



Route Jurisdiction Study

*Transportation
Commission Meeting*

March 14, 2024



Agenda

- 1** Project Status and Update

- 2** History and State of the Art

- 3** What we've heard in initial interviews

- 4** Strengths and weaknesses of current criteria and process

- 5** Opportunities: Areas of potential improvement

Project Update

- The Route Jurisdiction Study will review the criteria and process for transferring routes between the state, county and city roads systems and report to the Legislature by July 1, 2025.
- Previous meeting addressed study and outreach plans and initial observations.
- Status of work
 - Completed initial information gathering interviews
 - 75% complete with history and state of the practice task memo
 - Initial thoughts on SWOT analysis and promising areas for potential improvement

Commission Points of Contact

Date	Subcommittee	Full Commission
January 2024		Project update and study plan
February	Defining the issues / interview findings	
March		History and Context, SWOT Analysis
April	Criteria and potential scenarios	
May		Criteria: scenarios and decision frameworks
September	Scenario results, associations feedback	
October		Scenario results, analysis findings, next steps
December	Draft recommendations	
January 2025		Project recommendations
March	Draft report, associations feedback	
May	Final project report	Final project report



History and Context

What does it mean to be a state route? Why does it matter?

- Hierarchy necessary for navigation
- Routes serving longer trips require faster speeds and controlled access
- Heavy freight trucks require sturdier pavement and reliable access
- The state has greater capacity for funding and implementing high-cost infrastructure
- State routes have:
 - State funding
 - More stringent standards for design, maintenance/operations, and access management
 - Potentially less flexibility to accommodate town centers and local design preferences

How did we end up with today's state routes?

- 1905:** First 12 numbered state highways designated
- 1913:** State Highway Board established
- 1926:** US numbered highway system introduced
- 1937:** All principal arterials in Washington designated as state highways by statute; numbering reorganized
- 1956:** Interstate Highway System created
- 1969:** National guidelines for functional classification established
- 1990:** Criteria for state routes defined in statute after a three-year study by the Road Jurisdiction Committee

How has the transfer process been used?

- Impetus for transfers: funding responsibility and design authority
- Table includes transfers since the 1990 Road Jurisdiction Transfer Study

Year	Route and Location	Request	TIB/WSTC Recommendation	Legislative Decision
1992	SR-506 near Toledo	Remain as a state highway	Approved	NA
1992	SR-10 near Cle Elum	Remove from state system	Approved	Not enacted
1992	SR-901 near Lake Sammamish	Remove from state system	Approved	Enacted
1993	Alder Cut-Off Road in Pierce Co.	Transfer to WSDOT	Rejected	NA
1993	Road 24 SW in Grant Co.	Transfer to WSDOT	Rejected	NA
2000	Paine Field Blvd in Snohomish Co.	Transfer to WSDOT	Approved	Enacted
2001	SR-513 in Seattle	Transfer to City of Seattle	Partial transfer approved	Not enacted
2002	SR-99 in Tukwila	Transfer to City of Tukwila	Rejected	Transferred despite WSTC recommendation
2009	SR-908 in Redmond and Kirkland	Transfer to the cities	Approved	Enacted
2010	SR-527, between SR-522 and I-405	Transfer to the City of Bothell	Approved	Enacted
2023	SR 501 in Ridgefield	Transfer to City of Ridgefield	Approved	Pending
2023	Snoqualmie Parkway between SR-18 at I-90 and SR-202/Railroad Avenue	Transfer to WSDOT	Deferred	NA

How do other states handle route transfers?

Criteria/State Name	Arizona	Florida	Minnesota	Oregon	Washington
Where is the transfer process described?	Arizona DOT Route Transfer Handbook	Florida DOT Road Jurisdiction Transfer Handbook	Minnesota Jurisdictional Realignment Project Report	Oregon DOT Route Transfer Handbook	Criteria in statute (RCW) Process in administrative rules (WAC)
What transfers are addressed?	State→Local Local→State	State→Local Local→State	Transfers between any government	State→Local Local→State	State→Local Local→State
Approval Authority	Arizona Transportation Board	Florida DOT	MnDOT approves with MPO concurrence	Oregon Transportation Commission, MPO	WSTC recommends Change in statute
Requires Agreement Between Parties	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Provides funding to mitigate impacts	As specified in agreement	As specified in agreement	Yes, as strategic investment for best alignment	As specified in agreement	No
Consideration for transfer cost and impacts	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No



Information Gathering Interviews

Initial Interviews

- Conducted information gathering interviews staff from:
 - **Transportation Improvement Board (TIB)**
 - **County Road Administration Board (CRAB)**
 - **Washington State Association of County Engineers (WSACE)**
 - **Association of Washington Cities (AWC)**
 - **WSDOT**
- Presentations to:
 - **WSACE membership**
 - **MPO/RTPO Coordinating Committee**
- Separate meetings:
 - **City of Snoqualmie**
 - **City of Tacoma**

Comments about Process

- The process works when there is concurrence.
- Functional Classification – confusion about the meaning and multiple scales.
- If routes transfer, revenue should be reallocated.
 - Strong concerns about taking on additional responsibilities.
- Engage with underserved communities early so they can decide when in the process to be engaged.
 - The process is not clear, especially for underserved communities, regarding when and how to engage.
 - As sovereign entities, tribes must be encouraged and welcomed to be involved.
- Transfer should evaluate the impacts to the system, both the state and the local.

Comments about Facilities and Standards

- Design Standards:
 - Lack of consistency and confusion about which standards apply.
- Design Requirements:
 - Should not transfer substandard highways.
 - Transfer candidates should meet receiving agencies' design/function standards or define how the facilities will get to that standard.
 - Current standards should be met, particularly regarding ADA and fish passage.
 - State of good repair should be ensured before transfer.
- Bridges:
 - State may be better prepared to operate and maintain.
- State routes that look like city streets:
 - State wants to maintain access management for through travel.
 - Local wants to maintain access and character in business districts.

Comments about Criteria (1 of 2)

- Some current criteria have merit.
- Some jurisdictional assignment of existing state routes lack rationale or initial rationale is outdated.
- Need to be more quantifiable and use straight-forward language
 - Urban versus urbanized - confusion about proper definition.
 - Regionally oriented - lack of understanding about how to apply.
- Use of the roadway
 - Is the mix of traffic predominantly general traffic or trucks?
 - Is it necessary to accommodate pedestrians?
- Liability - what role should it play?
- Heavy truck routes should transfer to state.
- Should state parks be served by state system?

Comments about Criteria (2 of 2)

- Affordability:
 - Should be described as "burden."
 - Should not determine jurisdiction.
 - Every agency struggles with affordability.
- Route operations:
 - Need to consider implementation or financial capacity of different agency sizes.
- Equity:
 - State routes would be too great a burden for small towns (vulnerable communities).
 - Transfers should not be an equity issue; should be addressed as a maintenance funding issue.
 - Consider, but acknowledge that HEAL Act does not technically apply to cities and towns.
 - Three equity considerations for RJT process: public involvement, access for all, ongoing maintenance levels for the facilities following transfer.
- Statutory:
 - Consider removing criteria from RCW, make into WAC.



SWOT Analysis
Strengths, Weaknesses,
Opportunities and Threats

Strengths

- Basis for state route designation is rational, not political.
- Commission process ensures affected communities have a chance to comment.
- There are good reasons to transfer routes.

Weaknesses

- Original process was never tested.
- Criteria address what should be a state route, but not whether a route is a good candidate for transferring.
 - Lack of treatment of state of good repair, liability
 - No consideration of funding or implementation capacity
 - Challenging issues on state routes that are also Main Streets
- Mushy criteria, poorly defined terms don't support clear yes-or-no decisions

Threats – the Problem Statement

- Criteria:
 - Can result in inconsistent and inconclusive outcomes
 - Not sensitive to community priorities
 - Not responsive to changes in policy or emerging resiliency issues
- Criteria identify when a route should be a state route, but not when it is a good transfer opportunity.
 - No consideration of impact to receiving jurisdiction or its capacity to fund or maintain the roadway
- Four transfer mechanisms defined in law are not being coordinated.
- The process is unnecessarily long when there is concurrence between parties.

Opportunities for Improvement

- Streamline and simplify
 - Reduce the rigor of process and allow flexibility for concurrence transfers.
- Better informed decisions – clarity of analysis information
 - Consider multiple factors rather than yes-no criteria.
 - Define “mushy” terms more rigorously.
- Separate criteria for being a state route from criteria for being a good transfer opportunity.
 - Address or mitigate financial impact to receiving agency.
 - Address risk and state of good repair.
 - Ask whether jurisdiction change is the right way to address a problem.

Next steps

- Begin discussion of criteria and decision framework at April Subcommittee meeting.
- First meeting of steering committee later in April.
- Criteria and decision framework will be presented for discussion at full Commission in May, followed by engagement through statewide associations.