

**Total Highway
Maintenance and
Preservation
Estimates Are
Available
Phase 1 Briefing Report**

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STATE OF WASHINGTON

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REPORT SUMMARY

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has developed procedures for estimating total needs for highway maintenance and preservation. These estimates, however, are not required to be submitted as part of the biennial budget process. Unlike the budget procedures, which are well-documented, documentation of procedures for developing total need estimates is less complete.

Maintaining and Preserving Highways Is an Ongoing Responsibility

Washington's highway system is composed of numerous components, such as pavements, bridges, drainage systems, and electrical systems, all of which must be maintained on a regular basis and replaced or restored when they wear out.

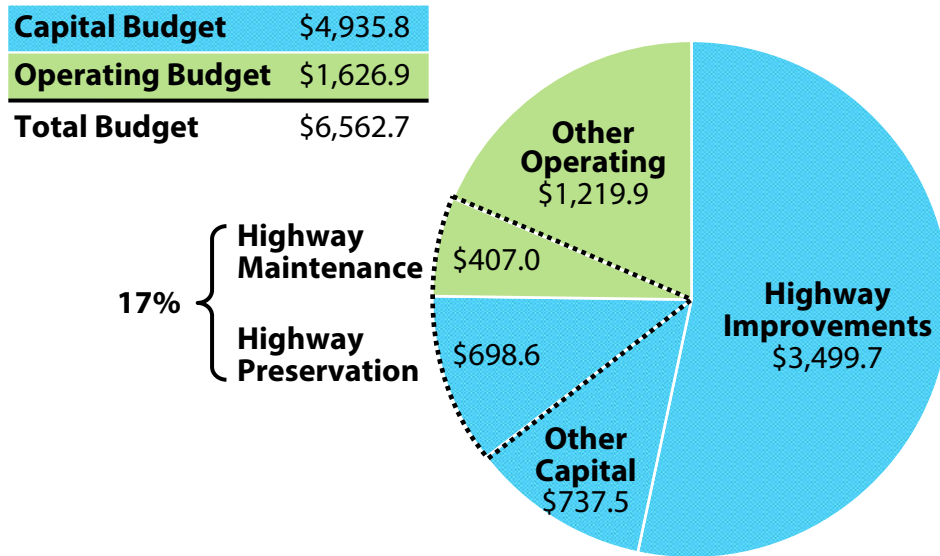
Together, highway maintenance and preservation account for 17 percent of the WSDOT 2013-15 Biennial Budget (Exhibit 1 on the following page). Highway maintenance is funded from the Department's operating budget and is budgeted at \$407 million in the 2013-15 Biennium. Highway preservation is a capital budget activity and is budgeted at \$699 million in the 2013-15 Biennium.

Legislature Directed JLARC to Review WSDOT Systems and Methods for Assessing Maintenance and Preservation Needs

The 2013-15 Transportation Budget (ESSB 5024) directed JLARC to conduct a review of the methods and systems used by WSDOT to develop estimates of asset condition, maintenance service level needs, and subsequent funding requests for highway preservation and maintenance programs. The full scope and objectives of the review are presented in Appendix 1. The directive establishes a two phase study:

- Phase 1 presents an **overview** of the methods and systems WSDOT uses to develop estimates of maintenance and preservation needs and the documentation for those methods and procedures.
- Phase 2 will **evaluate** whether WSDOT methods and systems for estimating maintenance and preservation needs are consistent with industry practices and other appropriate standards.

Exhibit 1 – Maintenance & Preservation Are 17 Percent of the WSDOT 2013-15 Biennial Budget (Dollars in Millions)



Source: JLARC staff analysis of 2013-15 WSDOT appropriations.

Total Maintenance and Preservation Need Estimates Are Available

WSDOT estimates both what is needed for continuing maintenance at the current level of service, as well as what would be necessary for a recommended level of service. The recommended level of service may be higher than the current level. The estimate to continue current maintenance activities is included in the biennial budgeting process and is consistent with instructions issued by the Office of Financial Management. Cost estimates for the total maintenance backlog, maintaining new additions to the highway system, or improving maintenance service levels are not required by the biennial budget process and may be provided to the Legislature separately.

Similarly, WSDOT estimates total preservation needs but, like maintenance, these needs are not a required part of the budget process which focuses on allocating available preservation revenues. WSDOT does not routinely provide estimates of all future preservation needs for the Legislature, but the agency has the information and systems to generate such an estimate when requested.

The estimates for both maintenance and preservation used in the biennial budgeting process are limited to the expected amount of available revenue. While this biennial budgeting process is well-established and well-documented, the procedures for estimating other needs (such as recommended maintenance and total future preservation) are not as thoroughly documented.

Phase 2 of Study Will Address Additional Questions

Phase 2 of this study will examine whether WSDOT methods and systems for assessing maintenance and preservation needs are consistent with industry standards, minimize life cycle cost, and quantify risk. JLARC staff will seek a technical consultant to assist in this phase of the study. The final report will be completed in December 2014.