Public Transportation Division

Washington State Transportation Commission

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Why public transportation?

Transportation that makes lives and communities better

- Eases traffic congestion
- Cuts down pollution
- Preserves natural resources
- Promotes healthier lifestyles and cleaner air
- Saves money
- Creates jobs and boosts the economy

What we do

Working with partners to make transportation safe, accessible, and equitable

- State and federal grant programs
- Technical assistance
- Safety oversight
- Planning
- Demand management
- Data analytics

Grant funding and recipients

In the 2025-27 biennium, we awarded $744 million in grant funding for more than 400 projects.

This includes:

- $149.5 million to deliver public transportation service
- $53.5 million to buy new, cleaner, more efficient vehicles
- $188 million to construct the infrastructure needed to enhance, preserve, and maintain the system into the future

Our grant recipients include:

- 34 transit agencies
- 38 community transportation providers
- 14 tribes
- 3 rural intercity service providers
- 6 metropolitan/regional transportation planning organizations
- 1 educational service district
- 32 local governments

Our long-term priorities

Safety, access, and equity

- Building a safer system through leadership, coordination, and shared knowledge
- Closing access gaps through funding, awareness, collaboration, and supporting demand management
- Embedding equity through capacity building, fairness, inclusive design, and accountability

Travel Washington intercity bus program

Nina Stocker, Travel Washington program manager

Project goals and 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 pairs 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 that is 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, un- and underserved, or disadvantaged populations located within 10 miles of an intercity bus route.
- Capture and project 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.

Key study findings

Service

- Most riders use intercity bus services to travel to work, access specialized medical services, visit friends & family, and to recreate
- Just under half of riders report that they would be unable to make these trips if not for intercity bus services
- The most frequent barriers to use are that the service doesn't come close enough to their residence, lacks frequency, and inconvenient timing of service
- Safer pick-up and drop-off locations

Policy

- Identify opportunities for promotion and marketing of program
- Improve monitoring and evaluation of existing services
- Enhanced coordination with local and regional partners, and neighboring state DOTs
- Consistency of traveler experience between different operators and routes
- Staffing and sustained funding

Expansion scenarios: 2024 study update

New services

- Yakima to Portland
- Ellensburg to Tri-Cities*
- Tri-Cities to Spokane*
- Tri-Cities to Pullman
- Spokane to Omak
- Ocean Shores to Tacoma
- Long Beach to Vancouver

Expanded service

- Dungeness Line express run to SeaTac from Port Angeles*
- Second daily round-trip Apple Line*
- Apple Line extension to Republic*
- Dungeness Line extension to Forks*
- Gold Line extension to Republic*

** prioritized expansion scenarios*

Table 34: Summary of Performance Criteria Evaluation for Primary Expansion Scenarios

Expansion Scenario	Performance Ranking (High/Medium/Low)					
	Demand	Demand (Equity)	Accessibility	Accessibility (Equity)	Connectivity	Connectivity (Equity)
Ellensburg–Tri-Cities	High	High	High	High	Medium	Medium
Tri-Cities–Spokane (Option 2)	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium
Dungeness Line Extension–Forks	Medium	Medium	Medium	Low	High	High
Apple Line Extension–Republic	Low	High	Medium	Medium	Low	Medium
Gold Line Extension–Republic	Low	Medium	Low	Medium	Medium	High

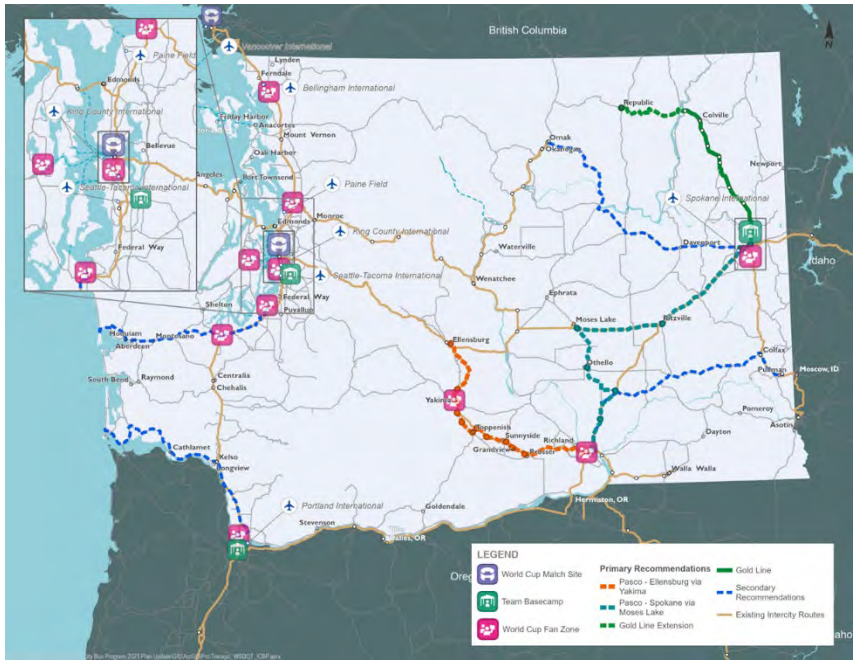
2026 World Cup host city and fan zones

Host city

- Seattle

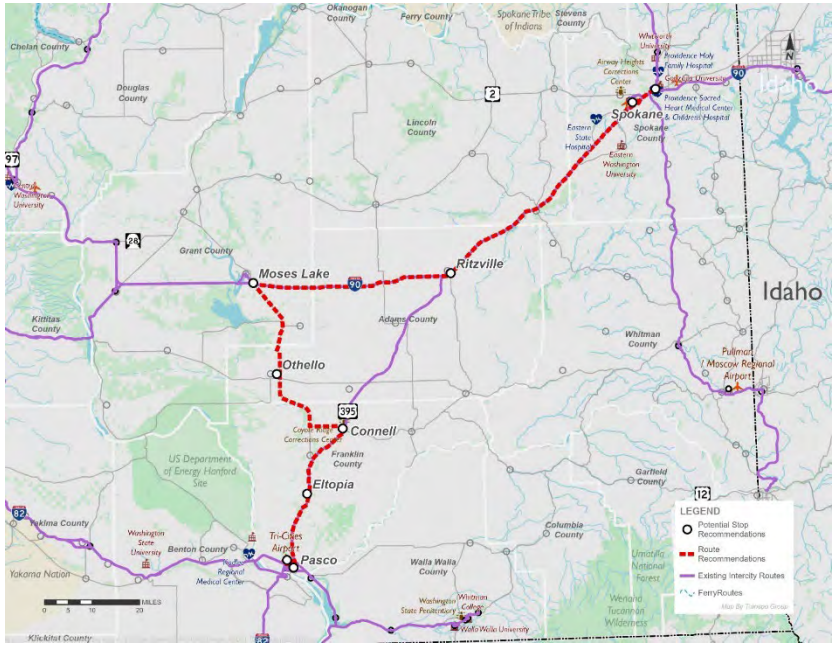
Fan zones

- Bellingham
- Everett
- Bremerton
- Tacoma
- Olympia/Lacey
- Vancouver
- Yakima
- Tri-Cities
- Spokane



NEW Wheat Line service

- Spokane to Moses Lake to Pasco corridor
- Two daily round trips
- Connections to Travel Washington Gold and Grape Line
- Interlining with Greyhound, NWSL, Jefferson Lines, and Amtrak
- Connection to Ben Franklin Transit, Spokane Transit Authority, and Grant Transit in Moses Lake
- Serving Pasco and Spokane airports
- Eastern Washington University



Extended pilot projects

COVID-era funding allowed WSDOT to implement two pilot projects, now funded through June 2027:

Owl Line

- Operated by NWSL
- Overnight service between Spokane and Seattle

Grape Line Connector

- Operated by CWA
- Service between Pasco and Yakima

Existing service enhancements

Dungeness Line

- MTRWESTERN became new operator of Dungeness Line in November 2025
- Added third round trip for express airport service Port Angeles to SeaTac
- New management in place at Seattle Greyhound terminal

Apple Line

- Reestablished second daily roundtrip for Apple Line between Omak and Ellensburg
- Second daily roundtrip is estimated to increase annual ridership by approximately 62% from 4,170 to 6,760 boardings
- This reflects an increase in bus mode share from .12% to .20%

Additional World Cup enhancements

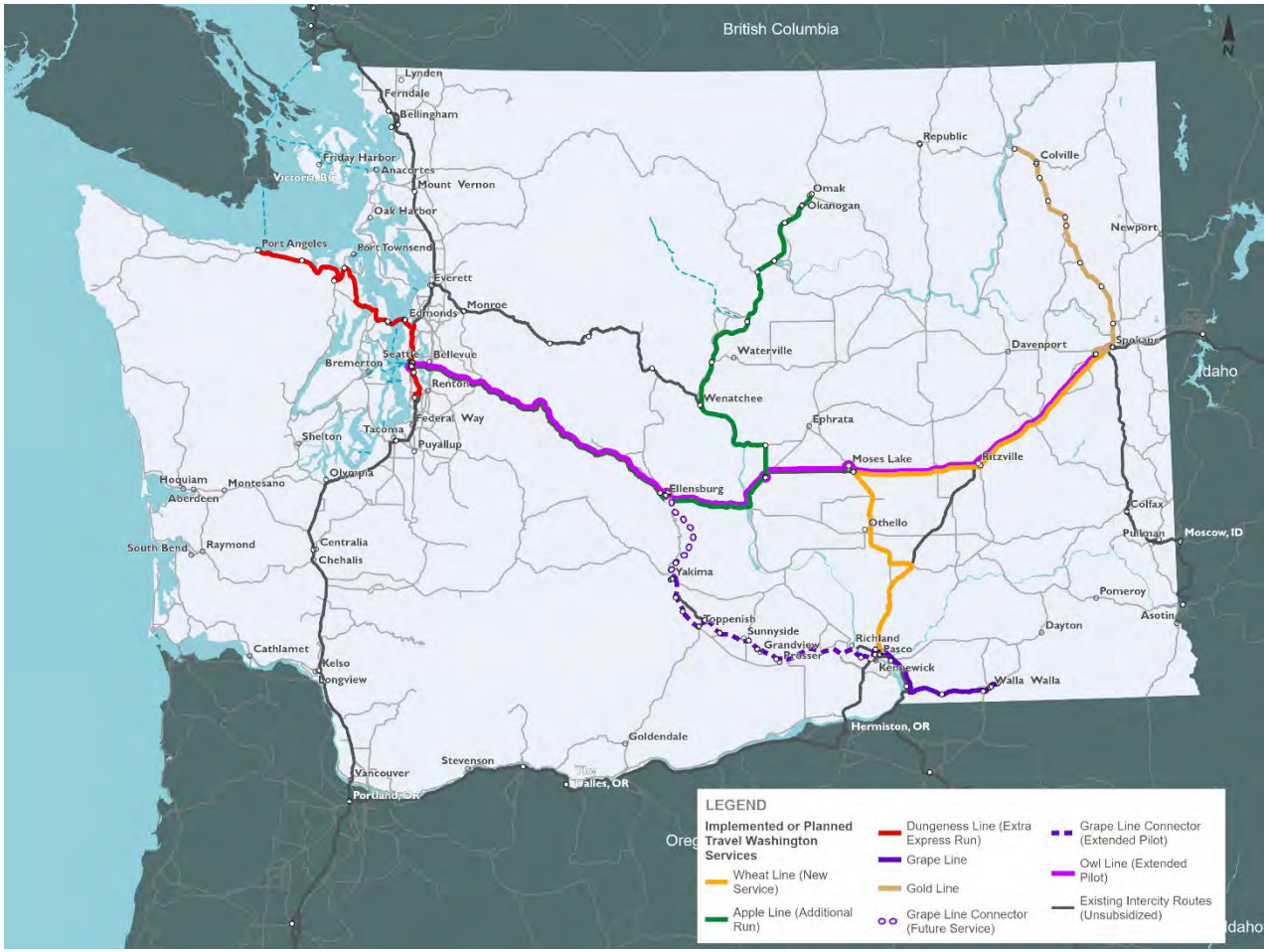
- Temporarily increased frequency on regular routes
- Supporting incentives to encourage intercity bus use during World Cup
- Cost recovery for fare discounts or zero-fare incentives
- Additional marketing efforts
- Language translation services
- Wayfinding
- Investments in safety and security
- Collaborating with public transit agencies to offer enhanced services and increased capacity

Funding allocation

$5 million total (ESSB 5161 – 2025-26, Section 221(14))

Project	Funding
New service	$1,800,000
Pilot projects	$1,850,000
World Cup additional support: marketing, rider incentives, traveler support, etc.	$500,000
Program administration & consultant support	$850,000
Implementation of airport express service (Dungeness Line)	No World Cup funding used
Additional roundtrip (Apple Line)	No World Cup funding used

Intercity bus system service map



Looking forward

Challenges

- Facilities access and management
- Reliance on private network
- In-kind match
- Expanding state role and staff capacity
- Increased operating costs

Opportunities

- Increased coordination with public transits, state DOT partners, private carriers, Amtrak
- Expanding state role
- Sustained state funding to supplement 5311(f) apportionment
- Collaboration and partnership with organizations such as WSTA, RTAP, CTAA, AASHTO, NBTA, ABA

World Cup formula grant

Nina Stocker, Travel Washington program manager

Enhanced World Cup service

- $9 million available ESSB 5161, Section 221(10)
- For service between June 1, 2026, and July 30, 2026 (includes preparatory work)
- **Enhanced services**
  - Increased frequency on regular routes,
  - Creating temporary shuttle services,
  - Enhancing on-demand services,
  - Increasing frequency of water taxi services, and
  - Supporting incentives to encourage transit use
- **Enhancing customer experience**
  - Temporarily increasing operations,
  - Cleanliness,
  - Rider communications,
  - Wayfinding, and
  - Safety and security
- Expenditure plans were due by Dec. 1, 2025.

World cup fan zone distribution

- 3 tiers of funding
- (40%, 40%, 20%)
- $9 million available
- 12 eligible transit agencies
- 11 received funding
- Methodology based on reported revenue hours
- Funds not awarded were redistributed among other agencies within the same tier

Agency	Award amount
Tier 1 (40% of distribution)	
King County Metro *Total*	*$3,600,000*
Tier 2 (40% of distribution)	
Community Transit	$899,331
Kitsap Transit	$315,780
Pierce Transit	$938,832
Sound Transit	$1,446,057
Total	*$3,600,000*
Tier 3 (20% of distribution)	
Ben Franklin Transit	$265,000
C-TRAN	$323,271
Everett Transit	$115,248
Intercity Transit	$321,273
Spokane Transit	$583,153
Whatcom Transportation Authority	$192,054
Yakima Transit	$0
Total	*$1,800,000*
Total amount for distribution	***$9,000,000***

Planned World Cup enhancements

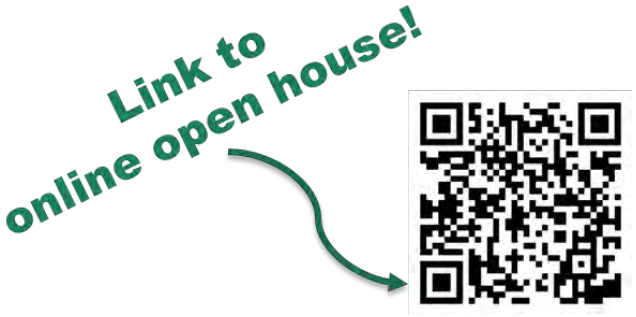
- **Ben Franklin Transit**
  - Increasing frequency regular routes
  - Adding shuttle service
  - Increasing on-demand service
  - Adding incentives for transit use
  - Going zero fare
- **C-Tran**
  - Rerouting and increasing frequency on regular routes
  - Adding shuttle service
- **Community Transit**
  - Increasing on-demand service
- **Everett Transit**
  - Adding shuttle service
  - Adding incentives for transit use
- **Intercity Transit**
  - Increasing frequency on regular routes
- **Kitsap Transit**
  - Increasing frequency on regular routes
  - Increasing local ferries and Fast Ferry
  - Adding incentives for transit use

Planned World Cup enhancements, cont.

- **King County Metro**
  - Increasing frequency on regular routes
  - Adding shuttle service
  - Increasing Water Taxi and increasing Dial-A-Ride to support
  - Adding subsidies for first/last-mile services
- **Pierce Transit**
  - Increasing on-demand service
- **Sound Transit**
  - Increasing frequency on Link, Sounder, Tacoma Link, and ST Express
  - Adding shuttle service
  - Enhancing station activation, transportation demand management, and parking strategies
- **Spokane Transit**
  - Increasing frequency on regular routes
- **Whatcom Transportation Authority**
  - Increasing frequency on regular routes

World Cup workgroup

- Collaboration between WSDOT, WSTA and World Cup Committee
- Timeline of award notification – 6 months
  - This includes signing of transportation budget to award letters



Public Transportation Plan update

Coby Zeifman, Public Transportation Plan project manager

What is the Public Transportation Plan?

The plan:

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

Organizing principles and vision statement

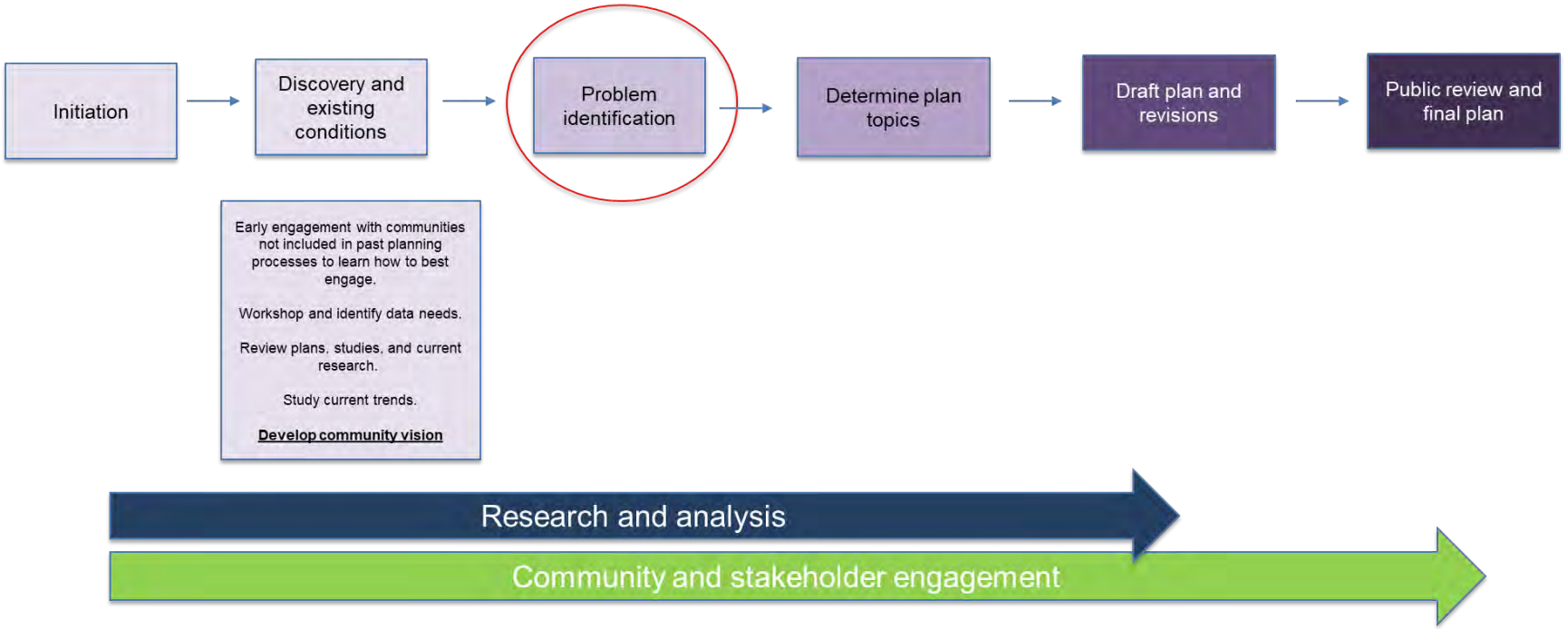
Organizing principles

- Access
- Mobility

Vision statement

“Washington state has a public transportation system that is easy, connected, and centers the needs and aspirations of non-drivers”

Planning process



Communities' top identified gaps from briefing paper review

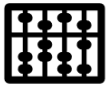
Not enough funding

Not enough public transportation to meet community needs

Not enough environmental justice investment

Not enough coordination between divisions, organizations, jurisdictions

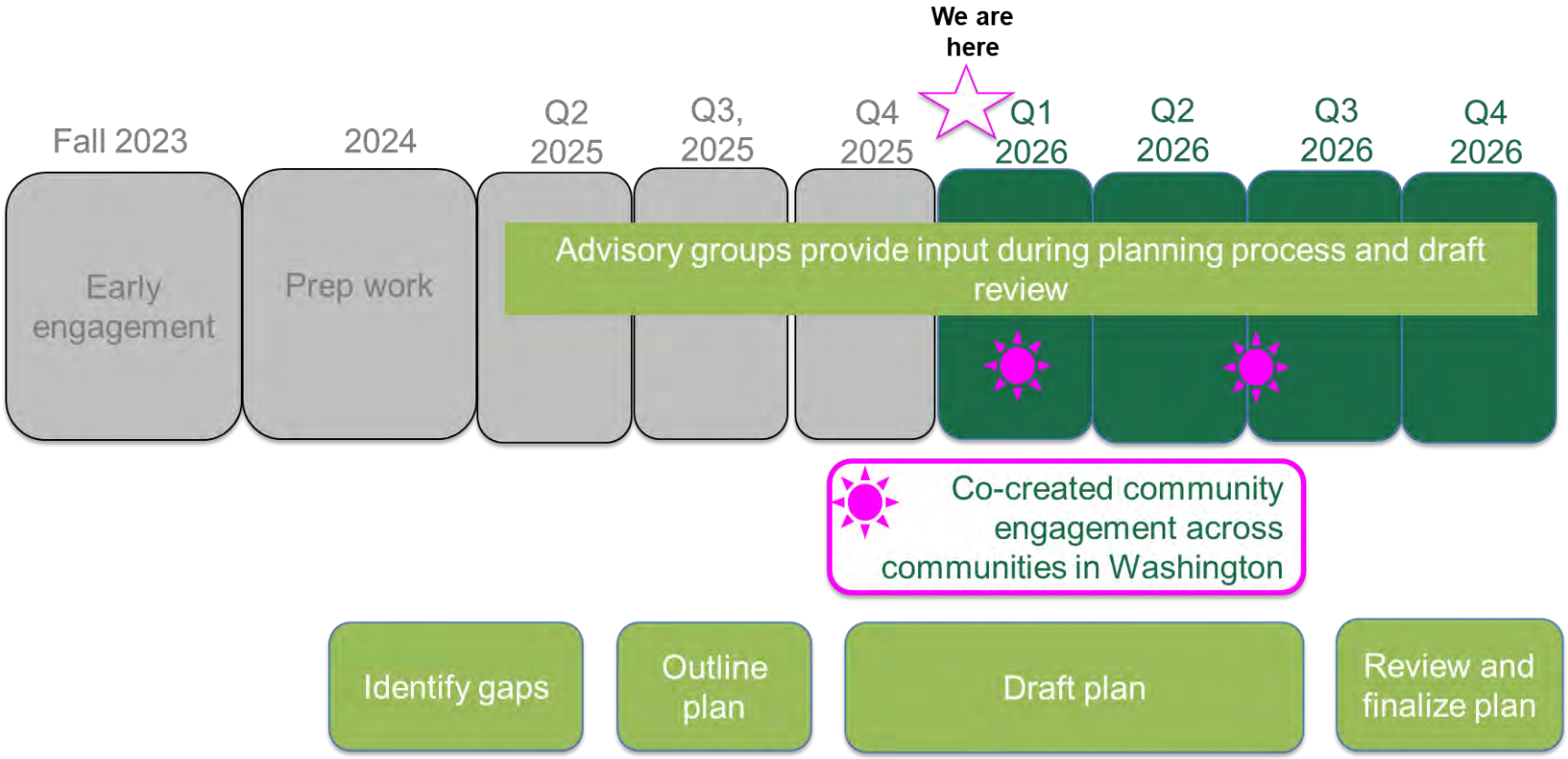
Available funding is difficult to access



No consistent way to measure public transportation access

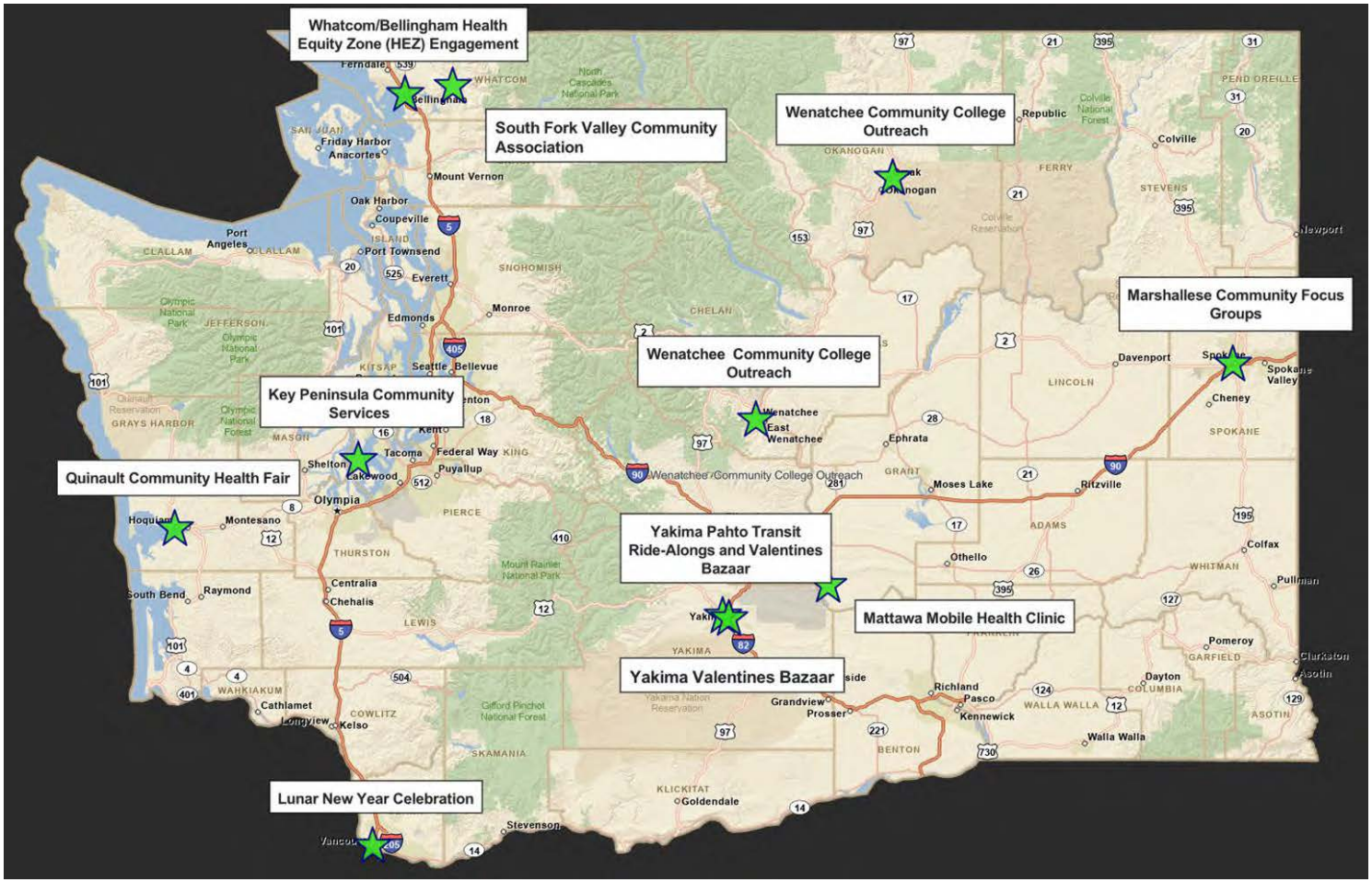
Real and perceived operational and personal safety challenges

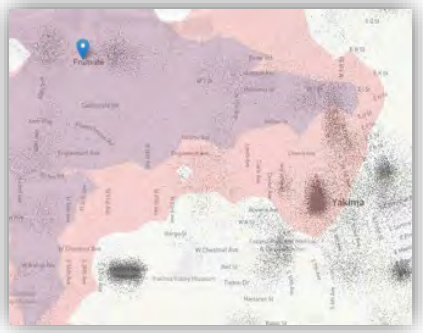
Community engagement



Community engagement events

Community engagement map





Measuring access

Engagement between divisions, agencies, and communities to enable a new performance measurement approach

Thomas Craig, public transportation planner

Transportation system policy goals (RCW 47.04.280)

(1) It is the intent of the legislature to establish policy goals for the planning, operation, performance of, and investment in, the state's transportation system. Public investments in transportation should support achievement of these policy goals:

(a) **Preservation:** To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services, including the state ferry system;

(b) **Safety:** To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system;

(c) **Stewardship:** To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, resilience, and efficiency of the transportation system;

(d) **Mobility:** To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility;

(e) **Economic vitality:** To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy; and

(f) **Environment:** To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.

(2) The powers, duties, and functions of state transportation agencies must be performed in a manner consistent with the policy goals set forth in subsection (1) of this section with **preservation and safety being priorities**.

Insufficiency of current metrics

Our measures give us information, but no standard way of asking, “Based on our goals, should we spend money on A or B?”

Access: the point of transportation

- Access is the capability for people to get places
- Access is the point of transportation
- Someone who can get to 1,000 jobs in 30 minutes probably **has more access to jobs** than someone who can get to 10
- Someone who can get to a park in 10 minutes rather than 30 minutes… etc.

Components of access

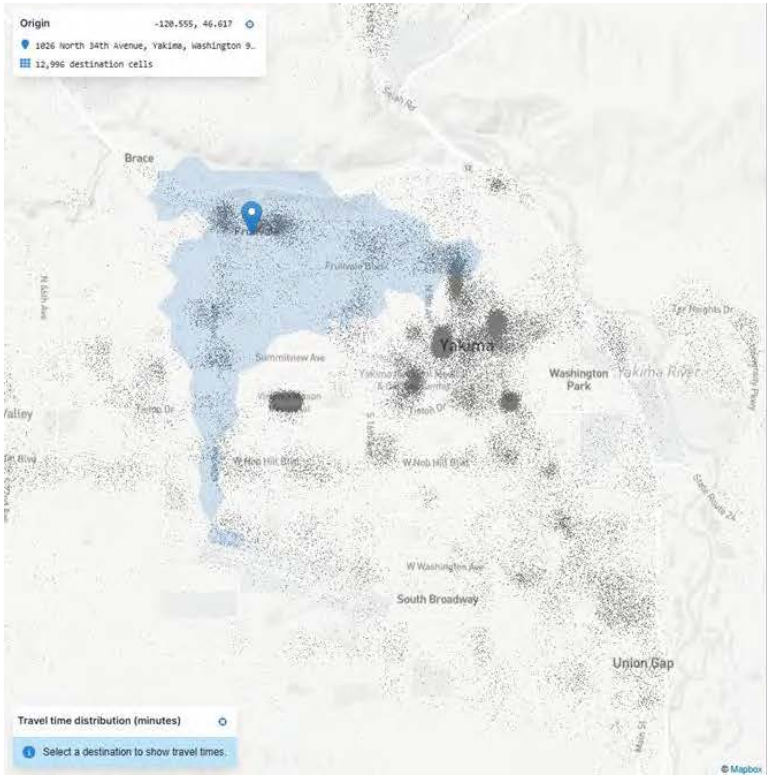
- Transportation network
  - Roads, transit services, sidewalks, trails, and their context
- Traveler capacities
  - Availability of vehicle, walking speed, infrastructure and service requirements
- Destinations (anything needed or desired)

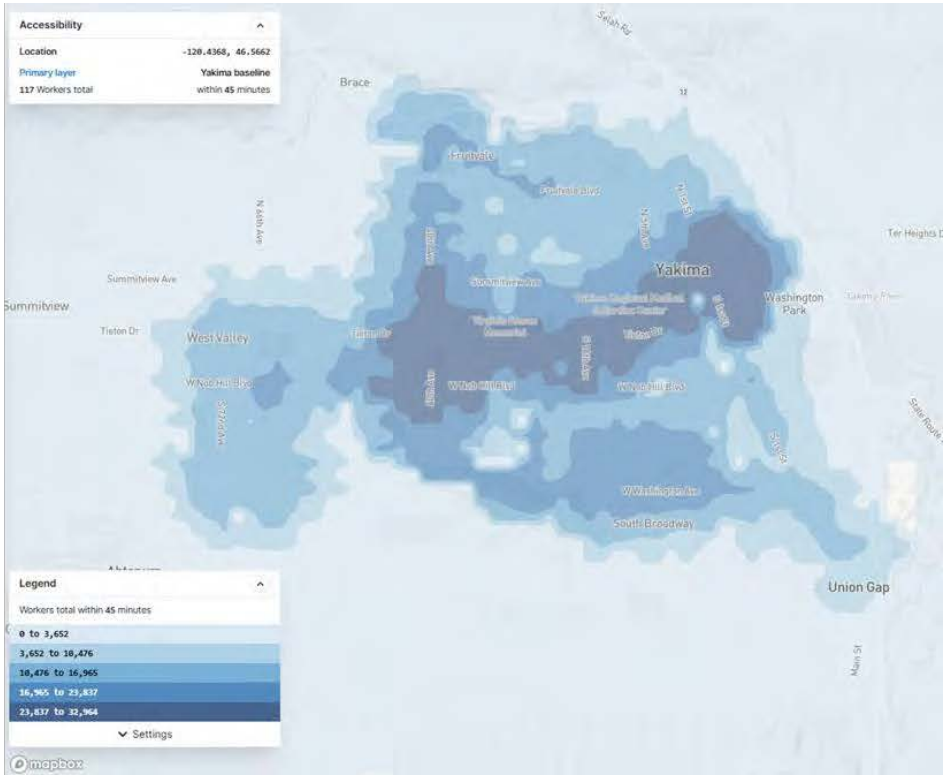
Access as a performance metric

- Access can be used to calculate outcomes related to each statewide policy goal

- Access can be estimated before developing a transportation project and measured after

How to measure access





Why are we doing a statewide destination access analysis?

- Destination access analysis would better meet the explicit requirement of the Public Transportation Plan in RCW 47.06.110:

  "…a state public transportation plan that (1) Articulates the state vision of an interest in public transportation and **provides quantifiable objectives, including benefits indicators**…

- Resources for research available through and aligned with requirements of the Frequent Transit Service Study 2 proviso (ESSB 5161, Section 221 (9))

Program intentions

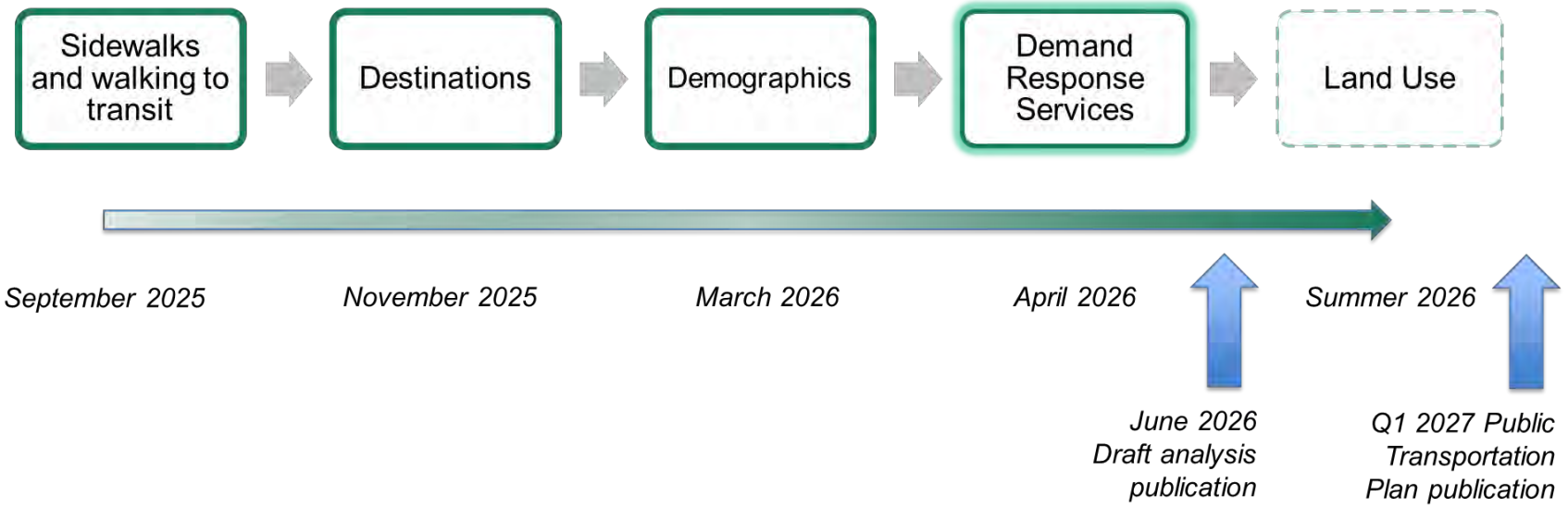
- **Innovate with community:** Access is a meaningful benefit for communities, so we're developing our methodology with community-based organizations at the table. We're taking our time to both learn and educate.
- **Build capacity with agencies:** Access to destinations is also valuable as a local planning tool. WSDOT is looking to collaborate with transit agencies to share our resources and learn from local efforts.
- **Test the value of measuring access at the state level:** Access could be a valuable performance tool for many use cases. PTD is collaborating with other WSDOT divisions and state agencies to identify other application opportunities.

Developing a multimodal destination access analysis method

- Data sets
  - Transit service data
  - Roadway and sidewalk data
  - Demographic and land use data
  - Destination data

- We can calculate statewide access for all modes*

Technical Advisory Group data themes And roadmap



Where we're headed for the Public Transportation Plan

- 4 walking profiles + demand response
- 6 destination categories
- 30 base metrics for comparative analysis
- Distinct research questions:
  - Demographic gaps
    - ACS categories
    - Drivers vs non drivers
  - Land use changes?

What happens after 2026-27?

- Destination access could be used in forward looking evaluations of Washington's transportation choices
  - Evaluate grants: under consideration by WSDOT Public and Active Transportation divisions
  - Compare different projects and policies:
    - Within modes
    - Between modes
- The Public Transportation Division believes that – given time, resources, and collaborative attention – destination access could provide a highly useful tool to communicate likely outcomes of projects and policies and **inform decision making in alignment with statewide transportation policy goals**

Questions and contact info

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