
Local/Regional Jurisdictions

Overview and Table of Contents

This section summarizes the responsibilities of local jurisdictions and regional organizations in planning, constructing, operating, and managing transportation systems within the state.

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JURISDICTION: **Cities**

RCW: [Title 35](#), including Chapters 35.72–35.79

BACKGROUND

- Cities and towns are responsible for approximately 17,000 miles of streets and 740 bridges in the 281 incorporated municipalities of the state.
- Currently about 79% of cities' transportation funding is generated from local revenue sources, 13% from state revenues, and 8% from federal sources.

PROGRAM

- Maintenance, construction, and management of city streets and bridges.
- Cities also have various responsibilities for city streets that are part of the state highway system (Chapter 47.24 RCW). For example, cities must (1) provide street illumination, except on limited access facilities, (2) clean the streets, including storm sewer inlets and catch basins, (3) regulate and enforce traffic and parking restrictions on the streets, and (4) install and maintain traffic control signals/devices on the streets, if in cities with a population greater than 25,000 (or 30,000, effective July 1, 2023).
- Six-year comprehensive transportation programs must be adopted before July 1 of each year and submitted to the Washington State Department of Transportation within 30 days of adoption (per RCW 35.77.010). The purpose of the program is to assure that each city has an advanced plan looking to the future as a guide in carrying out a coordinated transportation program.

FUNDING

- 2.96 cents per gallon of the state motor vehicle fuel tax (MVFT) (Chapter [46.68.090 RCW](#) (4)(a) and (5)(a))
 - Distributed to cities on a per capita basis
 - For the 2017-19 biennium, gas tax distributions are estimated at \$197.8 million
 - *More information on the MVFT can be found in “Distribution of the 49.4 cent Gas Tax” on page 47.*
- The Connecting Washington Act directs the State Treasurer to make regular transfers from the Motor Vehicle and Multimodal accounts to the cities and counties, with funds proportioned evenly between cities and counties ([RCW 46.68.126](#)). Beginning with the 17-19 the biennium, cities will receive \$25.1 million.
- Grants or loans from the Transportation Improvement Board, Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB), Public Works Board, Community Economic Revitalization Board, and several programs administered by WSDOT including Safe Routes to Schools and Pedestrian/Bicycle Safety.
- Federal-aid programs (FAST Act)
 - National Highway Performance Program
 - Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (previously called the Surface Transportation Program)
 - Distribution by Population
 - Bridge Program (off the federal aid system)
 - Statewide
 - Highway Safety Improvement Program
 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
 - National Freight Program
- General-purpose local revenue sources, including local retail sales and use taxes, real and personal property taxes, local real estate excise taxes, other licenses, impact fees, and other fees and taxes.
- Transportation local option taxes

- Commercial parking tax
- Border area motor vehicle fuel tax (for cities along the Canadian border)
- Portion of countywide local option motor vehicle fuel tax
- Business & occupation tax, residential excise tax, and sales & use tax (limited to public transportation system purposes)
- Transportation Benefit District local option taxes

(See the *Local Taxes section* on page 139 of this manual for information on *Local Option Taxes*.)

Sources:

For more information on local jurisdictions, see the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington at www.mrsc.org.

JURISDICTION: Counties

RCW [Title 36](#), including Chapters 36.75-36.87

BACKGROUND

- County Road Administration Board (CRAB) sets administrative standards and provides oversight for the county road departments of each of the 39 counties.
- Counties are responsible for managing 39,171 centerline miles of roads and 3,287 bridges in the unincorporated areas across the state.
- Currently, about 65% of counties' transportation funding is generated from local revenue sources, 24% from state revenues, and 11% from federal sources.

PROGRAM

- Maintenance, construction, management, and operation of county roads and bridges.
- Six-year comprehensive transportation programs, including plans for county road, trail, and ferry construction, must be adopted by each county prior to adoption of its annual budget and be submitted to the Washington State Department of Transportation and CRAB within 30 days of adoption (RCW 36.81.121). Annual programs must be adopted prior to adoption of annual road budget. The purpose of the program is to assure that each county has an advanced plan looking to the future as a guide in carrying out a coordinated transportation program.

FUNDING

- 4.93 cents per gallon of the 49.4 cent state motor vehicle fuel tax (MVFT) (Chapter [46.68.090 RCW](#) (4)(b) and (5)(b))
 - Distributed to counties using formula based upon mileage, needs, resources, and population
 - For the 2017-19 biennium, gas tax distributions are estimated at \$312.7 million.
 - *More information on the MVFT can be found in "Distribution of the 49.4 cent Gas Tax" on page 45.*
- The Connecting Washington Act directs the State Treasurer to make regular transfers from the Motor Vehicle and Multimodal accounts to the cities and counties, with funds proportioned evenly between cities and counties ([RCW 46.68.126](#)). Beginning with the 2017-19 biennia, counties will receive \$25.1 million.
- Grants and distributions from County Road Administration Board (CRAB)
 - County Arterial Preservation Program
 - 0.45 cents per gallon of state motor vehicle fuel tax, distributed to counties according to percentage of arterial lane miles
 - The 2005 Transportation Partnership account directed an additional yearly deposit of \$1.5 million into the County Arterial Preservation Account ([RCW 46.68.295](#))
 - Rural Arterial Program
 - 0.58 cents per gallon of state motor vehicle fuel tax
 - Regional distribution based on rural land area and mileage of paved county rural arterials and collectors. Within each region, distribution is competitive based on statutory criteria.
- Grants from the Transportation Improvement Board and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board.

- Federal-aid programs (FAST Act)
 - National Highway Performance Program
 - Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (was the Surface Transportation Program)
 - Distribution by Population
 - Bridge Program (off the federal aid system)
 - Statewide
 - Highway Safety Improvement Program
 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality
 - National Freight Program
- County road levy (property tax, maximum \$2.25/\$1,000)
- Transportation local option taxes
 - Countywide motor vehicle fuel tax (10% of state fuel tax)
 - Commercial parking tax
 - Local option taxes for high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes
 - MVET or employer tax
 - Eligible counties are King, Pierce, and Snohomish

(For information on Local Option Taxes, see the *Local Taxes section* on page 139.)

Sources:

For more information on local jurisdictions, see the Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington at www.mrsc.org.

JURISDICTION: County Ferry District

RCW: RCWs [36.54.110](#) and sections following

BACKGROUND

- Established by county legislative authority
- County legislative authority, acting independently, is ex-officio governing body
- District can be county-wide or a portion of a county
- Authority to operate passenger-only ferry service
- On April 30, 2007, the Metropolitan King County Council created the King County Ferry District to expand transportation options for county residents by enabling potential operation of passenger-only ferry service to various parts of the county. Currently, the District provides service between downtown Seattle and both Vashon Island and West Seattle.

FUNDING

- Annual ad valorem property tax levies of up to 75 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation (councilmanic) ([RCW 36.54.130](#)). The levy limit in King County is up to 7.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation.
- Voter-approved annual excess property tax levies ([RCW 36.54.140](#)).

A county or ferry district operating under the authority of Chapter 36.54 RCW may impose a vessel replacement surcharge on every ferry fare sold ([RCW 36.54.200](#)). The surcharge may be no less than vessel replacement fee imposed by the Washington State Ferries (effective October 1, 2011, 25 cents). Revenues must be used for the construction or purchase of ferry vessels.

OTHER RELEVANT STATUTES

Any county may operate ferries under the direction and control of the Board of County Commissioners ([RCW 36.54.010](#)). Such service may include auto-carrying capacity and may be funded from general county revenues. Currently Pierce, Skagit, Wahkiakum and Whatcom Counties operate ferries under this general authority. For counties operating ferry service under this general authority, WSDOT may reimburse for a portion of the deficit incurred operating county ferry service ([RCW 47.56.720 and 725](#)).

Any Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA) having a boundary on the Puget Sound may operate passenger-only ferry service ([RCW 36.57A.200](#)). Voter approved taxes are in addition to all other taxes and may include an MVET, local sales and use tax up to 0.4%, tolls, and other revenue generating activities ([RCW 36.57A.210](#)).

A PTBA bordering the western side of the Puget Sound, with a population greater than 200,000 and containing at least one state ferry terminal (currently only Kitsap Transit), may also establish one or more passenger-only ferry districts. Voter approved taxes are in addition to all other taxes and may include a sales and use tax up to 0.3%, a parking tax, tolls, and other revenue generating activities ([RCW 36.57A.224](#)).

Port Districts may operate passenger vessels ([RCW 53.08.295](#)). The Port of Kingston ran SoundRunner service up until September 2012.

The [2016 Summary of Public Transportation](#) includes information on a variety of ferry services.

JURISDICTION: **Local Improvement Districts/Road Improvement Districts**

RCW: [Chapter 35.43 RCW](#) and chapters following (LID), [Chapter 36.88 RCW](#)
(RID)

BACKGROUND

LIDs:

- A special purpose financing mechanism that may be created by local governments to fund improvements in specific areas which are smaller than the unit of government.
- Local improvements must directly benefit nearby property owners (e.g., water main, sewers, or streets).
- Local governments that can create LIDs include cities, counties, port districts, water districts, transportation benefit district, and others.
- LIDs can be initiated by petition of property owners in an area or by resolution of local governments.
- Voter approval is not required for LID formation, but may be challenged by property owners.

RIDs:

- A Road Improvement District (RID) is similar to a LID, except that it funds county road improvements in unincorporated areas.
- RIDs can be initiated by county resolution or by petition of affected property owners.

FUNDING

- Special assessments - property owners who benefit from improvements are assessed at proportionate levels to pay for the improvements.

JURISDICTION: **Metropolitan Planning Organizations**

REQUIRED BY: [23 USC Section 134](#) & 23 CFR parts [420](#) and [450](#)

BACKGROUND

- Federal law requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in urban areas of at least 50,000 people. MPOs must promote the safe and efficient management, operation, and development of surface transportation systems to serve mobility and freight needs and to foster economic growth and development, while minimizing fuel-consumption and air pollution.
- In areas with greater than 200,000 people, MPOs are designated Transportation Management Areas (TMAs), which have expanded responsibilities. The Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Authority (FTA) certify that TMAs follow federal planning requirements every four years.
- In urbanized areas, MPOs and RTPOs are integrated in the same organization. The exception is Lewis-Clark Valley MPO because it is a bi-state organization.
- MPOs are designated by local governments and the governor to perform basic transportation planning functions. These functions include but are not limited to: development of a long-range multimodal transportation plan, preparation of a transportation improvement program, data collection and analysis, and general coordination within the metropolitan area.
- Planning efforts are federally funded and follow federal planning requirements. WSDOT certifies that each MPO follows federal planning requirements, as required by federal law. Acceptance of these funds requires a local match. It also requires compliance with:
 - Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
 - The Americans with Disabilities Act;
 - Presidential Executive Order on environmental justice;
 - Presidential Executive Order on access to services for persons with limited English proficiency;
 - Federal Transit Administration circulars; and
 - Other federal laws, regulations, and guidance.
- There are twelve MPOs in Washington:
 - Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG) – TMA
 - Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (CDTC)
 - Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG)
 - Lewis-Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (LCVMPO)
 - Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) – TMA
 - Skagit Metropolitan Planning Organization (SMPO)
 - Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) – TMA
 - Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) – TMA
 - Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC)
 - Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (WWVMPO)
 - Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG)
 - Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG)

- Under federal law, the membership of an MPO is composed of local elected officials, officials of public agencies that administer major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area, and appropriate state officials (which may include state legislators).

PROGRAM

MPOs are required to:

- Carry out a continuing, coordinated, and comprehensive (3C) transportation planning process.
- Prepare a financially constrained Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) covering at least a 20 year time period to serve as the basis for the selection of projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- Develop a four-year TIP including a prioritized list of projects and demonstration of financial constraint for the program. The TIP must be updated at least every four years, but MPOs in Washington update their TIPs every one or two years to remain consistent with the update of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).
- Work with regional clean air authorities to develop transportation control measures for the air quality State Implementation Plan (SIP) if national air quality standards have not been met in the MPO area.

MPOs designated as TMAs are additionally required to:

- Develop a system for monitoring and managing congestion in their metropolitan area.
- Select projects for federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) program funding.

FUNDING

In Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2017 Washington State received a combined \$9.8 million from the FHWA and the FTA to complete planning activities as described in federally-required work programs. This funding is allocated to WSDOT who then reimburses MPOs for allowable expenses. In FFY 2018, Washington received a combined \$10.1 million.

Certain federal funds are sub-allocated by WSDOT directly to MPOs and RTPOs for project selection at the local and regional level. The programs include Surface Transportation Program (STP), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), and the Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP). Most federal funds require a non-federal match.

Resources:

[WSDOT webpage: What is an MPO?](#)

[MPO/RTPO Directory](#)

[MPO map](#)

JURISDICTION: **Ports**

RCW: [Title 53 RCW](#)

BACKGROUND

- Port districts are one of the oldest types of special purpose districts in Washington State, originally authorized by legislation in 1911.
- Until 1953, port districts could only be formed in maritime areas with programs focused on harbor improvements and associated rail and terminal facilities. Currently, port districts possess the broadest array of powers of any special purpose district.
- Ports are municipal corporations of the state and are classified as "special purpose districts" (organized to provide one or a small number of specific services)
- Can be smaller than a city or town, or as large as an entire county
- 75 public port districts in 33 of 39 counties
- 22 of the 75 districts located in two counties (12 - Kitsap County and 10 - Grant County)
- In 2017, \$76.4 billion in total commodity exports and \$49.8 billion in total commodity imports moved through Washington State ports. In 2017, 4.9 percent of total U.S. exports and 2.1 percent of total U.S. imports transited through Washington's gateways. For more information, see [US Census Bureau, International Trade Data by State](#).

GOVERNANCE

- Port districts are governed by boards of elected commissioners. Typically these are three-member boards; however, district voters may approve a ballot proposition expanding membership to five commissioners.
- A port district may be formed with simple majority approval of voters residing within the proposed district's boundaries.
- A proposition to form a port district may be placed on the ballot by either the board of county commissioners or county voters' petition.

PROGRAM

- Transportation facilities and services: marine shipping, airports, rail facilities, ferries, marinas, fishing terminal development, roads, toll facilities.
- Commercial facilities and services: general industrial, general commercial, economic development activities including tourism promotion, trade centers, and community renewal.
- Utilities and other services: pollution control, sewer and water, heating systems, telecommunications, watershed management, salvage and disposal of abandoned vessels, parks and recreation facilities, pilotage, police and fire protection.

FUNDING

- User fees, property lease and rental fees, property tax levies, interest income, federal grants and bond proceeds, bond proceeds (general obligation and revenue).
- Port districts have unique constitutional powers:
 - May expend public funds for industrial development or trade promotion that otherwise would violate prohibitions against lending of credit and gifting of public funds (Article VIII, section 8).
 - Port property tax levies are exempt from the one percent limitation (Article VII, section 2).

Sources:

History of Ports on [HistoryLink.org](#)

Lundin, Steve. The Closest Governments to the People: A Complete Reference Guide to Local Governments in Washington State, Washington State University Press, 2007.

Washington Public Ports Association: <http://washingtonports.org/washington-ports/about-our-ports/>

WPPA Ports [Map](#)

JURISDICTION: Public Transit Systems

RCW: See below

BACKGROUND

- Organized as locally controlled, special-purpose municipal governments to provide public transportation services.
- 32 operating transit systems, each using one of seven different governance structures.
- Public Transportation Benefit Areas (PTBA) ([Chapter 36.57A RCW](#))
 - 21 systems, including Okanogan PTBA which was approved in 2013, with a 0.4% sales tax taking effect on April 1, 2014.
 - Established by public transportation improvement conference convened by the county legislative authority.
 - Governed by up to nine elected officials selected by the legislative bodies of the county and the component cities (multicounty, up to 15). Citizen members permitted in Thurston County. In Mason County, the elected officials include school board members, fire district members, and public hospital district members.
 - Additional authority for PTBA bordering Puget Sound to operate passenger-only ferry service, including additional tax sources. (*See Local Taxes section, page 133*)
- County-assumed Metropolitan Municipal Corporation ([Chapter 36.56 RCW](#))
 - One system: King County Metro
 - Assumed the responsibilities of a metropolitan municipal corporation established per Chapter 35.58 RCW
 - County must have population of at least 210,000
- Cities ([RCW 35.92.060](#) and [Chapter 35.95A RCW](#) for city transportation authorities—monorail)
 - Five systems
 - Established by elected city officials
 - Cities: Yakima, Ellensburg, Everett, Pullman, Selah and Union Gap
 - In 2016, voters in Ellensburg approved a 0.2% sales tax (using Transportation Benefit District authority) for purposes of financing public transportation. The City of Ellensburg assumed full responsibility for the system as of July 1, 2017.
 - City Transportation Authority (monorail), cities with population over 300,000 (*see page 384*).
- County Transportation Authority (CTA) ([Chapter 36.57 RCW](#))
 - Two systems: Columbia and Grays Harbor Counties
 - Separate legal entities
 - Established by resolution of the county legislative body
 - Governing body is statutorily comprised of three county legislative members, three mayors, and a labor representative.
 - A county transportation authority may be created to offer services limited to persons with special needs ([RCW 36.57.130](#)): none established
- Unincorporated Transportation Benefit Areas (UTBA) ([RCW 36.57.100](#) and following section)
 - One System: Garfield County
 - Formed by county commission
 - Unincorporated areas only
- Regional Transit Authority ([Chapter 81.112 RCW](#))
 - One created in Central Puget Sound in 1992, Sound Transit
 - Board consists of 18 members: 17 members are local elected officials and the 18th member is the State Secretary of Transportation; local elected officials include mayors, city council members, and county executives and council members from within the Sound Transit District.

- Develop and operate a high capacity transportation system, which may include commuter/express bus, commuter rail, and light rail.
- High Capacity Transportation Corridor Area ([RCW 81.104.200](#) and following section)
 - Transit agency in a county with more than 400,000 people that adjoins a state boundary may establish one or more HCTCAs.
 - Governed by the establishing transit agency's governing body (ex officio and independently).
 - An HCTCA may establish finance and provide a high, capacity transportation system.

PROGRAM

- Public transit agencies offer primarily fixed route services in a specified geographic area (i.e., area of governance). In rural areas, transit agencies often provide deviated fixed route services to meet the needs of individuals unable to get to a routed service.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public transportation agencies to provide accessible demand response transportation services complementary to the fixed route service for persons with functional disabilities.
- About 27% of the state's population reside outside the service boundaries of a public transit agency. Community and brokered transportation providers are private, non-profit or government agencies which provide services to individuals with special needs and the general public in communities with limited or no transit service.

FUNDING

Public Transit Agencies, Sources and Uses of Funding, CY 2017

Revenues by Source	\$ millions	percent
Local	3,263.8	84.7%
State	340.2	8.8%
Federal	248.7	6.5%
Total Revenues	\$3,852.7	
Expenditures		
Operating	1,518.6	40.7%
Local Capital Investment	1,268.4	34.0%
State Capital Investment	307.6	8.3%
Federal Capital Investment	176.7	4.7%
Other expenses	457.4	12.3%
Total Expenditures	\$3,728.7	

Local taxes are the single largest revenue source and are described in detail in the *Local Taxes section* on page 139.

Fares accounted for the second largest source of local revenues at \$331 million in 2016, including vanpool and general fare revenue. The average statewide farebox recovery rate in 2016 (percent of operating costs recovered through fares) for fixed route transit service in the state was 25.1%.

Most federal funds for transit projects are distributed directly to transit agencies.

WSDOT Public Transportation also administers state grant programs, distributing funds competitively and on a formula basis as follows:

- \$32.2 million in new funds each biennium for Rural Mobility grants,
- \$52.7 million in new funds each biennium for Special Needs grants,
- \$10.3 million in new funds each biennium for Van Pool grants,
- \$2 million in new funds each biennium for Puget Sound Transit Coordination grants (through 2019-21 only, and
- \$77.7 million in new funds each biennium for Regional Mobility Grants.

Sources:

WSDOT's [Public Transportation Division webpage](#)

WSDOT's [Summary of Public Transportation](#)

Washington State's Public Transit Authorities [MAP](#)

Transit Agencies

- 1) Asotin County Transit – Public transportation benefit area (PTBA) serving Asotin County
- 2) Ben Franklin Transit – PTBA serving Benton and Franklin Counties
- 3) Clallam Transit System – Countywide PTBA serving Clallam County
- 4) Central Transit - City of Ellensburg
- 5) Columbia County Public Transportation – County Transportation Authority (CTA) serving Columbia County
- 6) Community Transit – PTBA serving urban and rural areas of Snohomish County
- 7) RiverCities Transit (formerly CUBS) – PTBA serving Kelso and Longview
- 8) C-TRAN – PTBA serving urban communities and small cities of Clark County
- 9) Everett Transit System – City operation
- 10) Garfield County – Unincorporated county benefit area serving Garfield County
- 11) Grant Transit Authority – Countywide PTBA serving Grant County
- 12) Grays Harbor Transportation Authority – CTA serving entire county
- 13) Intercity Transit – PTBA serving urban portions of Thurston County
- 14) Island Transit – Countywide PTBA serving Island County
- 15) Jefferson Transit Authority – Countywide PTBA serving Jefferson County
- 16) King County Metro Transit – County transportation system serving King County
- 17) Kitsap Transit – Countywide PTBA serving Kitsap County
- 18) Link Transit – PTBA serving Chelan County and a portion of Douglas County
- 19) Mason County Transportation Authority – Countywide PTBA serving Mason County
- 20) Pacific Transit System – Countywide PTBA serving Pacific County
- 21) Pierce Transit – PTBA serving Pierce County
- 22) Pullman Transit – City operation
- 23) Selah Transit – City operation
- 24) Skagit Transit – PTBA serving Skagit County
- 25) Sound Transit – Regional Transit Authority serving urban areas of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties
- 26) Spokane Transit Authority – PTBA serving Spokane County
- 27) TransGo—Okanogan County Transit Authority
- 28) Twin Transit – PTBA serving Centralia and Chehalis
- 29) Union Gap Transit – City operation
- 30) Valley Transit – PTBA serving Walla Walla County
- 31) Whatcom Transportation Authority – PTBA serving Whatcom County
- 32) Yakima Transit – City operation
- 33) Okanogan County Transit Authority – New PTBA in 2014.

JURISDICTION:

Regional Transit Authority ("Sound Transit")

RCW:

[Chapter 81.112 RCW](#)

BACKGROUND

- Separate legal entity.
- Formed by vote of county councils of two or more contiguous counties each having a population of 400,000 or more
 - Approved by King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties in 1993
- Currently authorized in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties only and may include all or portions of counties
- Eighteen-member governing board composed of city and county elected officials appointed by county executives and confirmed by the county legislative authorities, with at least half serving on transit boards in member counties, and the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Transportation.

PROGRAM

- To develop and operate a high capacity transportation system.
 - Intercity bus operations and facilities (Regional Express) contracted through Community Transit, King County Metro Transit, and Pierce Transit.
 - Light rail operations (Link Light Rail) in Tacoma and Seattle – SeaTac
 - Commuter rail operations (Sounder) between Seattle and Lakewood and Everett contracted through BNSF, maintenance through Amtrak.

FUNDING

- High capacity transit tax options (must be voter approved)
 - Sales and use tax - up to 1.4%
 - Sales and use tax on retail car rentals - up to 2.172%
 - Motor vehicle excise tax - up to 1.1%%
0.3% of the Motor vehicle excise tax was revoked with the passage of I-776; however, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that the tax may continue to be imposed by Sound Transit at the rate of 0.3% to meet contractual obligations for bond indebtedness. The tax may no longer be imposed after debt service payments are completed. Until bonds issued against the original MVET are repaid, the depreciation schedule remains the same as that in currently in use. Once those bonds are repaid, the schedule switches to the one in effect at the time the MVET is approved by the voters ([RCW 82.44.035](#)).
 - Employer tax - up to \$2/month/employee
 - Property tax of 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value.
 - Other revenue:
 - Farebox
 - General obligation bonds
 - Revenue bonds
 - Federal grants
 - Special assessments on property (Local Improvement District)

(For information on HCT Local Option Taxes, see the *Local Taxes section* on page 139.)

APPROVAL OF SOUND TRANSIT

- In November 1996, voters approved "Sound Move" including financing to construct and operate a regional transit system within the urban areas of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The vote passed by 56.5%.
- Sound Move originally included 25 miles of light rail stretching from Northgate to SeaTac, 26 light rail stations, 81 miles of commuter rail, 14 commuter rail stations, and high-occupancy-vehicle improvements for use by regional express buses. For more information, see [Sound Transit's History of What Voters Approved](#).
- Funding plan approved by voters
 - 0.4% sales and use tax
 - 0.3% motor vehicle excise tax (revoked with the passage of I-776, but still being collected due to the pledge of tax revenues for bonds)
 - Both taxes took effect April 1, 1997

APPROVAL OF SOUND TRANSIT 2

- Vote in November 2008 approved plan and authorized funding within the urban areas of King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The vote passed by 57%.
- The Sound Transit 2 plan includes the following:
 - A 36-mile extension of light rail north, east and south of Seattle.
 - Four new Sounder round trips between Tacoma and Seattle.
 - 100,000 more hours of ST Express bus service.
- Funding plan approved by voters
 - An additional 0.5% sales and use tax (0.9% total)
 - Taxes took effect April 1, 2009

Approval of SOUND TRANSIT 3

- Vote in November 2016 approved plan recommended by the Sound Transit Board, including:
 - \$53.8 billion in investments proposed
 - 62 additional miles of light rail, with stations serving 37 additional areas
 - Replacement of bus routes with rail service
 - Establish bus rapid transit on I-405 (Lynnwood to Burien) and SR 522
 - Expansion of Sounder capacity, with an extension to Joint Base Lewis McChord and Dupont
 - Expansion of Tacoma Link to Tacoma Community College
 - Details available at soundtransit3.org
- Funding plan approved by voters
 - An additional 0.5% sales and use tax (1.4 % total)
 - Increased the 0.3% MVET tax (that expires in 2028) by 0.8% ((1.1% total)
 - Establishes a 25 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value property tax.
 - An RTA imposing any of these additional taxes, is prohibited from receiving state grant funding except for transit coordinate grants.

JURISDICTION: **Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID)**

RCW: [Chapter 36.120 RCW](#)

BACKGROUND

- The King, Pierce and Snohomish county area, or each county individually, may form a special district to plan and finance certain highway improvements.
- The RTID would be a separate legal entity.
- The district is formed by vote of county councils of multiple contiguous counties, or by a single county, which then must be approved by voters living within the affected area.
- Authorized in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties only, and may include multiple contiguous counties, or a single county. The district is encouraged to include at least the portion of each member county located within a regional transit authority serving that county.

FORMATION

- Planning Committee formation required by the county councils proposing a RTID. The committee membership is comprised of county council members of each county proposing a RTID. Decisions are made by 60% majority vote based on proportional representation. Secretary of Transportation serves as non-voting member. Seven-member executive board. Planning Committee may dissolve with two-thirds weighted vote of the total Planning Committee membership.
- Planning Committee develops plan for improvements and submits plan to county councils. If a county opts not to participate in the district, but two contiguous counties do proceed, plan is redefined and submitted back to participating counties. If counties adopt plan, plan is submitted to voters.
- If RTID approved by voters, the governing board is comprised of county council members of member counties.
- In 2007, the plan developed by the then-existing Planning Committee was required to go on the November 2007 General Election ballot, along with a Sound Transit Phase II proposal, as a single ballot question. The voters rejected this joint proposal, therefore the proposed RTID was not formed.

ELIGIBLE PROJECTS

- Capital improvements to highway of statewide significance (HSS) that adds a lane or new lanes, or repairs or replaces a lane or lanes damaged by the 2001 earthquake;
- Capital improvements to all or portions of a HSS including an extension, and may include certain multi-modal capital improvements including approaches, HOV lanes, flyover ramps, park and ride lots, bus pullouts, vanpool vans, buses, and transportation system management improvements;
- Up to 10% of funds may be for capital improvements to all or portions of a city street, county road or existing highway or new highway that intersects with an HSS if: (1) the project is included in a plan that adds capacity to a HSS; (2) the DOT Secretary finds that the project would better relieve congestion than the same expenditure on the HSS; (3) 15% of the cost is paid by the local jurisdiction; (4) the RTID contribution does not exceed \$1 Billion; and (5) the improvements are included in the plan submitted to voters.
- No funds may be used for operation, preservation or maintenance of the facility except for toll facilities where tolls have been pledged to finance facilities and for traffic mitigation during construction for projects in the investment plan.
- (For information on RTID local option taxes, see the *Local Taxes section* on page 139.)

JURISDICTION: **Regional Transportation Planning Organizations**

REQUIRED BY: Chapter [47.80 RCW](#) and chapter [468-86 WAC](#)

BACKGROUND

- In order to ensure local and regional land use and transportation coordination, cities and counties are authorized to create Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs).
- RTPOs are formed through the voluntary association of local governments within a county or within geographically contiguous counties. Each RTPO must meet the following criteria:
 - Encompass at least one complete county.
 - Have a population of at least 100,000, ~~or~~ have a population of at least 75,000 and contain a Washington State Ferries terminal, ~~or~~ contain a minimum of three counties, or have a population of at least 40,000 and cover a geographic area of at least 5,000 square miles.
 - Have as members all counties within the region, and at least 60% of the cities and towns within the region, representing a minimum of 75% of the cities' and towns' populations.
- RTPOs containing a county with a population greater than one million include specific state and local entities as voting members on its executive board ([RCW 47.80.060](#)).
- In urbanized areas, RTPOs and MPOs are integrated in the same organization. The exception is Lewis-Clark Valley MPO because it is a bi-state organization.
- RTPOs are encouraged to invite tribal governments to participate in their transportation planning process.
- Once formed, a lead planning agency must be designated to coordinate preparation of the Regional Transportation Plan and carry out the other responsibilities of the RTPO. RTPOs must have a policy board with representatives from major employers, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), transit districts, ports, and member counties and cities. Under [RCW 47.80.040](#), any state legislators that have at least some of the RTPO area as part of their legislative district are *ex officio*, nonvoting policy board members.
- Sixteen RTPOs have been formed that include 38 of the 39 counties. San Juan is not part of an RTPO.

PROGRAM

- Establish guidelines pursuant [RCW 47.80.026](#) that provide specific direction for the development and evaluation of the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans.
- Prepare and periodically update a transportation strategy for the region.
- Prepare a Regional Transportation Plan as set forth in [RCW 47.80.030](#) that is consistent with applicable countywide planning policies for those counties fully planning under the Growth Management Act (GMA) ([RCW 36.70A](#)).
- Certify that the transportation element of comprehensive plans adopted by counties, cities, and towns within the region reflect the guidelines and principles developed by the RTPO and are consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan.
- Where appropriate, certify that countywide planning policies are consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan.
- Develop a six-year regional transportation improvement program in cooperation with WSDOT, operators of public transportation services, and local governments in the region.

- Certify that the six-year capital facility plans ([RCW 36.70A.070](#)) developed by cities and counties for street and road improvements and six-year capital and service improvement plans developed by transit agencies are consistent with the regional transportation plan.
- Review level of service methodologies used by cities and counties planning under the GMA to promote a consistent regional evaluation of transportation facilities and corridors. Work to develop level of service standards or alternative measures ([RCW 47.80.023](#)).
- Review the regional transportation plan biennially for currency and send documentation of the review to WSDOT.
- WSDOT's Transportation Planning Office has the following responsibilities:
 - Establish minimum standards for regional transportation plans. ([Chapter 468-86 WAC](#) and requirements defined by the GMA)
 - Facilitate coordination among RTPOs.
 - Provide general administrative oversight.
 - Identify and jointly plan improvements and strategies within corridors providing regional or statewide movement of people and goods, through the regional planning process and state planning efforts.
- WSDOT's Local Programs Division administers project funds and ensures expenditures meet applicable requirements.

FUNDING

RTPO funding for planning activities is allocated by WSDOT according to [RCW 47.80.050](#).

The 2017-2019 biennial transportation budget appropriated \$4.9 million for the RTPO program. RTPOs must submit an annual work program to WSDOT.

This appropriation was distributed, as agreed to among the WSDOT and RTPOs, in two parts:

- \$2.9 million for regional transportation planning. Each RTPO receives \$15,000 for each county within the RTPO. The remaining funds were distributed based on population.
- \$2 million for participation in statewide long-range transportation planning. Each RTPO receives an annual allotment portion dependent the status of the MPO located within its boundary and each MPO's federally classified type:
 - Transportation Management Areas (200,000 population) received \$50,000,
 - MPOs between 50,000 and 199,999 population received \$30,000, and
 - Non-metropolitan RTPOs received \$10,000
 - The remainder was distributed on a per-capita basis

Resources:

[RTPO Map](#)

[WSDOT webpage: What is an RTPO?](#)

[MPO/RTPO Directory](#)

JURISDICTION:

Transportation Benefit Districts (TBD)

RCW:

[Chapter 36.73](#)

BACKGROUND

- Cities and counties may establish TBDs to fund capital improvements and operation of city streets, county roads and state highways, high capacity transportation systems, public transportation, and other transportation programs of regional or statewide significance including transportation demand management.
- In addition to individual city/county TBDs, counties or cities may create a multi-jurisdiction TBD through interlocal agreement. Multi-jurisdiction TBDs may include all or portions of cities, counties, transit districts, or port districts, with the approval of those agencies.
- Creation of the district requires a public hearing and a finding of public interest for formation.
- The governing body of a TBD is the legislative authority of the city or county creating the district, acting in an ex-officio and independent capacity. A multi-jurisdiction district must have at least a five-member governing body, with at least one member from each participating jurisdiction. Under certain circumstances, a multi-jurisdiction district may be governed by the metropolitan planning organization serving the district.
- Ownership of the facilities revert to appropriate jurisdictions after improvements are made.

FUNDING

- Single-year, voter-approved excess property tax levies
- Multi-year, voter-approved excess property tax levies for bond redemption
- General obligation bonds and revenue bonds
- A voter-approved sales tax of up to 0.2%, which may not exceed a ten-year period without voter reauthorization (unless the revenues are dedicated to the repayment of debt, such as general obligation bonds, in which case the sales tax may exceed a ten-year period)
- An annual motor vehicle fee of up to \$100:
 - up to \$20 may be imposed without voter approval if imposed in a jurisdiction-wide TBD,
 - up to \$40 may be imposed without voter approval if the \$20 fee has been in effect for at least 24 months,
 - up to \$50 may be imposed without voter approval if the \$40 fee has been in effect for at least 24 months (subject to potential referendum),
 - A vehicle fee for passenger- only ferry transportation improvements must be approved by voters, regardless of amount.
- With voter approval, vehicle tolling; however, all tolls potentially impacting state facilities must be approved by the state Transportation Commission.
- Local Improvement District formation
- Border area motor fuel/special fuel excise tax (only for a district that has an international border crossing within its boundaries)
- Commercial and industrial development fees related to transportation projects

(For information on TBD Local Option Taxes, see the *Local Taxes section* on page 139.)

Source: Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) [webpage](#) on TBDs

JURISDICTION:

City Transportation Authority (Monorail Transportation)

RCW:

[Chapter 35.95A](#)

BACKGROUND

- Separate municipal corporation created to provide a public monorail function
- Formed in a city with a population greater than 300,000 in one of two ways:
 - By an ordinance proposed by the city council, which is then approved by a majority vote of city voters; or
 - By a petition submitted by 1% of the qualified city voters of the city, which is then approved by a majority vote of city voters
- Boundaries are designated by the ordinance creating the authority and do not have to be citywide

FUNDING

- Taxes (must be voter-approved)
 - Motor vehicle excise tax - up to 2.5% (excludes new vehicles)
 - Sales and use tax on retail car rentals – up to 1.944%
 - Vehicle fee upon vehicle re-licensing – up to \$100
- Other revenue sources: fares, excess levies on property, general obligation bonds, revenue bonds, regular property taxes (up to \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed property value)

APPROVAL OF SEATTLE POPULAR MONORAIL AUTHORITY (formally City Transportation Authority - CTA)

- Vote in November 2002 within the City of Seattle approved the creation of the CTA, the plan to build the green line, and funding. The vote passed by 50.23%.
- The Seattle Popular Monorail Authority plan approved by voters included the following:
 - An initial 14-mile monorail line from Ballard and West Seattle to downtown Seattle. Service was expected to begin in December 2007
 - Four additional lines were planned to be proposed totaling 44 miles
 - Initiative 83, the monorail recall, was defeated by voters in November 2004
- Funding plan approved by Seattle voters
 - 1.4% motor vehicle excise tax on vehicle re-licensing
 - Collection of the motor vehicle excise tax began in June 2003 and was set at 0.85% for the initial planning year. The full 1.4% began being assessed on vehicles with renewal dates of June 1, 2004, and later (now repealed).

TERMINATION OF SEATTLE POPULAR MONORAIL AUTHORITY (formally City Transportation Authority - CTA)

- Vote in November 2005 within the City of Seattle rejected a shortened monorail project and funding for it. The vote passed by more than 60.0%.
- Provisions of the ballot measure required termination of the Seattle Popular Monorail project and dissolution of the Authority after payment of outstanding debt.
- Collection of the motor vehicle excise tax was terminated as of August 1, 2006.