



# Route Jurisdiction Study

*Joint Transportation  
Committee Meeting*

November 21, 2024



# Objective

- Interim project update
- Looking for feedback

# Presentation Outline

- Project background and status
- Project work products
- Proposed evaluation process improvements
- Initial findings and recommendations
- Next steps

# What are Route Jurisdiction Transfers?

- State routes are defined in statute (RCW 47.17)
- Route jurisdiction transfers (RJT) are used to add or delete a route or route segment to the state system
- The Commission evaluates transfer requests from WSDOT, cities or counties against state route criteria
  - If recommended, the Legislature considers change to RCW 47.17
  - WSDOT executes transfers by assuming control of a local route or turning a state route back to a city or county

# State Routes/ Jurisdiction – Historic Milestones



## 1937:

- RCW 47.28 Washington State Highways Act - All “primary” state highways designated by state legislature, including description, name, and number.

## 1955 to 1984:

- Transportation Commission determines abandonment of state highways and certification process.

## 1977:

- RCW 36.75.090 Highway Commission, renamed Transportation Commission, retains authority to certify (and thereby determine) state routes.

## 1984:

- RCW 36.75.090 Department of Transportation given authority to determine highway abandonment-tempered by WAC.

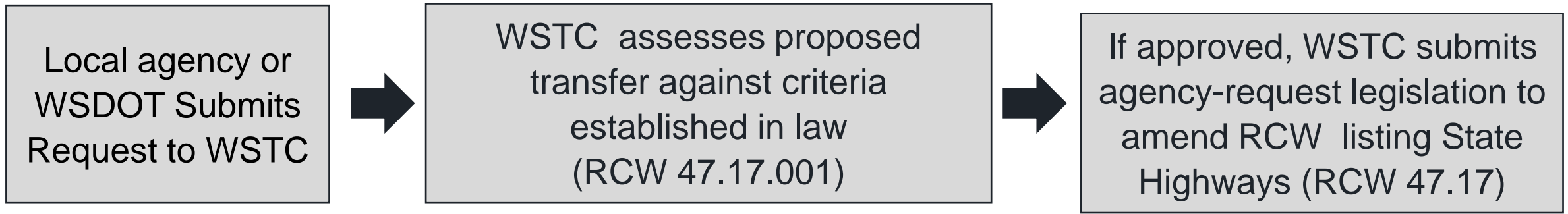
## 1991:

- RCW 47.01 Route Jurisdiction Transfer process established in statute.

## 2006:

- Department of Transportation delegated authority to determine a state highway route.

# WSTC Route Jurisdiction Transfer Process



- **General Route Jurisdiction Transfer Process:**

- An independent technical assessment of the transfer request is conducted by TIB, informing the WSTC's preliminary findings
- Public notice is provided, and input is gathered on preliminary findings
- A Public hearing may be held if there is public concern
- Based upon final determinations, the WSTC acts and if approved, agency request legislation is submitted in the next legislative session

- **In assessing an RJT request, criteria in statute (RCW 47.17):**

- **Urban routes** are those that are in an urban area, serve as principal arterials carrying regional traffic, or connect two state highways, part of interstate or US route
- **Rural routes** are those that serve as an international border crossing or as an integrated system of roads, part of interstate or US route

# Summary of Route Jurisdiction Study Budget Proviso

The Route Jurisdiction Study will:

- Determine if changes are needed in jurisdictional assignment between the state, county, and city road systems
- Review current criteria used to define the state highway system to determine whether changes are appropriate
- Submit a report of study findings and recommendations to the transportation committees of the legislature by July 1, 2025

# Partner's Guide the Study

- **Steering Committee Members:**

- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)
- Transportation Improvement Board (TIB)
- Washington State County Road Administration Board (CRAB)
- Association of Washington Cities (AWC)
- Washington Association of County Engineers (WSACE)

- **Engagement activities to date:**

- WSACE Meeting Brief
- Presentations to Metropolitan Planning Association Coordinating Committee and Tribal Transportation Planning Organizations
- Staff interviews with cities currently proposing jurisdiction transfers
- Upcoming meetings for association members and tribal agencies in January 2025

# Status of Work - Overview

## Progress to Date:

- ✓ Route Jurisdiction History and Context
- ✓ Legal and Policy Review
- ✓ Route Jurisdiction Transfers in Peer States
- ✓ Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Assessment
- ✓ Approach to Transfer Review Process and Evaluation

## Still in Progress:

- ❖ Documentation for Evaluation Method
- ❖ Final Project Report

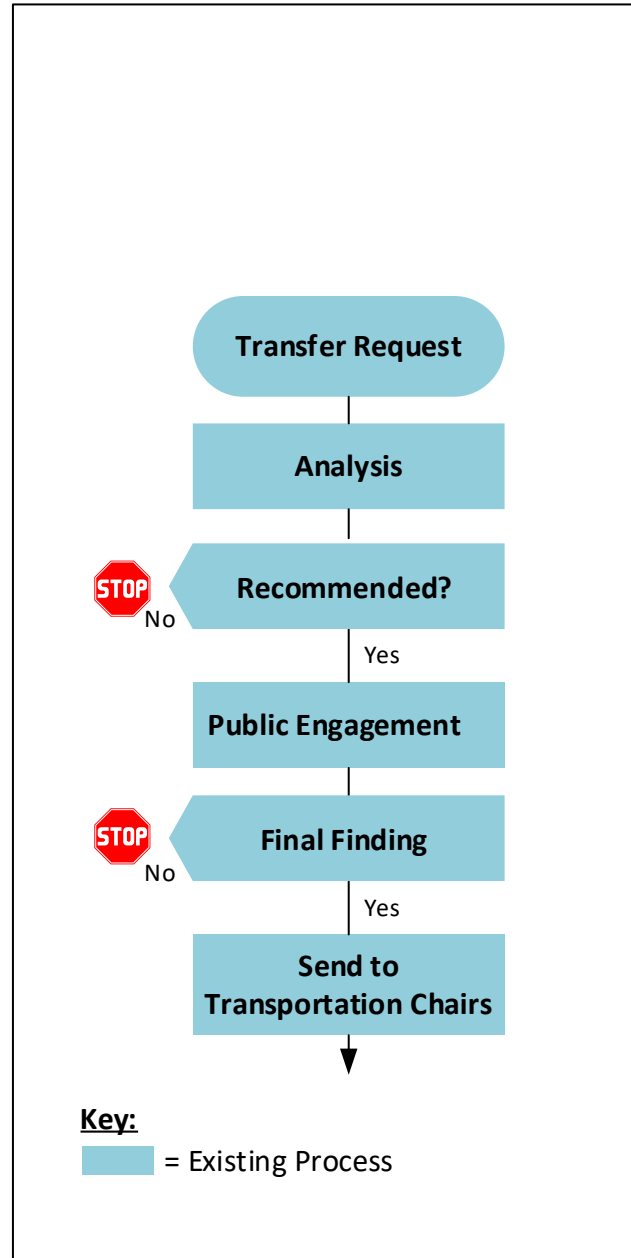


# Preliminary Identification of RJT Process Improvements

# Feedback from Agencies and Associations

- The process works when there is agreement.
- Lack of agreement is often due to cost and condition issues.
  - If routes transfer, revenue should be reallocated.
  - State of good repair should be considered before transfer.
  - Need to consider implementation or financial capacity of different agencies.
- Criteria include poorly defined terms and don't support clear yes-or-no decisions.
- Engage with underserved communities early so they can decide when in the process to be engaged.

# Existing Process



# Process Issues and Opportunities

## Issues:

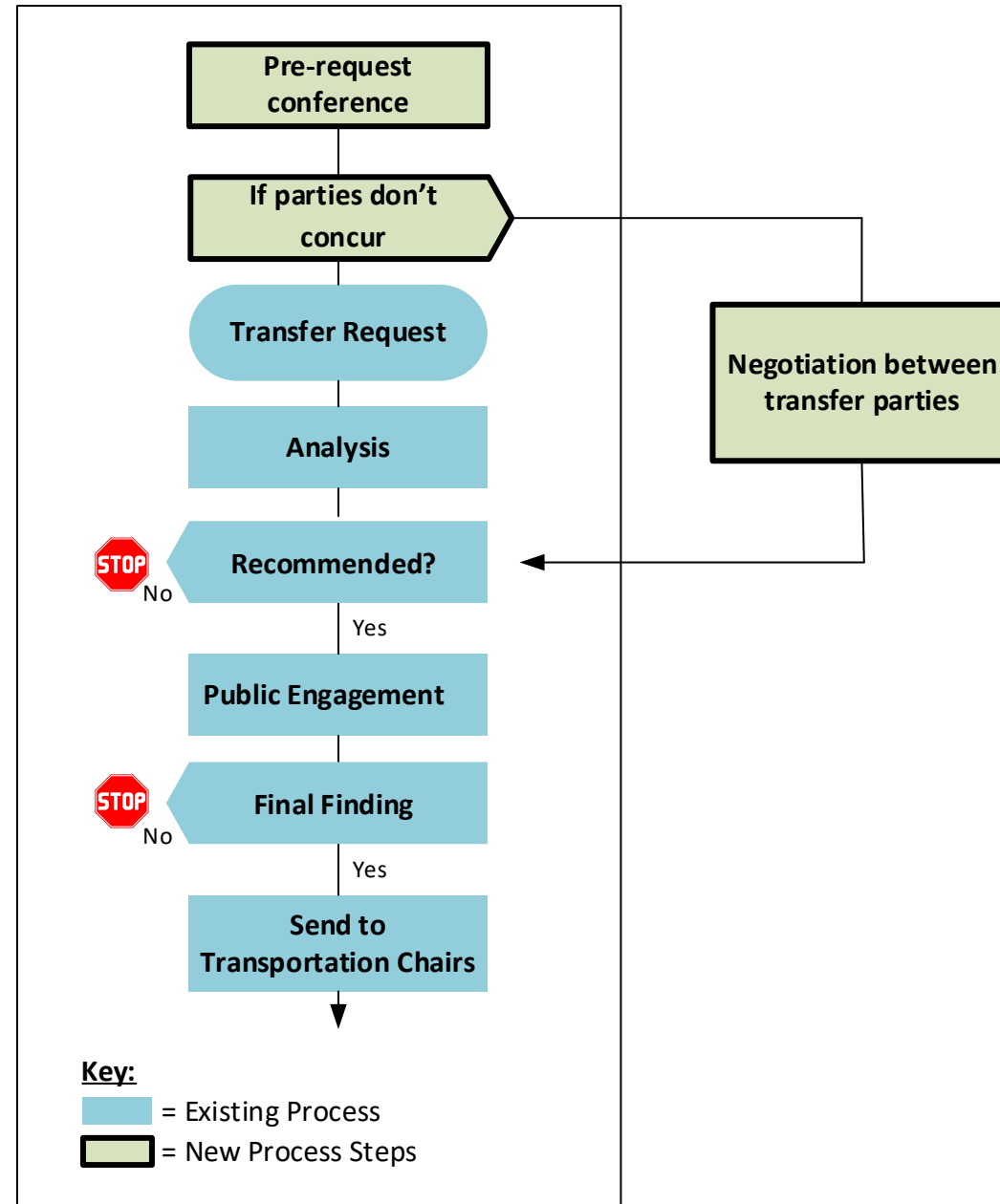
- Criteria for state routes includes ambiguous terms
- Analysis doesn't address costs or transfer conditions
- Process doesn't encourage problem solving

## Opportunities for improvement:

- Assess agreement up front
- Engage parties in problem-solving
- Streamline and simplify when parties agree
- Clarify analysis information and terms
- Address cost and condition issues directly between transfer parties

# Proposed Process Improvements

- Pre-request meeting
- In parallel, separate concurrent negotiation over costs and conditions



# Improving the RJT Evaluation Process

# Current criteria has ambiguous terms

A route should be designated as a state route if it's:

- On the interstate system or is a numbered US route
- **A rural highway** that's part of an **integrated system** of roads and:
  - Contains an international border crossing open 12+ hours/day
  - Carries 300,00+ tons annually and provides **primary access** to a rural port or intermodal freight terminal
  - Provides a **major cross-connection** between existing state highways
  - Connects to **population center** of 1000+, or "an **area or aggregation of areas** having a **population equivalency** of one thousand or more, such as, but not limited to, recreation areas, military installations, and so forth," or a **major commercial-industrial terminal** in a rural area with a **population equivalency** of one thousand or greater
  - Connects to a county seat
  - Is designated as a scenic and recreational highway

# Current criteria has ambiguous terms

- **An urban highway** and:

- Is an urban extension of a rural state highway into or through an urban area and is necessary to form an **integrated system** of state highways”
- Is a connecting link between two state highways and serves **regionally oriented through traffic** in **urbanized areas with a population of fifty thousand or greater**, or is a spur that serves **regionally oriented traffic** in urbanized areas.”



# Developing Data-driven Evaluation Factors and Scoring System

- Characteristics of existing state routes reveal legislative intent for defining state routes
- Used the data generated by all 180 state routes as a guide for developing evaluation factors
  - Identified data sources
  - Identified natural breakpoints in the data
- Assigned a score of High, Medium, or Low alignment with state highway indicators

# Proposed Evaluation Factors

Objective	Evaluation Factor
Connectivity	Cities/Census Designated Places
	County Seats
	Transportation Hubs
	State Facilities
	Parks & Rec
	Tribal Access
	Agricultural Access
Function	Scenic Byway
	HSS
	NHS
	Freight Route
	Max AADT (at any point on route)
Continuity	Border Crossing
	Continuity with other state routes

# Evaluation Worksheet Example

Transfer Request Evaluation Summary			
<b>Segment requested for transfer:</b> SR 501 between MP 16.91 and MP 19.88			
<b>Requested action:</b> Transfer from WSDOT to Ridgefield			
<b>LOCATION OF SEGMENT REQUESTED FOR TRANSFER</b>			
<b>Cross Street or Landmark:</b>			
City of Vancouver	Blurock Landing	Round Lake	City of Ridgefield
MP: 0.61	MP: 7.23	MP: 10.13	MP: 19.88
EVALUATION FACTORS	Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3
<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>			
<b>NUMBER OF CITIES CONNECTED</b>	High	Low	High
TRANSPORT HUB	High	Low	Low
STATE FACILITIES	Low	Low	Low
PARKS AND REC	Low	Low	Low
<b>COUNTY SEAT(S)</b>	High	Low	Low
<b>TRIBAL SEAT OF GOVERNMENT</b>	Low	Low	Low
TRIBAL RESERVATION ACCESS	Low	Low	Low
<b>AGRICULTURAL ACCESS</b>	Medium	High	Medium
<b>FUNCTION</b>			
SCENIC BYWAY	High	Low	Low
HSS	High	Low	Low
NHS	High	Low	Low
<b>FREIGHT</b>	Medium	Medium	Medium
<b>MAX AADT</b>	High	Low	High
<b>CONTINUITY</b>			
<b>BORDER CROSSINGS</b>	Low	Low	Low
<b>CONNECTIONS TO OTHER ROUTES</b>	High	Low	High
<i>Bolded factors indicate higher weight in roll-up scores below</i>			
SUMMARY	Segment 1	Segment 2	Segment 3
<b>OVERALL RANKINGS*</b>			
<b>CONNECTIVITY</b>	High	Low	Medium
<b>FUNCTION</b>	High	Low	Low
<b>CONTINUITY</b>	High	Low	High
* Rankings indicate how the segment compares to current state routes in each category: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High = Top third of scores (strong state route characteristics)</li> <li>• Medium = Middle third of scores</li> <li>• Low = Lowest third of scores (weak state route characteristics)</li> </ul>			

# General Decision Guidance for the WSTC

## Evaluation Scores

- High scores indicate transfer segment aligns with state highway objectives
- Low scores indicate transfer segment does not align with state highway objectives

## Additional Considerations

- Climate Sensitivity
- Equity
- Sole Connection to a Place
- Route or Network Discontinuities
- Duplicate Connections

# Additional Route Transfer Considerations

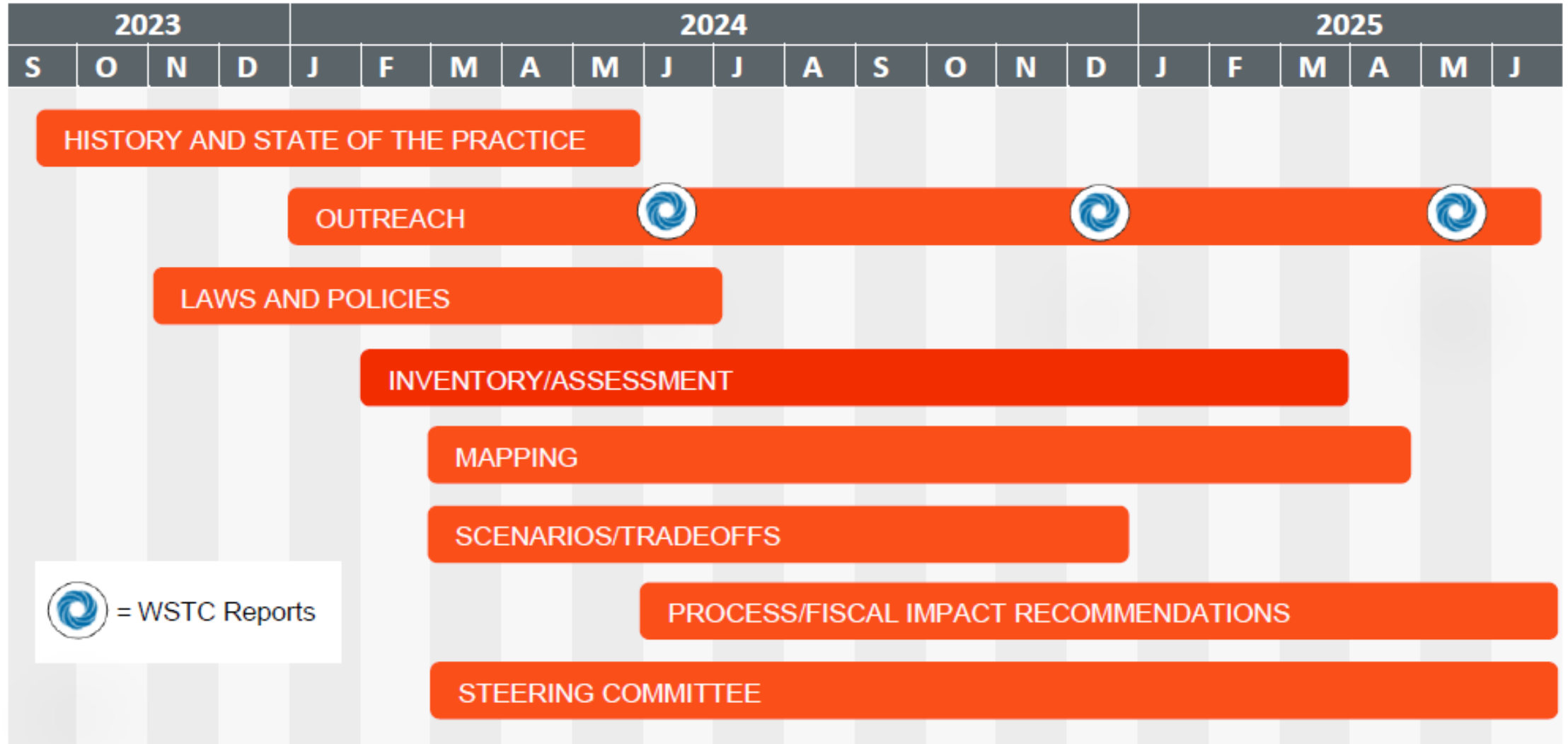
Climate Sensitivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which agency can best prevent, maintain, and restore damage?</li><li>• Ensure owner capacity to establish resiliency</li></ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid additional burden</li><li>• Ensure state of good repair</li><li>• Conduct additional targeted outreach</li><li>• Determine and act in communities' best interest</li></ul>
Sole Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid removing sole connections</li><li>• Maintain access to cities, county seats, and Tribal government centers</li></ul>
Discontinuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avoid gaps in state network</li><li>• Evaluate additional transfer segments if necessary</li></ul>
Duplication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Maintain a continuous, concise network</li><li>• Avoid unnecessary duplication in the same corridors</li></ul>

# Initial Findings and Next Steps

# Need for changes in Jurisdiction

- There is no urgency for realigning ownership between the state, county, and city road systems
- Heard strong concern this project would recommend state routes for transfer to local jurisdictions
  - Both state and local governments are concerned about taking on new responsibilities in a constrained funding environment

# Route Jurisdiction Study Schedule





# Next Steps

- Draft final Project Report - First DRAFT expected in February
- Present Draft Report to Transportation Commission in March
- Submit final report to Legislature by July 1, 2025

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