Public Transportation Division

Washington State Transportation Commission

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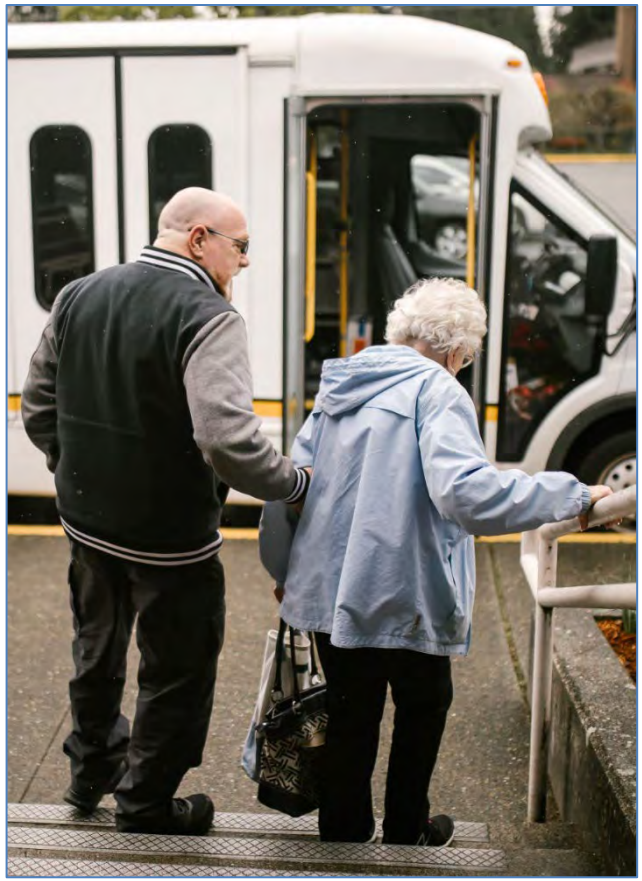
Why public transportation?

- ✓ Cost-efficiency
- ✓ Economic growth
- ✓ Equitable access to jobs, education, and community
- ✓ Cleaner air and water
- ✓ Livable communities
- ✓ Public health

What the Public Transportation Division does

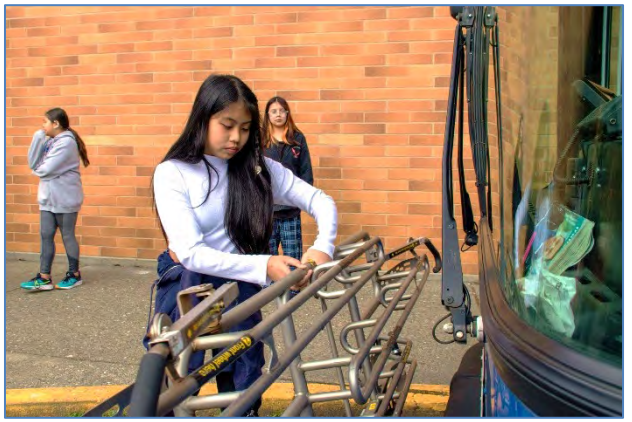
Deliver programs and develop systems

- ✓ State and federal public transportation grant programs
- ✓ Transportation Demand Management
  - Commute Trip Reduction
  - Telework
- ✓ Technical assistance
  - Compliance with federal and state requirements
- ✓ Fare-free youth transit ridership
- ✓ Safety oversight for light rail
- ✓ Planning and Practical Solutions
- ✓ Post-pandemic transit adaptability



Our results

- ✓ Delivering on-time, on-budget projects and services that integrate with the broader transportation system
- ✓ Supporting projects and programs that serve people from all walks of life
- ✓ Working with our partners to ensure our programs meet their local community needs
- ✓ Contributing to safety on roadways and in communities
- ✓ Ensuring our work supports communities by helping them achieve public health and environmental justice goals



State grant funding recipients

In the 2023–2025 biennium, WSDOT's Public Transportation Division awarded $835 million in grant funding for more than 400 projects:

- Of that, public transportation providers utilized more than $495 million immediately to deliver public transportation service
- They're utilizing another $190 million to buy new, cleaner, more efficient vehicles
- And they're investing $150 million to construct the infrastructure needed to enhance, preserve, and maintain the system into the future

Grant recipients in the 2023–2025 biennium include:

- 32 transit agencies
- 30 community transportation providers
- 8 tribes
- 3 rural intercity service providers
- 7 metropolitan or regional transportation planning organizations
- 1 educational service district
- 24 local governments

Transit Support Grant program

Immediate benefit for our state's youth

In 2021, state lawmakers passed legislation that enabled every transit system across the state to allow passengers under 18 to ride for free. If the numbers are any indication three years later, youth in Washington are taking full advantage.

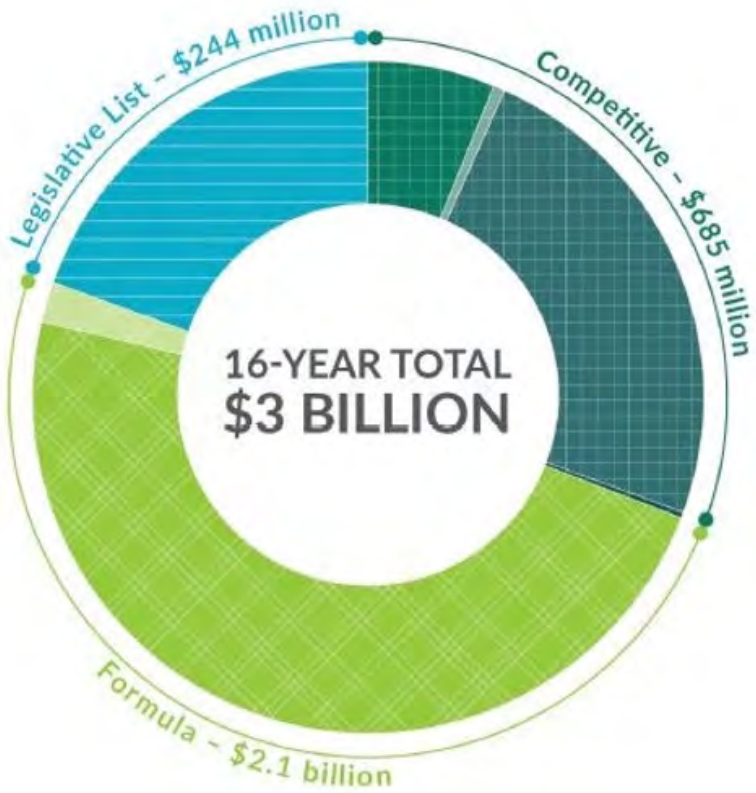
In 2023, Washington transit agencies reported that passengers under 18 took more than 15 million transit trips for free. When youth ridership on Washington State Ferries is added, that number grows to more than 16.5 million fare-free youth passenger trips.

Opportunities for growth

- Service gaps remain a barrier in our state. There are many seniors, people with special needs, and folks living in rural areas who have no or very limited access to public transportation.
- Our partners don’t just need vehicles – they also need drivers to operate them and mechanics to keep them running. There’s a shortage of all three.
- While increases in funding have especially benefited transit agencies, tribes and small nonprofits still face economic and workforce hurdles to keep their services running.

Climate Commitment Act funding update

CCA public transportation funding through MAW



LEGISLATIVE LIST – $244 MILLION

A three-tier list of public transportation projects selected by the Legislature. To be prioritized based on contribution toward environmental justice goals.

COMPETITIVE – $685 MILLION

Tribal Transit Mobility Grants – $80 million
Public transportation grants for tribal nations in Washington state.

Transit Coordination Grants – $5 million
Grants for projects that increase transit ridership and improve transit riders' travel experience through collaboration among agencies in the central Puget Sound region.

Bus & Bus Facility Grants – $300 million
Grants for replacing, rehabilitating, and purchasing buses and constructing bus facilities.

Green Transportation Capital Grants – $300 million
Grants for transit agencies to implement cost-effective capital projects that reduce the carbon intensity of the Washington transportation system.

FORMULA – $2.1 BILLION

Paratransit/Special Needs Grants – $600 million
Funding to assist transit agencies and organizations around the state in sustaining and expanding services to people with disabilities, including seniors and children.

Transportation Demand Management funding – $25 million
Commute trip reduction funding for local jurisdictions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and keep the busiest commute routes flowing.

Transit Support Grants – $1.45 billion
Funding to support operating and capital expenses of transit agencies.

2023–2025 CCA investments

The division awarded the **entire $406.3 million** in CCA appropriations for 2023-2025 for 177 projects.

Around **94 percent** of those projects benefit vulnerable populations in overburdened communities.

2023–2025 CCA funding breakdown

Public transportation grant program	CCA funding (in millions)
Transit Support	$188.9
Paratransit/Special Needs for transit agencies (formula)	$78.1
Move Ahead Washington: transit projects	$46.6
Green Transportation Capital	$39.4
State Buses & Bus Facilities	$38
Tribal Transit Mobility	$10
Transportation Demand Management/Commute Trip Reduction	$3.3
Transit Coordination	$2
Total	**$406.3**

2023-2024 greenhouse gas reductions

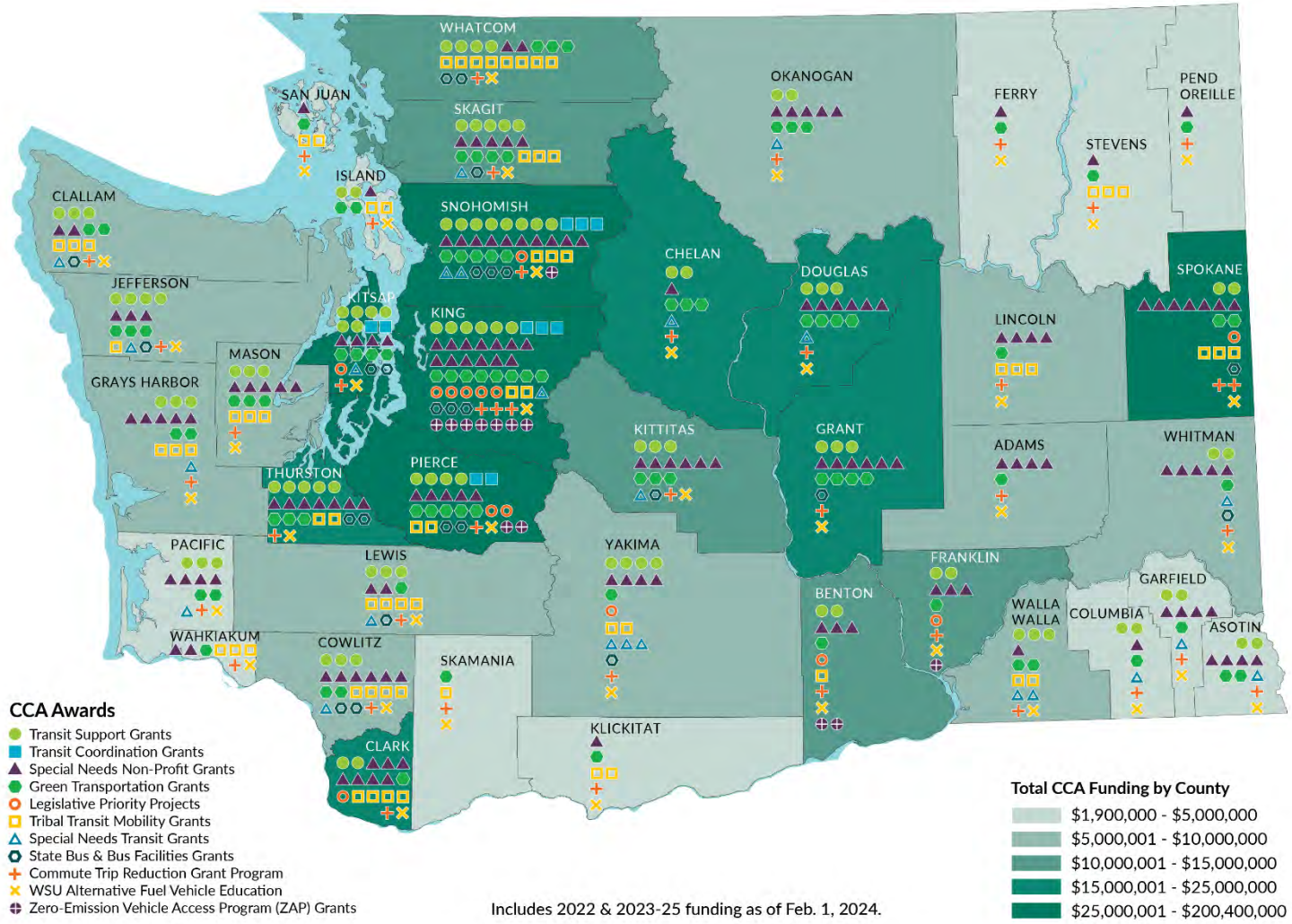
Reduced in 2023-2024 (14 projects)

1,422 metric tons

Anticipated reductions for current projects (54 projects)

124,955 metric tons

Public transportation CCA funding to date



Operating and Capital public transportation projects

Spokane Transit:
Cheney High Performance Transit Line
Regional Mobility Grant program

Project overview

- Widespread improvements to infrastructure along the transit line, including:
  - ✓ Real-time arrival information displays
  - ✓ Pedestrian-level lighting and shelters
  - ✓ Bike racks, heating, seating, and more

- Deploying the region's first double-decker buses for streamlined service

- Betz Station: A pair of stops at the intersection of Betz Road and SR 904 is now a full-size transit station complete with pedestrian shelters, handrails, benches, bike accommodations, signage, and digital displays

- Improvements to multiple stations including Eagle Station, the primary hub to the center of EWU's campus for routes throughout Cheney

Spokane Transit:
Cheney High Performance Transit Line
Regional Mobility Grant program

Project benefits

- ✓ **Addresses congestion along I-90**: In 2015, vehicle delay in the area increased by 112 percent.
- ✓ **Addresses increased ridership**: In 2023, the Cheney corridor carried approximately 475,000 passenger trips.
- ✓ **Addresses need for increased capacity**: Buses were frequently overloaded with passengers, with some standing for the ride. The new double-decker buses nearly double the capacity.
- ✓ **Options and safety**: Gives travelers a safe and comfortable travel option.

Lewis County Transit: Exit 68 e-Transit Station

Green Transportation Capital Grant program

FUNDED BY WASHINGTON'S CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT

Project overview

- The Exit 68 transit station is an intermodal hub for:
  - ✓ Carpooling
  - ✓ Bus access
  - ✓ Electric-vehicle charging
- The station also has an ADA-accessible transit island with pathways, bicycle and pedestrian access, and visual enhancements
- The station acts as a key component of Lewis County Transit's Zero-Emission Rapid Transit Hub, which consists of strategically located transit stations connected by a zero-emission bus service

Lewis County Transit: Exit 86 e-Transit Station

Green Transportation Capital Grant program

FUNDED BY WASHINGTON'S CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT

Project benefits

- ✓ **Closes gaps and expands opportunity**: The Exit 68 station links rural communities east of the Twin Cities with limited transit access to education and employment opportunities.

- ✓ **Increases multimodal access**: US 12 east is a heavily trafficked corridor with little multimodal access. The Exit 68 station provides a safe and accessible site for those traveling on Lewis County Transit services or those stopping to charge their electric vehicle.

- ✓ **Reduces carbon emissions and traffic congestion**: The e-Transit model will significantly reduce Lewis County Transit's carbon footprint, air pollution, and traffic congestion.

Pullman Transit: Battery-electric bus

State Buses and Bus Facilities Grant program

FUNDED BY WASHINGTON'S CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT

Project overview

- The new battery-electric bus will replace a 35-foot-long diesel bus purchased in 2005.
- The new bus is 30 feet long with 15 seats, room for one wheelchair, and grab-bars for standing passengers.
- Will be the sixth battery-electric bus added to their fleet of 24 buses, marking a 25-percent shift away from diesel power.
- Electric buses can travel more than 150 miles on a single charge – more than enough for the Loop, Pullman's longest route that traverses about 147 miles each day.

Pullman Transit: Battery-electric bus

State Buses and Bus Facilities Grant program

FUNDED BY WASHINGTON'S CLIMATE COMMITMENT ACT

Project benefits

- ✓ **Small and quiet**: The smaller bus will improve safety as it rolls along neighborhood routes with tight corners. The community also appreciates quieter electric buses rolling through their neighborhoods.

- ✓ **Drop in fuel usage**: In 2022, the transit bus fleet used nearly 80,000 gallons of diesel. That total dropped by **17.5 percent** to just over 65,000 gallons in 2023 as they transition to electric and hybrid busses.

- ✓ **Drop in fuel costs**: A single diesel bus costs about $20,000 a year to fuel, whereas the cost to fully charge a zero-emissions electric bus costs about $4,000 annually.

- ✓ **Reduces carbon emissions and noise pollution**: The Pullman City Council directed Pullman Transit to proceed down the electric-vehicle procurement path in 2018, and both the reduced air and noise pollution are investments the community continues to stand behind.

Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program

2024 STUDY UPDATE

Project goals & objectives

Goal

Accessibility
Improve access to intercity bus service to help people get where they need to go, when they need to go.

How will we measure success?

- Develop recommendations that prioritize major travel corridors and key origin/ destination points served by intercity bus.
- Understand and prioritize essential timed connections to other local, regional, and statewide transit services.
- Increase the proportion of the statewide population who are located within 25 miles of an intercity bus route.

Goal

Equity
Commit to equitable public outreach and engagement resulting in service recommendations that meet the needs of Washington's diverse residents, particularly those with the fewest transportation options.

How will we measure success?

- Increase the proportion of vulnerable, unserved or underserved, and disadvantaged populations located within 10 miles of an intercity bus route.
- Listen to and amplify the voices, stories, and experiences of current and prospective intercity bus riders within the plan.

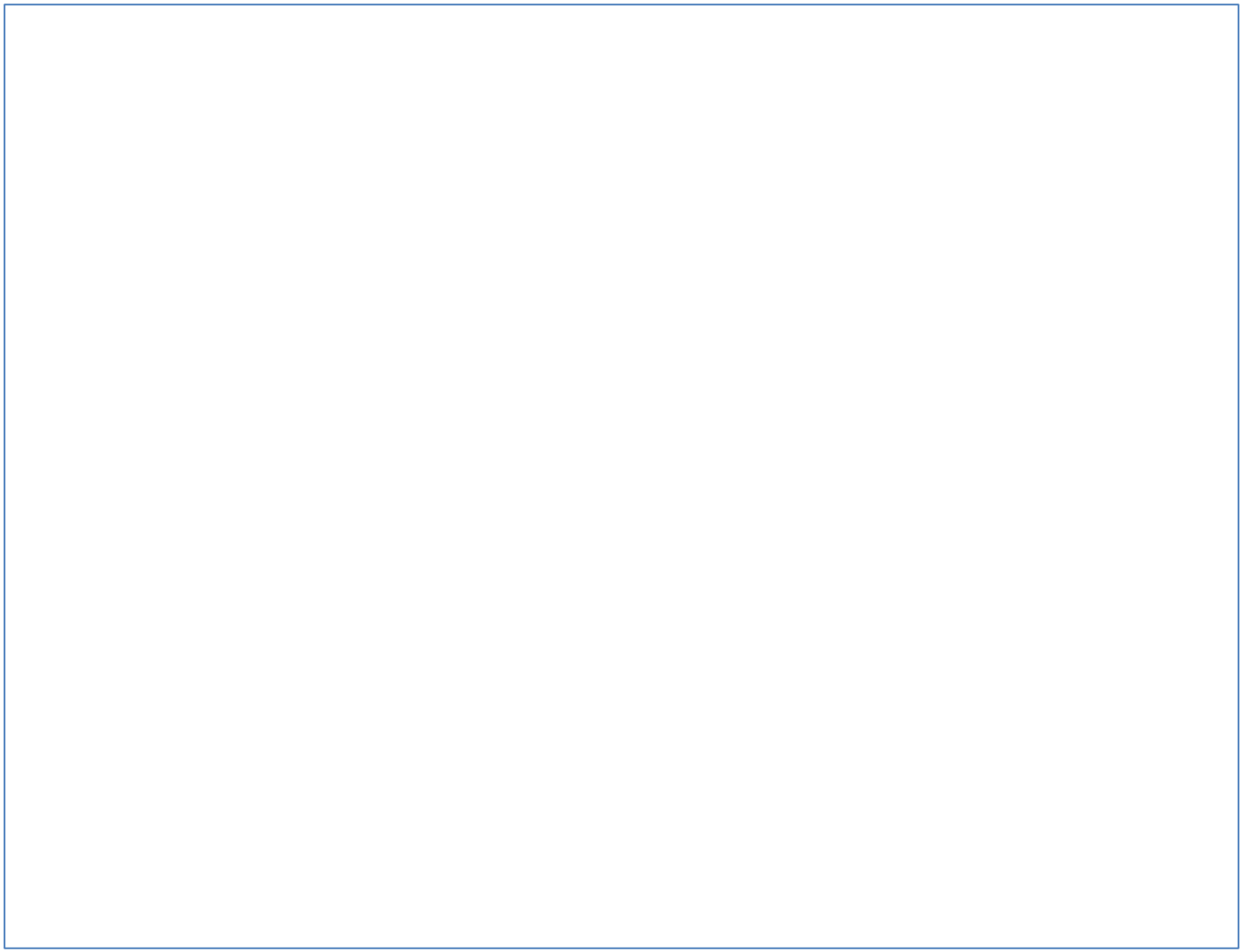
Goal

Safety and comfort
Address safety and comfort for riders at existing and future bus stops and transfer points.

How will we measure success?

- Develop recommendations that address safety and comfort concerns along existing routes.
- Plan for route expansion scenarios with safety and comfort of transfers as a priority.
- Establish key partnerships with local and regional jurisdictions to implement strategies related to safety and comfort.

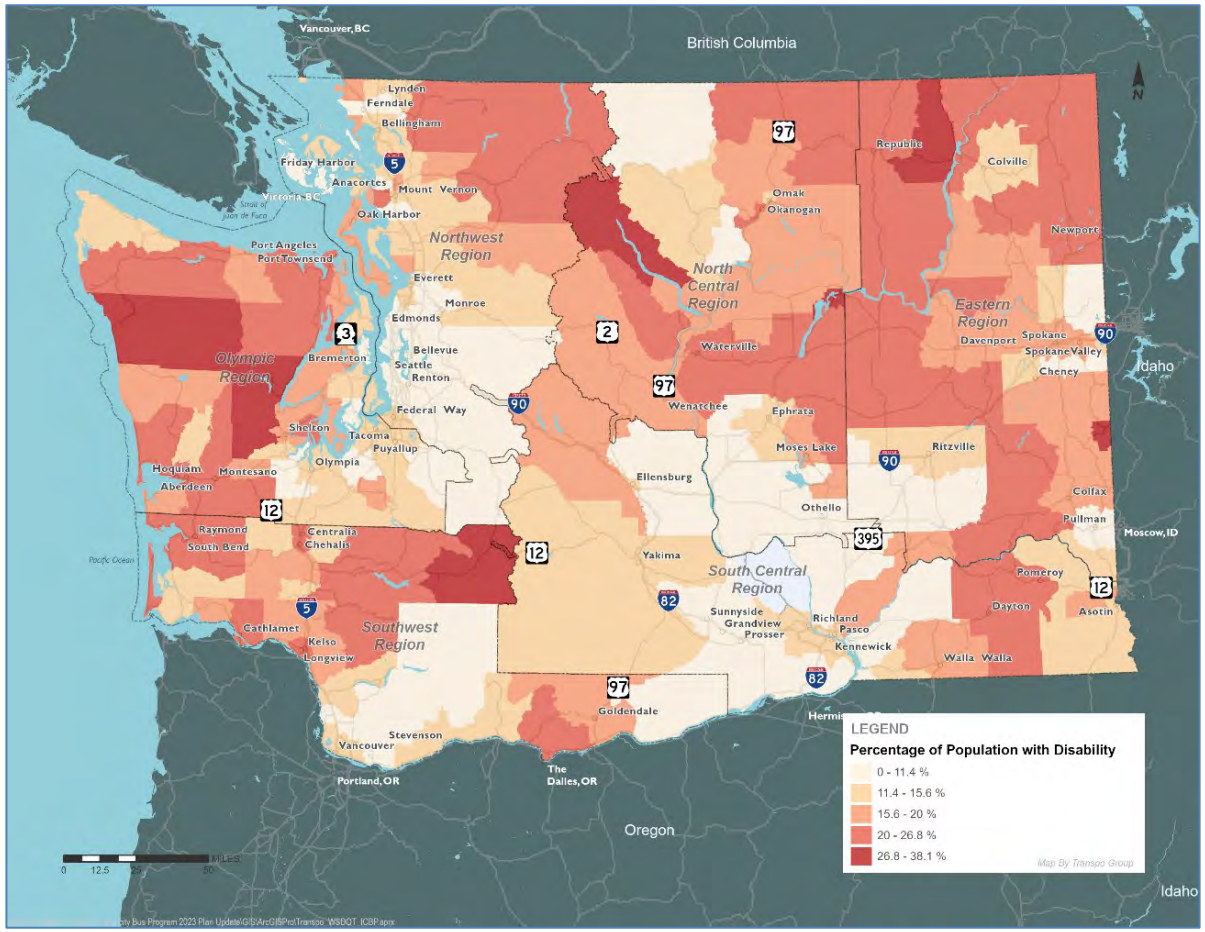
Intercity bus network



Who rides intercity bus?

Demographic groups

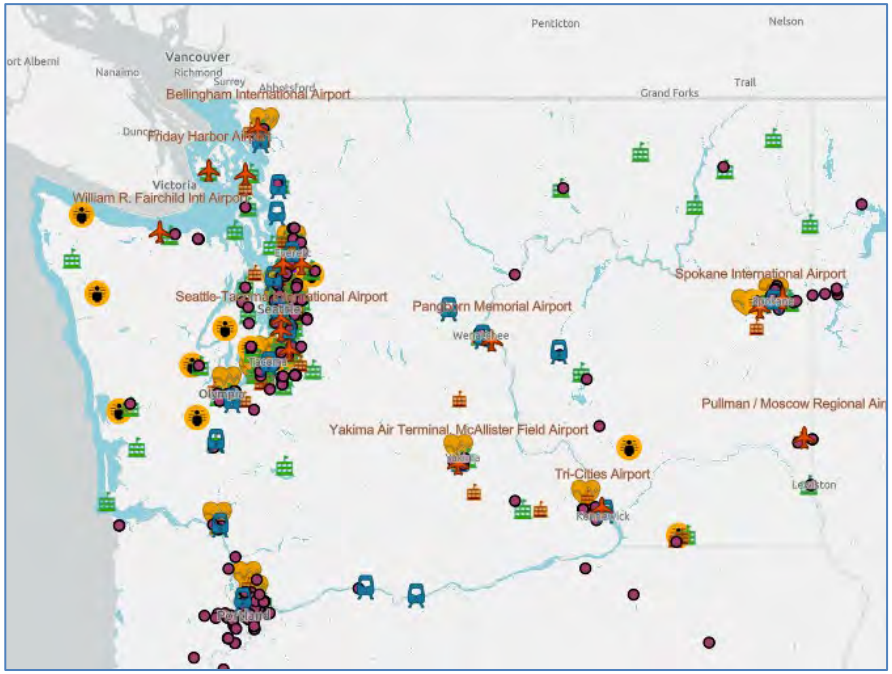
- Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
- Non-white population
- Zero-car households
- Senior population (65 and over)
- Post-secondary students
- People with disabilities
- Population density
- ALICE households



Where do riders want to go?

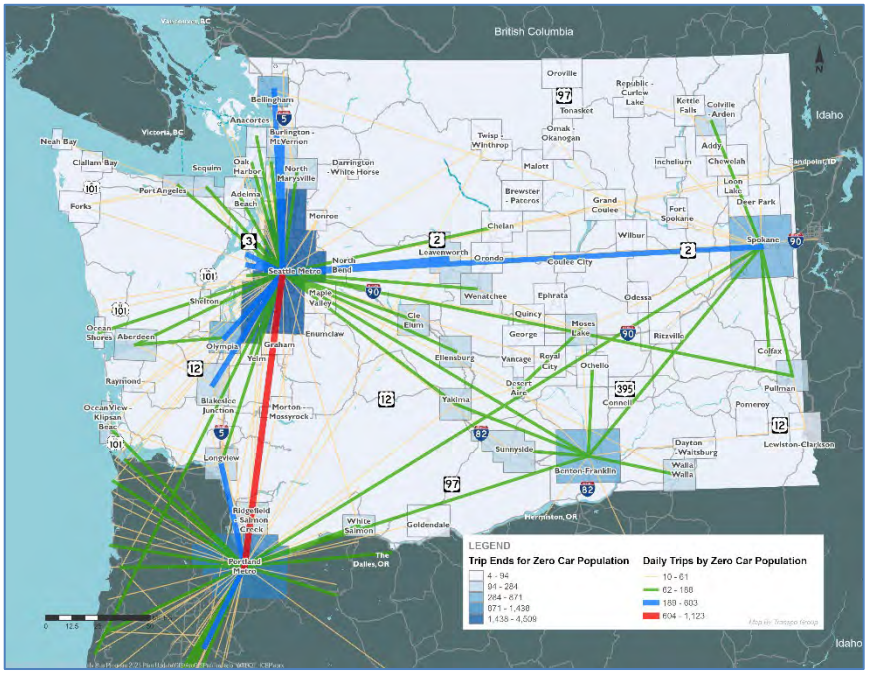
Key points of interest

- Airports
- Amtrak stations
- Big-box retailers
- Colleges and universities
- Prison facilities
- Health care facilities



We modeled travel patterns for each demographic group available within Replica, including…

- Non-white travelers
- Zero-car travelers
- Low-income travelers
- Senior-citizen travelers



Engagement and outreach

Engagement activities

- ✓ 4 tabling events
- ✓ 3 listening sessions
- ✓ 1 tribal listening session
- ✓ 6 open houses
- ✓ 6 operator interviews
- ✓ Targeted stakeholder interviews
- ✓ Online survey

Sharon

Once a month she visits her daughter in Moses Lake, goes shopping for groceries and other necessities at the Walmart Supercenter, and sees her ophthalmologist for her monthly treatment.

Normally, Sharon's daughter makes the hour plus drive each way to bring Sharon to Moses Lake, but this month, her daughter is recovering from an injury and cannot make the drive. There are no local or regional options for Sharon to visit her daughter or to access her ophthalmologist care. She can still access groceries locally, though.

Outbound Trip
If Sharon is able to get a ride to Grand Coulee, on most weekdays she would have the option to travel to Moses Lake from Grand Coulee using at least three, and potentially 4, different providers. She would catch the 7:40am People for People bus between Grand Coulee and Davenport (free), wait just 10 minutes to catch the Specialty Mobility Services bus from Davenport to Spokane (free), and wait just over an hour to take Flixbus between Spokane and Moses Lake ($25). Flixbus' stop in Moses Lake is outside of the central city, so Sharon may need to take a Grant Transit Authority bus to her final destination (free). This option would allow Sharon to get to Moses Lake to visit her daughter, but it would be very challenging for her to get to the stores where she normally shops. She would have to carry her purchases back home along the return trip that would require at least 3 transfers and take between 5 and 6 hours.

Without her daughter to drive her, Sharon's options to access Moses Lake are limited and time-consuming but could work for a social visit.

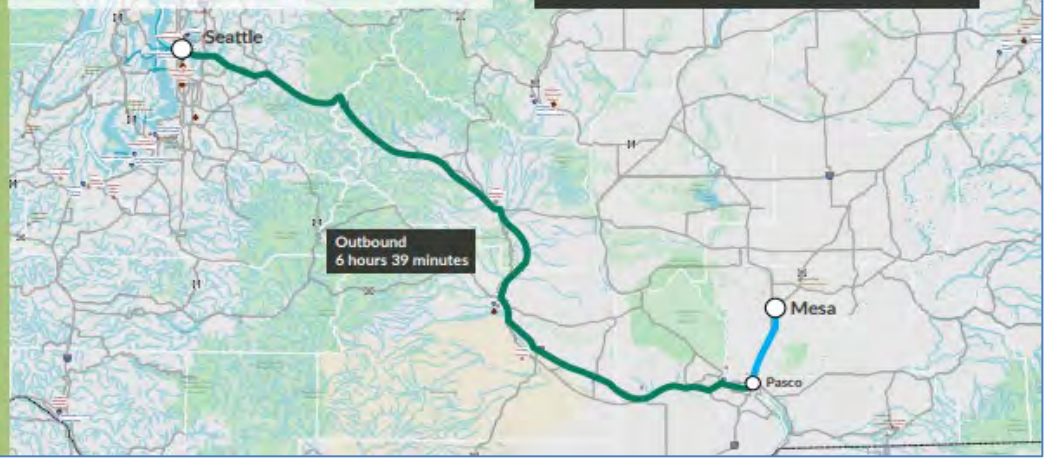
Javier

Javier is 24 years old and lives in Mesa, WA with his parents and two siblings. He needs to get to Downtown Seattle for a job interview. While his family has one vehicle, it's used by his dad during the week for work so Javier must rely on public transportation to get to and from his interview.

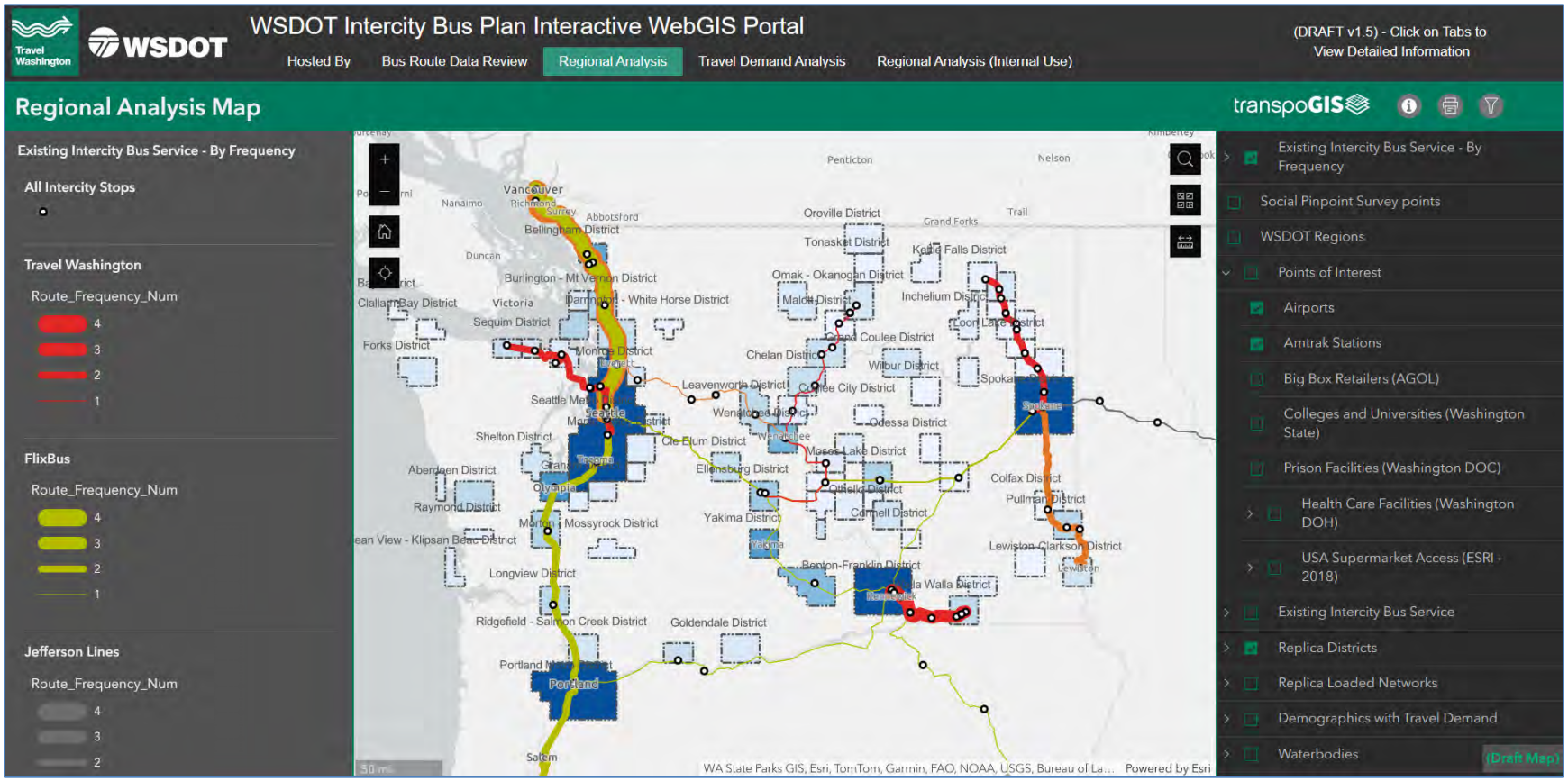
Javier has a few options for getting to and from his interview which rely on a combination of rural public transit in his area, intercity bus, and light rail in Seattle. His best option takes just over 6.5 hours on the way to Seattle and nearly 9 hours on the way back. If he had the option to drive it would take him between 3 and 4 hours each way.

Outbound Trip
His best option would be to take the Columbia Basin Health Association (CBHA) bus operated by People for People (Route 102) from Mesa to Pasco, transfer to the FlixBus route that travels between Pasco and Seattle, and finally transfer to Seattle's Light Rail system. The CBHA bus is free and gets him to Pasco in about 30 minutes, but requires him to call in advance to request pick up from the stop in Mesa. When he arrives in Pasco, he must walk 10 minutes to the FlixBus stop location and wait approximately 1.5 hours. The FlixBus from Pasco to Seattle leaves at 2:10 pm and arrives around 6:35 pm (approx. $35). From the Seattle Bus Station it would take Javier less than 20 minutes to get to his destination using Light Rail.

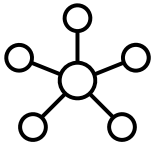
Return Trip
The return trip would be very similar. Javier could take the 9:15 am FlixBus and arrive in Pasco at 1:40 pm (approx. $32). He would have to wait until 4 pm for the CBHA bus to pick him up in Pasco and would arrive in Mesa at 5:36 pm. For this trip he would also need to call in advance to request a drop-off at the Mesa bus stop.



Intercity Bus GIS portal



Key findings, gaps & needs



Popular destinations

- Seattle, SeaTac, Spokane, Portland, and Yakima emerged as common destinations for travelers
- Recreation is the primary trip purpose, followed by visits to family, accessing medical services, and running errands

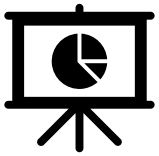
Awareness and use of services

- Awareness of intercity bus services is mixed; some participants were unfamiliar
- Praise for services like the Belair Airporter Shuttle, particularly noting the need for increased frequency and better schedule alignment with flights

Suggestions for improvement

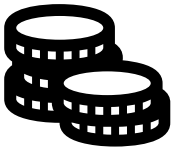
- More frequent service
- Better marketing and information sharing
- Improved bus comfort and cleanliness
- Safer pick-up and drop-off locations
- Cost concerns as bus fares sometimes rival flight costs

Key findings, gaps & needs



Specific needs

- Better connections, especially for medical trips; more reliable operations under various weather conditions
- Improved navigation support at destinations



Funding priorities

- Top priorities identified for funding were adding routes to new areas, increasing service frequency to align with key appointments, and extending existing routes
- An average satisfaction rating of 4.1 out of 10 indicated room for network improvements, particularly improving the marketing of services and connections to local transit services

Key survey findings

Trip types

- 50-60% of frequent riders use ICB to travel for work and jobs, do errands, visit friends and family, recreate, and shop for groceries
- 50-60% of infrequent riders use ICB to visit friends and family or recreation

Alternatives

- Just under half of frequent riders (46%) would be unable to make intercity trips if no ICB service were available
- Most infrequent riders (52%) would drive

Barriers to use or more frequent use

Frequent riders

1. Not available on days needed
2. Not available at times needed
3. Doesn't go where needed

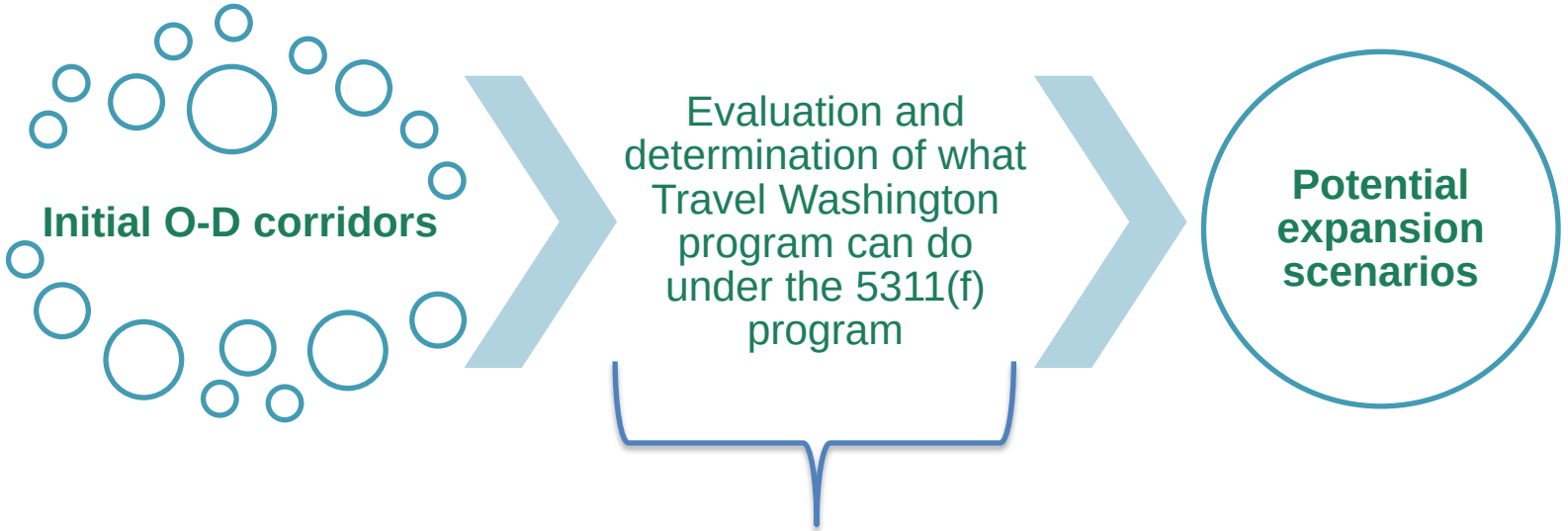
Infrequent riders

1. Not available at times needed
2. Doesn't go where needed
3. Takes too long on the bus

Non-riders

1. Doesn't go where needed
2. Doesn't come close enough to home
3. *(Tie)* Not available at times needed
   Takes too long on the bus

Potential Travel Washington expansion scenario identification

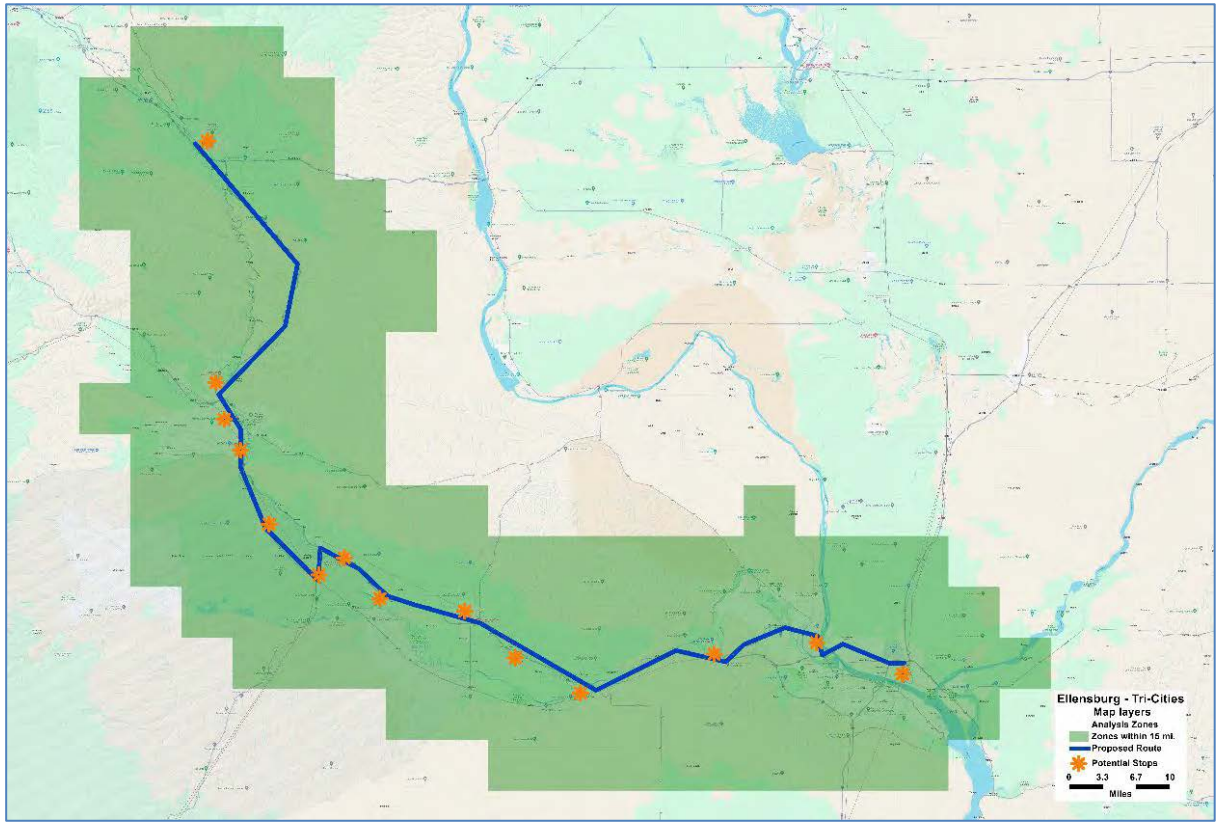


- Identification of national and private carrier corridors/routes
- Identification of commuter bus services (current and not eligible)
- Feasibility and functional operability of initial O-D corridors

***** Expansion scenarios and recommendations are entirely contingent upon interstate corridor services remaining at current service levels*****

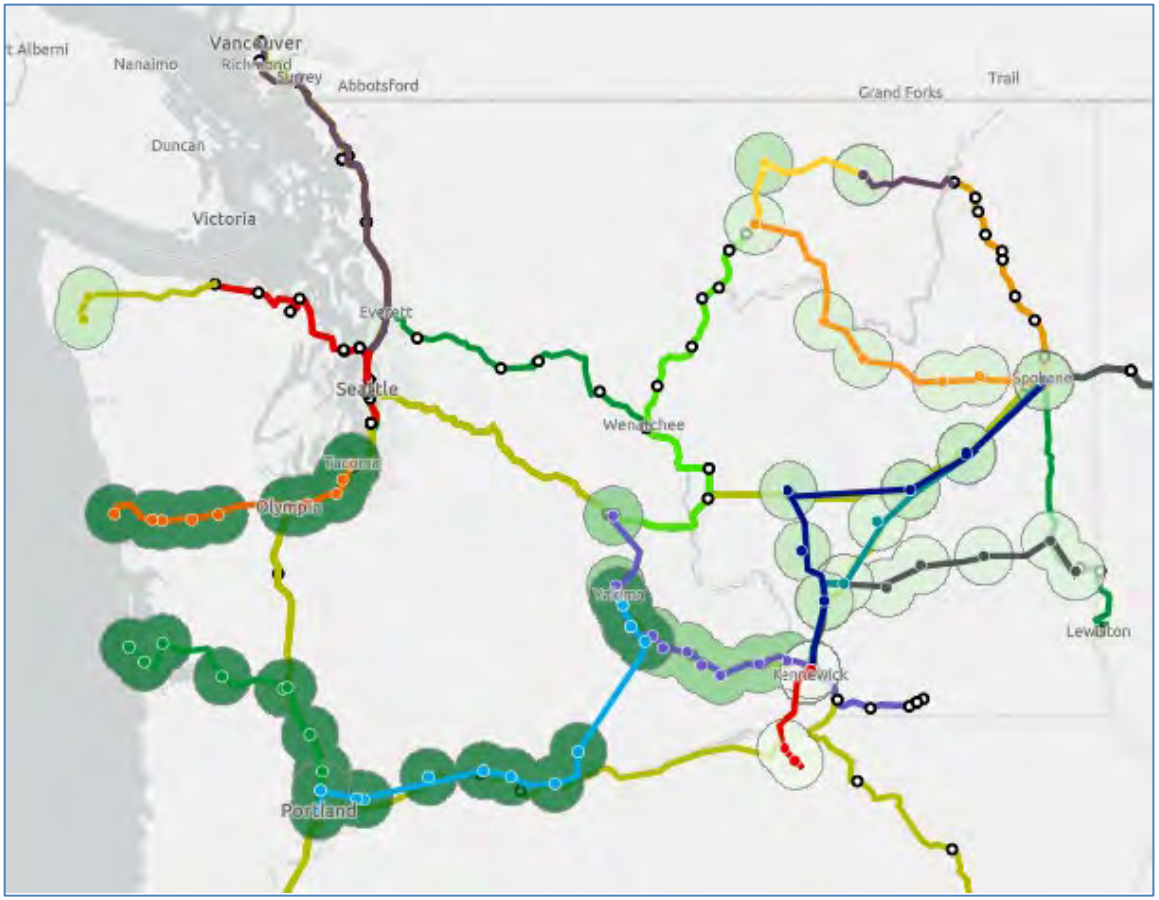
Potential Travel Washington expansion scenarios (12)

Demand analysis



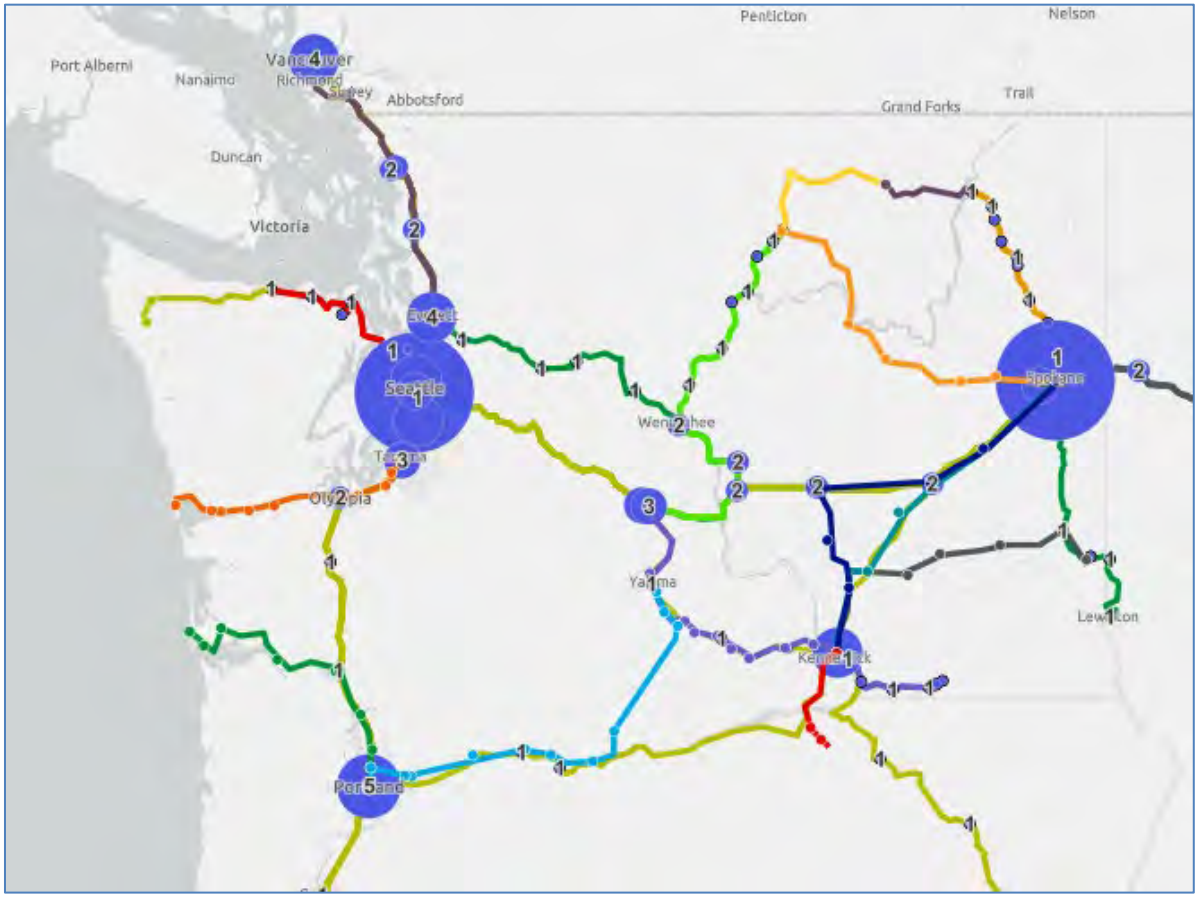
- Potential demand for intercity bus services
- Trips > 50 miles
- Trips to/from analysis zones within 15 miles of a “stop”
- Trips to/from the new stops for the extended routes (the values do not include trips to/from the existing route stops)

Accessibility



- Population served
- Total population within a 10-mile buffer of each stop location
- Net new population beyond those who are already served by intercity bus

Connectivity

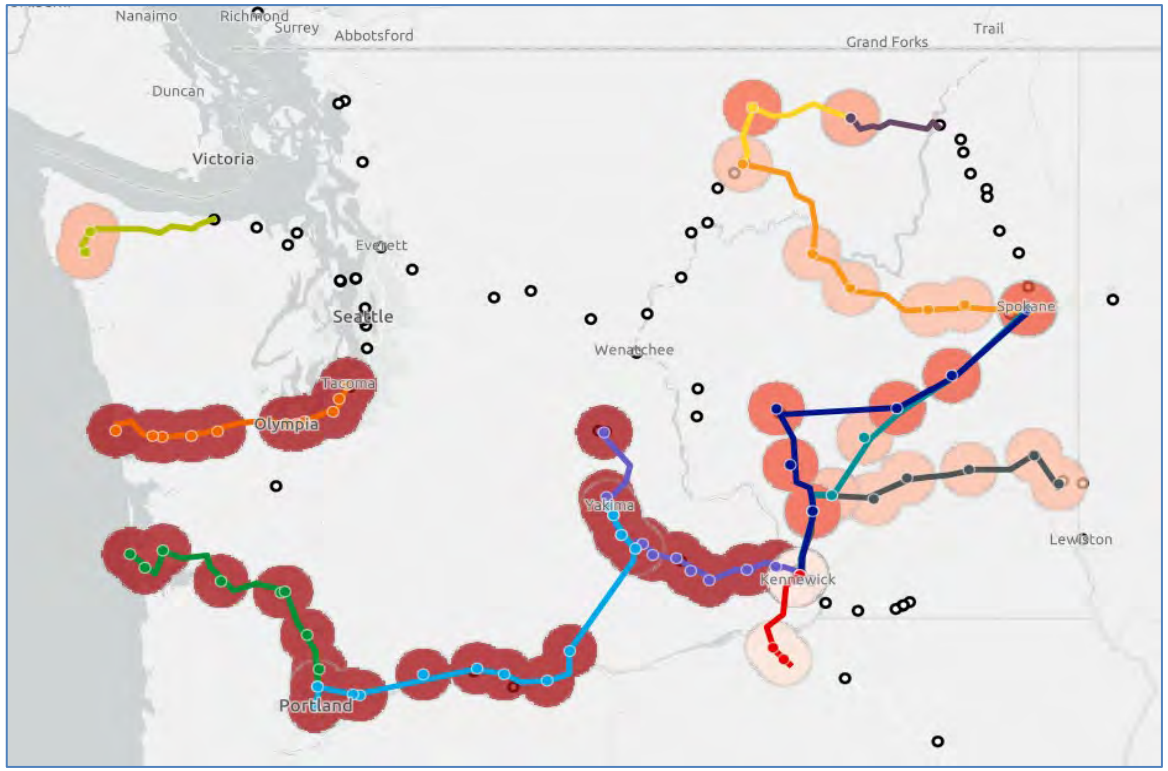


- Utility of new or expanded service
- Potential expansion scenarios provide additional connectivity regionally and to the greater ICB network
- Understanding of the magnitude of single-transfer connections to the greater ICB network

Equity

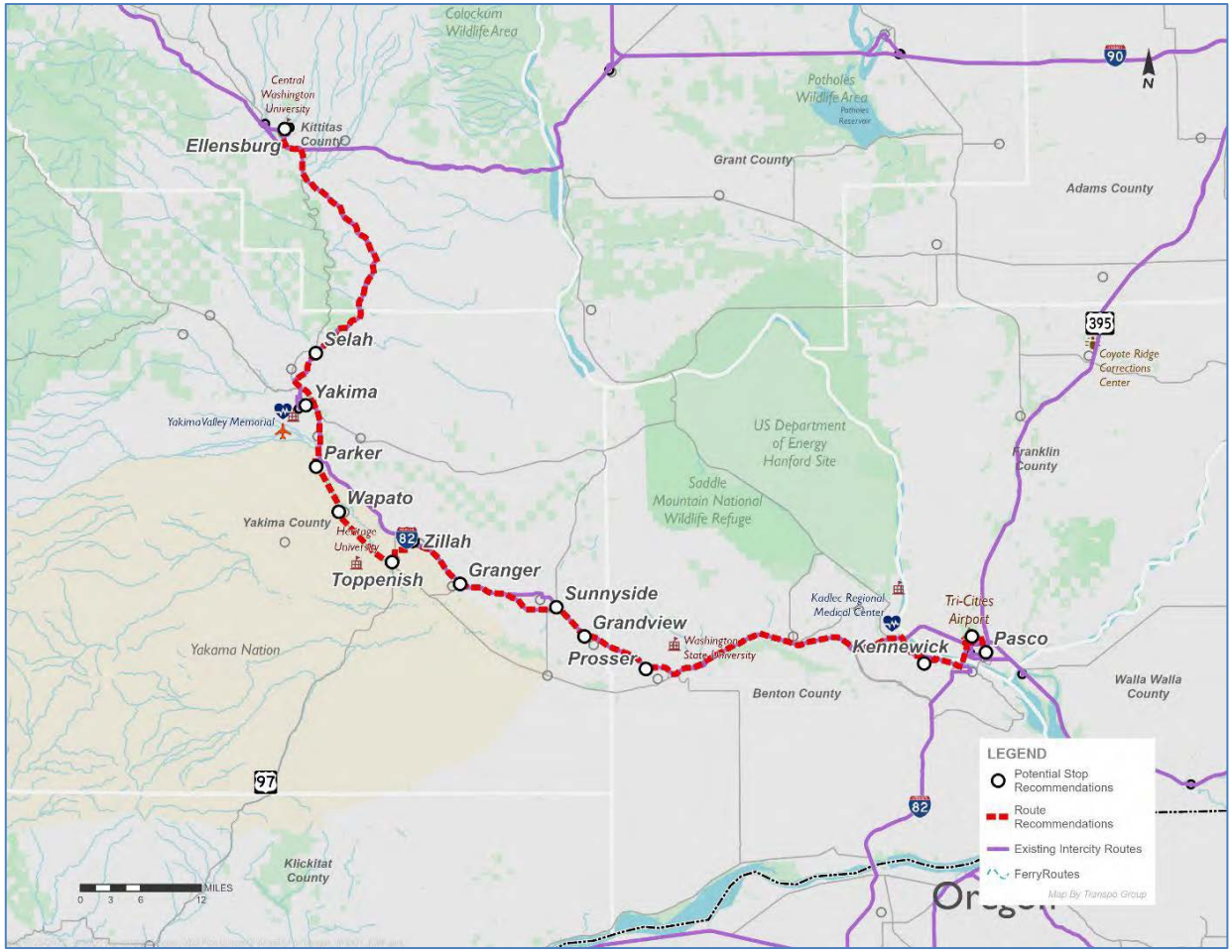
As a function of…

- Demand analysis
  - ❑ What proportion of demand is attributed to ICB demographic personas?
- Accessibility
  - ❑ What proportion of new populations served is attributed to ICB demographic personas and unserved areas?
- Connectivity
  - ❑ How many more connections are provided to unserved areas?



Recommended expansion scenario

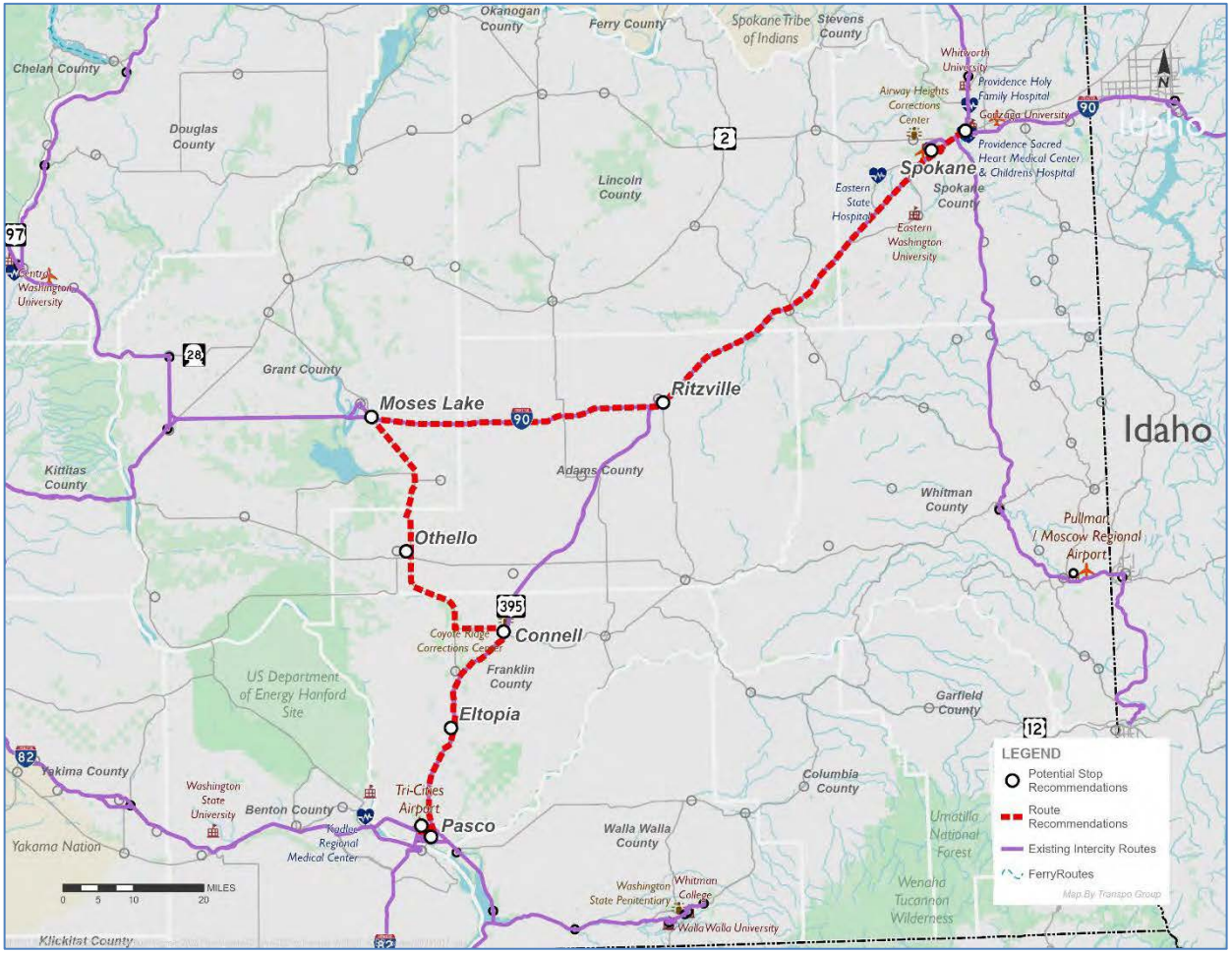
Ellensburg to Tri-Cities



- 3 daily round trips
- 4.5 hour run time
- Connects to local transit, other ICB lines, and Amtrak
- Fills a gap that has high travel demand between Tri-Cities and Yakima
- Augments other providers that are at-capacity for service between Yakima and Ellensburg
- Fills primary gaps and needs established in the provisos

Recommended expansion scenario

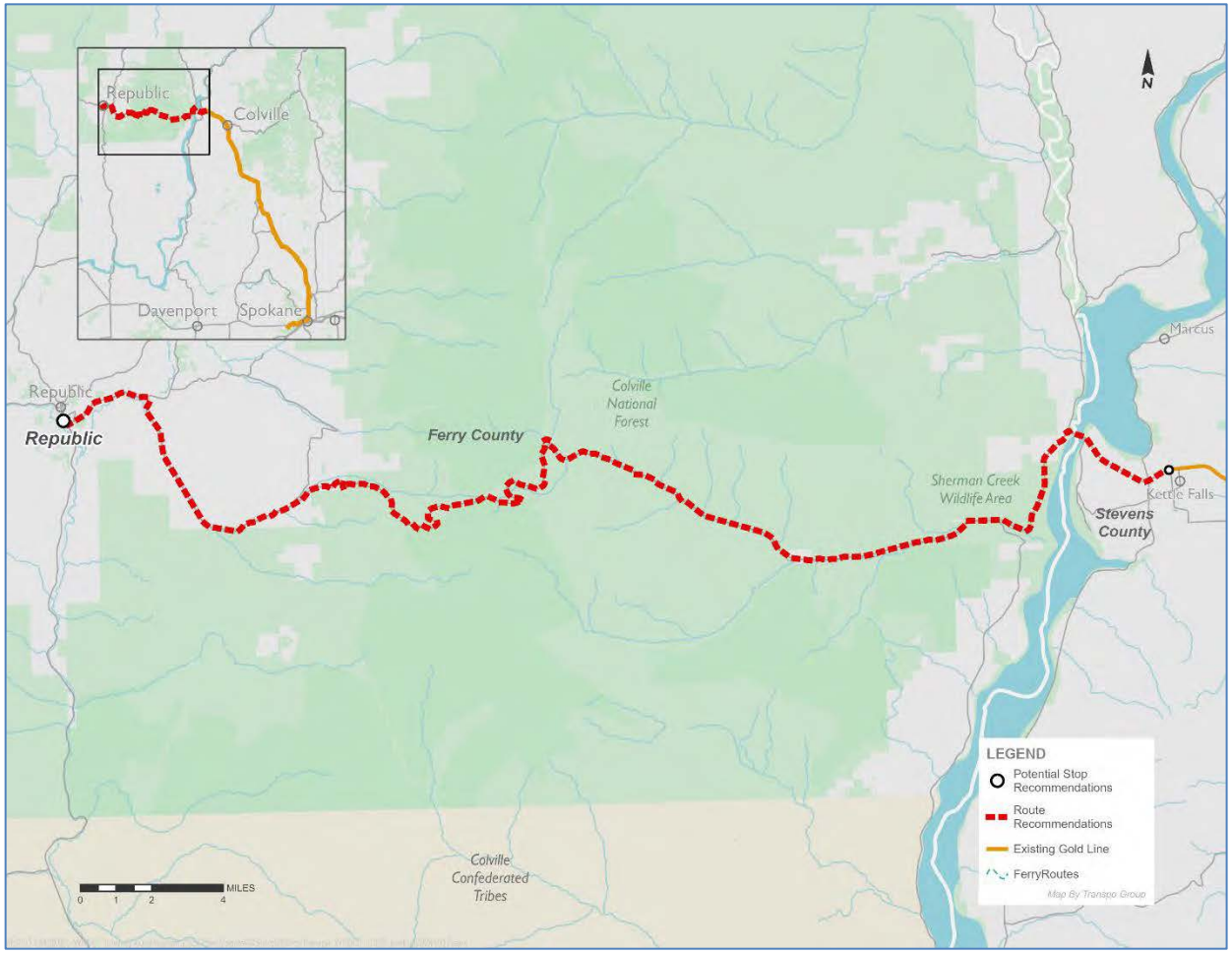
Tri-Cities to Spokane



- 3 daily round trips
- 4 hour run time
- Connections to Ben Franklin Transit and Grant Transit Authority
- Connections to Northwest Stage Lines and Flix Bus in Moses Lake
- Connections in Spokane to the airport and national ICB and rail networks at Spokane Intermodal
- Provides more flexible travel between rural communities

Recommended expansion scenario

Gold Line extension to Republic

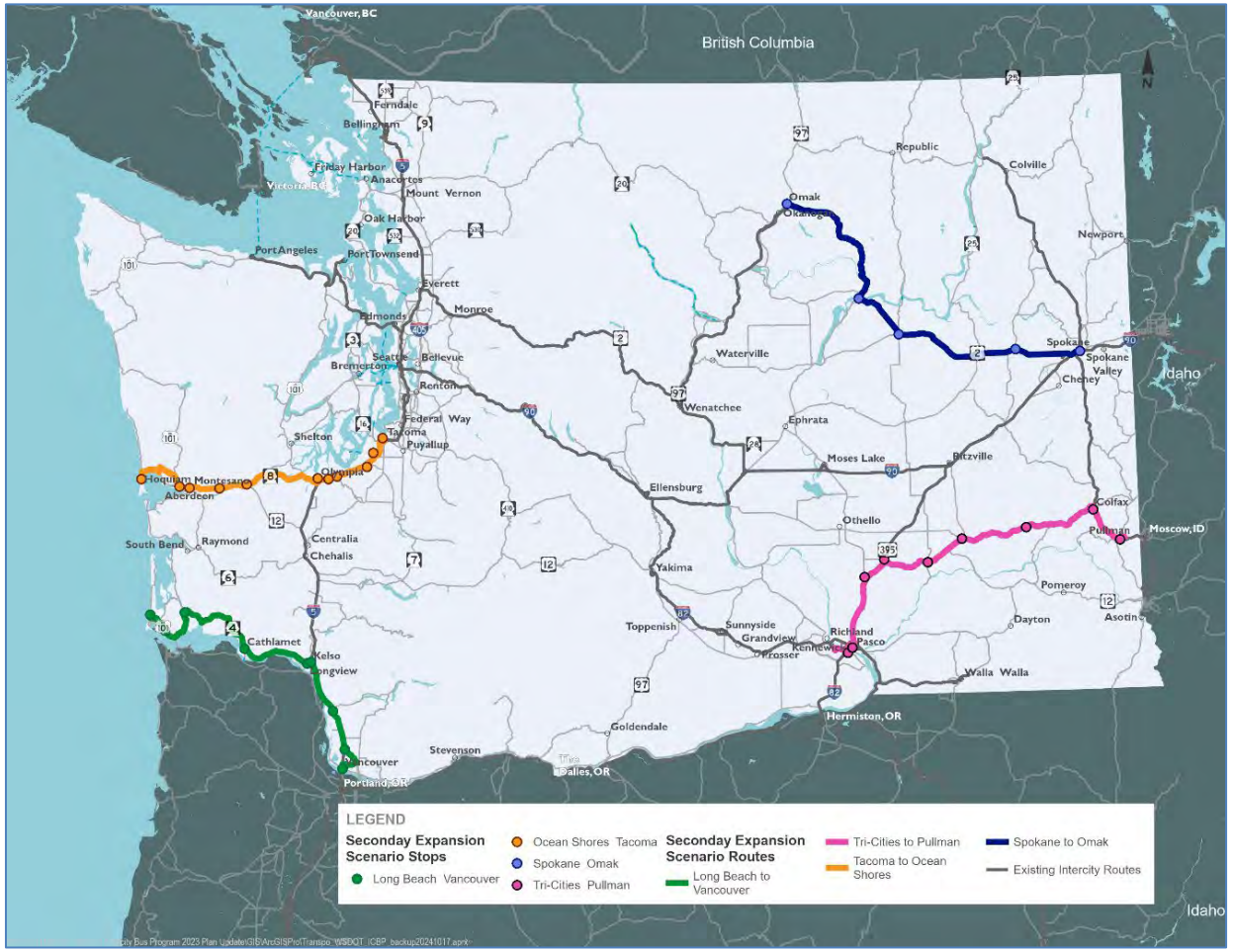


- Increased frequency from 2 to 3 daily trips
- 3.5 hour run time
- Increased service to rural residents and recreational travelers
- Increased access to services in Colville and Spokane
- Additional connections to ICB services through the implementation of additional morning run

Possible Travel Washington secondary expansion scenarios

New services

- Spokane to Omak
- Tri-Cities to Pullman
- Tacoma to Ocean Shores
- Long Beach to Vancouver



Public Transportation Plan

What is the Public Transportation Plan?

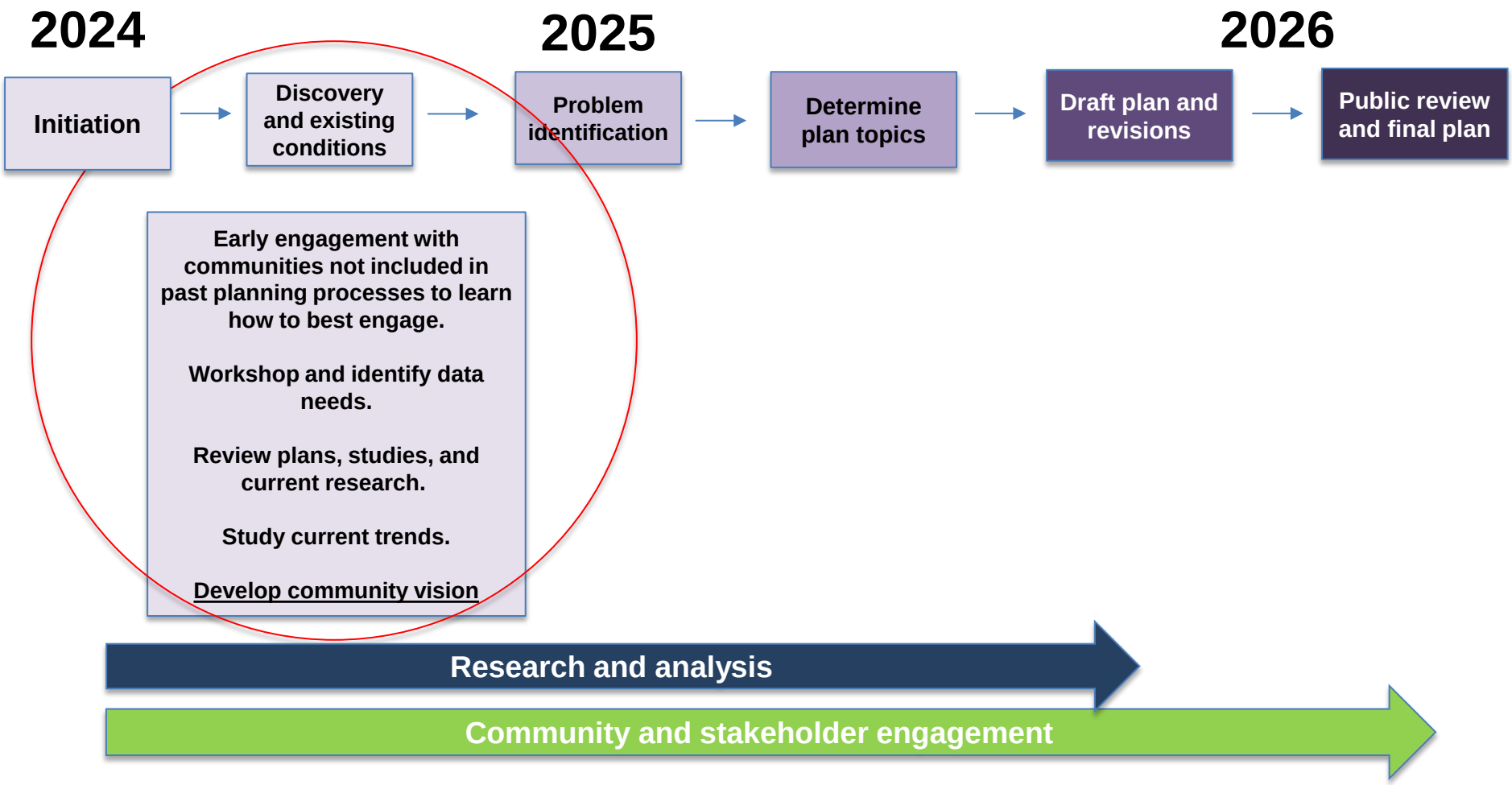
The plan:

1. Outlines the state interest in public transportation
2. Influences public transportation priorities, planning, and investments in Washington
3. 2016 plan lays out high-level strategies and goals:
    - Thriving communities
    - Access
    - Adaptive transportation capacity
    - Customer experience
    - Transportation system guardianship

What are our preliminary update goals?

1. Create a more focused plan to be used by policy makers
2. Elevate and reflect the voices of underserved communities
3. Articulate the value of public transportation
4. Build off the work of other WSDOT plans and projects (e.g., the Frequent Transit Service Study) to articulate the magnitude of funding and policy changes needed

Planning process



Questions & contact info

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