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# Passenger Modes

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## Passenger Vehicles

### BACKGROUND

- In FY 2021, 285,649 new original licenses were issued and 1,042,075 renewals were issued.
- In FY 2021, there were approximately 5.7 million licensed drivers in Washington State. Of that amount, 76,900 were intermediate licenses issued to drivers under age 18.
- In FY 2021, there were approximately 7.2 million vehicles registered.
- For FY 2021, gasoline consumption was 2.5 billion gallons, a -8.8% decrease from FY 2020. For FY 2021, diesel consumption was 726 million gallons, a 2.2% increase from FY 2020 volume (710 million gallons).

### GOVERNANCE

- The Department of Licensing administers laws related to the licensing and regulating of vehicles (Title 46 RCW)
- The Washington State Patrol provides traffic law enforcement; investigates auto theft, license fraud, and traffic collisions; and regulates vehicle safety (RCW 43.43)
- The Traffic Safety Commission coordinates and promotes traffic safety and education programs at the state and local level (RCW 43.59)

### FUNDING

- Passenger vehicle owners contribute to maintaining state roads and highways through user fees.
  - Motor vehicle and special fuel tax ([RCW 82.38](#))
  - Vehicle licensing/registration fees ([RCW 46.17.350](#))
  - Electric vehicle fees ([RCW 46.17.323](#))
  - Vehicle weight fees ([RCW 46.17.355](#) and [46.17.365](#))
- At the direction of the Legislature, the Washington State Transportation Commission has convened a Road Usage Charge Steering Committee to examine the feasibility of transitioning from the gas tax to a road user charge. More information may be found at: <https://waroadusagecharge.org/>
- Driving-related fees and taxes (including the gas tax) cover 56.7% of spending on the statewide network of streets, roads, and highways—with tolls and user fees included, 71.2% of spending ([2022 figures](#)). The balance is funded through other sources including property taxes, sales tax, federal income tax support for the Highway Trust Fund, and other sources.

### Other Relevant Statutes

- Off-road, non-highway, and wheeled all-terrain vehicles ([RCW 46.09](#))
- Certificates of title ([RCW 46.12](#)) and Registration ([RCW 46.16A](#))
- Special License Plates ([RCW 46.18](#))
- Mandatory Liability Insurance ([RCW 46.30](#))
- Vehicle lighting and other equipment ([RCW 46.37](#))
- Size, weight and load ([RCW 46.44](#))
- Rules of the road ([RCW 46.61](#))
- Disposition of traffic infractions ([RCW 46.63](#))

[DOL Motor Vehicle Registration by Class and County Report 2021](#)

## Miscellaneous Vehicles

Each of the following categories of vehicles are subject to specific requirements for vehicle registration and driver licensing (administered by the Department of Licensing) and vehicle safety regulation (enforced by the Washington State Patrol).

- Motorcycles
  - Approximately 219,000 motorcycles are registered in the state
  - Definition of motorcycles ([RCW 46.04.330](#)); motor-driven cycles ([RCW 46.04.332](#))
  - Helmet, goggles, and face shield requirements ([RCW 46.37.530](#) and [46.37.535](#))
  - Special endorsement for driver's license ([RCW 46.20.500](#))
- Mopeds
  - Approximately 5,500 mopeds are registered in the state
  - Definition of mopeds ([RCW 46.04.304](#)); as distinct from motorized foot scooters ([RCW 46.04.336](#))
  - Any person holding a valid driver's license of any class may operate a moped without taking a special examination ([RCW 46.20.500](#))
  - Mopeds must be registered, may not operate on non-motorized trails or fully controlled limited access highways, and must comply with applicable federal motor safety regulations ([RCW 46.61.710](#) and [46.61.720](#))
- Motor Homes & Travel Trailers
  - Approximately 67,000 motor homes and 180,000 travel trailers are registered in the state
  - Definitions of motor homes ([RCW 46.04.305](#)) and travel trailers ([RCW 46.04.623](#))
  - Fees: registration ([RCW 46.17.350](#)), weight ([RCW 46.17.365](#)), sanitary disposal ([RCW 46.17.375](#)), and starting on 5/1/19, abandoned RV disposal ([RCW 46.17.380](#)) fees.
- Campers
  - Approximately 18,500 campers are registered in the state
  - Definition of campers ([RCW 46.04.085](#))
  - Fees: registration ([RCW 46.17.350](#)), sanitary disposal ([RCW 46.17.375](#)), and starting on 5/1/19, abandoned RV disposal ([RCW 46.17.380](#)) fees.
- Trailers
  - Approximately 129,632 trailers over 2000 pounds and 438,000 private-use trailers are registered in the state
  - Definitions of trailers ([RCW 46.04.620](#)) and private-use trailers ([RCW 46.04.422](#))
  - Registration fees ([RCW 46.17.350](#))
- Tow trucks
  - Approximately 1,300 tow trucks are registered in the state
  - Towing and impoundment laws, including definitions ([Chapter 46.55 RCW](#))
  - Registration fees ([RCW 46.17.350](#))
- Electric Vehicles
  - Approximately 80,000 electric powered vehicles are registered in the state: 79,000 are conventional vehicles operating on electricity; 400 are trucks; 500 are motorcycles; and 600 are low-speed electric vehicles which operate under 35 mph.

- As of July 1, 2019, owners of conventional and plug-in hybrid electric vehicles that travel 30 miles or more powered solely by electricity must pay a registration renewal fee of \$150 (RCW 46.17.323), and a transportation electrification fee of \$75 (RCW 46.17.324).
- Lower speed (less than 35 mph) electric vehicles are defined in [RCWs 46.04.295](#) and [46.04.357](#), are not subject to the \$150 fee, and are subject to road use requirements and limitations ([RCW 46.61.723](#) and [RCW 46.61.725](#)).
- Off-Road and Wheeled All-Terrain Vehicles
  - Approximately 39,000 off-road vehicles and 66,500 wheeled all-terrain vehicles are registered in the state
  - Off-road vehicles are defined in [RCW 46.04.365](#) and wheeled all-terrain vehicles are defined in [RCW 46.09.310\(19\)](#)
  - Subject to equipment requirements and road use restrictions ([Chapter 46.09 RCW](#))
  - Registration fees ([RCW 46.17.350](#)); temporary use permits ([RCW 46.09.430](#)), decals ([RCW 46.09.400](#)), metal tags ([RCW 46.09.442](#)).
- Collector Vehicles & Horseless Carriages
  - Approximately 30,000 collector vehicles and 300 horseless carriages are registered in the state
  - Collector vehicles are over 30 years old ([RCW 46.04.126](#)) and horseless carriages are vehicles which are over 40 years old ([RCW 46.04.199](#))
  - Horseless carriage and collector vehicle plates are valid for the life of the vehicle, need not be renewed, and only need to be displayed on the rear of the vehicle. These vehicles must be operated primarily as collector vehicles. ([RCW 46.18.220](#) and [RCW 46.18.255](#))
  - Special license plate fees apply to both kinds of vehicles ([RCW 46.17.220](#)).
- Recreational Boating
  - Motor fuel tax refund to Marine Fuel Tax Refund Account ([RCW 79A.25.040](#))
  - Approximately 232,000 vessels licensed through the Department of Licensing
  - State Parks and Recreation Commission has regulatory authority ([Chapter 79A.60 RCW](#))
  - Registration fees and taxes ([RCW 88.02.650](#) and [82.49.030](#)) are deposited into the General Fund.
- Snowmobiles, Snow Bikes, and Tracked all-terrain vehicle
  - Approximately 23,000 snowmobiles are registered in the state
  - Registration and restrictions on use ([Chapter 46.10 RCW](#)); concurrent registration for use as a tracked all-terrain vehicle and wheeled all-terrain vehicle is allowed ([RCW 46.09.390](#))
  - An operating license is not required. However, no one under the age of 12 may operate a snowmobile on or across a public roadway or highway. Persons between the ages of 12 and 16 must have first completed a snowmobile safety education course before doing so.
  - Motor fuel tax refund to the Snowmobile Account in the General Fund ([RCW 46.10.510](#))

# Roadways (State Highways, County Roads, City Streets)

## BACKGROUND

- Washington State roadways consist of 79,428 centerline miles of highways, roads, and streets
  - 7,052 miles of state highways (includes interstate miles)
  - 39,250 miles of county roads
  - 17,515 miles of city streets
  - 15,610 miles of other roadways, including State Park, National Park, Indian Reservation, and U.S. Forest
- Annual vehicle miles traveled (VMT) on the state's system of roadways totaled over [58 billion miles](#) during 2021. According to the Washington Transportation Plan 2035 average annual growth of VMT since 2002 has been only 0.5%, compared to 2% per year for the 1990s, and 4.5% for the period from 1967 to 1990. WSDOT forecasts continued slow growth in VMT until 2019, after which a gradual decline is forecasted.
- State highways carry 58 % of VMT, while county roads carry 15%, city streets 25%, and other roadways 2%.
- Washington's 764 miles of Interstate highways account for only 1% of roadway miles, but carry 28% of annual VMT.
- The National Highway System (NHS) is designated by federal law and encourages states to focus federal funds on improving the efficiency and safety of this network. The NHS is an interconnected system of principal arterials and other highways that serve major population centers, international border crossings, ports, airports, public and intermodal transportation facilities, and other major travel destinations; meet national defense needs; and serve interstate and interregional travel. Under MAP-21, the NHS was expanded to include more local roadways. In Washington, the NHS consists of 4,554 miles of roadway, of which 79% is state and 21% local roadway.
- The [Freight and Goods Transportation System](#) of state highways and local roadways is classified according to the volume of freight traffic using the route.
- The [Scenic and Recreational Highway System](#) comprises state highways that have exceptional scenic qualities and recreational opportunities along them; they are designated by the Washington State Transportation Commission and identified as State Scenic Byways.

## GOVERNANCE

- State Highways
  - Owned and operated by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).
  - WSDOT is a cabinet agency and is managed directly by the Secretary of Transportation, subject to the oversight of the Governor.
  - A route jurisdiction transfer is the conversion of a state highway into a local road or the conversion of a local road into a state highway. Requests for transfers are made to the Washington State Transportation Commission which evaluates the transfer request according to criteria in [RCW 47.17.001](#). The Commission forwards its recommendations to the Legislature for approval. Jurisdiction comes with the responsibility to preserve, maintain, and when necessary, improve the facility.

- County Roads
  - Each of the 39 counties is responsible for construction, maintenance, and management of the roads and bridges under its jurisdiction.
  - Six-year construction plans must be adopted before January 1 of each year and submitted to WSDOT and the County Road Administration Board (CRAB).
  - Six-year plans pertaining to arterial road construction in urban areas of the county must be submitted to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) every two years.
  - CRAB sets engineering standards and provides oversight for the county road departments in each county.
- City Streets
  - Each of the 281 incorporated cities is responsible for construction, maintenance, and management of the streets and bridges under its jurisdiction.
  - Six-year construction plans must be adopted before July 1 of each year and submitted to WSDOT.
  - Six-year plans pertaining to arterial street construction in urban areas of the city must be submitted to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) every two years.

## FUNDING

- State Highways
  - 37.44 cents per gallon Motor Fuel Tax (of which, Ferries receives 1.08 cents)
  - See *Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax and Special Fuel Tax* on page 45
  - Motor vehicle licenses, permits, and fees
  - Federal highway grants
  - Bond issue proceeds
  - Transportation Budget Project Lists may be found on the [LEAP.leg.wa.gov](http://LEAP.leg.wa.gov) website
- County Roads
  - 4.93 cents per gallon Motor Fuel Tax
  - State grants from CRAB, TIB, and FMSIB
  - Dedicated county road property tax levy
  - Local funds appropriated for use on county roads
  - Bond issues for county road purposes
  - Transportation local option taxes (see *Local Taxes* on page 139)
  - Federal aid grants
  - 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](http://RCW 46.68.126)). Beginning with the 2017-19 biennium, counties receive \$25.1 million per biennium.
- City Streets
  - 2.96 cents per gallon Motor Fuel Tax
  - State grants from TIB and FMSIB
  - Local funds appropriated for use on city streets
  - Bond issues for city street purposes
  - Transportation local option taxes (see *Local Taxes* on page 139)
  - Federal-aid grants
  - 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](http://RCW 46.68.126)). Beginning with the 2017-19 biennium, cities receive \$25.1 million per biennium.

## OTHER RELEVANT STATUTES

- [RCW Title 47](#) encompasses the majority of laws pertaining to public highways and transportation.
- Chapter [46.61 RCW](#) governs the Rules of the Road.

# Ferries

## BACKGROUND

- In terms of overall ridership, the Washington State Ferries (WSF) division of WSDOT is the nation's largest ferry system:
  - Linking urban areas on the east side of Puget Sound with communities on the Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas,
  - Linking the San Juan Islands and Vashon Island with mainland, and
  - Linking Washington State with Canada through Sidney route.
- WSF is considered part of the state's highway system and is eligible for 18th amendment funding.
- Ferries are also operated by private businesses and counties.

## GOVERNANCE

### **State Ferries**

- Operated by the WSDOT – Washington State Ferries.
- System includes 21 vessels providing service on nine routes to 20 terminals. In FY 2022, WSF carried 8.6 million vehicles and 17.2 million riders. This is down from peak ridership in FY 2018 when the Ferry System carried 10.7 million vehicles and nearly 24.6 million riders. Based on the total number of riders carried, WSF is the third largest public transportation agency in the state.
- Current WSF vessel fleet consists of 8 vessel types: Jumbo Mark II Class (3), Jumbo Class (2), Super Class (2), Olympic Class (4), Issaquah (90-Car) Class (1), Issaquah (124-Car) Class (5), Evergreen State Class (1), Kwa-di-Tabil (3).
- WSF currently serves 20 terminals in eight counties and British Columbia, however the international route has been suspended since the pandemic began in FY 2020. WSF owns 16 of the terminals and four others are leased. WSF also owns the Eagle Harbor maintenance facility on Bainbridge Island.
- [Chapter 47.60 RCW](#) provides general ferry operating authority
- Some powers and duties of WSDOT relative to the ferry system may also be found in [Chapter 47.56 RCW](#) (Toll bridges, Tunnels and Ferries)
- [Chapter 47.64 RCW](#) governs marine labor relations, overseen by the Public Employees Relations Commission.
- Fares are set by the Transportation Commission and are used to offset operating costs. (See *Ferry Fares* on page 124.)

### **County Ferries**

- Five counties currently operate public ferries:
  - Pierce, Whatcom, Skagit, King, and Wahkiakum counties
  - Largely funded with county road funds (property taxes).
  - State support is provided to some counties to offset operating deficits ([RCW 47.56.720 and RCW 47.56.725](#))

### **Private Ferry Operations**

- There are 7 private ferry operations regulated by the [Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission](#) ([Chapter 81.84 RCW](#))

### **Other Ferry Operations**

- The Colville Indian Tribe provides a toll-free crossing of Lake Roosevelt (Columbia River)
- The Alaska Marine Highway (between Bellingham, Washington and Skagway, Alaska)



- WSDOT Eastern Region maintains and operates the MV Sanpoil on SR 21 in Eastern Washington (toll-free).

## FUNDING

- State Ferries
  - Dedicated motor fuel tax distribution for ferry operations (0.54 cents of 23-cent gas tax) ([RCW 46.68.090\(2\)\(c\)](#))
  - Dedicated motor fuel tax distribution for ferry capital construction (0.55 cents of 23-cent gas tax) ([RCW 46.68.090\(2\)\(d\)](#))
  - Transfers from the Highway Safety Account, the Motor Vehicle Account and the Multimodal Transportation Account
  - Combined licensing fee (1.375% of collections) for ferry operations ([RCW 46.68.035](#))
  - \$2.02 (initial registration) or \$0.93 (renewal) from the \$30 vehicle license fee for ferry operations ([RCW 46.68.030](#))
  - Ferry fares, concessions, and rent
  - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant programs: Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program, Ferry Boat Program, National Highway Performance Program, Surface Transportation Program
  - Federal Transit Administration (FTA) grant programs—Section 5307 and Section 5337
  - Bond proceeds
  - Transportation Budget Project Lists (including WSF projects) may be found on the LEAP website, <http://leap.leg.wa.gov/>.
- County Ferry Districts and PTBA Ferry Operations
  - See *Local Option Taxes: Ferry Services* on page 167

## Sources:

WSF website: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/>

History of WSF: [Historylink article for the Seattle Times, June 2, 2001](#)

# Ferry Route Map



# Transportation Demand Management

## BACKGROUND

Transportation demand management (TDM) strategies improve the efficiency of the statewide system, helping transportation projects and existing facilities perform closer to optimal levels. The tools and techniques of TDM—such as Commute Trip Reduction, telework, vanpool programs and ride-matching services—help cut road-maintenance costs, enhance community safety and livability, and reduce vehicle carbon emissions. TDM also offers low-cost solutions to roadway congestion and capacity needs, allowing resources to be dedicated to other transportation improvements.

State policies governing transportation demand management in the state and local government and private sector, and specifically Commute Trip Reduction, are found in Washington’s Clean Air Act ([RCW 70.94.521 through 70.94.555](#)). WSDOT’s strategic plan, “Results Washington,” incorporates TDM principles by using the most cost-beneficial approach for solutions to adding capacity, managing demand, and enhancing operational efficiency.

There are several TDM programs and strategies used by different public agencies and private organizations in Washington State.

- *Commute Trip Reduction.* In 1991, the Washington State Legislature passed the Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Law to reduce air pollution, traffic congestion, and energy consumption through employer-based programs that decrease the number of commute trips made in single occupant vehicles (SOVs). Participating employers with at least 100 employees must establish a program for reducing employees’ SOV trips as well as the vehicle miles traveled during peak commuting periods. For more information on the Commute Trip Reduction program, see [WSDOT’s CTR page](#).
- *Tax Credits.* Employers that provide financial incentives to their employees for ridesharing, using public transportation, car sharing or non-motorized commute options may apply for CTR tax credits against business and occupation or public utility taxes. The total tax credits awarded may not exceed \$2.75 million in any fiscal year. The tax credit program expires January 1, 2024.
- *Transit Pass Programs.* Typically a part of CTR or other TDM approaches, these programs offer discounted transit fares to certain users for certain time periods. In particular, some transit agencies have teamed with universities and large employers to provide transit passes. Examples:
  - Spokane Transit Authority sells monthly passes to employers at a discount, provided that the company or organization agrees to pass that savings on to the employees.
  - King County Metro offers the ORCA Business Passport and ORCA Business Choice programs to employers of all sizes. ORCA Business Programs provide employers a way to purchase, manage, and subsidize ORCA transportation benefits for their employees.
  - The University of Washington’s U-PASS program is available to students, faculty, and staff. The U-PASS program provides unlimited rides on King County Metro, Community Transit, Sound Transit, Pierce Transit, Kitsap Transit or Everett Transit bus services, Seattle Streetcar, Sound Transit’s regional bus services, Link light rail and Sounder commuter trains.

- *Shared vehicle services.* For travelers who rely primarily on non-motorized and public transit travel, but require a car for special trips, car-sharing or shared vehicle services offer a network of vehicles to users who pay a membership fee and an hourly or daily rate. Services may be offered by private companies or public jurisdictions. While similar to car rental services, these services are marketed as more accessible and flexible, with vehicles distributed throughout a service area and available 24/7. Names of some popular shared vehicle services include Turo, Zipcar, and car2go. *Rideshare Online:* This online service assists commuters by providing free carpool, vanpool and bicycle ride matching services. Employers also use it to manage their CTR program.
- *Transit Direct Access:* Direct access ramps allow buses, carpools, and vanpools to directly access the HOV lanes in the center of the freeway. This allows these vehicles to avoid the need to weave across the other lanes of traffic and cause congestion.
- *Park and Ride:* Park and ride facilities provide a convenient and safe transfer area for transit, carpool, vanpool passengers, cyclists, and pedestrians to park their vehicle or bike and catch their ride. Typical users include commuters who live farther way, don't live near a transit route, or need a place to meet their vanpool or carpool.
- *Active Transportation:* Active transportation is a strategy focused on providing people with safe options for getting from one place to another using “active modes” such as walking and bicycling.
- *Guaranteed Ride Home.* Guaranteed ride home programs provide rides home for commuters who walk, bike, bus, or carpool to work and who are unable to make their normal commute home for unplanned reasons. King County offers a Home Free Guarantee program to employers for a subscription fee.
- *Flexible Schedules and Teleworking.* Many private and public employers offer flexible schedules, compressed work weeks, and support employees working at home to encourage employees to manage their commutes. These policies reduce commute trips and peak time commuting.
- *Congestion/Variable Pricing.* On tolled facilities, pricing which varies based on congestion and/or time of day provides incentives for drivers to make trip choices which help reduce traffic on congested corridors. Automated toll collection also eliminates delays related to queuing up at a toll booth.
- *Real-time Traveler Information.* WSDOT, the City of Seattle, and various third-party providers offer tools that allow the traveler real-time access to traffic and transit information. By providing information through a variety of mechanisms—including highway signage, smart phone applications and web maps—travelers can more effectively plan their trips to avoid traffic. Traffic information includes travel times, congestion levels along major routes, visuals of actual road conditions, real-time transit information, and notice of special events which may create traffic issues.
- *Transit-Oriented Development.* [Transit-oriented development](#) (TOD) land use policies are intended to increase convenient access to public transportation by encouraging neighborhood development near transit hubs.

## GOVERNANCE

*State.* The state Commute Trip Reduction Board (appointed by the Secretary of Transportation and staffed by WSDOT) is responsible for guiding the implementation of CTR. WSDOT Public Transportation provides funding for vanpool and Regional Mobility Grant programs supporting TDM. WSDOT Traffic Operations program provides support for active traffic management and real-time traffic data. WSDOT Tolling is implementing variable pricing on the SR 520 Bridge and the HOT/Express Lanes in the SR 167/I-405 Corridor.

*Local Governments.* Transit agencies have led the development and implementation of a number of TDM strategies, including pass programs, guaranteed ride home programs, web-based route planning, and TOD. Regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs) are required under federal funding rules to develop transportation plans that deploy TDM strategies to help address urban congestion issues.

## FUNDING

- For CTR, WSDOT Public Transportation allocates \$3.9 million for grants to local governments for technical assistance to employers and \$1.8 million for program technical assistance, measurement, and evaluation by WSDOT.
- In 2021-23, the state General Fund budget provided \$784,000 from the State Parking Account for limited technical assistance and services to state agencies (transit passes and emergency ride home program). This included \$30,000 to expand the state employee pass program to Mason and Grays Harbor Counties. Other state agency CTR efforts are funded directly by those agencies.
- \$5.5 million in CTR tax credits are awarded each biennium by the Department of Revenue for incentives paid by employers for the purposes of reducing their employees' SOV trips.
- For the support of vanpools, \$2 million was authorized for the 2021-23-20 biennium to purchase additional and replacement vans to support local programs.

### Sources:

[2021 CTR Report to the Legislature \(Public Transportation Mobility Report, pp. 65-67\)](#)

[WSDOT's Commute Trip Reduction webpage](#)

[WSDOT's TDM webpage](#)

Traveler Information: [WSDOT](#), [City of Seattle DOT](#)

[Transit real-time information](#) (available for eight transit and three other transportation organizations in Western Washington)

# Buses

## BACKGROUND

- Bus service is the principle public transportation service provided by most transit systems in the state. Transit systems may provide routed bus services, route deviated services (fixed routes with some custom services), light and commuter rail services, ferry services, paratransit specialized services (often referred to as demand response or "Dial-a-Ride"), and vanpooling/ carpooling coordination. The figures presented below address only the bus service provided by those systems.
- In 2021 the public transit systems in Washington provided the following services:

<u>Service Type</u>	<u>(in millions)</u>		
	<u>Revenue Vehicle Hours</u>	<u>Revenue Vehicle Miles</u>	<u>Passenger Trips</u>
Fixed Route	6.6	86.0	83.3
Route Deviated	0.19	3.3	0.9
Demand Response	1.3	17.4	2.3
Vanpool	0.39	13.1	1.8

- The majority of public transit buses that are operated in Washington state use diesel fuel. In 2021, public transit agencies used 19.3 million gallons of diesel, 2.8 million gallons of gasoline, 1.6 million therms of compressed natural gas, 0.95 million gallons of propane, and consumed 17.5 million kilowatt hours of electricity to operate the fixed route, route deviated, and demand response services, and vanpools.
- Bus-rapid transit (BRT) is a type of high-capacity bus service, which adopts many features of rail rapid transit, seeking to achieve faster, more frequent service than traditional bus service. BRT may operate in its own right-of-way, have shorter headways, low-floor articulated buses, real-time bus arrival information signs, off board fare collection and longer stop spacing than traditional bus service. In practice, BRT systems may adopt all or only some of these features. King County Metro, Community Transit, and C-Tran all operate some form of BRT.

## GOVERNANCE

- Currently there are 32 operating public transit agencies in Washington State that provide bus service.
- Public transit is provided by counties, public transportation benefit authorities (PTBA), county transportation authorities (CTA), unincorporated public transportation benefit authorities, regional transit authorities, or cities. For a complete description of the governance models authorized for transit agencies, see the *Local/Regional Jurisdictions section* on page 369.
- Travel Washington - the WSDOT Intercity Public Transportation program – provides bus services in rural areas where intercity service had been discontinued by privately-owned companies when those services were no longer profitable based on ticket sales only. WSDOT has contracted with private operators to provide the services. The Federal Transit Administration provides WSDOT with the operating subsidy for these services. In partnership with private bus operators, four publicly funded lines of intercity bus services currently operate within Washington State:
  - Travel Washington: Grape Line between Walla Walla and Pasco
  - Travel Washington: Apple Line between Omak and Wenatchee and Ellensburg
  - Travel Washington: Dungeness Line between Port Angeles and Seattle and SeaTac
  - Travel Washington: Gold Line between Kettle Falls and Spokane

For more information regarding [WSDOT’s Intercity Bus program check the website.](#)

## FUNDING

- Public transit agencies are primarily funded through voter-approved local taxes. In 2021, local taxes contributed \$3.2 billion to public transit.
- In 2021, public transit agencies collected \$117.3 million in fare revenues. The majority of this revenue (\$82.5 million) was collected from users of fixed-route bus service.
- The 2021 average farebox recovery rate (the percent of annual operating costs recovered by passenger fares) for fixed-route service offered by public transit agencies was 6.5%.
- In 2021, Washington public transit agencies received \$1.1 billion in federal funds.
- During the 2021-23 biennium, the state transportation budget provided \$305,577,000 million in funds to public transit agencies through the Special Needs (\$67,821,000), Regional Mobility ([RCW 47.66.030](#)) (\$115,488,000), Rural Mobility ([RCW 47.66.100](#)) (\$33,283,000), Vanpool (\$2,000,000), Connecting Washington Projects (\$29,030,000), Transit Coordination grant programs (\$1,000,000), Green Transportation Capital Grant Program ([RCW 47.66.120](#)) (\$23,349,000), and Transit Support Grants ([RCW 47.66.140](#)) (\$33,606,000).
- WSDOT uses a public/private partnership to meet federal match requirements in some cases. As described above, the Travel Washington Intercity Bus program is funded in part by the FTA. The FTA 5311 Non-Urban Program requires states to set-aside 15% of their federal transit apportionment to support intercity bus service. The federal grant funds require a 50% local match for operating assistance. WSDOT has been granted FTA authority to use the private investment in the intercity system (primarily from Greyhound) as the required match, and therefore is supporting the four Travel Washington routes with only federal funds. The private contractors are allowed to keep fares and fees.

## ASSET MANAGEMENT

- As a condition of receiving state funding, public transit agencies are required to submit an asset management plan to the Washington State Department of Transportation. The plan must include an inventory of all transportation system assets, and a preservation plan based on lowest life cycle cost methodologies. This requirement applies to public transportation providers receiving federal ([49 CFR Chapter VI Part 625](#)) and state funding. Washington State transit systems established under the following sections of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) need to complete a plan:
  - RCW [35.84.060](#) – City Transit Systems (defined in RCW [47.04.082](#))
  - RCW [36.56.121](#) – County that has assumed the functions of a metropolitan transportation system (King County)
  - RCW [36.57A.191](#) – Public Transportation Benefit Areas (PTBAs)
  - RCW [81.112.086](#) – Regional Transportation Authorities

### Sources:

For a more in-depth information on public transit service, see WSDOT's [Summary of Public Transportation](#).

For a list of public and private agencies providing any kind of public transportation service, see the [Washington State Public Transportation Directory](#).

# Special Needs Transportation

## BACKGROUND

- [RCW 81.66.010](#) defines persons with special transportation needs as "persons, including their personal attendants, who because of physical or mental disability, income status, or age are unable to transport themselves or to purchase appropriate transportation."
- "Demand-Response" service is a type of transit service where individual passengers can request transportation from a specific location to another specific location at a certain time. Service is not on a fixed route and usually requires advance reservations.
- "Deviated Fixed Route" service is a hybrid of fixed-route and demand-response transit services. A service vehicle will travel along a fixed route, with fixed stops, on a fixed schedule, but may deviate from its course for a pre-scheduled request.
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires transit agencies to provide paratransit services (demand response) to individuals that cannot take the fixed-route bus because of a functional disability. The FTA requirements include "complementary" paratransit service to destinations within 3/4 mile of all fixed routes.
- In 2021, public transit agencies around the state spent \$185.7 million for demand-response service or about 10.7 percent of total operating costs. Route-deviated service cost public transportation agencies about \$29.9 million or 1.7 percent of total operating costs.
- In 2021, demand-response service provided by public transit agencies accounted for about 2.3 million passenger trips, or about 2.2 percent of all passenger trips. Passenger trips on route-deviated service accounted for about 0.88 million trips, or about 0.86 percent of all passenger trips.
- In 2021, about 16.3 percent of the state's population resided outside of the service boundaries of a transit system. For these mostly-rural residents and other populations unable to use transit systems because of age or abilities, Community and Brokered Transportation providers help fill these transportation service gaps. Community transportation providers are primarily paid for by federal funds.
- Since 1989, Washington State has used a competitively selected brokerage system to provide non-emergency medical transportation (NEMT) for eligible Medicaid clients. Transportation brokers link riders to least-cost, most-appropriate transportation providers. Brokers are primarily non-profit organizations that are governed by a Board of Directors. The state is divided into 13 service regions and currently contracts with six brokers. In 2021, the brokers coordinated nearly 1.83 million trips for Medicaid clients. This was a decrease of 4.7 percent from 2020.
- Community Transportation Providers are private, non-profit, or governmental agencies that provide core transportation services for individuals with special needs and the general public in rural and urban areas. With a focus on the transportation needs of low-income, elderly, youth, veterans and their families and people with disabilities, they coordinate transportation services for access to health care, nutrition, employment, training, education, social services, and other vital community resources. Community Transportation Providers partner with a network of transportation service providers, employers, and human service agencies that may include health care providers, senior services, veteran services, community colleges, workforce partners, services for people with disabilities, and other social service agencies.



## GOVERNANCE

- According to the 2008 JTC Study of Special Needs Transportation, as many as 623 organizations and agencies provide some level of special needs transportation in Washington State. There is no typical provider or service offering, but private, non-profits represent slightly more than one half of the identified providers, and vast majority of services are door-to-door demand-response services.
- Transit agency authorizing statutes are described in the *Local/Regional Jurisdictions* section of this manual on page 369.

## FUNDING

- In 2021, the farebox recovery (the percent of annual operating costs recovered by passenger fares) rate for route-deviated service was 1.4 percent. For demand-response service, the farebox recovery rate was 1.3 percent. The lower farebox recovery rates associated with these services are due to reduced fares or fare-free policies for the elderly or persons with disabilities and the high cost of individualized service, as well as changes to service models during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- For the 2021-2023 biennium, the state transportation budget appropriated \$67.82 million in multimodal funds for special needs transportation services offered by nonprofit providers and public transportation agencies.
- Transit agency operating expenses for route-deviated and demand-response service amounted to \$215.7 million for calendar year 2021.

### Sources:

[WSDOT public transportation grant programs and awards](#)

For a more in-depth descriptions of Community Transportation Providers and Medicaid Transportation Brokers, see WSDOT's "[Summary of Public Transportation](#)".

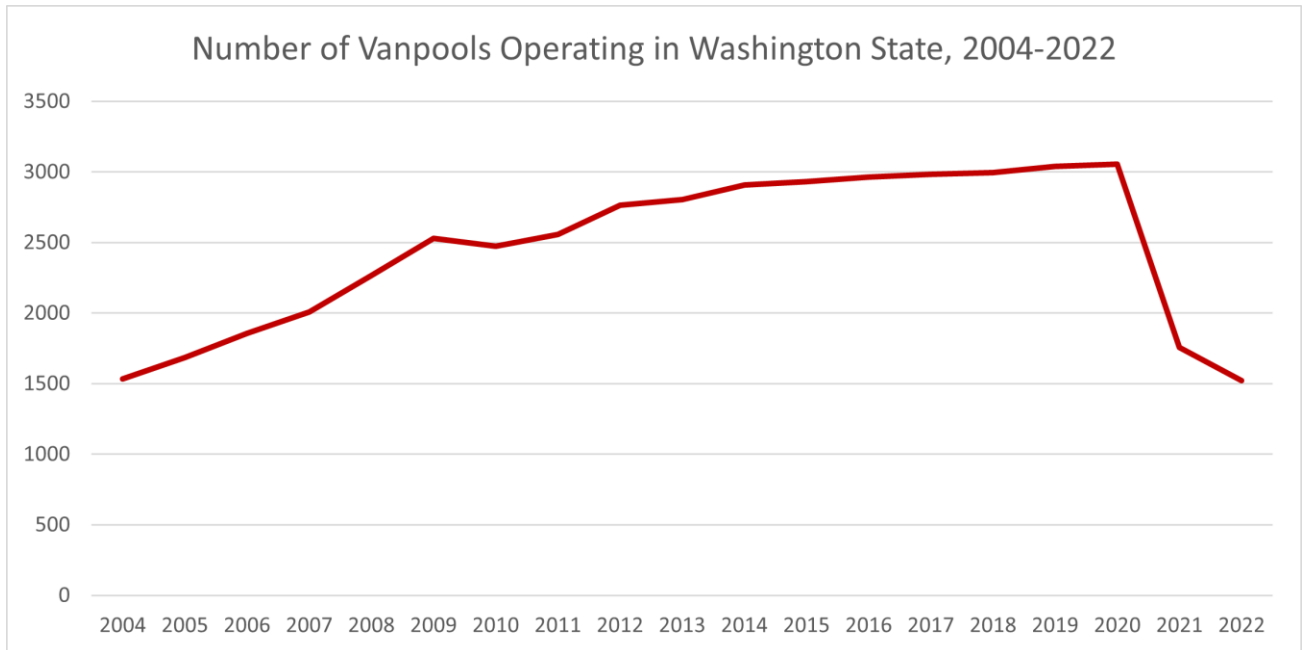
For a list of public and private agencies providing any kind of public transportation service, see the [Washington State Public Transportation Directory](#)

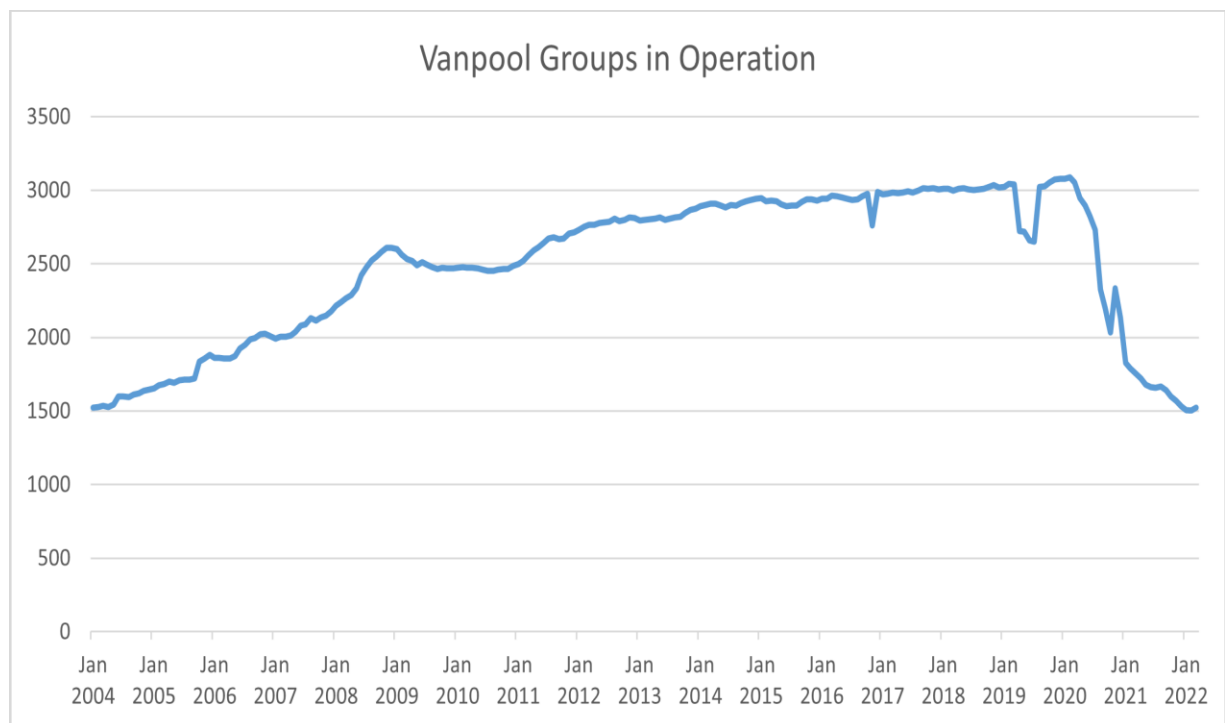
Joint Transportation Committee, "Special Needs Transportation Study," [Final Report](#), January 2009

# Carpooling/Vanpooling

## BACKGROUND

- Filling empty seats in vanpools and personal vehicles is often a cost effective mobility and congestion reduction strategy. Investments in vanpool vehicles, ride-matching technology (e.g. RideshareOnline), park and ride lots, marketing and rider incentives and promotions are tools to capitalize on this asset.
- The State Legislature created a vanpool grant program in 2003 to help public transit agencies expand existing vanpools. Since then, the state has provided more than \$63 million to local transit. Agencies have purchased more than 2800 vans; an additional 205 vans were purchased during the 2019-2021 biennium.
- In July 2003, 1,508 public vanpools were operating in Washington State and transported over 11,000 employees to work each day. As of March 2022, there were 1,521 vanpools transporting 8,700 passengers per workday. Vanpool numbers were significantly affected by changes in commuting behaviors related to COVID-19. For comparison, in March 2019, there were 3,040 vanpool groups in operation, transporting about 30,000 passengers per workday.
- Vanpool use is closely tied to economic activity and gas prices and has also been significantly impacted by the changes in commuting behavior related to the COVID-19 pandemic. As the following graph demonstrates, the number of operating vanpool groups significantly decreased at the beginning of 2020.
- The majority of vans transport employees to employers participating in the Commute Trip Reduction program.





- Carpooling in personal vehicles and vanpooling are both supported by investments in [RideshareOnline.com](https://rideshareonline.com). Washington supports RideshareOnline.com as part of a tristate technology partnership with Oregon and Idaho. This system allows commuters to seek carpool/vanpool partners through its ride-matching capabilities. In addition, numerous employers, local governments, and other organizations use RideshareOnline.com as a tool to track employee commuting and to provide incentives for employees who make more efficient transportation choices.
- [Preferential loading](#) for carpools and vanpools is available on Washington State Ferries.
- Similar to taxi, for-hire, and limousine services, transportation network companies (TNCs) such as Lyft and Uber (which are marketed as “ride share” services) may be subject to regulation at the city level.
- Commuters at Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) worksites increased their use of alternative, non-drive alone modes from 34.3% in 2007/2008 to 42% in 2017/2018. In contrast, the national non-drive alone rate remained flat during that same period at roughly 24%. For more information on CTR, see the *Transportation Demand Management* section on page 401.
- Park and ride lots provide a safe, convenient transfer area for transit, carpool and vanpool passengers, cyclists and pedestrians. There are more than 346 park and ride lots around the state. In most cases, park and ride lots are operated and maintained by local transit agencies. Through the state’s Regional Mobility Grant program and other funding sources, WSDOT, transit agencies and local governments have developed partnerships to construct new park and rides and increase capacity at existing lots. WSDOT and its partners have also developed agreements with property owners, such as churches and community centers, for “park and pool” lots for flexible carpools and vanpools to free up space for transit riders at high demand park and ride lots. Some areas are combining park and ride functions with new residential and commercial development.

## GOVERNANCE

- The direct formation and management of carpooling and vanpooling is conducted by numerous entities, including private individuals and businesses; public transit systems; and city and county governments.

- In Washington State, vanpool vehicles are most commonly available through public transit agencies. A few private employers continue to operate vanpools. In addition, private individuals and employers work to form vanpool groups.

### FUNDING

- The 2021 transportation budget allocated \$2 million to purchase vehicles to expand vanpooling in the state. The majority of public vanpool program costs are recovered from fares paid by riders. Many employers partially or fully subsidize the cost of vanpools for their employees. Fare policies vary by operator, as determined by the operator's board or county council.
- Public and private vanpools are exempt from retail sales tax on the purchase of the vehicle ([RCW 82.08.0287](#), [82.12.0282](#), [82.44.015](#)).
- The state transportation budget invests in select transit agency park and ride lot projects via the [Regional Mobility Grant program](#) and Connecting Washington funding.

### Sources:

WSDOT's Transportation demand management [webpage](#)

WSDOT's Vanpool Investment Program [webpage](#)

WSDOT [Park and ride information](#)

# High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes

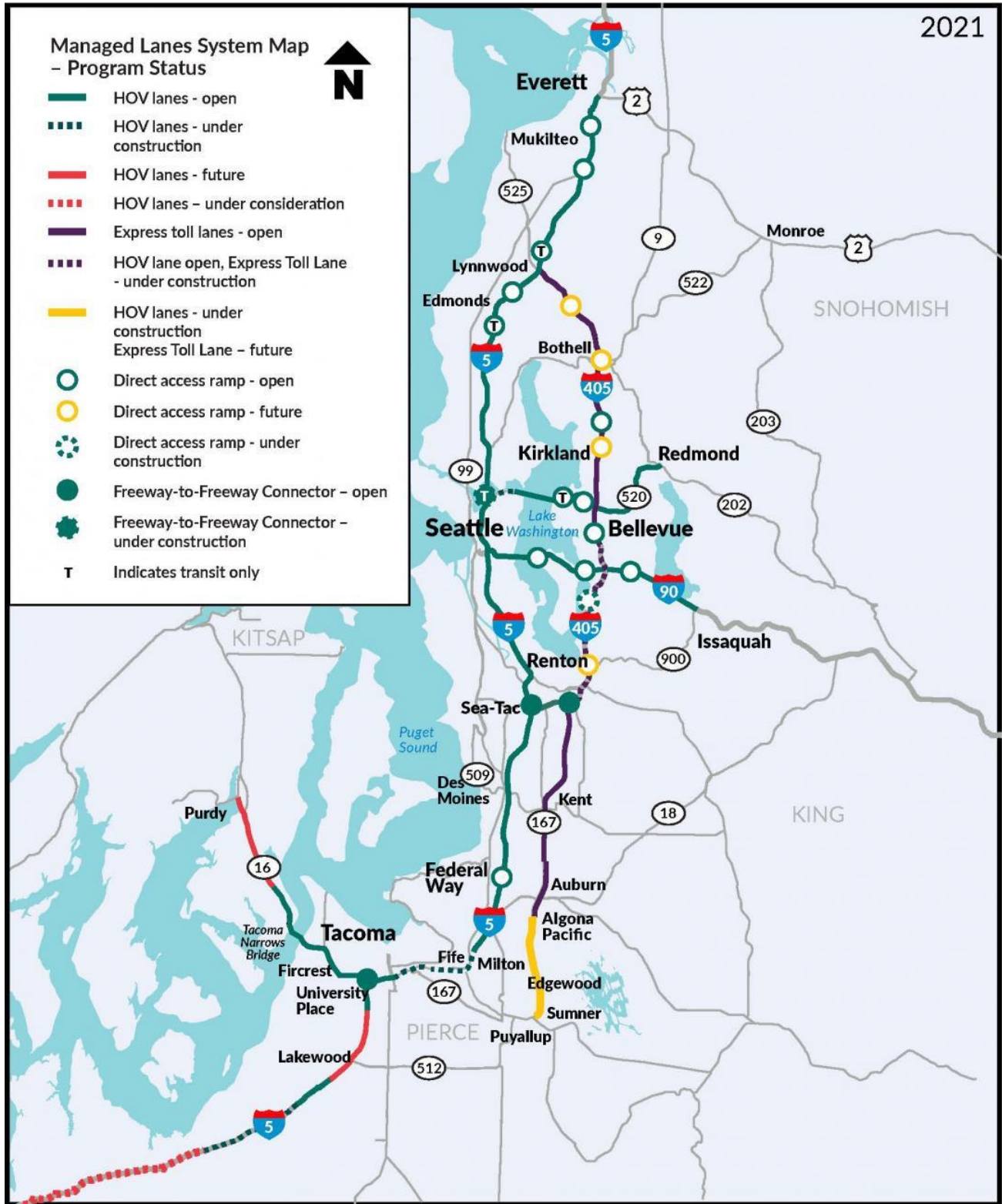
## BACKGROUND

- The HOV system is intended to increase highway efficiency by increasing speed and reliability for buses, vanpools, carpools and motorcycles.
- Elements of the HOV system includes HOV lanes on highways, HOV priority treatments on local streets, park-and-ride lots, enforcement facilities, HOV by-pass lanes at ramp meters, and HOV direct access ramps.
- USDOT and WSDOT performance standards call for freeway HOV lanes to provide an average speed of 45 mph or greater at least 90 percent of the time during the morning and afternoon rush hour.
  - In 2021, five of the 10 HOV commutes monitored met this standard, up from three corridors in 2020. All locations performed with more reliability than 2017-2019.
- Roughly 5.5 million person miles were traveled on the central Puget Sound region freeway HOV network on an average weekday in 2021. Daily person miles traveled in 2021 increased 28% from 2020 (4.3 million) but were 28% lower than the pre-pandemic level in 2019 (7.6 million).
- Approximately 42% of all freeway person miles traveled in the central Puget Sound region were on the HOV network in 2019.
- About 255 lane-miles of the planned 369-mile Puget Sound region HOV network have been completed (excluding ramps and arterials). The 2015 Connecting Washington Act included an investment in additional HOV capacity. Currently additional HOV capacity is funded on I-5 in Pierce County through the Joint Base Lewis-McChord corridor and on the southern end of SR 167.
- Puget Sound freeway HOV lanes generally require that carpools have two or more occupants, 24 hours per day, seven days a week. Three or more occupants are required on the short segment of SR 520 between I-405 and the floating bridge. East of Lake Washington and on SR 167, HOV lanes, Express Toll Lanes, and High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes are open to general purpose traffic at night between 7:00 pm and 5:00 am.
- The [I-405 Express Toll Lanes](#) and [SR 167 HOT Lanes](#) are a form of HOV lane that can also be used by non-HOV drivers who choose to pay a toll. Drivers who do not qualify as a carpool have the choice to pay a toll for a faster trip. Toll rates adjust every few minutes based on real-time traffic conditions to keep traffic in these lanes moving.
- High Occupancy Toll (HOT) lanes and Express lanes may have different operating policies: the I-405 Express lanes require 3+ occupants during peak commute hours and requires HOVs to have a Flex Pass set in the carpool position to claim a toll exemption. All traffic is allowed in express toll lanes on weekends. Carpools with two or more people can always use the SR 167 HOT Lanes for free. A Good to Go! Pass or account is optional on SR 167. Both express toll lanes and SR 167 HOT lanes operate from 5am to 7pm on weekdays.
- Future policy changes to improve HOV lane performance may involve increasing the occupancy requirements to 3 or more or implementing managed lane pricing via conversion to High Occupancy Toll (HOT) or Express lanes. (For more information on HOT and Express lanes, see the Tolling section on page 231.)
- Until June 30, 2023, unless extended by the Legislature, the following vehicles are also allowed under a pilot program: registered blood collection and distribution vehicles, organ transport vehicles, taxicabs that have been modified to carry a person in a wheelchair, non-emergency medical transportation vehicles displaying a decal issued by the Department of Licensing.

## GOVERNANCE

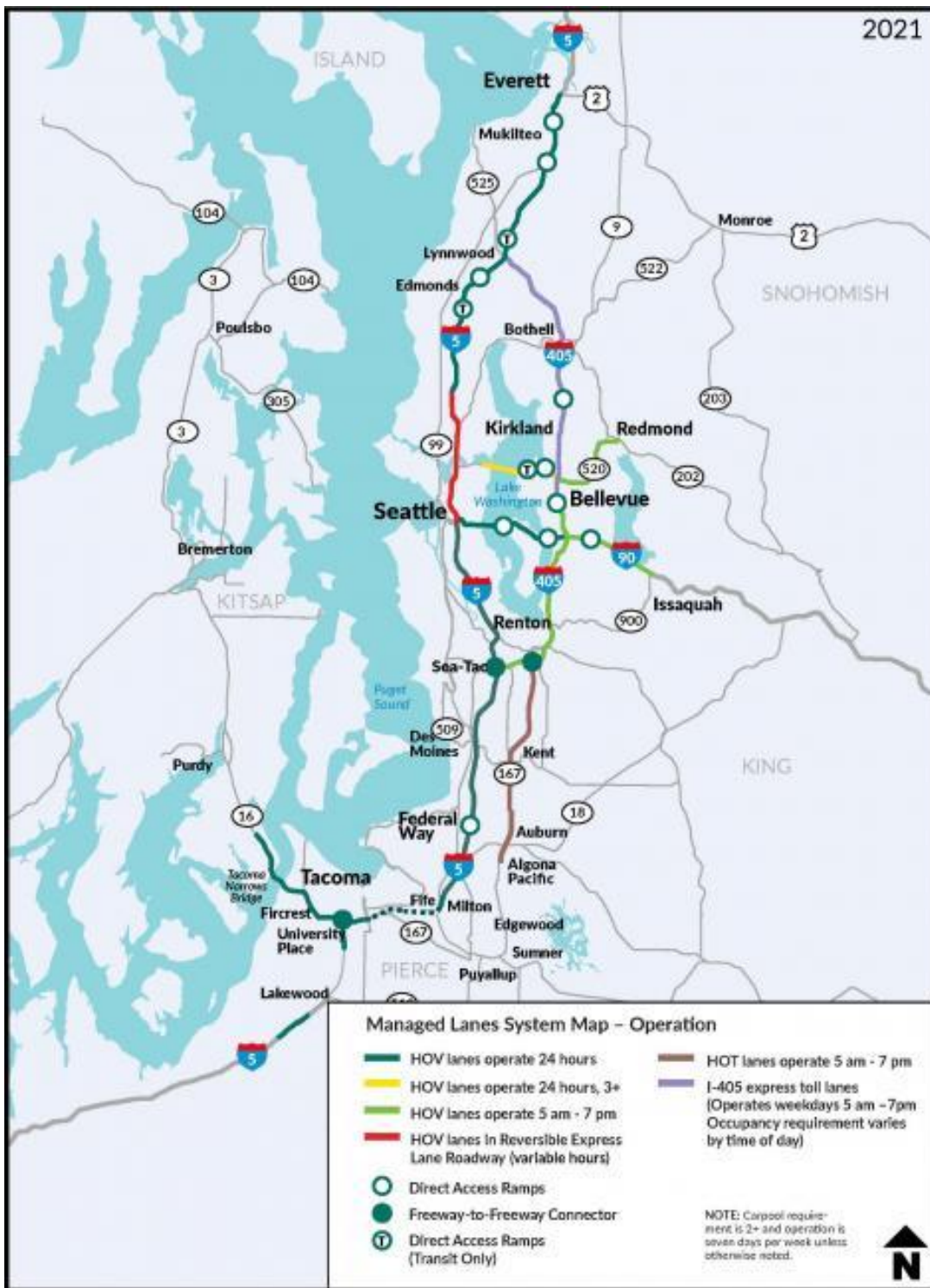
- Federal law currently requires agencies that operate HOV lanes to consider policy changes if average speeds in the HOV lanes drop below 45 mph for 90 percent of the time performance threshold over a consecutive 180-day period during the weekday peak periods ([23 USC 166 \(d\)\(2\)\(B\)](#)).
- State law (RCWs [46.61.165](#) and [47.52.025](#)) allows WSDOT, cities and counties to limit access to certain highway facilities, including designating lanes or ramps for preferential use by transit agencies, motorcycles, high-occupancy vehicles, and private transportation companies which operate vehicles with a carrying capacity of eight or more passengers.
- WSDOT has the primary responsibility for planning, constructing, and operating HOV on state routes, but consults and coordinates with Sound Transit and other local jurisdictions as appropriate.
- The Core HOV Lane program is included in and supported by the Puget Sound Regional Council's Metropolitan Transportation Plan and is being designed in coordination with Sound Transit.

## Locations of existing and future HOV lanes in the Puget Sound region



<https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/roads-bridges/hov-lanes/hov-system-map>

## HOV operating rules by location





## FUNDING

- The federal Interstate Completion program included substantial funding for the initial investments in a Puget Sound HOV system on I-5, I-405 and I-90.
- The 2003 nickel package funded substantial portions of the core HOV system, including projects on SR 16 in Tacoma, on I-5 in Federal Way and Everett, on SR 167 in Auburn, and on SR 520 in Redmond. The total cost of core HOV system improvements funded through the nickel package is in excess of \$700 million.
- The 2005 transportation funding package (Transportation Partnership Act) also provided funding for core HOV improvements. Specifically, adding HOV lanes to I-5 in Pierce County between SR 16 and the Pierce/King County line and improving the I-5/SR 16 interchange including direct HOV to HOV connections. These projects are finished or currently underway.
- The 1996 Sound Transit plan included direct access ramps to allow buses to enter and exit HOV lanes without crossing general purpose traffic. These direct access facilities cost approximately \$500 million.
- King, Pierce and Snohomish counties are authorized to levy, with voter approval, local taxes to accelerate completion of HOV lanes and related facilities on state highways and local arterials and to fund other HOV programs ([RCW 81.100.030](#), [81.100.060](#)). No county has authorized these tax options.
- For more information on local option HOV taxes, see the *Local Option Taxes for High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Systems* section on page 166.

### Sources:

[WSDOT's HOV webpage](#)

[WSDOT's HOV Policy](#)

FHWA [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about HOV lanes

# Intercity Passenger Rail (Amtrak Cascades) and Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Study

## Amtrak Cascades - Intercity Passenger Rail Service

### BACKGROUND

- The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) along with the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) sponsor the intercity passenger rail service known as Amtrak Cascades. The Amtrak Cascades service operates on a 467-mile rail corridor connecting 18 cities spanning from Eugene, OR, through Portland and Seattle to Vancouver, BC. The tracks are owned by the Union Pacific Railroad (Oregon); the BNSF Railway (Washington and British Columbia); and Sound Transit (between Tacoma and Nisqually).
- BNSF owns the rail network on which Amtrak operates in Washington. Freight, national and regional passenger rail, and local commuter rail services use this rail line.
- 300 miles of the corridor are in Washington, 134 miles in Oregon and 33 miles in British Columbia.
- Prior to the pandemic, Amtrak Cascades service included four daily roundtrips between Seattle and Portland; two between Seattle and Vancouver, BC; two between Portland and Eugene
  - As of September 2022, there are three daily roundtrips between Seattle and Portland; one between Seattle and Vancouver, BC; and two between Portland and Eugene. Amtrak cites staffing and equipment maintenance issues as reasons for not yet returning to prior service levels.
- Ridership on WSDOT/ODOT sponsored service in the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor (Amtrak Cascades) has risen from 94,000 in 1994 to 824,000 in 2019. In 2020, ridership was at 172,000 and in 2021 was at 221,000.
- In October 2013, Section 209 of the Federal Railroad Administration's Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) was implemented, which eliminated federal operating funding for state-supported trains, requiring states to absorb more costs.
- Two additional Amtrak long-distance trains operate daily in Washington: the Empire Builder, which travels from the Pacific Northwest to Chicago, IL, with service from Seattle/Portland to Spokane, WA; and the Coast Starlight, which travels between Seattle, WA, and Los Angeles, CA, with a total of six station stops in Washington State.

### GOVERNANCE

- WSDOT is responsible for developing and implementing Washington State's passenger rail program as specified in [RCW 47.79](#) and [47.82](#). In 2019, WSDOT published the [updated State Rail Plan](#), which incorporates passenger and freight rail into one strategic plan. This plan is updated every five years.
- WSDOT is currently working on the 2022-23 Amtrak Cascades Service Development Plan which will provide a summary of possible alternatives to improve the Amtrak Cascades service over the next 20 years. This plan, being developed in coordination with ODOT, will be completed in 2023.
- The 18th amendment to the Washington State constitution prohibits the expenditure of state or federal gas tax dollars on rail construction projects or operations. For a more in-depth description of the *18th Amendment*, go to page 37.

## FUNDING

The states of Washington and Oregon pay for operating expenses not covered by ticket revenue (which includes food and beverage sales and other related fees). Ticket revenue covered more than 60% of Amtrak Cascades' operating costs in 2019, prior to the pandemic. However, with the drop in ticket sales over the last two years, the farebox recovery rate was substantially lower – down to 21.7% in 2020 and at 40% in 2021. During the first eight months of 2022 there was a sharp increase in revenue to more than \$10 million, which is twice the amount collected in the same eight months of 2021.

### **Amtrak Cascades Passenger Rail Funding -- Multimodal Account Federal**

- Between 2010 and 2017, Washington was awarded a total of \$794.9 million in federal funding to increase the frequency and reliability of the Amtrak Cascades service.
  - January 2010 – Washington was awarded \$590 million in federal ARRA grants for High-Speed Rail improvements in the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor.
  - April 2011 – Awarded an additional \$145.5 million in ARRA funds.
  - September 2011 - Awarded additional \$31.1 million in ARRA funds.
  - Other federal funding sources for high-speed rail totaled \$28.3 million.
- WSDOT completed construction of the [Cascades high-speed rail program](#) in June 2017. The projects included a new Tacoma Dome Station and new route between Tacoma and Nisqually. All of the ARRA improvements, including this move, were undertaken to realize:
  - Two additional daily round trips between Seattle and Portland, for a total of six round trips
  - 10-minute reduction in travel times between Seattle and Portland
  - 88 percent on-time performance throughout the Washington corridor
- The December 2017 derailment in DuPont, WA, on the inaugural run on the new route, has delayed these service outcomes. Amtrak Cascades returned to its previous route between Tacoma and Olympia and returned to just four daily trips between Seattle and Portland. The return to the new Tacoma station and the Point Defiance Bypass happened in November 2021 and operations have continued without incident since that time. However, because of the pandemic the number of daily trips between Seattle and Portland have been curtailed. There currently are only three daily roundtrips occurring. Additional trips will be added back into the schedule as Amtrak staffing and equipment become available. The ultimate goal is to offer the six daily roundtrips as soon as resources and demand allow.
- Current federal funding
  - WSDOT, in coordination with nine other state supported routes, is participating in Amtrak's national procurement to acquire new trains that will replace the current aging Amtrak Cascades fleet with new modern trainsets. The Cascades fleet will be the first to be delivered in the 2025-26 timeframe and will include eight new trainsets, two locomotives and an extra cab car. These will primarily be paid for through federal IJA funding totaling some \$225 million for the Amtrak Cascades fleet.
  - Since 2018, WSDOT has applied for and been awarded three separate CRISI grants from the Federal Railroad Administration to address landslides along the railroad tracks north of Seattle. The three grants leveraged \$4.5 million in state funds into more than \$12 million total project funding through the federal grants and BNSF Railway contributions. WSDOT administers the grants, with BNSF Railway undertaking the work to install catchment walls and slope stabilization. Where implemented,

the mitigation measures have been successful in preventing debris reaching the tracks and preventing delayed or cancelled Amtrak Cascades and Sounder trains.

- WSDOT and its partner BNSF Railway was recently awarded a \$25 million federal INFRA grant to rehabilitate the Salmon Bay Bridge, a critical rail structure located in north Seattle, over the Ballard locks. BNSF is providing the entire match funding for this project. This bridge handles daily Amtrak Cascades, Amtrak long-distance, Sounder and freight trains.

### **Multimodal Account – State**

- For the 2021-2023 biennium, the Legislature appropriated \$186.75 million from the Multimodal Transportation Account – State, to carry out the following activities:
  - Operate two daily round trips between Seattle and Portland; one daily round trip between Seattle and Vancouver, B.C.; and one daily roundtrip between Portland and Vancouver B.C.
  - Ultra-High Speed Ground Transportation (planning)
  - Cascades Service Development Plan
  - Return to Service on the Point Defiance Bypass
  - Statewide Freight Rail Assistance Program (FRAP)
  - Chelatchie Prairie Railroad Track Rehabilitation
  - PCC Rehabilitation
  - Ridgefield Rail Overpass Grade Separation
  - Port of Moses Lake Improvements
  - South Kelso Railroad Crossing Improvement
  - PV Hooper Track Improvements
  - Cascades Corridor Slide Prevention and Repair

### **Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation study**

- WSDOT is studying how ultra-high-speed ground transportation (250 mph and greater) could provide a transportation option to travel between Vancouver, British Columbia and Portland, Oregon in just a few hours.
- During the 2022 legislative session, the Legislature allocated \$4 million for additional analysis and development of an expanded framework for future work, and \$150 million to be used as matching funds to leverage federal funding opportunities over the next six years.

### **2017 feasibility study**

- The 2017-19 Transportation budget appropriated \$300,000 for a study of ultra-high-speed (250 mph or faster) ground transportation, including identifying costs and benefits as well as a north-south alignment in Washington state. Submitted on December 14, 2017, [Ultra-High Speed Ground Transportation study](#) includes an economic impacts addendum submitted on February 1, 2018.
- [Highlights from the December 2017 report](#) were presented to the Joint Transportation Committee.

### **2019 business case study overview**

- The 2018 Supplemental Transportation budget appropriated \$750,000 of state multimodal funds and matching funds to conduct a business case analysis of ultra-high-speed ground transportation. Matching funds of \$750,000 will be provided by the Province of British Columbia, the Oregon Department of

Transportation and Microsoft. An [advisory group](#) representing both public and private sectors from Washington, Oregon and British Columbia will guide the study.

- The more in-depth 2019 business case study will include an evaluation of:
  - Corridor options, including station and alignment opportunities, technologies, and costs
  - Potential ridership and revenue
  - Governing structures and economic impacts
  - Funding and finance alternatives

## **2020 Governance framework, strategic engagement plan, and financial strategy**

- The 2020 report recommends actions in three areas for future decision-making:
  - *Governance Framework*  
This offers guidance to create a coordinating entity to advance the project beyond the initial concept phase and outlines a more formal governing model for the future.
  - *Strategic Engagement Plan*  
Developing a robust, deep, and equitable engagement approach with:
    - the general public
    - Tribes and Indigenous communities
    - Elected officials
    - State, provincial and federal agencies
    - Business and labor leaders
    - Advocacy organizations
  - *Financial strategy*  
This sets forth potential strategies to secure a variety of funding sources and includes scenarios for possible federal, state or provincial, and private investments that could create a complete funding and financing plan.

## **2022 JTC Independent review of ultra-high-speed ground transportation corridor**

- ESSB 5689, Sec 204(10) directs the Joint Transportation Committee to conduct an independent review of the ultra-high-speed ground transportation corridor between Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia. The review should include an assessment of the assumptions included in the prior studies and reports. A final report is due to the House and Senate Transportation Committees by June 30, 2023.

### Sources:

[WSDOT Passenger Rail website](#)

[WSDOT Amtrak Cascades Dashboard](#)

2019 [Washington State Rail Plan](#)

[WSDOT Passenger Rail Plans](#)

[WSDOT's Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Studies website](#)

Completed High-Speed Rail studies to date:

[Initial feasibility study – 2017. \(An economic impact addendum was added to the report in 2018\).](#)

[Business case analysis – 2019](#)

[Framework for the Future report - 2020](#)

# Regional Rail Commuter Service

## BACKGROUND

- "Commuter rail" is typically a passenger rail service connecting city centers with their suburbs or nearby cities. Stations tend to be further apart than for light rail. In Washington State, Sound Transit's "Sounder" service runs primarily on the same mainline as the Amtrak Cascades service. A small portion of the Sounder line in south Puget Sound runs on line owned solely by Sound Transit. Currently, Sounder service is available during morning and afternoon commute hours roundtrip between Everett and Seattle and Seattle and Lakewood, via Tacoma.
- "Light rail" or "light rail transit" (LRT) is a form of high-capacity rail public transportation that may have a lower capacity and lower speed than heavy rail or subway systems, but higher capacity and higher speed than streetcar systems. Light rail operates primarily in separate rights-of-way.
- In Washington State, LRT is operated by [Sound Transit](#) in the Puget Sound region. "1 line" service runs between Angle Lake, just south of SeaTac airport, and Northgate station in Seattle approximately every ten minutes between 5AM and 1 AM. A separate light rail line operates within Tacoma between the Tacoma Dome and the Theater district, with a Hilltop extension planned for 2023
- In November 2008, the voters of the Central Puget Sound approved Sound Transit 2. Sound Transit opened the Northgate Link Extension in October 2021 and anticipates opening stations further north to Lynnwood by 2024 and across Lake Washington to Bellevue and Redmond in 2023 and 2024.
- In November 2016, voters approved a \$53.8 billion investment in Sound Transit 3. The plan includes 62 additional miles of light rail, with stations serving 37 additional areas; replacement of bus routes with rail service; and expansion of Tacoma Link to Tacoma Community College, with targeted delivery in 2039
- LRT is under consideration for the Vancouver area, extending light rail (MAX) from Portland, Oregon, as part of the replacement of the Interstate 5 bridge over the Columbia River.

## GOVERNANCE

- Sound Transit operates as a Regional Transit Authority under [RCW 81.112](#). For more information, refer to the *Local/Regional Jurisdictions* section on page 389.
- Under the RTA statutes, light rail may be expanded upon approval by Puget Sound voters for the system additions and new taxing authority.
- C-TRAN may operate light rail under its authority as a Public Transportation Benefit Area ([RCW 36.57A](#)) and is eligible to seek funding as a High Capacity Transportation Corridor area ([RCW 81.104](#)).

## FUNDING

- Sound Transit's capital program and services are not funded by the state transportation budget; however, they have received funds from the state's Regional Mobility Grant Program. Sound Transit may continue to receive state grant funds because it will maintain the voter approved sales & use tax currently charged and [it implemented a youth zero fare policy](#) by Oct. 1 2022, per Section 422 of [SB 5974](#), and so is eligible for Transit Coordination and Regional Mobility Grant programs.
- In 2020, farebox revenue paid for 7.54% of light rail operating expenses and 10.41% of commuter rail operating expenses (Summary of Public Transportation).
- For more information about Sound Transit's tax sources, refer to the *Local Option Taxes for High Capacity Transportation* section on page 163.

# Bicyclists, Pedestrians, and other Active Transportation Users

## BACKGROUND

- The State Active Transportation Plan published in December 2021 reported an increase in pedestrian\* and bicyclist fatalities as a percent of all traffic fatalities during the last ten years. [In 2021](#), 2.5 percent of all traffic crashes involved people who walk, roll, or bike. The same group represents approximately 26.2 percent (155) of all fatal traffic crashes (592) for the year. *\*Under current federal practice, crashes involving users of micromobility devices are reported as pedestrians.*
- From 2010 to 2019, 61 percent of serious injuries and fatalities involving pedestrians or bicyclists occurred on city streets, 27 percent on state routes and 11 percent on county roads. For 2021 these figures were: city streets, 53.5 percent; county roads, 12.7 percent; and state highways, 33.8 percent.
- WSDOT manages a data collection program that includes permanent bicyclist/pedestrian counters around the state and an annual count conducted by volunteers. The first permanent counters were installed in 2016. Data may be viewed at the [WSDOT Bicyclist/Pedestrian Count Portal](#)
- According to the most recent National Household Travel Survey (2017), in Washington State, 12 percent of all trips, 9 percent of commute trips, and 1 percent of all miles traveled were made on foot or by bicycle, primarily in urban areas. Also, 38 percent of Washington residents reported walking or biking for their transportation needs at some point as an alternative to driving and over 85 percent of public transportation users in Washington reported walking or bicycling as their primary means for accessing transit from their homes or places of work. Walking and bicycling use rates are currently increasing at rates that exceed the state's population growth rate.
- The US Bicycle Route System is a developing national network of bicycle routes connecting urban, suburban and rural areas using highway shoulders, roads, trails, and other facilities appropriate for bicycle travel. They are assigned numbers by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) as part of the highway numbering system. Washington State currently has USBR10, 610, and portions of USBR 20, 40, 81, 85, 87, 95, 97, and 281 designated. [WSDOT US Bicycle Route System information](#)
- Bicycles are defined in [RCW 46.04.071](#). Electric-assisted bicycles are defined in [RCW 46.04.169](#) as Class 1, 2 or 3 based on the speed at which the motor ceases to provide assistance. E-assist bicycles are permitted on highways, streets, and sidewalks under the same laws as bicycles except where regulated by local ordinance subject to the requirements of [RCW 46.61.710](#).

## GOVERNANCE

- The [Washington State Active Transportation Plan, 2020 and Beyond](#), provides a framework for future actions that meet federal and state requirements. It emphasizes the Safe System Approach and is consistent with the State Highway Safety Plan and the Governor's goals. This plan fulfills both state and federal requirements to have a Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan ([RCW 47.06.100](#)).
- In 2020, the Legislature passed SB 6493 which merged existing pedestrian and bicyclist safety councils to create the Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Council (ATSC), which is staffed by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC). The ATSC reviews and analyzes data and makes recommendations related to pedestrian/bicyclist fatalities and serious injuries in annual reports to the legislature. [Website](#)

- WSDOT's biking and walking webpages serve as clearinghouses for bicyclist and pedestrian information and resources: [Bicycling in Washington](#) and [Walking in Washington](#).
- The WSDOT Design Manual undergoes annual updates to reflect best practices to address the safety of all roadway users, including [bicyclists and pedestrians](#). The [Traffic Manual](#) was updated in 2021 to incorporate information about speed management and other elements related to active transportation safety and connectivity. A new section of the WSDOT website addresses [guidelines for the Complete Streets directive](#) enacted by the legislature in 2022. Federal and local guidelines also address standards relating to designing for bicyclists and pedestrians. WSDOT maintains [a list of design resources](#).

## FUNDING

- The 2021-23 biennial transportation budget includes \$67.64 million in state and federal funds for the Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety and Safe Routes to Schools grant programs. A [2019 analysis](#) of all Safe Routes projects found a 36.4 percent decrease in bicyclist and pedestrian crashes at project sites.
- The [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#) is the current federal surface transportation authorization program, providing federal funding through 2026. IIJA continues a set-aside of Surface Transportation Block Grant funds (previously the Transportation Alternatives program). Under the IIJA, the calculation for the Transportation alternatives program was changed, so the amount available will fluctuate. The current estimate is \$19 million annually for a wide variety of eligible activities, including bike and pedestrian projects. At legislative direction, Washington sets-aside \$4.1 million a biennium for the Safe Routes to School grant program. The IIJA also creates a number of competitive grant programs that can fund active transportation planning and projects for local jurisdictions as well as WSDOT.
- 0.3 percent of WSDOT's total construction program (about \$2 million/year) and 0.5 percent of city and county gas tax revenue is to be used for non-motorized (active) transportation, particularly where highway and roadway projects sever existing paths ([RCW 47.30.050](#)).
- 75 percent of all money collected by cities and towns for bicycle licenses, fees, and penalties must be placed into the Bicycle Roads Fund ([RCW 35.75.050](#)). As of 2018 no Washington cities currently collect bicycle license fees; cities that have tried this in other states have found that administrative costs exceed revenues.
- WSDOT, county, and city funds may be used for planning, constructing, and maintaining non-motorized facilities ([RCWs 47.30.030](#), [35.75.060](#), [36.82.145](#)).
- The Traffic Safety Commission (WTSC) provides grants to local communities primarily for signage and lighting improvements in school zones; \$500,000 is available annually, funded by state fines on speeders in school zones. The WTSC also administers the Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Account (RCW 46.68.480), which funds grant projects or programs for bicycle, pedestrian, and non-motorist safety improvement. This account is funded by 50 percent of fines collected from violations identified through use of automated traffic safety cameras ([RCW 46.63.170](#)).
- The Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) administers the [Urban and Small City Active Transportation Programs](#) with an average of \$10 million dedicated annually. TIB also administer the [Complete Streets Grant Program](#) created to construct retrofits of urban arterials in commercial and community centers for enhancing safe access for all road users. Grant funding has also assisted with updating active transportation plans. TIB awarded the first grants in 2017. The 2015 Connecting Washington transportation package included \$14.7M/biennium and the 2022 Move Ahead Washington transportation package included \$17.1M/biennium in funding; funds are not codified. The next grant award cycle will be in 2023 or 2024.
- The Recreation and Conservation Office provides [competitive grants for trail projects](#) through the Washington Wildlife and Recreation Program.



- A list of regional, state and federal funding sources, including ones for pedestrian/bicyclist facilities, is maintained on the [Transportation Efficient Communities website](#). WSDOT provides [information on WSDOT grants and technical assistance](#) for cities, counties, tribes, and other transportation partners, including active transportation grants.

Other Relevant Statutes:

- List of [Washington state bicycle laws](#) and [Washington state pedestrian laws](#)
- Rules of the road apply to bicyclists, and they are defined as pedestrians when on a sidewalk or crosswalk ([RCW 46.61.755](#))
- Highway designs shall accommodate paths and trails ([RCW 47.30.020](#)) and highway construction shall not sever or destroy a trail without a replacement ([RCW 47.30.010](#))
- Local and regional comprehensive plans must include a pedestrian and bicycle component, with guidance from regional transportation planning organizations ([RCW 36.70A.070](#) and [47.80.026](#))

Sources:

WSDOT pages on [bicycling](#) and [walking](#)

Washington Traffic Safety Commission Pedestrian and Bicycle Program [page](#)

[Cooper Jones Active Transportation Safety Council](#)

[WSDOT Complete Streets](#)

[State Active Transportation Plan](#)

# Air Transportation

## BACKGROUND

Air transportation in Washington State is comprised of three primary segments: Commercial Passenger Service, Air Cargo and General Aviation. In 2019, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reported more than one million take-offs and landings from FAA-towered airports across Washington State.

- Commercial Passenger Service is by far the largest segment with over 28 million passenger boardings statewide in 2019. Seattle-Tacoma International Airport had 25,001,762 passenger boardings (a 4.07% increase from 2018), ranking 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation. Spokane International Airport ranked 71<sup>st</sup> with 1,944,393 passenger enplanements.
- 2.05 million tons of air cargo flowed through the state's airports in 2020, an increase of 3.5% over 2019. Seattle-Tacoma International (Ranked 18), King County International (Ranked 39), Spokane International (Ranked 61) and Paine Field (Ranked 100) are in the top 100 of airports within the nation for cargo movement.
- General Aviation refers to civil aviation operations other than scheduled air services and military air operations. The [2020 WSDOT Aviation Economic Impact Study](#) identified 17 aviation activities that provide value to users. The majority of these activities fall into the category of general aviation, which includes a wide range of activities, such as business use, flight training, air ambulance, police aviation, aerial firefighting, aerial tours, and parachute drops. Aviation facilities in the Washington State system include a total of 132 [public-use airports](#) serving over 19,000 pilots across the state.

The 2024 Washington Aviation System Plan update is currently underway and classifies each public-use airport in Washington:

- 10 Major
- 20 Regional
- 33 Community
- 36 Local
- 33 General Use

Airport ownership varies across the state:

- 40 City/town
- 35 Port District
- 26 Private
- 15 state-managed
- 12 County
- 3 Joint
- 1 Airport Authority

Sixty-four public-use airports in the state are considered significant to national air transportation and are included in the FAA's National Plan of Integrated Airports System (NPIAS), making them eligible for FAA improvement grants.

The [15 state-managed airports](#) are strategically located to provide aircraft emergency access and fire suppression bases in remote areas of the state. These airports also serve remote communities and are used for recreation.

In Washington State, as of April 2022, there were 10,302 aircraft registered, of which 10,035 are considered general aviation aircraft - including piston-powered airplanes, multi-engine turboprops, business jets, helicopters, and experimental and light sport aircraft.

## GOVERNANCE

- Public-use airports are operated by port districts, cities, counties, and private interests.
- Key programs at WSDOT Aviation include:
  - Airport grants, loans, and capital improvement programs
  - Aviation system and land use planning
  - Administering the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission (CACC) to recommend a location for a new commercial service airport by June 15, 2023
  - Aircraft registration
  - Commercial unpowered aircraft system (UAS) registration
  - Aircraft dealer licensing
  - Aviation emergency services
  - Construction and maintenance of facilities for 15 state-operated airports

## FUNDING

**Funding for WSDOT Aviation Division** (*see States Taxes Chapter for more information about each of the state taxes and fees*):

- State aviation fuel tax: 18 cents per gallon fuel tax, which applies primarily to general aviation aircraft.
- Motor fuel tax transfer: 0.028% of the gross motor fuel tax (less sales tax) (approximately \$770,000 for the 2015-2017 biennium), compensation for unclaimed motor vehicle fuel used in aircraft.
- Aircraft and UAS registration fee: \$15 paid annually by aircraft owners operating in Washington State.
- Aircraft excise tax: Annual rate levied on a sliding scale depending on the type and size of the aircraft.
- FAA Grants - all grants require matching: 90% federal – 10% state/local:
  - State Aviation System Plan projects
  - State's Pavement Management Program
  - Aviation Economic Impact Study
  - Airport Improvement Projects
- Community Aviation Revitalization Board (CARB) loans – Funded with \$10 million in the public use general aviation airport loan revolving account.

### **Funding sources for local airport funding:**

- Dedicated aviation funds: from proceeds of leases, hangar rentals, commercial leases, concessions, etc.
- Major airports (e.g., Seattle-Tacoma and Spokane International) impose landing fees on airlines to cover operations and finance capital improvements made with revenue bonds. In addition, passenger facility charges are assessed at commercial service airports for improvement projects.
- Public-owned facilities use several different funding mechanisms, including user fees (such as landing fees and passenger facility charges), voter-approved property tax levies, interest income, federal and state grants, and bond proceeds. Some ports, counties, and cities appropriate general tax revenues to support their facilities.

### Sources:

- WSDOT Aviation can be found at <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/>
- The [Washington Aviation System Plan \(WASP\)](#) was updated in 2017
- Washington's [2020 WSDOT Aviation Economic Impact Study](#)
- [Airport Investment Solutions](#)
- For more airport data, see FAA's [Airport Program Statistics](#) and [Airport Operations and Ranking Reports](#).

