Washington State
Transportation Commission

Picking Up the Pieces

2019 Reflections and Recommendations

Message from the Chair

Reliable, safe, and cost-effective transportation is central to Washington's quality of life and strong economy. Over the last 16 years, beginning with the 2003 "Nickel" package, the state and many local governments have invested in major improvements in highways, transit, and rail to keep pace with a growing population and economy. While our state faces challenges and even setbacks from time to time that threaten our ability to address ongoing maintenance of highways and bridges, operate our ferry system effectively, provide tax payers with modal choice, and achieve incremental congestion relief, we must stay focused on achieving planned investments and continually work at identifying sustainable approaches to delivering them.

Regardless of the outcome of I-976, its passage is telling and it indicates critical messages we must heed as public officials. The time has come to dedicate ourselves to reassessing our approaches to funding the transportation system holistically at the state and local level. We must work to identify sustainable funding approaches, while working to streamline and simplify them by drawing clearer lines between the purpose of a tax or fee, and its use. And, we must identify ways in which we can increase tax equity and fairness.

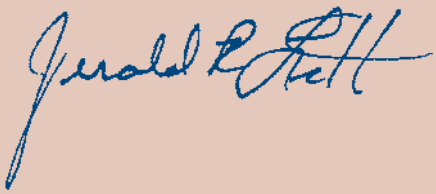
Fortunately, this work has begun. Over the last year, the Transportation Commission has issued "2040 & Beyond" – a 20-year roadmap to advancing transportation statewide at all levels; the Legislature has initiated a system-wide transportation needs assessment; the Department of Transportation has started updating the state's Highway System Plan; and the Commission has concluded over seven years of research and testing of road usage charging as a possible replacement to the gas tax.

So, how should we move forward from where we are today? The entire Transportation Commission joins with me in recommending the following path:

- Put preservation and resiliency of the existing transportation system first and fully fund it.
- Prepare for declining gas tax revenue in the future by starting a gradual transition towards road usage charging – a funding approach that could shore up gas tax revenues as they begin to decline, and eventually replace the gas tax in the future.
- Determine the state's role in transit and enact a new, dedicated, and sustainable state revenue source to address those needs and the long-term needs of the ferry system.
- Identify a coordinated approach to funding and removing culverts and fish passage barriers.
- Identify opportunities to increase efficiencies in state programs, collaborate on state and local solutions to reduce congestion, and more actively leverage state assets to attract private sector investments in making our system work for everyone.

Washington's future is at stake and while the challenges we face can be daunting, this is an opportunity to learn, listen, and adapt. If we continue to do what we have always done, we will always get the same result.

Sincerely,



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Recommendations

The Lyons Ferry Bridge, which crosses the Snake River as SR 261, is only 20' wide and functionally obsolete. The trestle previously spanned the Columbia River at Vantage. The Union Pacific Joso Bridge is on the left.

The Transportation Commission proposes policies to further a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation system for our state. The Commission is directed[1] to provide the Governor and the Legislature policy guidance in key issue areas, including:

- ***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;***
- ***Use of intelligent transportation systems and other technology-based solutions.***

As in past years, insufficient investment in basic preservation and maintenance is a major short-term concern. Looking farther into the future, when the Commission updated the state's long-range transportation plan, Washington Transportation Plan 2040 and Beyond, we emphasized the need to address three important topics: resiliency, technology, and funding. What the Commission heard during 2019 validates the emphasis on those topics.

Resiliency. Washington's transportation system faces risks from seismic forces we understand better each year. Our state made a significant step toward reducing seismic risk this year by replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct with the SR 99 tunnel. Fires and floods – both more frequent and more severe with changing climate – are a major hazard and a growing problem. In their aftermath, roads and railroads are susceptible to landslides and communities are isolated.

Technology. The transition from transportation modes powered by fossil fuels to cars, planes, boats and trains powered by electricity and other fuels draws nearer each year. From the testing and deployment of autonomous vehicles to the opportunities that broadband technology can bring to rural residents, the nexus of transportation and technology looms large.

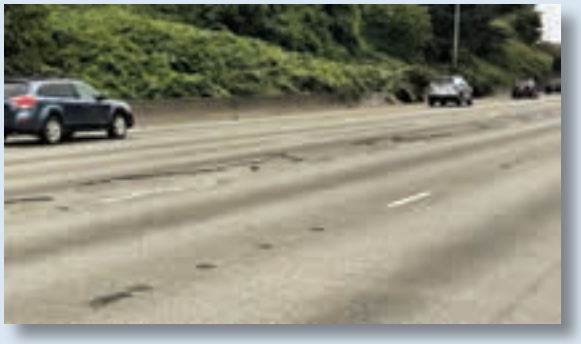
Funding. At both the local and state level, we are not spending enough to keep the existing transportation system in good repair, let alone make investments needed to respond to growth, to address congestion, to improve fish passage, and to keep freight moving. Current ways of funding transportation are not sustainable, whether for roads or other modes.

This section of the 2019 Reflections and Recommendations provides policy guidance and recommendations for the Governor and Legislature on the topics identified by RCW 47.01.075. We also single out the need to improve safety on our streets and roads.

[1] RCW 47.01.071 and RCW 47.01.075

Put Preservation and Resiliency First

Preservation and maintenance of the transportation system is underfunded almost everywhere in the state. A 2019 report to the Joint Transportation Committee indicated that city preservation funding falls short by about $1 billion annually[2]. The $690 million WSDOT receives annually for preservation and maintenance is less than half of what it needs. Add to that figure $1.5 billion WSDOT needs to minimize and avoid catastrophic bridge failures by strengthening bridges and structures to better withstand earthquakes.



Pavement damage on I-5 southbound.

Many transit agencies also cannot keep pace with capital needs. Whether repairing roads or maintaining buses or ferry vessels, scrimping on preservation and maintenance results in a less reliable, less resilient system and higher costs over time.

Preservation also costs more today. Much of the increase is due to higher material costs and more vehicles on the road. In addition, the mandatory requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which improve mobility for many people, can sometimes double project costs. And recently, homeless encampments in the transportation right-of-way have become a challenging multi-jurisdictional and multi-agency maintenance issue.

Transportation Finance: Move Forward on a Road User Charge and Multi-Modal Funding

Gradually move forward on a Road User Charge to replace the gas tax

As vehicles become more fuel-efficient, Washington will be unable to continue to rely on the gas tax as a viable long-term funding source for transportation. The gas tax provides approximately 46% of all revenue supporting the state's transportation budget. About 1/2 of the gas tax is currently pledged for repayment of bonds, with the burden projected to steadily increase over the next decade.

As revenue collections fall short of the forecasted amounts, the impacts will fall heaviest on programs such as maintenance, operations, and safety improvements. Because WSDOT and local transportation agencies already are unable to adequately fund preservation, maintenance, and safety, the problem will grow as time goes on.

A Road Usage Charge (RUC) is one of the more promising options if Washington wishes to strengthen roadway funding on a user-pays basis. A RUC is a direct user fee like the charges we pay for water, wastewater, and electricity. Unlike tolling, which funds specific facilities or corridors, a RUC provides funding for the entire roadway network.

Raising the gas tax to make up for expected revenue shortfalls increases inequities among drivers. The principle behind user-fee approaches to funding public infrastructure and services is that people should pay for what they use. By increasing the gas tax to make up for shortfalls in funding needs, the tax burden shifts further to those who do not (or cannot afford) to drive newer and more fuel-efficient gas, diesel or electric vehicles.

Unless Congress takes action at the national level[3], a gradual transition to RUC in Washington State, over a 10 to 25 year period, is necessary for a variety of reasons, including:

- Outstanding bond obligations;
- Changing vehicle fleet (MPG increases and electric vehicle adoption rate);
- Need to harmonize with state's current advanced technology vehicle programs and policies;
- Need for further improvements in a RUC system before it is ready for full deployment as a replacement for the state gas tax;
- Advances underway in other states implementing RUC.

Should the Legislature decide to begin to implement a RUC in Washington, the Commission recommends it take a gradual approach, including a start-up phase to help inform a transition plan before there is broad, fleetwide adoption in the future. A start-up phase should include vehicles that pay little or no gas tax: plug-in electric and hybrid vehicles, which currently pay flat annual fees regardless of miles driven. This will allow the state to continue to develop and test a RUC for at least five years before considering fleetwide implementation. Include state-owned vehicles in the start-up phase to test:

- New approaches to privacy protection;
- RUC compliance and enforcement;
- Travel between states;
- Opportunities to reduce operational costs; and
- Improving the driver experience in transitioning away from the gas tax.

[2] Assessment of City Transportation Funding Needs, June 2019

[3] Congress has authorized $95 million in grant funds for states to demonstrate alternative revenue mechanisms based on user fees.

Key state policies and considerations needed for a RUC system

- Implement privacy protection measures in state law specific to a RUC system.
- Restrict RUC revenues to highway-related expenditures by making RUC subject to the 18th Amendment of the Washington Constitution.
- Current programs that receive gas tax refunds attributable to non-highway activities should continue receiving their same share of funding during the transitional period to RUC (expected to be at least 10 to 25 years), since the state gas tax will remain in place during this transition.

Columbia County Public Transportation waits at the Courthouse.

Continue researching key topics over the next couple of years

- Assess potential equity impacts of RUC on communities of color, low-income households, rural communities, vulnerable populations, and displaced communities.
- Continue assessing RUC on a broader scale including testing new mileage reporting options, assessing different approaches to RUC rate-setting and how to maximize compliance.
- In collaboration with other states, conduct additional research on different approaches to reducing administrative and operational costs of RUC, assess how RUC would be applied efficiently to cross-border travel and assess compliance gaps and potential enforcement measures.

Determine the state's role in transit and enact a new, dedicated, and sustainable state revenue source to address those needs and the long-term needs of the ferry system

State interests in public transportation include maintaining the mobility and safety of the transportation network, reducing carbon emissions, improving the health of citizens and communities, and supporting state initiatives in energy and environment. State ferries also function as part of the public transportation network.

Three specific areas of state involvement in public transportation stand out:

- Key Transportation Corridors: Transit service in congested corridors benefits the state by increasing the person-carrying capacity of state highways, freeing up room for freight and other non-commuter vehicles. State funding partnerships with local transit agencies, coordinated with additional investment in High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, Express Toll Lanes (ETL), and other operational changes, can reduce the need for more costly capital approaches to improve performance on heavily traveled state corridors.
- Special Needs Transportation: Public transit agencies provide most of the lifeline transportation services and paratransit trips in the state, a necessity for those with special transportation needs or no other transportation options. Increased state funding for these services is warranted, together with a concerted effort to better leverage federal funding.
- Connecting Communities. Transit provides connections between cities and counties, population and employment centers, and to other modes, such as ferries and intercity rail. Businesses often consider the availability of transit service in deciding where to locate or expand. Connecting people to jobs is key to maintaining economic vitality. State investment in transit programs connects communities and improves access to employment and education.

Current transit and passenger ferry service needs local option funding authority for operations and meeting future demand in those jurisdictions that have fully tapped their existing authority.

Improve Transportation Safety

The personal, financial, and societal loss for every person killed or injured in traffic crashes is enormous. The loss of even one family member, co-worker, or friend is unacceptable.

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total Fatalities	462	551	536	563	539
Ped and Bicyclist Fatalities[4]	85	100	105	124	119

[4] Four of the 119 fatalities in 2018 were people using a skateboard, wheelchair or other non-motorized conveyance.

Washington's Target Zero strategic plan successfully drove down the number of traffic fatalities for many years but the curve has trended upward, and has plateaued at over 500 fatalities statewide each year between 2014 and 2018. Pedestrian and bicyclist fatalities, now numbering 100 or more annually, have increased at a faster rate over the same period of time than that of drivers and passengers. Pedestrian and bicyclist safety warrants extra attention, especially considering efforts to encourage more walking and bicycling to improve personal health, reduce congestion, and curb carbon emissions.

Infrastructure Needs and Best Practices: The Benefits of Tolling

Tolling is an effective tool to raise revenue for needed improvements, to fund preservation and maintenance of new facilities, and to help to manage congestion. While tolling can be a financial challenge for some drivers, the Commission has enacted toll exemptions that encourage more efficient use of roadways, and balance costs and benefits.

Toll Rate Traffic & Revenue by Facility (FY 2019)

Toll Facility	Traffic	Toll Revenue*
SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge	15.5 million	$82.3 million
SR 520 Floating Bridge	26.5 million	$85.7 million
SR 99 Tunnel (tolling began Nov. 2019)	N/A	N/A
I-405 Express Toll Lanes	9.7 million	$29.3 million
SR 167 Express Toll Lanes	1.7 million	$3.7 million
Total	**53.3 million**	**$200.1 million**

Source: TRFC, November 2019 *Adjusted Gross Toll Revenue

A greater reliance on tolling can help reduce dependence on the gas tax for transportation revenue for critical infrastructure improvements, and it can help improve transportation flow in congested corridors. Development of a long-range strategic tolling policy plan would be forward looking and at a minimum:

- Establish a high-level roadmap for development of future toll facilities;
- Identify policies to integrate current and future toll facilities and enhance overall transportation system performance; and
- Evaluate the cumulative impacts of tolling on specific regions or populations.

Improve Planning: Address Climate Change and Fix Fish Barriers

Transportation infrastructure is vulnerable to changes in climate

Transportation is the primary contributor to climate change in Washington State, making up 43% percent of the state's carbon emissions. While public and private sector work is underway in Washington to reduce carbon emissions from cars, trucks, ships and planes – including electrification of each of these modes – more needs to happen to prevent long-term impacts to infrastructure and the environment as well as to reduce and mitigate short-term impacts to communities.

In 2019, the Commission heard how infrastructure both contributes to climate change and is affected by it in its three meetings in Bremerton, Federal Way, and Okanogan County.

- In Federal Way, we heard concerns about expanding airport infrastructure without addressing carbon emissions, noise and particulate impacts on neighboring communities.
- Kitsap County told the Commission that shoreline and climate change has made miles of roads vulnerable to sea level rise, high tide and storm surge, and landslides. While individual new project designs address sea level rise, it is better addressed by a systems level analysis and approach.
- In Okanogan County, the Commission saw how infrastructure is vulnerable to wildfires with a visit to a state highway taken out by a landslide in an area ravaged by wildfire; the Commission also learned that the Methow Valley has had fires every year but one since the major 2014 fires. Fires increase vulnerability to floods, erosion and landslides, isolating communities and hindering emergency response.

Extreme heat can cause road buckling and freeze-thaw cycles cause pavement cracking and potholes. Climate change also increases the variability of weather, and roads designed for a particular climate range may fail more quickly. All of these impacts add costs to infrastructure design and retrofit, as well as decreasing reliability for users.

Road washout following Okanogan fires.

Work to build and strengthen infrastructure from climate impacts must take place alongside local, regional, and statewide efforts to reduce greenhouse gases from the transportation sector, including the aviation sector, as well as mitigating noise and pollution impacts near airports and surrounding communities.

Identify a coordinated approach to funding and removing culverts and fish passage barriers

The ability of salmon and steelhead to swim upstream to their spawning grounds is vital to their recovery across Washington. In the past, state and local agencies built roads without adequate attention to fish passage.

While increased funding and intergovernmental coordination in recent years has enabled removal of hundreds of fish passage barriers from state highways and opened up over 1,000 miles of upstream habitat for fish resources, the need dwarfs this effort. It is estimated that nearly $4 billion is needed to fully comply with a federal court injunction and timeline to address state-owned fish barriers by 2030. A coordinated approach where the state partners with cities, counties, tribes, other landowners and fishery groups to prioritize barrier correction efforts across the state and across ownerships will provide the greatest benefits to fish in the most cost-effective way.

Efficiencies, Collaboration, Leveraging

No single change in how transportation infrastructure is planned, built, and operated will reduce cost or improve travel options significantly. However, there are several ways to increase efficiency, reduce costs, and improve the productivity of our transportation system.

Reduce unnecessary permitting delays, especially on preservation and maintenance projects where the potential for environmental impact is minimal

Permitting basic preservation and maintenance of existing facilities, as well as in-kind replacement in some cases, should not take years. Reducing the time and requirements for environmental permitting on low-risk projects makes them more cost-efficient and allows for faster implementation. It also frees up the capacity of resource agencies to focus on more impactful or complex environmental reviews.

Collaborate on state and local solutions for highway and roadway system improvements

WSDOT's Practical Solutions approach promotes improvements to operating efficiency and safety before considering strategic system expansion. Practical solutions support the right investment in the right location at the right time. Other important strategies include adequate Park-and-Ride facilities that support seamless intermodal connections, and an array of travel demand management measures that reduce overall need for single-occupancy vehicle travel.

Deployment of federal funds for county and city transportation projects is another opportunity for state and local collaboration to improve efficiency. Federal funds include additional administrative and reporting requirements that increase costs for most projects – and for those local projects whose price tag is relatively small, the proportion of these costs outweigh the benefit of the funding. The state can reduce the challenges that federal funds pose to smaller counties and cities and help them stretch limited resources farther.

A new review of state route designation also can be helpful to cities and counties. The most recent state route designation was done in 1990-91. Three decades of the Growth Management Act have changed the characteristics of city streets and state highways within urban growth areas.

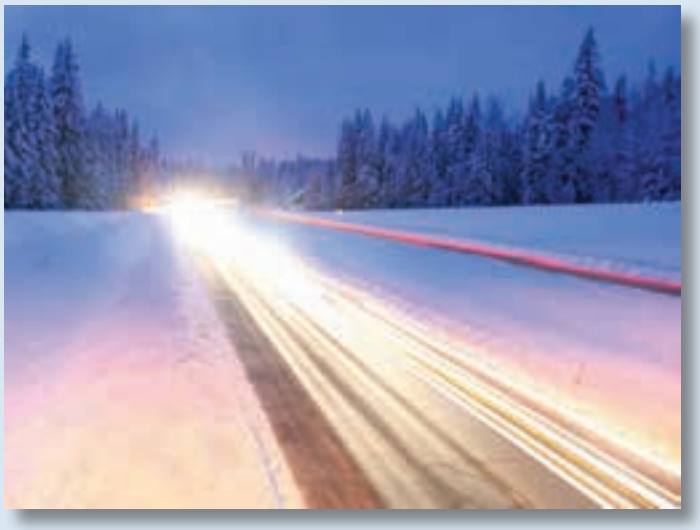
More than two million passengers and one million vehicles were served by the Anacortes ferry terminal in 2018. WSDOT is exploring whether private investment can help replace the 50-year old terminal building, which is too small and deteriorating.

Leverage state assets to attract private sector investments in service and capital delivery

Collaboration between public agencies and private businesses should expand beyond traditional concrete and steel solutions. The Commission recommends a new look at systemic, on-going, long-range partnerships that may include financial contributions, or involve collaboration on property, services, data, or access to facilities.

Innovative partnerships between transportation agencies and the private sector can improve access to public transportation, support housing adjacent to transit centers, and reduce single-occupant trips. Opportunities to improve transportation access and capacity may include:

- Allowing private transit providers access to publicly owned lots in exchange for increased parking capacity;
- Co-developing park and ride lots with housing, private business, and a variety of transportation modes (public and private) to create a mobility hub;
- Co-developing ferry terminals with hotels, restaurants, and tourism offices; and
- Using private sector data to facilitate ride-sharing opportunities.



All-weather tires perform better than studded tires in most winter driving conditions and avoid damaging the road surface.

Prohibit the use of studded snow tires on public roadways within five years

Studded tires are estimated to cause an estimated $20 to $29 million in damage to Washington's highways annually, and that does not include damage to local streets and roads. More than a dozen states have banned tires with metal studs. Studies show all weather tires perform better than studded tires in the vast majority of winter driving conditions because they have better contact with the road surface, except when driving on solid ice. The $5 studded tire fee, implemented in 2016 on the sale of every studded tire in Washington, covers only a small fraction of the cost of damage they cause to public roads and highways.

Technology: Continue to Prepare for Autonomous Vehicles

RCW 47.01.510 directs the Commission to appoint and convene an Executive Work Group to gather information and develop AV policy recommendations to address the operation of AVs on public roadways in the State of Washington. Based upon input from the Work Group during 2019, the Commission supports the following two recommendations to the legislature.

Require $5 million umbrella liability insurance for AV testing companies

Enact legislation that requires persons or entities self-certified with the Department of Licensing for testing AVs or AV technology equipment to maintain proof of an umbrella liability insurance policy of no less than $5 million per occurrence for damages by reason of bodily injury, death, or property damage, in addition to the financial responsibility requirements in accordance with RCW 46.30.020.

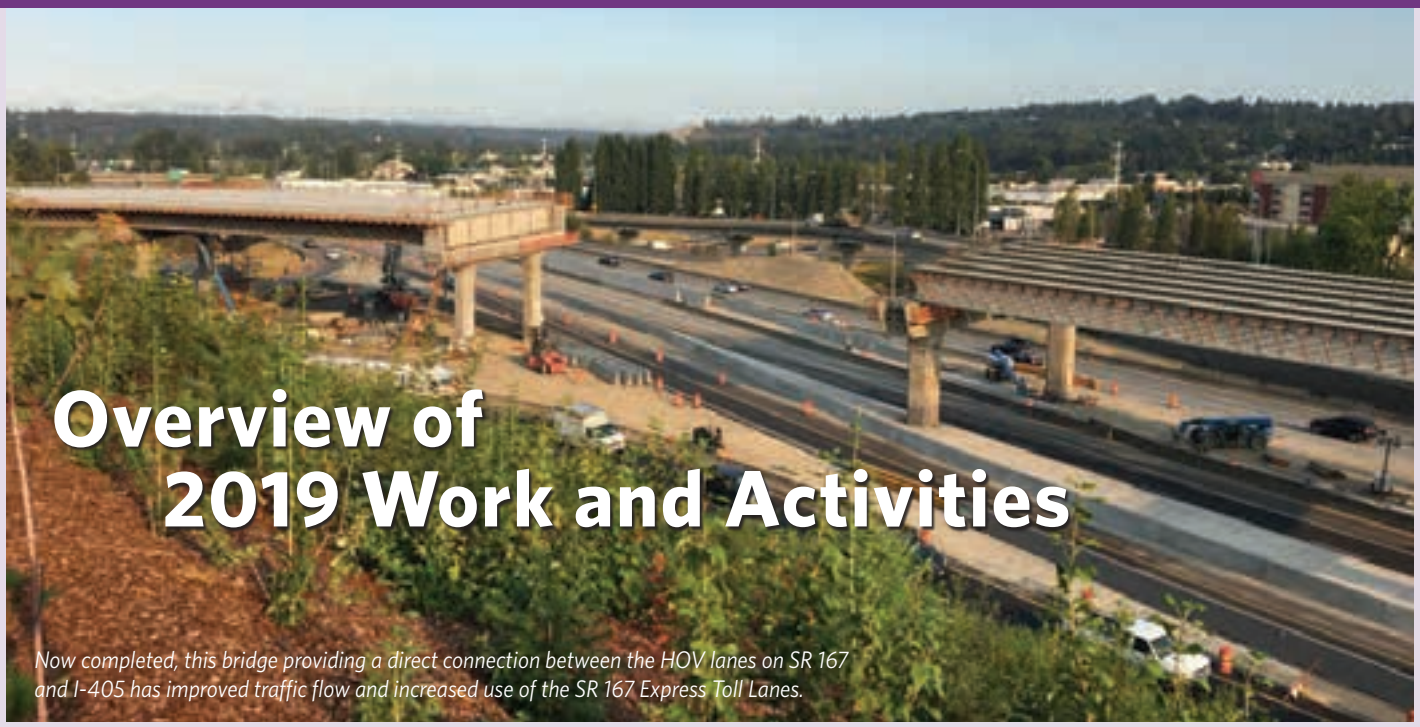
The Executive Work Group and the Commission both endorse this recommendation, which the AV Liability Subcommittee developed.

Conduct an assessment of health impacts

Fund and conduct an assessment of potential health impacts of AVs, with emphasis on identifying disproportionate impacts on disadvantaged populations. The assessment would outline the likely public health impacts of various scenarios so that policymakers can understand the implications of an approach before decisions are made; would provide strategies to maximize the positive impacts; and would develop mitigation strategies for negative impacts.

This recommendation is similar to a 2018 recommendation made by the AV Safety Subcommittee for a modified Health Impact Assessment. Although the Executive Work Group did not take formal action on this recommendation, it was unanimously endorsed bythe Transportation Commission, subject to further work from the Subcommittee and Department of Health.

The Work Group and the Commission also reviewed and unanimously endorsed eight policy goals developed by the AV Infrastructure & Systems Subcommittee. These goals provide a foundation for developing strategies for integrating connected and autonomous vehicles in the transportation system.



Overview of 2019 Work and Activities

Now completed, this bridge providing a direct connection between the HOV lanes on SR 167 and I-405 has improved traffic flow and increased use of the SR 167 Express Toll Lanes.

Tolling and Ferry Fare Actions

Tolls and ferry fares are projected to generate nearly $870 million during the 2019 – 2021 biennium. This is a significant and growing portion of the state's transportation budget, raising revenue for major capital improvements and system operations, and improving traffic flow on key corridors. Ferry fares generate about 75% of the operating costs for the ferry system.

When revising or establishing toll rates and ferry fares, the Commission carefully reviews traffic and revenue projections and listens to affected members of impacted communities. Tolls and fares are set at rates that will meet the fiscal and mobility needs of the transportation system and minimize the financial impact on those residents and businesses who regularly use toll facilities and ferries. The Commission is committed to help the public understand how tolls and fares help build and operate the transportation system, and it strives to ensure that customers are treated fairly.

This section of the Annual Report summarizes the Commission's 2019 toll setting and ferry fare activities. It also provides the annual report to the Legislature on changes in toll rates required by RCW 47.56.855.

SR 520 Floating Bridge

The current SR 520 Floating Bridge opened for traffic in 2016, replacing the four-lane bridge that opened in 1967. Tolls contribute $1.2 billion toward its construction cost and also help manage congestion and improve traffic flow. 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, the Commission enacted new toll rates for the new bridge. The Commission reviewed traffic and revenue data early in 2019 to determine if the toll rates that took effect in July 2017 adequately met the revenue needs and maintained traffic flow. Finding that traffic and income from tolling met expectations, the Commission took no action on toll rates in 2019. The Commission will continue to monitor SR 520 traffic and revenue each year. No toll rate increase for the SR 520 floating bridge is anticipated in 2020.

I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes Corridor

In spring 2019, the Legislature authorized tolling on planned Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) from Renton to Bellevue, and both funded an extension of the SR 167 ETLs (formerly SR 167 High Occupancy Toll Lanes) and authorized it as a permanent toll facility, eventually creating a 50-mile ETL corridor. This same legislation also funded the converting the single lane ETL on I-405 between SR 522 and SR 527 to a two lane facility, authorized bonding of the I-405 / SR 167 ETLs for projects in the corridor, and directed a WSDOT study of a HOV 2+ policy for the Bellevue to Renton portion of the I-405 ETLs.

The Legislature also directed the Commission to study options for a low-income toll program for the corridor. This study began in December 2019 and will be completed by June 2021.

I-405 Express Toll Lanes

The I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETLs) between Lynnwood and Bellevue opened in September 2015. The ETLs converted an existing High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lane to an ETL with dynamic pricing, and added a second ETL in each direction between SR 522 and downtown Bellevue.

In "dynamic tolling" projects, overhead electronic signs display the toll rates which vary automatically depending on traffic volumes and speeds. The Transportation Commission has set a minimum toll rate of $0.75 and a maximum rate of $10.00. As of June 2019, the toll rate averaged $4.79 for peak period, peak direction trips.

Before the ETLs opened, this corridor experienced some of the state's worst traffic. The HOV lanes were often as congested as the general purpose lanes, and failed to operate reliably. For example, in the previous HOV lane, traffic moved at 45 mph only 62% of the time during peak periods (January – June 2015). Now, overall, traffic moves at 45 mph 80% of the time during peak periods. Though a significant improvement, this remains short of legislative performance measure of maintaining speeds of 45 mph or faster 90% of the time during peak periods. While the dual lane ETL sections exceed this performance measure, the single-lane ETL sections between Bothell and Lynnwood, with their limited capacity, are significantly less reliable and have held back performance of the full 17-mile ETL system.

The ETLs have also demonstrated value for users of the general purpose lanes and transit. Through spring 2019, general purpose lane traffic speeds had increased by as much as 3 mph in some the sections of the corridor. In addition, transit routes using the corridor have experienced time savings of up to 11 minutes through June 2019, contributing to up to a 9% ridership increase during that time. Since opening, the express toll lanes have generated $99.5 million in gross revenue through June 2019. Of that, $66.8 million has or will be invested on I-405 improvements.

WSDOT and the Commission have both made adjustments to the ETLs throughout the first four years, including addition of a northbound peak use shoulder lane between SR 527 and I-5 in Lynnwood to reduce congestion, and ongoing refinement of the dynamic toll rate algorithm. In 2016, the Commission modified the hours of operation for the I-405 ETLs, limiting tolling to 5am - 7pm on weekdays only and opening the lanes to all vehicles on evenings, weekends, and major federal holidays. This maintained faster and more reliable trips for transit, carpoolers, and toll-paying customers during the busiest time of the work week, while balancing traffic across all lanes on evenings and weekends when traffic volumes are much lower.

SR 167 Express Toll Lanes

Since 2008, a pilot project allowed drivers of single occupancy vehicles equipped with a transponder to "buy into" the SR 167 HOV lanes between Renton and the Pierce County line (20 miles southbound and 9 miles northbound). Overhead electronic signs indicate the variable toll rates, which the Commission has maintained at the original 2008 minimum and maximum rates of $0.50 and $9.00. SR 167 ETLs became a permanent facility in spring 2019 and use continues to increase, particularly with recent expansion of the lanes to the south and the completion of a direct connector ramp in Renton between the SR 167 ETLs and the I-405 HOV lanes.

SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge

Scheduled increases in debt service payments require the Commission to regularly review traffic volumes and revenue collection on the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB). This review ensures tolls generate adequate revenue for debt service payments, and to maintain and operate the facility. Based on this review, the Commission did not change toll rates on the TNB in 2019.

In spring 2019, the Legislature provided a loan of $12.543 million to keep toll rates at current levels for the 2019-2021 biennium. This followed legislation passed by the Legislature in spring 2018 stating its intent to provide up to $85 million in loans to keep toll rates at current levels for the remaining life of the debt service, except for a $0.25 rate increase for FY 2022.

The 2018 legislation directed the Commission to provide the Legislature with an annual update on the loan amounts needed to meet the bill's intent. The Commission provided this report to the Legislature in January 2019 and recommended a loan of $14.9 million for the biennium. The Commission will provide an updated report on the loan amounts to the Legislature in January 2020.

SR 99 Tunnel toll rate sign

SR 99 Tunnel

In October 2018 the Commission adopted toll rates for the SR 99 tunnel facility that will generate $200 million toward tunnel construction costs. The adopted toll rates were set based on current traffic and revenue projections, and were designed both to generate the required revenue and to minimize impacts of diversion to city streets. Tolls range from $1 to $2.25 for drivers with a Good To Go! pass, depending on time of day. Drivers without a Good To Go! account pay an extra $2 per toll. Toll rates are also higher for vehicles with more than two axles.

The tunnel opened for traffic in February 2019 for a period of free access, and tolling began in early November 2019. Traffic and revenue for the initial month of tolling on the tunnel exceeded initial projections, but such results remain too preliminary to inform long-term trends. The Commission will closely monitor the tunnel's traffic and revenue performance in 2020.

Toll rates will increase by 3 percent every three years beginning in July 2022, subject to annual review by the Commission. The Commission anticipates an additional toll rate increase as soon as July 2021 to support payment of facility repair and replacement costs, as required by the Legislature in spring 2019. Payment of these costs with toll revenues is consistent with use of toll revenues from the state's other toll facilities, but was not initially required for the SR 99 Tunnel.

Toll exemptions for the SR 99 tunnel are consistent with non-HOV system wide exemptions the Commission adopted in July 2018 for public transit, emergency responders, highway maintenance vehicles, school buses and qualified private buses, which serve the public or commuters.

Exemption Policies

In July 2018, after input from the public and stakeholders, the Transportation Commission adopted changes to non-HOV tolling exemptions to be consistent across all of the state's tolled facilities. Changes took effect on August 1, 2019.

These changes simplify use of all tolled facilities, reduce administrative efforts with streamlined regulations, support parity between communities with tolled facilities, and further align tolling policies with state transportation system goals. None of these changes are expected to result in the need for a toll rate increase.

System-wide tolling exemptions apply to the following vehicles:

Buses

Rideshare Vans

Emergency Vehicles

Incident Response & Maintenance Vehicles

Ferry Fares

Fares generate about 75% of the operating costs for Washington State Ferries (WSF), the largest ferry system in the country. Each biennium, the Transportation Commission sets fares to meet the revenue target and policy objectives set by the Legislature. The process begins nearly a year before new fares and policies take effect, beginning with extensive discussions involving WSF, the Commission, and the Ferry Advisory Committee on Tariffs (FAC-T), representing citizens and interested parties who use each ferry route, including transit, freight and tourism.

In July 2019, the Commission adopted fares for the 2019-2021 biennium. Adopted fares included vehicle fare increases of 2.5% in October 2019 and 2.5% in May 2020, and passenger fare increases of 2.0% in October 2019 and 2.0% in May 2020.

In addition, the Commission increased the vessel capital surcharge by $0.25, effective May 2020, as authorized by the Legislature in spring 2019. This increase will support funding for one new hybrid electric ferry vessel. The rate setting also included adjustments to several fare categories and policies, including an increase of the reservation no show fee, and authorization for WSF to develop two pilot programs: a low-income passenger fare pilot program, and a pilot program to test more efficient vehicle fare collection methods, such as the use of *Good To Go!* transponders currently used for toll collection.

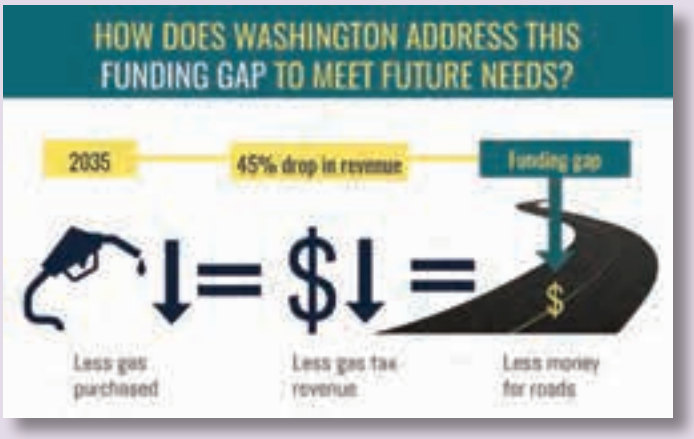
Expected Toll and Fare-Setting Activity in 2019

- SR 16 Tacoma Narrows Bridge: No rate setting is expected if the loan provided by the Legislature for the 2019-2021 biennium in spring 2019 remains sufficient, or if the Legislature provides additional funds, if needed. If loan revenue is not sufficient, the Commission may need to take action on increasing toll rates for FY 2021 (July 1, 2020).
- SR 520 Bridge: No rate setting is expected, with certification from the State Treasurer that projected toll revenues are sufficient at current toll rates.
- SR 99 Tunnel: No rate setting is expected. The tunnel opened with no tolls in February 2019. Toll rates adopted in October 2018 took effect in early November 2019.
- I-405 / SR 167 Express Toll Lanes: No changes to current toll rates is expected.

The Commission works with WSDOT on planning for proposed toll facilities, including the Gateway Program projects and the extension of I-405 ETLs from Bellevue to Renton, both authorized as toll facilities by the Legislature in spring 2019.

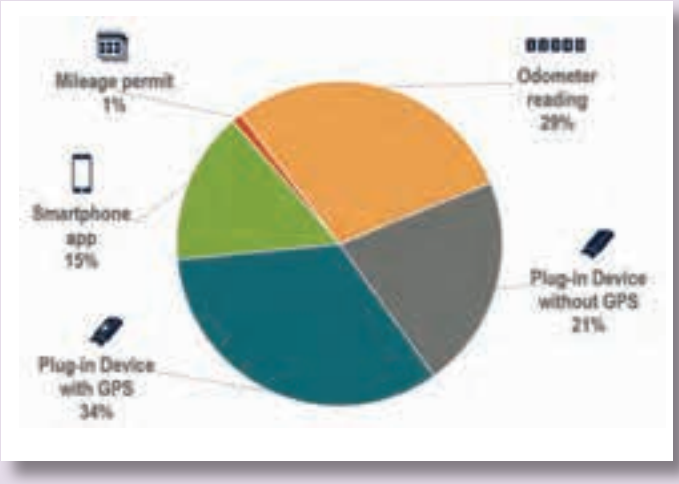
Road Usage Charge Pilot Project

As the cars and trucks we drive become cleaner, more fuel-efficient, and increasingly automated, our method of paying for roads must evolve as well. In 2012, the Legislature directed the Transportation Commission to fully assess road usage charging (RUC), a pay-by-the-mile fee that could eventually replace the state's gas tax.



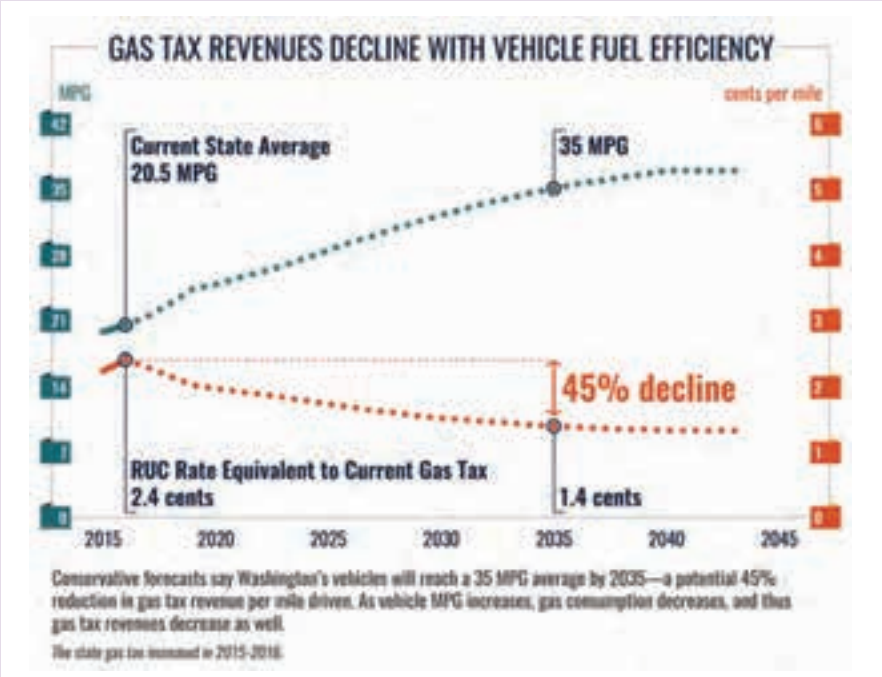
Several states and national transportation commissions have recommended this usage-based system as a more financially sustainable and equitable approach. Oregon and Utah are now implementing RUC as a new way for electric vehicles and other highly fuel-efficient vehicles to contribute their proportionate share of roadway funding, since these types of vehicles pay very little (or no) gas tax.

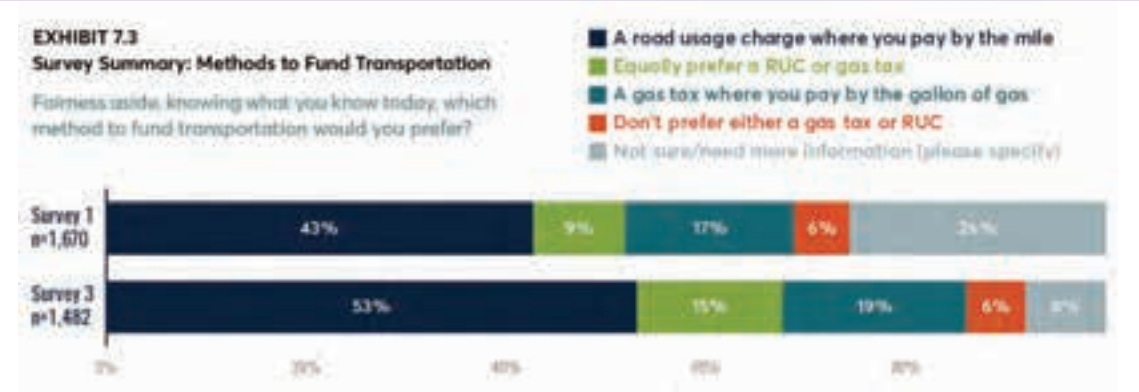
The Commission determined in 2013 that a per-mile fee system is technically feasible and eventually can generate revenue equal and greater than the state's gas tax. In 2019, the Transportation Commission completed its assessment of a RUC. With advice from a broad-based steering committee, and the experience and input from over 2,000 Washington drivers who participated in a year-long pilot to "test-drive" a prototype RUC system, the Commission has developed recommendations to the Legislature for how to proceed. The recommendations are found on pages 3 and 4 of this report.



The pilot project launched in February 2018 and continued until January 2019 to see if a road usage charge makes sense for Washington as a potential replacement to the current gas tax at the pump. The pool of test drivers reflected the geographic and demographic diversity of Washington. Since driving needs and habits can vary by region, the pilot ensured proportionate representation of less-urbanized and rural areas.

Participants tested a mock pay-per-mile system to see how the system personally affected them, choosing one of four mileage reporting options to record and report their road mileage. The pilot tested high-tech, low-tech, and no-tech options to report miles driven, ranging from self-reporting of a vehicle's odometer to using smartphones or in-vehicle technology.





The test-driving phase gave participants the opportunity to provide feedback on their experience to better understand the implications and impacts of a road usage charge system. Throughout the pilot test, the research team surveyed drivers to measure their reactions to various aspects of the RUC system. Focus groups explored issues in greater detail than is possible through surveys. Top concerns and questions of pilot participants include:

- Privacy and data collection
- Compliance and administration costs
- Fairness and equity
- Travel between states
- Operational viability

Support for a RUC as a replacement to the gas tax to fund transportation infrastructure grew from 50% of participants at the start of the pilot to 72% at its end. Of nearly 1500 pilot participants surveyed, one-third suggest gradually phasing in a RUC over 5 – 10 years to eventually replace the gas tax.

For more information about the WA RUC pilot project and the Commission's ongoing assessment of RUC, visit: www.waroadusagecharge.org.

Washington and Oregon have renewed discussions about rebuilding the I-5 bridges connecting the two states.

Washington Transportation Plan 2040 and Beyond

Washington's transportation system safely connects people and communities – fostering commerce and economic opportunity for all, operating seamlessly across boundaries, and providing travel options to achieve an environmentally and financially sustainable system.

This vision statement guided development of WTP 2040 and Beyond, Washington's 20-year statewide transportation policy plan. A comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation plan, WTP 2040 and Beyond is consistent with the state's growth management goals and based on the six transportation policy goals established in RCW 47.04.280.

- Economic vitality
- Safety
- Environment
- Preservation
- Mobility
- Stewardship

The entire plan can be found on an interactive website that includes links to all of the regional and modal transportation plans. www.wtp2040andbeyond.com

During 2019, the Commission added eight videos to the WTP 2040 website. Six videos illustrate the six transportation policy goals and two show how transportation – and long-range planning – influence our everyday lives.

WTP 2040 and Beyond also identified four tough topics the state must address between now and 2040, topics that are bigger than any one transportation agency can address. They intersect all six of the transportation goals, and will require significant intergovernmental discussions and decisions over the next several years. Progress took place in 2019 on three out of four of these:

- Facilitating Trade and Travel across the Columbia River
- Limitations on Sea-Tac Airport Capacity
- Rebuilding and Reinforcing the Marine Highway System

Autonomous Vehicle Work Group

Autonomous vehicles (AVs) and related technologies are rapidly penetrating the market, with lower-level automation becoming mainstream in newer vehicles today, and higher levels of automation being tested and deployed across the country. As of late 2019, twelve companies had self-certified their ability to safely test and operate AVs on public roads with the Washington State Department of Licensing in the state.

PACCAR is testing an electric, self-driving truck at its Mt. Vernon technical center and automated truck test track

Legislation enacted in 2018 created the Washington State Autonomous Vehicle Work Group, convened by the Transportation Commission. The primary purpose of the Work Group is to identify measures, including regulatory, policy, infrastructure and other changes, necessary to enable and ensure the safe operation of AVs on public roadways, and provide recommendations to the Commission. In consideration of the Work Group's recommendations, the Commission must then make recommendations to the Legislature and the Governor each year.

The Work Group originally consisted of two legislators from each caucus in the House and Senate, state agencies previously tasked by the Governor to provide initial guidance regarding AV testing and research, the Office of the Insurance Commissioner, and a member of the Commission. During 2019, the Commission appointed 18 additional members to the Executive Committee from state and local government, the transportation industry, academia, labor, and underrepresented communities to ensure a broad range of perspectives and opinions are at the table.

The Work Group hit the ground running in 2019, with subcommittees actively meeting, developing and executing work plans, convening subgroups to explore topics in more detail, and engaging public and private leaders to gain a broad understanding of the current landscape and prioritize efforts moving forward. Disability Rights Washington and the National Federation of the Blind addressed considerations and potential impacts AVs will have on the disabled communities, pressing the importance of engaging these communities and the concept of equity in AV policy conversations. The Work Group also learned more about advanced driver assistance systems (ADAS), such as blind spot monitoring and rear collision warnings. These crash avoidance ADAS technologies are reducing crashes and adjusting driver behavior for safer roadways.

The Work Group advanced several recommendations, including policy recommendations needing legislative action found on page 7 of this report and operational changes to make the Work Group itself more effective.

The AV Work Group website is https://avworkgroupwa.org

Ferry Riders' Opinion Group

The Commission conducts surveys each year to provide the Governor, the Legislature, the Commission, and WSDOT insights on ferry operations by the people and businesses that use the ferry system. The Ferry Riders' Opinion Group (FROG) is an on-line community of Washington State Ferry (WSF) riders who join an ongoing panel to weigh in on ferry issues through surveys and quick polls year-round.

Two FROG surveys were conducted during 2019:

- A Policy Study asked 5,141 WSF riders in January questions about ferry funding issues, the impact of the differential passenger to vehicle fare increase, suggested service improvements, potential amenities, and methods to encourage walk-on behavior.
- A Winter Survey of 3,441 ferry riders in March and April assessed rider attitudes toward WSF performance. The Winter Survey confirmed a growing negative trend among ferry commuters first seen in the Policy Study.

M/V Spokane is one of the largest ferries operated by WSF.

Policy Study Highlights

Ferry Funding

Riders identified preferred funding sources for long-term capital needs from a list of options:

- Establishing a new tax in Western Washington ferry served communities (26%)
- Increase the statewide gas tax (25%)
- Establish a new statewide tax dedicated to funding ferry capital needs (23%)
- Increase vehicle registration fees (21%)
- WSF does not have a funding problem (7%)
- Not sure (12%).

Riders also expressed willingness to increase the current $0.25/ticket ferry surcharge and pay, on average $0.59 per ticket, provided the funds continue to be dedicated to new ferries. After learning how much the current surcharge raises and the cost of a new 144-car ferry, 63% said they would support increasing the surcharge, 12% would not support an increase and 25% said it depended on the amount of the surcharge. Informed riders would be willing to pay a surcharge of $0.73 per ticket provided the funds continue to be dedicated to new ferries.

Ferries are a popular way to travel to Seahawk and Mariner games.

Impact of Passenger to Vehicle Fare Increase Differential

One in four (23%) riders feel the impact of lower increases in passenger fares has encouraged their walk-on behavior. One in three (36%) riders systemwide were not aware of the percentage difference in fare increases.

Methods to Encourage Walk-On Behavior

Better transit connections to and from ferry terminals was the top method (40%) to encourage walk-ons by vehicle boarding respondents. As in the 2016 survey, the second most mentioned encouragement to walk on was "lower parking costs at terminal(s)."

Winter 2019 FROG Survey Report

Overall satisfaction with WSF 2019 winter performance (67%) declined 9 percentage points from winter 2018 while dissatisfaction grew to 24%. Both the extremely dissatisfied (7%) and somewhat dissatisfied (17%) are at their highest levels since 2010. Of the major routes, riders on the Fauntleroy/Vashon (58%), Fauntleroy/Southworth (34%) and Anacortes/San Juan (29%) were the most dissatisfied.

As in past years, terminal bathroom cleanliness, clear loading crew directions, cleaner terminals and efficient loading procedures are the best opportunities for WSF to improve the rider experience.

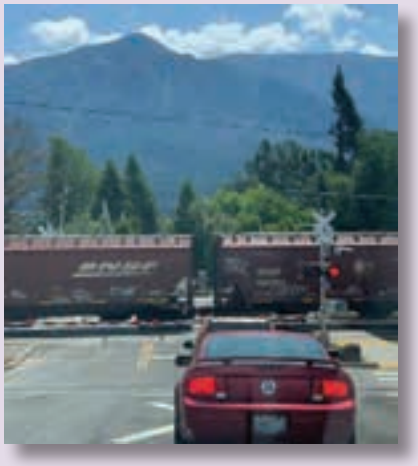
Specific areas of needed improvement by route, based upon riders' survey feedback are as follows:

- **Seattle/Bainbridge:** Improve the comfort of the terminals and ensure the terminal bathrooms are clean.
- **Seattle/Bremerton:** Improve the comfort of the terminals, ensure the terminal bathrooms are clean, and provide adequate parking near the terminal.
- **Point Defiance/Tahlequah:** Provide adequate parking near the terminal, improve the efficiency of vehicle loading procedures, and load the ferries to capacity.
- **Fauntleroy/Vashon:** Provide adequate parking near the terminal, efficiently process vehicles through ticket lanes, load the ferries to capacity, fully utilize dockside holding areas, improve the efficiency of vehicle loading procedures, and ensure vehicle loading crews provide clear directions/hand signals.
- **Southworth/Vashon:** Provide adequate parking near the terminal, ensure sailing schedules are adequately coordinated with transit services, and improve the comfort of the terminal.
- **Port Townsend/Coupeville and Mukilteo/Clinton:** Provide adequate parking near the terminal.
- **Anacortes/San Juan Island:** Ensure sailing schedules are adequately coordinated with transit services.

Performance Measurement Review

In 2016, the Legislature directed the Office of Financial Management to consult with the Commission on transportation performance measures that ensure progress toward accomplishment of the transportation policy goals in RCW 47.04.280. The 2018 Transportation Attainment Report included new performance criteria recommended by the Commission that addressed county freight roads, diesel emission reductions, and the linkage of transportation and housing costs. The Commission continues to work with OFM on refining performance measures.

Joint Work with California and Oregon



At at-grade crossings in small towns can create challenges for traffic and emergency response.

The Washington State Transportation Commission meets periodically with its colleagues in California and Oregon to consider issues common to the three states. The three bodies convened in Stevenson, Washington in September to discuss rural transportation issues, including emergency response, freight, and economic vitality. The three Commissions sent a joint letter to the states' Congressional delegations urging new federal transportation funding.

Rural emergency response depends on partnerships and active planning between jurisdictions to achieve seamless and direct help from emergency responders. When natural disaster strikes in rural areas, emergency response can be extremely challenging. Oregon and Washington have a mutual aid compact and a Pacific Northwest Emergency Management Agreement, comprised of FEMA Region 10 states and Canada.

All three states are experiencing wildfires with greater frequency and intensity. In Okanogan County, critical access routes were cut off by fire in 2014 and 2015. In response, the county has developed a new regional transportation plan and embarked on a Backroads Study. Phase 1 will identify a highly rural road network of gravel, dirt, and primitive roadways that function as the primary network providing critical access and rural connectivity regardless of jurisdiction or land management agency boundaries. Phase 2 will identify strategies for improving interagency collaboration and coordination in the designation and management of this essential network.

While it is important to identify logical evacuation routes, it may not be enough. Two fires threatened Paradise, California in 2008. Because evacuation was difficult, the city began planning to improve response in a future fire. It established evacuation zones and developed plans for contraflow, with all lanes headed out of town. A gravel forest service road was paved to provide an additional evacuation route. The city held Emergency Operations Center drills every six months.

As good as the preparation was, the dead trees and new brush that resulted from the 2008 fires fueled the 2018 Camp Fire. Technology failed. Cell phone towers collapsed. Every evacuation route was blocked during part of the day. In the 2018 fire, 90% of the town was destroyed, 12,000 homes were destroyed and 86 people died. Over 26,000 people were displaced. If the emergency planning had not been done, more would have died.

Since 2018, Paradise has developed a Long Term Recovery Plan, including important transportation projects:

- Evacuation routes
- Complete missing road segments
- Eliminate long dead-end streets

Rural freight movement is important in all three states. Rural areas are especially reliant on trucks to move freight. Growth in trucks on the road is outpacing the supply of truck parking spaces.

Compared to 2018, there is a little excess capacity available on rail and in trucking. Coal shipments by rail are down and oil shipments are up. While short line railroads can provide an alternative to trucking where available, at-risk rail lines need investment to prevent rail abandonment.

Technology is impacting freight movement and supply chains in a variety of ways, from e-commerce and home delivery to urban congestion, which reduces truck productivity and permits fewer daily farm to market trips.

Sustainable rural economic development and growth faces the many of the same challenges as rural freight movement. It not only requires safe, accessible and well-maintained roads and rail, but also public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian transportation, and air service.

Naming Transportation Facilities

The Commission is authorized to name state highways, bridges, and ferries. In February, the Commission adopted Resolution 736, naming a portion of SR 530, from milepost 22 to milepost 45, the "Oso Slide Memorial Highway" in memory of the forty-three individuals lost their lives that day March 22, 2014. In July, the Commission named the Skookumchuck River Bridge on State Route 507, the "Petty Officer 1st Class Regina R. Clark Memorial Bridge."

Partners in Transportation

Each community and region in our state has unique transportation needs, challenges and successes. This section presents key findings from the Commission's 2019 visits to Bremerton, Federal Way, and Okanogan County. In each place, local officials, citizens, and businesses emphasized the need to maintain existing transportation systems and to invest in new transportation options.

Bremerton

1. Bremerton is the host to Naval Base Kitsap (NBK). The city population is 41,000 and NBK employs 23,000, over half of whom arrive by bus or ferry and walk onto the base every day. To mitigate congestion, the city is pursuing an NBK-Bremerton commuter study and the shipyard may put more workers on swing shift.

2. The 60-year old Warren Avenue Bridge is one of two bridges connecting the two halves of Bremerton. Part of SR 303, it carries 43,000 vehicles a day, with narrow sidewalks and no bike lanes. Because the sidewalks are less than 4 foot wide, wheelchairs and strollers can't pass. People have been observed climbing on handrails to get by wheelchairs. Bremerton has received a $1.5 million grant to design an ADA compliant upgrade to the bridge and its approaches.

With its wide sidewalks and stylish design, the Manette Bridge encourages walking and bicycling between downtown and East Bremerton.

3. Poulsbo, a city of 11,000 with a Scandinavian heritage that has earned it the nickname "Little Norway," is the transportation hub of North Kitsap. Poulsbo needs help in accommodating regional traffic that passes through the city to the rest of the Puget Sound region. The SR 305/SR 307 intersection is at capacity and has the highest accident rate in the SR 305 corridor.

Farther south on SR 305, the Agate Pass Bridge is the only overland link to Bainbridge Island. Built in 1950, it is functionally obsolete and needs to be replaced.

4. SR 3 and SR 302 are the only land routes to the Kitsap Peninsula. The four Kitsap ferry routes carry over 55% of all WSF passengers and vehicles. The Bainbridge route is the busiest in the Washington State Ferry system. The Kingston route is the second busiest and handles the most truck traffic in the ferry system.

SR 104 and the Kingston Ferry Terminal is another transportation challenge. Long, unsafe ferry holding queues can reach two miles and longer from the ferry dock to the Kingston Village Center. Funding is needed to realign SR 104 and construct a ferry traffic holding lot to mitigate congestion.

5. Kitsap County, like most counties, faces many challenges with its road system. Gas tax revenue is flat and the county road levy, capped at 1% per year plus new construction, averages 2.5% annually while the cost of doing business grows 5% - 7% per year.

6. The Gorst Interchange at SR 3/SR 16 is a high congestion bottleneck. In addition to a sub-standard roadway design and limited non-motorized connectivity, it is susceptible to sea level rise and is in a seismic risk, high liquefaction zone.

7. Focused on providing reliable service to its commuter base, many Kitsap Transit bus routes start and end at the four ferry docks. The innovative Worker/Driver bus program employs workers at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard and the Bangor Trident Base to drive buses on 33 routes bringing over 2000 employees from across the county to the naval facilities.

8. Kitsap Transit operates four low-wake passenger ferries weekdays from Bremerton and Kingston to Seattle. Passengers can travel to Seattle from Kitsap County for $2 and from Seattle to Kitsap County for $10. Fast ferry ridership is up 153%.

Kitsap Transit also operates three foot ferries between Bremerton and Port Orchard, the county seat. The oldest, the historic Carlisle II, built in 1917, was once part of Puget Sound's famed Mosquito Fleet.

9. Nearly half of the fish passage barriers in the state that require removal and replacement are in WSDOT's Olympic Region. One of the most costly, a design-build project that will rebuild a portion of SR 3 and open 20 miles of Chico Creek habitat, will cost $57 million. The cost to repair all fish blockages in the Olympic Region is about $3 billion.

10. Bremerton National Airport has a 6000' runway that can handle a 737. Although commercial service ended in 2004, UPS and FedEx use the Bremerton Airport and the number of corporate aircraft based there is increasing.

Federal Way

1. Federal Way, the state's 10th largest city, is expecting to gain 40,000 more jobs and 5,000 more residents. The City is planning for a multi-modal future in the City Center, once Sound Transit (ST) Link Light Rail reaches the City at South 320th Street in 2024. Another light rail station is planned for South Federal Way near South 352nd Street.

2. The City of Fife, with only 10,000 people, has stepped up to meet the challenges it faces from freight traffic. While Fife's general fund budget is $19 million, over the last 10 years it has led projects costing five times that much:
   - Fife has put $1.6 million into the SR 167 Gateway Project.
   - The city secured $1.4 million for the Interurban Trail project that is one of the initial components of the Gateway Project.
   - Fife has taken the lead in addressing the bottlenecks leading up to and at the Port of Tacoma Road and I-5.

The Federal Way Transit Center will anchor a multi-modal hub of housing and commerce when light rail arrives in 2024.

3. Because the unincorporated areas in King County have very little commercial sales tax base and property tax is limited, King County cannot keep up with maintaining 1,500 miles of roads and 182 bridges. Partnerships between King County and its cities are needed to improve county roads that were not built to handle the traffic they see today.

4. King County Metro plans to increase service 70% by 2040. This includes adding 625 more buses, 2.5 million more service hours on bus routes, and new facilities to operate and maintain buses.

5. Pierce Transit runs five routes into King County, including a route which connects to the Auburn Sounder Station and a route connecting Puyallup to Federal Way.

6. The Puget Sound Gateway Program, a $2 billion investment to improve connections to the Ports of Tacoma and Seattle, will complete SR 167 in Pierce County and SR 509 in King County. Many local partners have contributed to the project, which will generate $180 million of the project cost with tolls.

7. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is conducting a Regional Aviation Baseline Study to assess current aviation planning activities and to forecast future demand. The study builds on master planning underway at the 29 regional airports in the PSRC Region. Sea-Tac is now the eighth busiest airport in the nation, based on 24 million enplanements.

   Key takeaways to date:
   - Demand for commercial service and air cargo will more than double by 2050
   - Regional demand for general aviation will grow by 1/3.
   - Beginning in 2027, combined demand at Sea-Tac and Paine Field will exceed capacity.

8. In 2018, Sea-Tac served 49.8 million passengers, on a footprint that is very small for an airport serving this volume. Sea-Tac Airport also is the largest single traffic generator in the region. Its transportation access issues include Puget Sound Gateway program and SR 518 study.

   The airport is transforming about 1 million square feet of Sea-Tac facilities to meet the growing demand, by upgrading decades old spaces, and building new where it can.

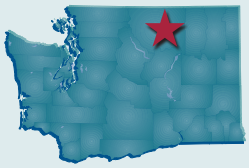
   Current Projects include:
   - Adding 10,000 more square feet to the Central Terminal;
   - A brand new International Arrivals Facility about a year away from opening;
   - Expansion of the North Satellite with new gates and new dining options.

9. Metro is building on the success of ORCA Lift and investigating additional ways to ensure transit is accessible to low-income households. Staff have developed a program leveraging existing ORCA Lift infrastructure for customers who earn ≤80% federal poverty (Medicaid eligibility standard).

10. Sound Transit is engaged in the largest rail expansion in the nation. At build-out, Link Light Rail will be a 116-mile regional system with 50 stations, connecting Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Issaquah, Tacoma, Everett, Ballard and West Seattle. Tacoma Link will have 12 new stations, connecting to Hilltop and Tacoma Community College.

    Expansion in South King County and North Pierce County includes the 7.8 mile Federal Way Link Extension which will open in 2024, the 9.7 mile Tacoma Dome Link Extension which will open in 2030, and bus rapid transit from Burien to Tukwila on I-405.

Okanogan County



1. Twisp, Winthrop and the Methow Valley have evolved from a region based on extraction industries to arts, culture, and tourism. Second homes make up 46% of the housing stock in the Methow Valley. Winthrop has 465 year-round residents, but tourism expands its population to over 5,000.

   About 800,000 to 1 million visitors come through the Methow Valley each year, half taking the North Cascade Highway when open. In both Twisp and Winthrop, SR 20 is the main street, splitting the town and causing land use and safety concerns. Both cities are seeking to be more walkable, but sidewalk construction on state routes includes very expensive requirements.

   With no room to expand SR 20, Winthrop is considering satellite parking and a river walk as a way to improve pedestrian safety.

One of the Methow River Bridges in need of replacement.

2. Okanogan County, the largest county in the state, is roughly the size of Connecticut and has 1335 miles of county roads, half of which are unpaved. The timber, agriculture and mining industries in the county rely on the state highways and rural road system. Paving costs about $1 million per mile.

3. In 2013, Okanogan County residents passed a sales tax to support a transit system, which expanded in 2016 to serve and connect both river valleys. Providing transit is a challenge in this rural county where only half the people live in town and the population is aging. Okanogan County Transportation and Nutrition provided seniors and the disabled with 49,000 demand-response trips last year.

4. Built in 1923, the SR 155 Omak Bridge is functionally obsolete. A main route across the Okanogan River for people and vehicles, the bridge has only 10-foot traffic lanes, no shoulders, and 3 to 5-foot sidewalks. The Colville Tribe has submitted a $25 million grant proposal to replace the bridge. WSDOT has proposed an alternative $11 million rehabilitation project that will remove sidewalks, widen lanes, and create a separate, shared-use structure.

5. The 31-mile stretch of highway between US 97 at Pateros and SR 20 near Twisp includes 11 bridges over the Methow River constructed between 1933 and 1950. All are in various stages of deterioration, and have been classified as either structurally deficient, scour critical, or weight restricted. For the last 20 years, the bridges have required investments of over $10 million. WSDOT estimates it will cost $99 million to replace eight bridges due for replacement.

6. SR 97 is a major trade route and its border crossing facility is the busiest in Eastern Washington. In the summer almost 50,000 vehicles a month cross the border. With a better dollar exchange rate, about 70,000 vehicles a month cross the border.

   Alongside SR 97, WSDOT owns the rail line that serves the Okanogan Valley and carries cement, wood products, and grain across the border. Like many short lines, it is in poor condition. The Okanogan Economic Alliance has discussed options with BNSF and the Genesee and Wyoming Rail Road to keep the line open.

7. Some roads on the Colville Reservation are maintained by WSDOT, some by Okanogan County, and some by the Colville Tribe. While roads such as the Columbia River Road near Omak Lake provide a smooth and safe ride, many other roads on the reservation have had major landslide and erosion problems, including the Kartar Valley Road, Manilla Creek Road, Inchelium Highway, the Strawberry Creek Bridge, and East Sanpoil Road.

8. Between 2007 and 2018, 56 fatal collisions and 117 collisions with serious injuries occurred on the Colville Reservation. The tribe has received funding for a Traffic Safety Coordinator and has conducted community outreach and traffic safety educational events.

9. Two ferries provide critical access to and from the Colville Reservation. The Inchelium-Gifford Ferry is owned by the tribe and is expensive to operate and maintain. It cannot operate when there are drawdowns on Lake Roosevelt. WSDOT operates the Keller Ferry connecting the reservation to Lincoln County and points south.

10. Since the 2014 Carlton Complex fire, WSDOT has spent at least $10 million to repair and keep the highways open. Floods and massive landslides followed the fires. In early 2017 rain and snow melt caused major debris flows in fire areas that had not yet recovered, washing out SR 20 in multiple locations. The worst slope stability problems happen 7 years after a fire – a time period soon approaching.

Commission Roles and Responsibilities

Key Facts

The Washington State Transportation Commission is a seven member body of citizens appointed by the Governor for six-year terms. The WSDOT Secretary and a representative of the Governor's Office sit ex officio.

The Commission provides an open public forum for transportation policy development. It reviews and assesses how the entire transportation system works across the state and issues the state's 20-year Transportation Plan. As the State Tolling Authority, the Commission adopts state highway tolls and sets ferry fares. The Commission also conducts special studies and projects as directed by the Legislature.

Current Responsibilities in Detail

Washington Transportation Plan

Every four years, the Commission recommends to the Legislature a comprehensive and balanced statewide transportation plan, which also addresses local and regional needs. The plan must be consistent with the state's growth management goals and is based upon six statutory transportation policy goals.

Ferry Fares and Highway Toll Responsibilities

The Commission adopts tolls for all state toll facilities including: the SR 520 Bridge, the Tacoma Narrows Bridge (TNB), the SR 167 and I-405 Express Toll Lanes (ETLs), and the SR 99 Tunnel. It also monitors traffic and toll revenue, reviews and oversees toll collection processes, costs, and operational policies, and serves as a public forum for input on tolling.

The Commission adopts fare policies for Washington State Ferries (WSF), and reviews and adjusts fares. It reviews the long-range ferry system capital plan and works with WSF in developing operational strategies.

Ferry Customer Survey

The Commission conducts surveys of ferry customers at least every two years. Data gathered from the Ferry Riders' Opinion Group (FROG) survey panel helps to inform WSF level of service, operational, pricing, planning, and investment decisions.

Policy Guidance

The Commission offers policy guidance and recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature on issues which include:

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

Public Involvement and Outreach

The Commission conducts public outreach both through meetings held in Olympia and in community meetings throughout the state which focus on local and regional transportation issues and challenges. The Commission also gathers public input via its FROG survey panel, via special projects and studies, and its email inbox.

Transportation Innovative Partnerships Program

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

Route Jurisdiction Transfer Program

Cities, counties, or WSDOT may petition the Commission to consider a revision to the state highway system. Once its review is complete, the Commission forwards a recommendation to the Legislature for final action in law.

Naming State Highways and Bridges

The Commission may name state highways, bridges, and ferry vessels after receiving a naming request from the Legislature, community organizations, a local government, or individual. The Commission carefully considers community support and consults with WSDOT before acting to name a transportation facility or vessel.

Special Studies

The Commission conducts special studies or projects directed by the Legislature, which result in formal reports and recommendations to the Legislature and Governor. It has just completed research and a pilot test to assess whether a road usage charge could potentially replace the gas tax. Studies and projects currently underway:

- The Autonomous Vehicle (AV) Work Group advises the Commission in its task to make recommendations to the Legislature on policies that enable the safe accommodation of AVs on public roadways statewide.
- A Low-Income Tolling Study was funded in 2019 to assess options, costs and benefits of implementing a low-income tolling program for users of the I-405 ETLs.
- The TNB Loan Report provides the Legislature with an annual update on funding needed to provide up to $85 million in loans to the TNB Account.

For more information please visit our website: wstc.wa.gov

Commissioners

Jerry Litt, Chair, Grant County

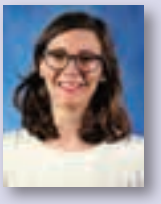
Jerry brings 40 years' experience in planning and community development to the Commission. He was the Director of Planning and Community Development for the City of Lacey for 13 years, following 10 years with Douglas County, and has done consulting throughout Eastern Washington. His experience includes developing Douglas County's award winning GMA public involvement program and the City of Lacey's "Designing Downtown 2000" program. He has been an executive board member for the Washington City Planning Director's Association, a past president of the Washington County and Regional Planning Director's Association, and a member of the Transportation Improvement Board. Appointed by Governor Gregoire in 2011, Jerry was reappointed by Governor Inslee in 2017. His term expires June 30, 2023.

Roy Jennings, Vice Chair, Clark County

Roy retired as a Staff Non-Commissioned Officer after 20 years of honorable service in the United States Marine Corps, where he worked on various transportation projects including airports, railheads, and road building. In 1997, he and his family moved to Southwest Washington, where he drove a transit bus for over 20 years. A graduate of the University of Oregon Labor Education & Research Center, Roy has served as the Secretary-Treasurer, Southwest Washington Central Labor Council, as a member of the Executive Board, Amalgamated Transit Union Local 757, and on the Board of Directors for C-TRAN, the transit agency in Clark County. He is currently Treasurer of the Labor Roundtable of Southwest Washington. Appointed by Governor Inslee in 2014, Roy was reappointed by Governor Inslee in 2019. Roy's second term expires June 30, 2025.

Joe Tortorelli, Spokane County

Joe is an economic development consultant with 40 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 Regional Transportation Council and the Spokane Area Good Roads Association. A lifelong Spokane resident, Joe is an avid cyclist and snow skier. Appointed by Governor Gregoire in 2011, Joe was reappointed by Governor Inslee in 2014. His term expires June 30, 2020.



Hester Serebrin, King County

Hester is the Policy Director at Transportation Choices Coalition, a statewide organization working to bring Washingtonians more affordable, sustainable, and reliable transportation choices to connect them with jobs, housing, education, and each other. With partner organizations, she develops transportation policy recommendations to improve health and equity outcomes. A member of the Executive Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council, Hester sits on several of its committees. She has a Bachelor's degree from Reed College and a Master's Degree in Public Administration from the University of Washington Evans School of Public Policy and Governance. 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. Her 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 worked in the utility industry for over 20 years as the Natural Resources Manager for Tacoma Power, leading the federal licensing process for Tacoma's hydroelectric projects. Debbie has served on the National Hydropower Association Board, the Tahoma Land Conservancy, and the Forterra Board of Directors. She also served on the Nisqually River Council for over 15 years, including a term as Chairman. Debbie now resides on Lopez Island where she and her husband operate a small farm providing meat and specialty food products to customers in the Puget Sound region. Appointed by Governor Inslee in 2015 for a partial term, she was reappointed in 2016. Her term expires June 30, 2022.

Shiv Batra, King County

Shiv was a co-founder and President of a US based engineering company for over two decades. He has held leadership roles in numerous engineering and construction organizations, promoting innovations, technology transfer, civic, and professional development activities locally, nationally, and internationally. He also served two terms as a US Commissioner for the Permanent International Association of Navigation Congress (PIANC). Shiv and his wife are active in many local and international non-profit organizations. Appointed by Governor Inslee in January 2016, Shiv was reappointed in 2019. His term expires June 30, 2025.

James "Jim" A. Restucci, Yakima County

Jim has over 35 years of government service as a soldier in the U.S. Army and Army National Guard for 20 years and as a city official. The mayor of Sunnyside from 2010 to 2018, he is now serving his 5th term on the City Council. Jim has chaired the Yakima Valley Transportation Policy Board for the past 9 years. He served as President of the Association of Washington Cities in 2016, and also was President of People for People, Inc. Jim currently oversees the daily operations of a technology services company he co-founded in 2002. Jim was appointed by Governor Inslee in 2018. His term expires June 30, 2024.

Kitsap Transit's Fast Ferries provide new connections between Seattle and Bremerton and Kingston.

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Transportation Commission

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