

January 10, 2023

**TO: Members of the Senate and House Transportation Committees**

**SUBJECT: Joint Transportation Committee Annual Activity Report**

During 2022, the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) completed four studies and coordinated the IJJA Work Group as directed by the Legislature. Attached are brief summaries of these activities:

1. Vehicle Registration (Car Tabs) Payment Options Workgroup (p. 3)
2. Washington State Ferries Workforce Plan – Phase II (p. 5)
3. Transportation Equity in Washington Cities (p. 7)
4. Evaluation of Washington State Patrol's Cessna Aircraft Fleet (p. 8)
5. Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IJJA) Work Group (p. 9)

Four additional studies were initiated in 2022 and will be completed in 2023.

1. Nondrivers: Population, Demographics and Analysis – due February 2023
2. Encouraging High Mileage Drivers to Buy Electric Vehicles – due June 2023
3. Independent Review of Cascadia Ultra-High-Speed Rail – due June 2023
4. Powered Micromobility Device Lending Libraries – due June 2023

In 2022 the JTC also completed a significant update of the Transportation Resource Manual (TRM), a nearly 500-page compendium of facts and data about Washington's statewide transportation system, its governance, and its funding. The last full update of the TRM was published in 2019, in 2021 a supplement was published. This update incorporates legislative bill actions for four years (2019-2022) including a new state transportation funding and revenue package (Move Ahead WA). Other new information includes program summaries from the new federal transportation authorization (IJJA) and a state petroleum taxes chart.

The Joint Transportation Committee held five meetings in 2022:

1. May 19 via videoconference
2. June 21 in Vancouver, in conjunction with Association of Washington Cities conference
3. October 4 in Seattle
4. November 15 in Renton, in conjunction with Washington State Association of Counties conference
5. December 15 in Olympia

Our annual tour was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic but the following site visits occurred after meetings: June 21 - C-TRAN's Bus Rapid Transit project; October 4 - Washington State Ferries Eagle Harbor Maintenance Facility; November 15 - King County Maintenance Facility.

Additional information about JTC activities including links to all current and past studies with meeting presentations and reports is available on the JTC website at [leg.wa.gov/jtc](http://leg.wa.gov/jtc).

If you have any questions, please contact the JTC staff:

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Representative Jake Fey  
Co-Chair



Senator Marko Lias  
Co-Chair



Representative Andrew Barkis



Senator Curtis King

# Summary of 2022 Joint Transportation Committee Studies

January 10, 2023

## **Vehicle Registration (Car Tabs) Payment Options Workgroup**

JTC Project Manager: Alyson Cummings

In 2021, the Legislature directed the JTC to convene a work group and conduct a study to recommend options for payment of vehicle fees and taxes due at the time of application for vehicle registration.

The JTC contracted with BERK Consulting to conduct the study and facilitate the Work Group. BERK was assisted by The Vida Agency, Yates Consulting Group and CDM Smith.

### **Background**

Vehicle registration fees are paid annually by vehicle owners and include both state and local fees. State fees include the base registration fee of \$30, electric and hybrid vehicle renewal fees, vehicle weight fees, and administrative fees. Local fees include vehicle license fees authorized by Transportation Benefit Districts and motor vehicle excise taxes (MVET) levied in the Sound Transit service area.

During the 2020 legislative session, SB 5448 proposed quarterly payment plans for persons with registration fees over \$150. The bill passed out of committee but did not reach the Senate floor. This study was commissioned to convene a workgroup to recommend payment options and solicit public input.

### **The JTC Study**

The primary study questions were:

- Could the State reduce the impact of vehicle registration tax and fee payment on households with low incomes by offering a payment plan?
- If so, how could that payment plan be structured?

The specific elements of the study included:

- Researching best and promising practices for paying taxes and fees in installments.
- Analyzing various details associated with vehicle registration including: evaluating possible fee structures and revenue allocation for payment plans; exploring rebates for those that pay taxes and fees in full at the time of application; identifying systems and processes necessary to allow licensing agents and subagents to determine if a vehicle owner has paid all taxes and fees prior to renewal of a vehicle registration; itemizing options for reducing revenue loss; and reducing impacts for communities of color, low income households, vulnerable populations, and displaced communities.
- The consultants, at the direction of the Workgroup, conducted stakeholder outreach with those potentially interested in new payment options, including persons from communities of color, low-income households, vulnerable populations, and displaced communities.

The Vehicle Registration Payment Options Workgroup consisted of representatives from: the Department of Licensing. County Auditors, Vehicle Licensing Subagents, a local taxing authority imposing vehicle registration fees, vehicle owners paying local MVET, vehicle owners paying electric vehicle licensing fees and an advocate for multimodal transportation options.

### **Key findings**

- A payment plan would require modifications to the Department of Licensing's DRIVES system at a significant upfront cost. Administration of a payment plan option would add additional ongoing costs.
- Through public engagement this study found that there is little interest in a potential payment plan: 77 percent of survey respondents prefer annual payment of registration taxes and fees to a quarterly plan. Focus groups confirmed this finding.
- Most survey participants would not be willing to pay the minimum fee needed to cover the additional administrative costs of a payment plan. This finding was confirmed by focus group participants.

### **Recommendations**

- Do not pursue a payment plan option at this time.
- Enhance email reminders and launch text message reminders for vehicle registration renewals.
- Consider other ways of supporting households with low incomes.

The final report is available here: <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/cartabsworkgroup.aspx>

## Washington State Ferries Workforce Plan – Phase II

JTC Project Manager: Paul Neal

The Washington State Legislature directed the JTC to develop a workforce plan for Washington State Ferries (WSF). Like many employers WSF is grappling with finding qualified candidates to replace retiring baby boomers and with increasing the diversity of their workforce. The available pool of employees is further limited by Coast Guard licensing and certification requirements. These limitations impact WSFs ability to meet Coast Guard minimum crew requirements. If a crew member doesn't make it to work, WSF must find a replacement, or the vessel cannot sail. The confluence of a shortage of qualified candidates, staffing to Coast Guard minimums and absences due in large part to Covid illness and exposure led to an unprecedented number of cancelled sailings, with WSF operating at a reduced schedule for much of 2022.

### Background

The study proviso required the study to be delivered in two phases. Phase I, delivered in December 2021, focused on addressing increases in overtime expenses which began when the Coast Guard increased minimum crewing requirements in 2013. That analysis is incorporated in the phase II report released in December 2022. The phase II report addresses:

- Recruitment
- Retention
- Diversity
- Training needs
- Leadership development and
- Other elements needed to ensure sufficient and cost-effective crewing and staffing, including examination of the WSF work culture.

### The JTC Study

The JTC hired Seattle Jobs Initiatives and The Segal Group to create a strategic workforce plan and an implementation plan to guide WSF in incorporating the recommendations. Given the depth of the workforce challenges, the consultants did not find any quick fixes. Instead, they recommended an overhaul of the WSF workforce recruitment and retention process to ensure sufficient and cost-effective crewing.

### Key Findings

The consultants summarized their key findings:

- **Staffing Model:** WSF staffing model is too lean and cannot cover ordinary unplanned absences and maintain service or support the career pipelines WSF depends on to fill highly skilled senior positions.
- **Staffing Shortage:** The too-lean staffing model, combined with changes in its workforce, has forced WSF to use an increasing amount of overtime pay and, more recently, required Ferries to cut service.
- **Career Advancement and Retention:** There are limited near-term solutions because WSF depends on its internal career pipeline to fill skilled senior positions. However, career advancement is slow, and the process is opaque with little institutional support. This makes it difficult for people new to the sector to transition from entry- and low-ranking positions to more senior and skilled positions.
- **Recruitment and Hiring:** WSF's recruitment and hiring practices have also not kept up with changes in the WSF workforce or Washington state's labor force. As a result, they are not generating large enough pools of qualified candidates. In addition, WSF does not reliably recruit or hire minority workers despite the state's increasingly diverse labor force.

- **Cultural Issues:** Finally, WSF staff and crew described an outdated working culture that is not inclusive. Because they also feel disconnected from leadership, there is limited potential for cultural change under current conditions.

The consultant team also provided a detailed implementation plan to correct the issues discussed in its findings with three phases:

**Phase 1: Building a Foundation for the Plan.** During this phase, WSF must create a short-term staffing plan to address staffing shortages, add talent acquisition staff, specify operational staffing demands, review data management practices, and establish a data governance approach.

**Phase 2: Evolve the Plan.** In Phase 2, WSF will start putting into place the structural elements of the plan, including procuring technology, hiring necessary administrative personnel, developing an employee value proposition, and implementing succession planning for leadership.

**Phase 3: Implement Sustainable Workforce Strategies.** The final phase of this implementation plan is to integrate it organization-wide. Central to this phase is deploying the knowledge transfer plan and creating a change management strategy and communications plan to support the staffing model and technology implementation.

The final report is available here: <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/WSFworkforceplan.aspx>

# **Transportation Equity in Washington Cities**

JTC Project Manager: Dave Catterson

In 2021, the Legislature directed the JTC to study transportation equity in Washington state's cities and towns. The study was funded by transportation revenues that would otherwise be distributed directly to cities. To conduct the study, JTC staff partnered with the Association of Washington Cities.

The JTC contracted with Toole Design to conduct this study. They were assisted by Cascadia Consulting Group and the Thrivance Group.

## **Background:**

There are 281 cities and towns in Washington state. Some have been working directly on equity issues for years. Others are getting started or have hired dedicated staff only recently. Smaller cities and towns often lack staff and resources to create their own equity programs. The demographic makeup of Washington's cities and towns, as well as the disadvantaged communities within, vary significantly. The goal of this study is to provide information, guidance and recommendations that is helpful to all.

## **The JTC Study**

The primary purposes of this study are to:

1. Educate city and state officials on the impacts of current and historic city transportation investments on designated populations including communities of color, low-income households, vulnerable populations, and displaced communities.
2. Describe tools and methods that individual cities and towns can use to assess transportation equity in their own jurisdiction.
3. Provide recommendations on tools and best practices that cities and towns can use to improve, diversify, and expand city transportation investments leading to more equitable distribution of transportation benefits and impacts.

## **Key Deliverables:**

To meet the objectives of this project the consultants produced:

- An overview and analysis of the impacts of transportation investment patterns on designated populations, including review of key plans and policies from around the state, examination of the demographic groups that have been identified as having a need for equity, and statewide maps of five equity-seeking population groups to exemplify how this demographic data could be used at a local level.
- An overview of past policy and investment decisions and their use, intentional and unintentional, that result in inequitable outcomes, and how effects are still experienced today, nationally and in Washington state.
- A catalog of tools and methods for assessing equity that is intended to be a reference for cities seeking to use or develop such assessment tools for their own transportation equity efforts.
- Best practice recommendations for moving towards more equitable processes and outcomes.

The final report is available here: <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/transportationequity.aspx>

# **Evaluation of Washington State Patrol's Cessna Aircraft Fleet**

JTC Project Manager: Paul Neal

In 2022, the Legislature directed the JTC to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the Washington State Patrol's (WSP) fleet of Cessna aircraft.

WSP's aviation section provides aerial traffic enforcement, traffic congestion management, natural disaster response, homeland security, and other aerial law enforcement and public safety services. It operates five Cessna aircraft to accomplish this mission: three Cessna C182s and two Cessna C206s. The 206s also include forward-looking infrared (FLIR) cameras and associated on-board computer equipment allowing nighttime missions.

## **Background**

The Washington State Patrol asked the 2022 Legislature to fund replacement of all five Cessnas with new 206s over the next four years. WSP also requested purchase of five additional FLIR units, one for each Cessna 206. In analyzing that request the Legislature had additional questions that could not be addressed during the limited time constraints of the 2022 session. The Legislature commissioned this analysis to evaluate the duties of the aviation section and examine options for fleet modernization.

## **The JTC Study**

The elements of the study included:

- Assessment of the current use and performance of the WSP Cessna fleet, including performance measures used to manage the program. The evaluation includes discussion of potential efficiencies, alternative approaches to accomplishing the Aviation Section's mission, and recommended timing of aircraft replacement.
- Evaluating replacing current aircraft with alternative fuel aircraft. This required research into the current state of alternative fuel general aircraft and projected improvements in those aircraft, if any.
- Evaluating innovative technologies, including but not limited to unmanned aerial vehicles, for accomplishing some or all of the Aviation Division's mission.

## **Key Recommendations:**

The consultants recommended that WSP:

- Replace the current fleet of three Cessna 182s and two Cessna 206s aircraft with four Cessna 206s and one Cessna 182. The recommended replacement schedule takes place incrementally over the course of five years; FY 24-28.
- Purchase three FLIR units instead of the five. Under this scenario the FLIR cameras could be changed out of the plane on the ground and attached to mission planes – a process which takes approximately one hour.
- Continue to monitor the development of alternative fuels and aircraft. Neither have sufficient availability, range, or price point to use within the recommended fleet replacement window. This may change in the future and WSP should revisit these issues over time.

The study report is available here: <https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/cessnafleet.aspx>



## **Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) Work Group**

JTC Project Manager: Dave Catterson

In 2022 The Washington State Legislature directed the JTC to convene a work group to develop recommendations on the distribution of federal-aid highway formula program funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to state and local government in future biennia.

### **Background**

When new federal transportation authorization laws are enacted, Washington state has a tradition of convening a work group to make recommendations on future distributions of federal-aid highway formula program funding to state and local governments. This year, the 2022 Supplemental Transportation Budget directed the Joint Transportation Committee to convene this Work Group.

In November 2021, Congress passed, and the President signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), which included a five-year authorization of federal-aid highway formula program funding. Washington is expected to receive approximately \$5.433 billion in apportioned funds over the life of the Act. In addition to the reauthorization of several surface transportation programs, IIJA created four new federal-aid highway formula programs and provides \$1.7 billion more in federal-aid funding for Washington state than was included in the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act.

### **The Work Group**

Work Group representation was spelled out in the budget proviso. Local government associations were asked to designate elected official representatives to serve on the Work Group. Staff from the associations attended meetings and advised their Work Group designees. The Work Group roster of members is below.

<b>Member</b>	<b>Organization</b>
Representative Jake Fey	House Transportation Committee
Representative Andrew Barkis	House Transportation Committee
Senator Marko Liias	Senate Transportation Committee
Senator Curtis King	Senate Transportation Committee
Councilmember Ryan Mello, Pierce County	Washington State Association of Counties
Mayor Cassie Franklin, Everett	Metropolitan Planning Organizations
Mayor Kevin Freeman, Millwood	Regional Transportation Planning Organizations
Mayor Rob Putaansuu, Port Orchard	Association of Washington Cities
Chairman Leonard Forsman, Suquamish Tribe	Tribes
Secretary Roger Millar	Washington State Department of Transportation
Debbie Driver, Senior Policy Advisor	Office of the Governor
Erik Hansen, Senior Budget Assistant	Office of Financial Management
Commissioner Michael Fredrickson, Port of Walla Walla	Washington Public Ports Association
Justin Leighton, Executive Director	Washington State Transit Association

The Work Group met three times:

1. June 8 via video conference
2. July 8 at SeaTac Airport Conference Center
3. July 15 at SeaTac Airport Conference Center

The Work Group discussed distribution of funds for the following federal-aid highway programs:

- National Highway Performance Program
- Surface Transportation Block Grant program

- Highway Safety Improvement Program
- Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) Program
- National Highway Freight Program
- Bridge Replacement Program (New)
- Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient, and Cost-Saving Transportation Program (PROTECT – New)
- National Electric Vehicle Program (New)
- Carbon Reduction Program (New)

Staff from the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) provided background information and technical support for the Work Group. Based upon that information, and input and feedback from the Work Group members, the JTC Executive Committee documented their recommendations in a memo.

The final memo and other background materials for the IJJA Work Group can be found here:

<https://leg.wa.gov/JTC/Pages/IJJAWorkgroup.aspx>