New Realities and Transportation Trends Emerging from COVID

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Washington State Transportation Commission

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Transit Ridership Rebound Continues to Lag Personal Vehicle Trips

Transit Ridership and Personal Vehicle Trips vs pre-COVID

Source: INRIX & National Transit Database (latest NTD data Oct 2021)
How Travel has Changed Throughout the Seattle Region

- Travel demand for crossing the lake has decreased more than other trips due to increased telecommuting.

- Travel through the two areas has increased by 16%, the only increase in trip type.
Travel to Dense Downtowns has Decreased Even More

-32%  

-25%
Travel Speeds in the Puget Sound Region

Commute speeds are generally above pre-COVID levels.

This indicates more travel is occurring off-peak and on weekends.

The largest increases in travel speeds occur during the morning peak on SR 520 and I-90, but look more “normal” during the evening peak, with I-5 between Seattle & Tacoma just 2% faster than in 2019 and I-405 between Bellevue & Renton 12% slower.
Telecommuting in Washington State has Increased under COVID

In 2019, telecommuting was 6.5% of work trips.

In 2020, it increased to 25% of work trips, nearly a four-fold increase.
COVID-19 Accelerated Migration Out of Urban Neighborhoods

Yet “Most didn’t move far.”

Urban neighborhood defined as Census Tract > 7,000 population per sq. mile
People are Moving Due to Work From Home Ability

Source: Upwork
The New Reality: 6 Undeniable Trends

1. Commute patterns have changed probably forever
   - More telecommuting (at home, 3-day weeks, etc.)
   - More flexible hours ("rush hours" flatten out across the day)

2. ‘Urbanization’ has reversed to ‘de-urbanization’
   - People have more flexibility to live where they want
   - Significant movement out of urban core areas due to Covid-19, increase in crime, increased housing costs, etc.

3. Flexible transportation has never been more important
   - Covid demonstrated fixed transportation infrastructure is obsolete – flexibility is key
   - ‘Micro’ and ‘Mini’ transit vs. ‘Mass’ transit
   - Ride sharing, employer shuttles, bikes, scooters, autonomous shuttles will drive the future
The New Reality: 6 Undeniable Trends

4. Electrification of everything
   • Cars, busses, bikes, scooters, etc.
   • Great, but this trend require clean grids or benefit is lost

5. Autonomous and semi-autonomous vehicles will greatly improve safety
   • ADAS functionality, cameras, etc. already on majority of new vehicles
   • Washington State should encourage AV’s, not discourage them in our State

6. Dramatic investment by private sector in mobility
   • Investment in mobility is very hot right now: EV/battery companies, AV’s, data/analytic companies, etc.
   • Washington State needs to embrace private sector investment in mobility, not discourage it