

Washington State Needs a Strategic Plan for its Freight Systems

Strategic Investments Are Critical

The value and volume of goods moving in Washington's freight systems is huge and growing. Globalization, competitive industry trends, and new technologies are pushing freight volumes up twice as fast as Washington's overall population and traffic growth. Washington's economic future requires that we address freight constraints in all areas. The Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) proposes several strategic investments necessary to increase the state's economic vitality, improve our marketplace competitiveness, and ensure our resiliency:

- Address freight constraints in the Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor:
 - ◊ Continuously improve WSDOT's Traffic Management System and Incident Response Program.
 - ◊ Complete missing links in the major north-south freight corridor system: Highway 167 to I-5; Highway 167 and Highway 18; Highway 509 to I-5; complete Highway 18 to I-90.
 - ◊ Replace failing structures: Alaskan Way Viaduct and I-5 Columbia River Bridge.
- Identify, establish, and fund a statewide all-weather county road system.
- Complete the statewide Commercial Vehicle Information System Network (CVISN)/Weigh-In-Motion system.
- Create fuel pipeline capacity and distribution alternatives to meet long-term demand.
- Support growth in main line rail capacity and port-rail connections and preserve rail yards in metro areas.
- Support an ongoing, appropriate level of funding for regional freight projects that advance economic development.
- Maintain and improve the Columbia-Snake River barge system.



Seven-step plan for building a strategic freight system plan

1. Quantify freight customer requirements

The first step in building a strategic freight plan requires determining freight needs of industry sectors, current freight system deficits, and economic growth opportunities through industry surveys and freight mobility research.

2. Identify existing performance gaps

Existing performance gaps include bottlenecks, chokepoints, accident locations, capacity constraints, and highway deficits and priorities.

3. Get good data

Very little system-wide data exists to inform decision makers about the freight systems in Washington State, and what does exist is not linked and shared among stakeholders.

4. Predict future freight demand

Industry sector and population growth are good predictors of truck trip growth across the state. WSDOT's Freight Systems Division is analyzing freight-dependent sectors and regions to estimate freight demand.

5. Value freight investments

WSDOT's Freight Systems Division is working with the University of Washington, Washington State University, and University of California Los Angeles' national Center for Risk and Economic Analysis of Terrorism Events (CREATE) center to develop tools that will estimate economic output.

6. Develop solution proposals

WSDOT's Freight Systems Division is working with partners to develop solutions.

7. Prioritize solutions based on their ability to meet the state's goals

Investment priorities can be judged on how they meet the state's goals of increased economic growth for the state's regions and citizens, efficient use of public funds, and the preservation of the citizen's quality of life.

Achievements Made in the Freight Systems Strategic Plan

Freight project highlights

Here are some examples of the many freight-related projects in Washington that have been funded, are underway, or have been completed:

Freight Transportation Resiliency Study

Phase I of this study allows the state to appropriately consider the requirements of the freight transportation system users and the state economy, when responding to disruptions to the transportation system.

I-5 Columbia River Crossing

The I-5 Columbia River Crossing project is a bridge, transit, and highway improvement project for I-5 between Vancouver and Portland, which will address the congestion, mobility, and safety problems on I-5 between SR 500 in Vancouver and Columbia Boulevard in Portland.

I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East

This project will improve I-90 by providing a safer, more efficient 6-lane interstate from Hyak to Easton and will reduce avalanche closures, increase capacity, stabilize slopes, and enhance freight mobility.

Rail Bank & Emergent Freight Rail Assistance

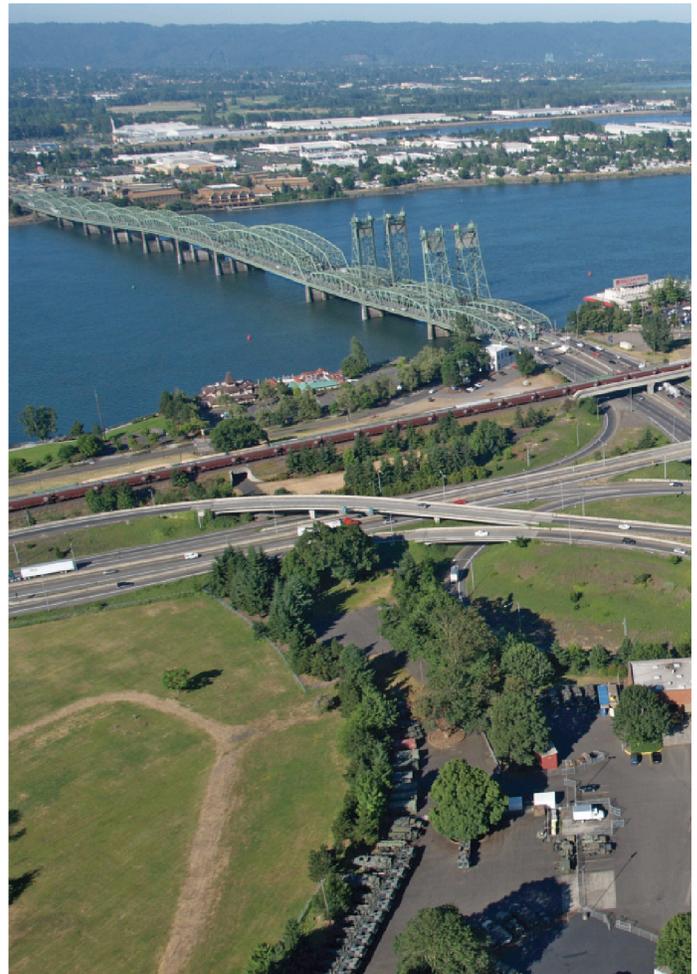
The Emergent Freight Rail Assistance provides funding for freight rail capital projects and the Rail Bank provides loans for smaller freight rail capital projects. Both programs are products of a regional economic investment by the legislature.

SR 518 Sea-Tac Airport to I-5/I-405 Interchange

The SR 518 Sea-Tac Airport to I-5/I-405 Interchange Project improves existing mobility and safety, and accommodates projected airport traffic by adding a third eastbound lane on SR 518 between the North Airport Expressway and the I-5/I-405 Interchange.

National Recognition for Washington State's Strategic Plan for Freight Systems

WSDOT's Freight Systems Division was recognized in 2006 by the Federal Highway Administration and American Planning Association for the development of the "Washington Transportation Plan Update: Moving Freight" strategic plan. This award recognizes outstanding initiatives across the country that involve innovation, community and public involvement, partnerships, demonstrated results, and effectiveness. The Freight Systems Division was recognized with an "Honorable Mention" award, which gave them the distinction of being ranked second in the nation in transportation planning excellence.



I-5 bridge crossing Columbia River at Vancouver to Portland, OR.