COVID-19 IMPACTS ONE YEAR LATER

PRESENTATION TO THE WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
AXEL SWANSON – WASHINGTON STATE ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY ENGINEERS  OCTOBER 19, 2021
County Background

- County Roadway Responsibilities
  - 39 Counties/39,000 centerline miles
  - 59% of Washington roadways
  - 45% of Washington bridges
  - 4 ferry systems
Current COVID-19 Challenges

- Workforce
- Projects
- Revenue
- Uncertainty
Workforce Challenges

- **Impacts to employees and tough decisions for managers:**
  - Changing guidance and mandates
    - Masking, distancing, quarantining
    - Vaccination mandates
    - Contingency planning (possible reduction in workforce)
  - Ongoing turnover and hiring (shortages of drivers and operators)
  - Complex and rushed collective bargaining
  - Prolonged stress and fatigue
    - Increased personnel issues
    - Increased anger/speeding from citizens/drivers
Construction Challenges

- Impacts to construction, maintenance, and operations:
  - Disrupted supply chains for equipment and supplies
  - Increased costs for materials resulting in change orders
  - Challenging discussions with contractors and oversight of contracts
  - Complex procurement and contracting decisions
  - Postponed or prolonged project timelines
  - All while managing other health/safety concerns unrelated to COVID (heat and wildfire smoke)
Revenue Challenges

- Impacts of unanticipated revenue fluctuations
  - Decreases in direct distribution of Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax
  - Decreased or delayed grant funding or grant cycles
  - Influx of American Rescue Plan Act funding and need for increased program capacity (water/sewer/broadband)
  - New and more complex audit requirements
  - Uncertainty about state and federal transportation/infrastructure packages
Long-term Challenges

- **The Impact of uncertainty:**
  - How have travel habits changed?
  - How long will these changes last, and how will they continue to impact the transportation system?
  - How will these changes continue to impact traditional sources of transportation revenue?
  - Should we/can we change how we forecast revenue and plan projects during this time of uncertainty?
  - What happens after one time funding is gone?
  - Will inflation exacerbate the existing County revenue problem?
Questions?