the cost share program and the projects normally are 100% completed by county forces. About three projects per year are done, with 58 completed since 2001.

## Vancouver

1. About 20% of the Portland metropolitan region's population lives in Vancouver and 60,000 Clark County residents cross the I-5 bridge daily for work. Between 2011 and 2015, traffic from north of Vancouver to downtown Portland increased by 230%.

2. Vancouver enacted a "pay as you go" local street funding package in December 2015. About half of the revenue is dedicated to maintenance and preservation, with over a third for arterial upgrades, and the remainder for mobility and safety improvements.

*Camas has designed its downtown streets and sidewalks for walking and shopping.*

3. The $133 million Salmon Creek Interchange project is a multi-jurisdictional success which involved federal and state grants, a loan from the Public Works Trust Fund, funding from WSU, Legacy Medical Center, impact fees, and utility partnerships.

4. Clark County's transit agency, C-Tran is a partner in the metropolitan region's Hop Fastpass, offering easy transfers between C-Tran and e-fare partners TriMet and the Portland Streetcar.

5. C-Tran faces challenges from growth and land use decisions. Eight C-Tran routes carry commuters across the Columbia River. The congestion that slows cars also delays buses without HOV Lanes on the Clark County freeways. The region is looking at opportunities to operate buses on the shoulder.

6. The Port of Vancouver, which generates $2.9 billion in economic activity, has grown thanks to the Columbia River channel deepening project and the West Vancouver freight access. It has attracted a new grain terminal and increased Subaru operations. The Port also is redeveloping a new commercial waterfront area, Terminal 1, that will include a hotel, a farmer's market, mixed use commercial and residential development, water access, and many transportation options.

*Port of Vancouver projects have improved freight rail access and reduced Amtrak delays.*

7. Miller's Landing, a former 41-acre mill site owned by the Port of Ridgefield, provides a new public waterfront near downtown Ridgefield and builds on the existing destination recreation area. An overpass road to Miller's Landing will close the fourth and fifth most dangerous rail crossings between Eugene and Seattle.

8. Congestion in, near and around the I-5 corridor is the biggest challenge in the Vancouver and Portland region. Since 1999, a Bi-State Coordinating Committee including WSDOT, ODOT, the cities of Portland and Vancouver, Clark and Multnomah Counties, the transit agencies and ports have worked on developing solutions. Compromise will be necessary to build a new I-5 bridge.

9. Like Vancouver and Clark County, the nearby cities are growing rapidly:
   - Battle Ground's Transportation Benefit District generates $203,000 per year for preservation and safety projects, and ADA compliance through a $20 license fee. The revenue also provides a match for other funds, such as a $430,000 Transportation Improvement Board grant.
   - Camas had 5,000 people and a mill in 1982 when the I-205 bridge opened. Its population is now over 20,000. It's thriving, vibrant downtown has helped to attract businesses, new residents, and visitors.
   - Ridgefield's population is 7,000 and growing; an I-5 overpass and the industry it brought includes 2,000 jobs.
   - Washougal needs a second crossing over the BNSF mainline. Safety and access to SR 14 are important for the Port of Camas-Washougal and Washougal's town center.

10. Communities in Clark County are working to create healthier built environments. Smart Growth America ranked Battle Ground as the 10th best Complete Streets city in the nation, and bike safety is part of the physical education program in Vancouver Public Schools.

    The county's Growing Healthier Plan includes recommendations to maximize the use of healthy and sustainable transportation modes through transportation and land use policies, build neighborhoods that support active transportation, and enhance the safety and comfort of active transportation.

# Snapshot of Regional Priorities

**The legislature established Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) to build consensus on transportation priorities that address the unique needs in each region of the state. They are voluntary planning organizations in which 36 counties currently participate.**

**RTPOs benefit cities, counties, ports, transit agencies and other local governments by providing interagency coordination, technical expertise, planning assistance, and regulatory guidance related to federal and state transportation laws and requirement. RTPOs provide regional forums for WSDOT and the Transportation Commission to engage local governments and residents in statewide planning and policy development. By law and for the sake of efficiency, RTPOs in urban areas, are integrated with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to carry out federal planning requirements and disburse federal transportation funds.**

**The Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG)** is the MPO and Transportation Management Area (TMA) for the Tri-City Metropolitan Area and the RTPO for Benton and Franklin counties. Agriculture is a critical component of the regional economy.

*The Cable Bridge connecting Pasco and Kennewick is one of three bridges that tie together the Tri-Cities.*

Successes of the past year and challenges for next year include:

- An Active Transportation Plan, including a discussion of pedestrian issues and policies/practices of jurisdictions, an examination of safety and health related aspects of active transportation, and an analysis of active transportation project funding.
- Coordinating a regional traffic count program. Starting in the spring of 2016, counts were taken in approximately 630 locations, both urban and rural, in the two counties. The regional traffic count program will be repeated on a biennial basis. The data will inform the metrics used to evaluate progress on congestion management and also will be used as a tool to identify transportation investments across the region.
- Three priority local projects were partially funded through Connecting Washington, but the funds necessary to complete the projects on schedule are not yet secured.
- Despite much knowledge of the area freight economy, there are challenges in obtaining data and performing the technical analysis for a comprehensive regional freight profile.

*Public transportation is growing with population in the Tri-Cities.*

- Continuing work on the BFCG long-range plan, Transition 2040, and a companion travel demand model. The enhanced travel model, which incorporates a mode share for transit, is data rich and will be a useful tool in locating future demand on the urban street network. Transition 2040 contains goals and objectives directly aligned with performance-based planning and programming.

**Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (CDTC)** is the MPO and RTPO for a large region of diverse small cities and rural areas with the Wenatchee urban area at its center. With an economy based on agriculture and tourism, the region depends heavily on access to I-90 (42 miles eastbound through George and 70 miles westbound through Ellensburg) and the US 97 and US 2 mountain passes to access the Puget Sound region and its ports.

The CDTC's strategic transportation plan Transportation 2040 emphasizes the following challenges and opportunities:

- Adequate and ongoing funding sources to maintain the region's transportation system in a state of good repair and to reliably move agricultural commodities
- Connecting the Wenatchee urban core with neighboring cities and the state highway system by building a third access point over the Wenatchee River (or Columbia River)
- Relocating the BNSF switchyard out of downtown Wenatchee to reduce the traffic impacts of unit trains.

*Train movement in downtown Wenatchee disrupts mobility.*

**Island RTPO (IRTPO)** held its first meeting on September 28, 2016. Island County, which had been in an RTPO with Skagit County, relies exclusively on Washington State Ferries and two state routes, SR 20 and SR 532, for connections to Whidbey Island and Camano Island. IRTPO is interested in passenger ferry connections to employment centers in the Puget Sound region.

**Northeast Washington RTPO (NEW RTPO)** serves Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties. Mountain passes and river valleys provide transportation challenges in this rural area highly dependent on state highways.

*Hawthorne Dedication in Colville.*

Colville and Newport recently completed pedestrian improvements and Republic was awarded a TIB grant to complete a much-needed pedestrian facility along Knob Hill-Klondike Road. Colville completed Phase II of its Hawthorne Avenue project to include space for pedestrians and bicyclists and has received a TIB grant for a sidewalk project on US 395. Newport finished the Garden Avenue sidewalk project, which children use walking to school and parks.

**Palouse Regional Transportation Planning Organization (PRTPO)** provides transportation planning services to the cities and towns, ports, and transit agencies of Asotin, Columbia, Garfield and Whitman Counties. Clarkston and the urban portion of Asotin County are also within the Lewis-Clark Valley MPO, which includes Lewiston, Idaho.

A regional freight study identified freight movements and needed investments. A 14-week Snake River system closure is impacting freight movement beginning December 2016.

*Barge facility at the Port of Almota, Whitman County.*

Challenges PRTPO faces in updating its long-range regional transportation plan include funding to maintain and improve paved surfaces, maintaining the regional rail network, and preserving the inland waterway transportation system. Key regional projects include the Moscow Pullman Airport runway realignment and improving the Fleshman Way interchange in Clarkston.

A Palouse Driver Education Safety Campaign aims to reduce fatalities and crashes on US 195 and SR 26. Despite the Connecting Washington funding for six passing lanes on US 195 and four on SR 26 through, earlier action is sought on SR 26 passing lanes programmed for 2021 - 22.

**Peninsula RTPO** covers the jurisdictions within Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, and Mason Counties. The preservation of existing highways and roadway facilities is a priority. The challenge in delivering major projects is funding. While the concept and need is well-stated in all cases, the lack of available local, state and federal funding, coupled with the need to put locally generated dollars to immediate local use, often prevents the accumulation and availability of matching funds. This puts larger projects at the mercy of state and federal dollar availability. The region has strong public transportation systems and they note the need for a dedicated funding source to meet the alternative fuel vehicle requirement by 2018 (RCW 43.325.080).

Recent successes include:

- SR 3 corridor improvements in Mason County and widening and safety improvements in the Belfair area
- SR 108 fish barrier removal
- Completion of administration facilities for Jefferson Transit Authority and Mason Transit Authority
- Park and Ride development by local agencies in preparation of the Belfair Bypass design
- The Gorst Area highway improvement planning and public process.

*SR 3 looking north. New signal at Belfair Elementary School.*

**Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)** is the MPO and RTPO for King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties, a region whose economy has seen unprecedented job growth – job growth that has met a transportation system too often unprepared. Since 2010 the region has added almost 300,000 new jobs. During that time traffic congestion also is up: by 92% on I-5 and by 94% on I-405. In 2016 the PSRC region's population surpassed four million. Five million people are expected by 2040.

*First train arriving at UW Station.*

Transportation is the top priority of the people of the region and its elected leadership. Significant investments have been made to get better prepared and thanks to action by state leaders and voters in 2015 and the region's voters in 2016, more help is on the way. Over 436 transportation projects currently underway in the region are part of a coordinated three-year $5.6 billion investment program.

Milestones in 2016 included the opening of light rail service between downtown Seattle and the University of Washington, connecting two of the state's largest employment centers with a reliable eight-minute trip. The new connection led to the redeployment of buses, improving the frequency and reliability of Metro service for an additional 80,000 Seattle residents. In the fall, Sound Transit opened light rail service to Angle Lake, south of Sea-Tac Airport.

*I-90 is the unifying backbone connecting Adams, Grant, Kittitas, and Lincoln Counties.*

Also, the new SR 520 floating bridge connecting Medina to Montlake opened in 2016 – replacing a fragile structure, and adding lanes, shoulders, and access for bikes and pedestrians. On I-90, work is progressing to prepare for light rail: completion of the outside HOV lanes will allow light rail construction to start on the center roadway in 2017. Significant progress has been made toward completing Seattle's Mercer Corridor, and HOV lanes through Tacoma on I-5, including the replacement of the Puyallup River Bridge on I-5. At the end of 2016, Bertha, the SR 99 tunnel boring machine, has progressed over 1.2 miles under downtown Seattle for potential completion in early 2019.

The region's voters approved Sound Transit 3 in November 2016. This long-term funding plan will complete the light rail spine to Everett, Tacoma and Downtown Redmond; build light rail to West Seattle and Ballard; build bus rapid transit service in the I-405 and SR 522 corridors; and significantly expand regional bus and park and ride capacity in the region. Kitsap County voters also made history by approving funding for fast passenger service between the peninsula and Seattle – the first service is expected to start in July 2017.

In total, these investments move the region a long way toward implementing the region's long range transportation plan, Transportation 2040. At least 25% of the new investments in the plan are now funded. Priorities remaining are additional funding for city streets, county roads and local transit; near-term operational improvements that can provide congestion relief in state freeway corridors; and building an integrated regional transit network built around the approved Sound Transit system.

*Road projects in Skagit County and throughout Western Washington frequently involve improvements to fish passage, such as on Lake Creek.*

**Quad County RTPO (QUADCO)** comprises the counties, cities and towns of Adams, Grant Kittitas, and Lincoln Counties, covering an area of 9,214 square miles. Construction progresses on I-90, the unifying backbone of QUADCO, and the remaining phases of the I-90 Snoqualmie Pass improvements project have been fully funded by the 2015 Connecting Washington package.

Another state-funded priority for this agricultural hub is rehabilitation of the rail lines for the Port of Moses Lake, the Port of Warden, and the Palouse River and Coulee City Railroad.

QUADCO recently updated its Regional Transportation Plan, emphasizing projects that make travel safer and projects that preserve and extend the life of previous transportation system investments. QUADCO's vision is to achieve and maintain safe, reliable, and cost effective transportation options for the people, goods, and services throughout the QUADCO region.

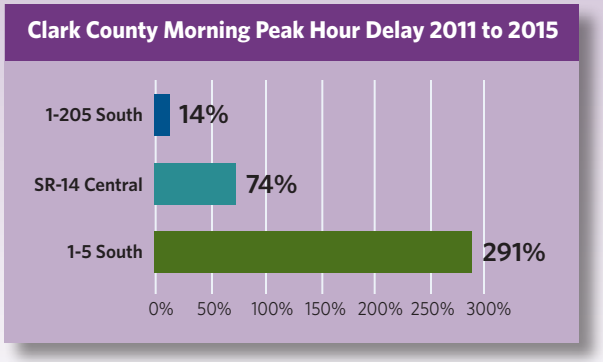
**Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG)** is the MPO and RTPO for Skagit County and its cities, towns, transit agency, tribes, and ports. Preservation and maintenance of existing roadways and services is the primary challenge facing the region. Years of deferred maintenance have placed Skagit County jurisdictions in difficult funding situations and some have begun implementing their own funding mechanisms rather than relying on state or federal grants. In 2016, voters in the City of Mount Vernon elected to implement a transportation benefit district.

Like many other regions in the state, at-grade railroad crossings pose a major transportation challenge. The Skagit Rail Crossing Study completed early in 2016 helped to identify and assess potential strategies at key railroad crossings. The crossings on Cook Road, College Way, and SR 20 are the highest priorities for grade separation or intelligent transportation systems.

In 2016, SCOG approved the Skagit 2040 Regional Transportation Plan, which identifies prioritized regional projects through 2040. One top priority is identifying and securing long-term funding for Skagit Transit's regional connector service, so it is not dependent on grants or earmarks.

**The Regional Transportation Council (RTC)** is the MPO for Clark County and the RTPO for Clark, Klickitat, and Skamania Counties. Planning for growth within the region was a major focus in 2016, a year that most jurisdictions in Clark County updated their Growth Management Act (GMA) comprehensive plans. Over the next two decades, Clark County's population may increase by 28%, to over 577,000 persons, and employment could grow by 58%, to over 230,000 jobs. This amount of growth is stressing the region's transportation network and driving a search for innovative and lower cost strategies to meet transportation demands.

Along the region's major road and transit networks, the RTC's annual congestion monitoring report found that conditions on major corridors have significantly deteriorated in the last five years, concurrent with the rebound in the economy and population growth. To little surprise, the report found that the two interstate corridors serving the four-county region were both the most highly traveled (I-205) and most acutely congested (I-5) within the bi-state area. In response to this report, various regional agencies have initiated an assessment of near term opportunities for low-cost system operations or service enhancements including:




- shoulder running bus operations as part of a regional and bi-state feasibility study
- review of using on-ramp meters along the interstate and state routes within the County
- approval of grant funds for I-5 corridor specific operations study to lay the groundwork for system enhancements on important regional commute corridors.

Jurisdictions in the three counties continue to move ahead on Complete Streets policies and programs. The City of Battle Ground won national recognition as a standout city for implementing a Complete Streets ordinance and program.

Within Skamania and Klickitat counties, priorities include regional economic development and bi-state transportation needs. Conversations address regional and cross-river circulation and bridge maintenance needs, and planning for a more connected regional transit service, including medical transportation services.

**Southwest Washington RTPO** covers a five county area (Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum) with diverse transportation needs. The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) staffs both the RTPO and the bi-state Longview-Kelso-Rainier MPO. The biggest challenge facing the region is identifying funding to maintain and preserve the existing transportation network.

*Heavy truck traffic frequents I-5 in Kelso.*

During 2016, the region focused on roadways, active transportation, public transportation, and freight mobility -- the four emphasis areas identified in the current Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). A regional assessment of bike and pedestrian facilities supports efforts to build upon the RTP's active transportation element. A comprehensive and coordinated public outreach process brought forth the uniqueness of the five counties: the transportation issues, the demographics, and the geographic limitations vary as much as the transportation networks in each county. Acknowledging those differences, CWCOG worked with each county's stakeholders to develop regional long-range strategies for active transportation, public transportation, and roadways for the 2045 RTP.

**Spokane Regional Transportation Council** is the MPO and RTPO for the Spokane County area. In 2016, the City of Spokane had its largest construction season ever with 35 capital projects and $74 million in construction citywide. WSDOT also was busy planning and constructing North Spokane Corridor (NSC) projects, including completion of a roundabout at Wellesley Avenue and Freya Street prior to the construction of the NSC interchange at Wellesley. The NSC is now fully funded through the Connecting Washington package.

*Spokane Transit buses waiting for students at Eastern Washington University.*

Spokane Transit Authority (STA) had a banner year. In November voters approved a two-step sales tax increase (a 0.1% increase goes into effect April 1, 2017, and a second 0.1% becomes effective April 1, 2019) which will enable service to increase by 25% throughout the region, including expanded hours. The revenue also will fund 25 projects, such as a West Plains Transit Center at the Medical Lake interchange on I-90, expansion of service on in Spokane Valley, and new park-and-ride lots at Liberty Lake, Mirabeau Park, Moran Prairie and Spokane Community College. Connecting Washington also provided $15 million for STA's Central City Line, a six-mile electric bus transit route through downtown Spokane to Spokane Community College.

The region also made progress on bicycling and walking. Walk Bike Bus Spokane, an individualized marketing program that encourages residents to use active transportation, was implemented in the Garland neighborhood. Walking trips in the Garland neighborhood made a statistically significant increase and bike and transit trips also moved in a positive direction.

**Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC),** the single-county MPO and RTPO for the Thurston County region, provides regional transportation planning for one of the fastest growing regions in the state. Current population tops 272,000, and 120,000 more residents are expected by 2040.

In 2016, TRPC adopted the What Moves You 2040 Regional Transportation Plan. It addresses changing population demographics, improving travel mode split,

main street highways, high capacity transportation, and changing technology. The plan is supported by a new regional transportation model which incorporates the results of a recent household travel survey, and increases the ability to model truck travel and examine bike, pedestrian, carpool, vanpool, and park and ride usage. The model also better integrates with the Puget Sound Regional Council's model and provides more detailed information on traffic flows between surrounding counties.

*JBLM Traffic.*

JBLM traffic congestion limits personal and freight mobility and could impact military operations. TRPC and local jurisdictions are working with the South Sound Military & Communities Partnership and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) to encourage alternative means of commuting and capture all possible efficiencies on the I-5 Corridor. In 2017, this partnership will bring the need for a Thurston County I-5 Corridor plan to the state Legislature.

**The Walla Walla Valley MPO/RTPO** is responsible for coordinating transportation investments in northeastern Umatilla County, Oregon, Walla Walla County, Washington, and the cities within. In 2016, the region completed its 2040 Plan, outlining policies and projects to guide long-term investments in the transportation system. The 2040 Plan projects $794 million to be available for basic maintenance of infrastructure and the implementation of 117 roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle projects, and 44 transit improvements; 165 priority improvements remain unfunded and an additional $360.7 million is needed for better maintenance.

Important road projects completed in 2016 include reconstruction of College Avenue/Rose Street, transforming the City of College Place's main street corridor, and the City of Walla Walla's rehabilitation of Alder Street and Chestnut Street. The RTPO will begin work in 2017 to develop a Blue Mountain regionwide trails plan.

**Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)** is the MPO for the Bellingham urban area and the RTPO for Whatcom County. While the State benefits greatly from $16 billion in trade through the "Cascade Gateway" – the four ports-of-entry Whatcom shares with British Columbia -- the associated traffic places enormous strain on the transportation network. WCOG's International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) Program aims to mitigate the impacts of over 12 million vehicles crossing the border through the Cascade Gateway. IMTC projects include the Border Freight Operations study, the Dynamic Border Management project, B.C. Highway 11 NEXUS lane improvements, and an assessment of northbound bus traffic at the SR 543 port-of-entry.

*One of the four border crossings in Whatcom County.*

The region's three principal regional transportation challenges are:

- West Horton Road multi-modal corridor extension, phase 2 – creating an east-west, multi-modal connection in fast-growing north Bellingham;
- I-5 Exit 274 interchange design and construction, an $11.8 million "practical solution" to eliminate the back-up onto I-5 of Canada-bound tractor-trailers using the Pacific Highway crossing; and
- Lincoln Creek Transportation Center, a park-and-ride and regional transit center that needs surface improvements and new storm water management infrastructure.

Nearly 900 new participants joined the nationally-recognized Whatcom Smart Trips program in 2016, bringing participation over the 10-years of the program to more than 18,000. Smart Trip diary entries track walking, bicycling, ridesharing, and riding the bus, helping to increase awareness of travel mode choices.

**Yakima Valley Council of Governments** is the MPO for the Greater Yakima metropolitan area and the RTPO for Yakima County. The Connecting Washington funding package is making possible a number of vital connections: A new "East-West Corridor" over the Yakima River to unite the community of Terrace Heights with central Yakima; the final missing link of a bicycle and pedestrian paved pathway over 20 miles long stretching from the Town of Naches to the City of Union Gap; and I-82 interchange improvements.

*The Yakima-Ellensburg Commuter benefits students attending Central Washington University.*

Communities throughout the region are using Transportation Benefit Districts to maintain and preserve the Valley's infrastructure investments despite gaps in state and federal transportation dollars. Future challenges include exploring the need for expanding regional public transportation, and enhancing strategic freight improvements to meet the needs of the agricultural economy.

**Okanogan and San Juan Counties** are the two counties not included in an RTPO. In Okanogan County wildfire recovery and preparedness is a major issue with transportation aspects. The short line for freight rail is important for sustaining industrial development and employment.

Ferry service, and connections to ferry service, dominate transportation issues in San Juan County. Without public transportation on the islands, the WSF reservation system and multimodal connections to and from the ferry terminal in Anacortes are growing in importance.

# Commission Facts

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Key Facts

The Washington State Transportation Commission is composed of seven members appointed by the Governor for six-year terms. The Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation and a representative from the Governor's Office are ex officio members of the Commission.

The Commission provides a public forum for transportation policy development. It reviews and assesses how the transportation system works across the state, and develops and issues a 20-year statewide transportation plan. The Commission also serves as the state tolling authority, adopting all state highway tolls and setting ferry fares.

### Current Responsibilities in Detail

#### Washington Transportation Plan

Every four years, the Commission recommends to the Legislature a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation plan. The plan must be consistent with the state's growth management goals and is based upon transportation policy goals adopted by the Legislature. It addresses local, regional and statewide needs, including multimodal transportation planning.

#### State Highway Tolling and State Ferry Fares

As the state's tolling authority, the Commission adopts tolls for the SR 520 Bridge, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge, the I-405 Express Toll Lanes, the SR 167 HOT Lanes, and any future authorized toll facilities. The Commission also sets fares and pricing policies for Washington State Ferries (WSF).

#### Ferry Customer Survey & Statewide Surveys

The Commission is required to conduct a ferry customer survey every two years. Surveys are conducted via the Ferry Riders Opinion Group (FROG) survey panel. Data gathered is used to help inform the level of service, operational, pricing, planning, and investment decisions for the state ferry system. The Commission also conducts statewide surveys via the Voice of Washington State (VOWS) survey panel. Surveys are typically conducted once a year to gather citizen input on transportation system needs, priorities, and funding approaches.

#### Policy Guidance

The Commission offers the Governor and the Legislature policy guidance on key issue areas including but not limited to:

- Transportation finance and funding.
- Preserving, maintaining and operating the statewide transportation system.
- Transportation infrastructure needs.
- Transportation efficiencies to improve service delivery and intermodal coordination and connectivity.
- Improved planning and coordination among transportation agencies and providers.
- Use of intelligent transportation systems and other technology based solutions.

#### Public Involvement and Outreach

The Commission conducts its public outreach through meetings held in Olympia and communities throughout the state each year, and through its two survey panels. Meetings held outside of Olympia focus on local and regional transportation issues and challenges. The Commission also convenes periodic regional forums to gather citizen input on transportation issues.

#### Transportation Innovative Partnerships Program

The Commission may solicit concepts or proposals for eligible public private partnership (PPP) projects. In consultation with the Governor, the Commission may execute, reject or continue negotiations on proposed PPP.

#### Route Jurisdiction Transfer Program

The Commission is required to consider and act upon possible additions, deletions, or other changes to the state highway system. The Commission receives, reviews, and evaluates petitions from cities, counties, or WSDOT requesting changes to the state highway system. Once the review is done, the Commission makes a final finding and forwards its recommendation to the Legislature for final action in law.

#### Naming State Highways and Bridges

The Legislature has authorized the Commission to name state transportation facilities, including highways, bridges, ferry vessels and rest areas. Naming requests may come from the legislature, community organizations, state and local governments, or an individual. The Commission carefully considers community support and consults with WSDOT before naming any transportation facility or ferry vessel.

#### Studies, Projects, and Multi-State Efforts

- The Commission received a $3.8 million federal grant to prepare for a road usage charge pilot project expected to begin fall 2017.
- The Commission confers and collaborates with the Oregon and California transportation commissions on initiatives of common interest, including road usage charging, federal funding, and freight movement. This includes authoring letters to their collective congressional delegations on matters of top priority.
- Preparations are underway for a Statewide Transportation Survey of the VOWS panel and a random telephone sample. It will be completed by January 2017.

# Commissioners

**Jerry Litt,** Chairman, Douglas County

Jerry brings the Commission 40 years' experience in planning and community development. He served as the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Lacey for 13 years and 10 years with Douglas County. He has mid-management experience in Spokane and Chelan Counties and has done private sector consulting throughout Eastern Washington. His experience includes responsibility for a full-range of Planning and Community Development services, including public participation in Douglas County's award winning GMA public involvement program and the City of Lacey's "Designing Downtown 2000" program. He has also been involved with state-wide issues through the Washington City Planning Director's Association as an executive board member and Transportation Improvement Board member. As past president of the Washington County and Regional Planning Director's Association he has built a long history and awareness of community infrastructure needs and economic development at the forefront. Jerry is currently the office principal of a consulting firm in Wenatchee. Jerry was appointed by Governor Gregoire in 2011. Term expires June 30, 2017.

**Roy Jennings,** Vice Chairman, Clark County

Roy brings to the Commission over 30 years of hands on experience in the field of transportation. He served on the Board of Directors for the Clark County Public Transportation Benefit Area (CTRAN), the local transit agency in Clark County for over six years. Roy is currently the president of the Amalgamated Transit Union Legislative Council of Washington State and the Secretary-Treasurer of the Southwest Washington Central Labor Council. He also serves as Treasurer of the Southwest Washington Roundtable and is also a member of the Executive Board of the Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757. In 1976 Roy enlisted in the United States Marine Corps, and after 20+ years of honorable service he retired as a Staff Non-Commission Officer (SNCO.) In 1997 Roy and his family moved to Southwest Washington (Vancouver) where he has lived for the last 18 years. He worked full-time as a coach operator for CTRAN. He is a graduate of the Labor Education and Research Center, University of Oregon. Roy was appointed by Governor Inslee in 2014. Term expires June 30, 2019.

**Anne Haley,** Walla Walla County

Anne comes to the Transportation Commission with a breadth of experience serving on private, public, and nonprofit boards and commissions, and 30 of years' experience managing public libraries in Washington. She is currently Chairman of the Board of Directors of Brown & Haley, Tacoma. As Chairman of the Washington State Library Commission, she guided the Washington State Library's merger into the Office of Secretary of State in 2002. She was President of the Washington Library Association and Pacific Northwest Library Association, and Counselor-at-Large of the American Library Association. In Walla Walla, she founded Project Read, sat on the Sherwood Trust Advisory Committee, and has served on the boards of various community organizations. After retiring from the Yakima Valley Library in 2002, she returned to school and earned a BFA degree. Anne was appointed by Governor Gregoire in 2011 for a partial term and reappointed in 2012. She resigned effective December 31, 2016..

**Joe Tortorelli,** Spokane County

Joe is an economic development consultant with over 30 years of experience working with cities, counties and ports interested in growing their local economy by creating jobs and private sector capital investment. He began his career with Washington Water Power Co., now Avista Corp., after attending Eastern Washington University. He has led numerous boards on economic development over the years and serves on a variety of local boards such as the Spokane Area Workforce Development Council, the SRTC and the Spokane Area Good Roads Association. Joe has lived in Spokane all of his life and is an avid cyclist and snow skier. Joe was appointed to the Commission by Governor Gregoire in 2011 and reappointed by Governor Inslee in 2014. Term expires June 30, 2020.

**Hester Serebrin,** King County

Hester is a Policy Analyst at Transportation Choices Coalition, a statewide organization working to bring Washingtonians more affordable, sustainable, and reliable transportation choices that connect them with jobs, housing, education, and each other. She regularly works with a broad coalition of partner organizations to develop transportation policy recommendations that focus on improving health and equity outcomes. Hester is a member of the PSRC Transportation Policy Board, PSRC Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, PSRC Regional TOD Advisory Committee, and PSRC Transit Access Working Group. She received her Bachelor's degree from Reed College in 2004, and completed her Master's degree in Public Administration at the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance in 2016. She is a two-time winner of the Women's Transportation Seminar Senator Scott White Memorial Scholarship. Hester was appointed by Governor Inslee in 2015. Term expires June 30, 2021.

**Debbie Young,** San Juan County

Debbie brings 30 years of management, negotiation and natural resources experience to the Commission. She has served on a number of boards and councils, including being elected to the National Hydropower Association Board, serving as the Chairman of the Nisqually River Council and as a council member for over 15 years, serving on the Tahoma Land Conservancy, and the Forterra Board of Directors. Served as President of the Association of Power Biologists and is a graduate of the Washington State Agriculture Forestry Leadership program. She has worked in the utility industry for over 20 years, serving as the Natural Resources Manager for Tacoma Power managing the federal licensing process for the City of Tacoma's hydroelectric projects. Early in her career she taught sciences at the community college level, and worked as a field biologist and naturalist. She currently resides on Lopez Island where she and her husband operate a small diversified farm providing meat and specialty food products to customers in the Puget Sound region. Debbie was appointed by Governor Inslee in 2015 for a partial term and reappointed in 2016. Term expires June 30, 2022.

**Shiv Batra,** King County

Shiv has played a key role in establishing INCA Engineers' unparalleled reputation in the professional Architectural/Engineering (A/E) community. INCA a US based consulting firm that provides civil, structural, hydraulic, mechanical, electrical engineering and surveying services to public and private clients. Shiv has been a prominent advocate and active member of the US engineering community for more than three decades. He is currently a member of numerous professional organizations that serve the engineering and construction industries. He has also served terms as president, special consultant, committee chair, and board member for these organizations. In these roles, he has been successful in promoting membership, technology transfer, civic, and professional development activities at the local, regional, national, and international levels. He and his wife are very active in many local and international non-profit organizations. Shiv was appointed by Governor Inslee in January 2016. Term expires June 30, 2019.

The Commission thanks Anne Haley for her service as a Transportation Commissioner from 2011 to 2016, including the Chairmanship from 2014 to 2016. A businesswoman, public servant for over 30 years, and a community leader in her adopted hometown of Walla Walla, Commissioner Haley was especially proud of her community's vote to establish a Transportation Benefit District (TBD). Pictured here is work improving Alder Street in Walla Walla. This project in front of the Walla Walla Library that Anne Haley headed for 20 years is not funded by the TBD, but it is the type of street repair that has generated support for TBDs in Walla Walla and other communities across the state.

## Photo Credits

Paul Parker; WSDOT Photo Library; Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council; City of Kennewick; City of Walla Walla; King County Department of Transportation; NEW RTPO; Port of Almota; Skagit Council of Governments; Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments; Spokane Regional Transportation Council; Whatcom Council of Governments; Yakima Valley Council of Governments

## Acknowledgments

The Commission appreciates the ideas and comments from all who have contributed to this Annual Report. Graphic design work is by Cheri Huber Design, Tenino.

Washington State
Transportation Commission

P.O. Box 47308
Olympia, WA 98504-7308
360.705.7070
**www.wstc.wa.gov**