

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION



Summary

Consistent funding and service levels for demand response service by both transit agencies and other providers need to be addressed. Lack of consistent funding acts as a barrier to efficient coordinated transportation service.

The state should make it a priority to clarify its role and objectives in public transportation particularly as it relates to:

- Support for the development and preservation of park and ride lots
- Coordinating and supporting transit connections across jurisdictional boundaries within region
- Providing additional transit service to address congestion in corridors
- Coordinated transportation and defining department objectives in transportation access needs.
- The state needs to ensure preservation of the systems they own or manage that support transit, including HOV facilities and state-owned park and ride lots.
- Sustained system efficiency is dependent upon the inclusion of transit/TDM supportive features in highway project planning and corridor development. The department should pursue policies that more fully tap the potential of operational strategies to improve system efficiency, and integrate operational strategies with expansion plans.
- Traffic signal prioritization, queue jumps, adequate HOV capacity, and direct access ramps are traffic flow improvements that provide public transportation significant contribution to transit service effectiveness. Pricing strategies for the state highway system could contribute to the realization of transit efficiencies through maximized system use.



Where basic transportation services are indispensable for all citizens' societal engagement, how is public transportation interwoven into the fiber of the state transportation system?

Washington's Transportation Plan (WTP) is identifying key issues for developing an efficient transportation system that enhances the efficiency of the highway system. Public transportation complements this program.

Therefore, it is in the state's interest to ensure the capital resources of the public transportation system are preserved and maintained. Preserving the current public transportation vehicle fleet and facilities is paramount to an effective state transportation system. Even, maintaining current service levels requires increased investment to keep pace with population growth.

There are currently no state policies in effect that provide the necessary resources for preserving our existing system.

Washington's Public Transportation System

There are 26 transit systems currently operating in Washington State:

- 19 Public Transportation Benefit Areas
- One County Transportation Authority
- One County Operated System
- One Unincorporated Transit Benefit Area
- Three City Systems
- One Regional Transportation Authority

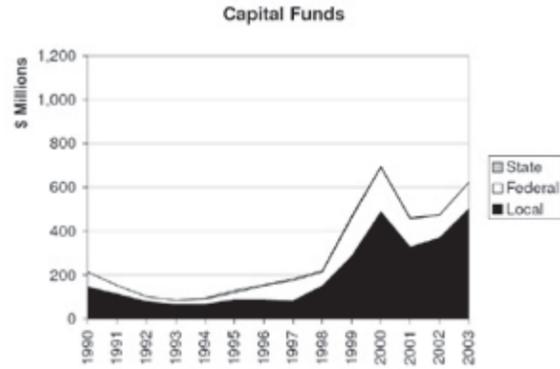
* A PBTA as defined by RCW 36.57A is a municipal corporation of the state that may be less than city or countywide, or include more than one county.

According to the Washington State Department of Transportation's Summary of Public Transportation, the state public transportation system is comprised of 5,600 vehicles, 300 park and ride lots, 75 transit centers and 102 maintenance facilities. These which serve over 155 million passengers annually.

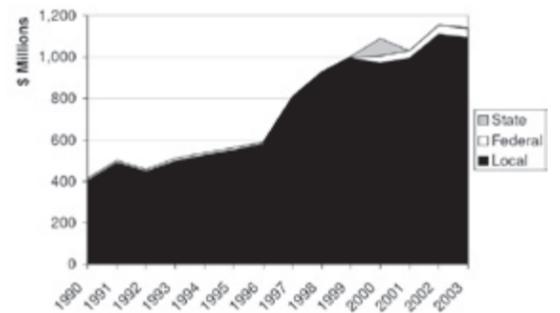
Cities, counties, or PTBAs may levy local sales and use taxes up to 0.9 percent for transit programs. Local sales taxes and increases must be voter approved. Transit systems no longer receive matching motor vehicle excise tax (MVET) distributions as of January 1, 2000. Since that time, 14 transit systems approved local sales tax increases to mitigate the lost revenue.

The two charts below illustrate the funding derived from local, state and federal sources.

Capital funds support vehicle acquisition, maintenance and facilities.



Operating funds support fixed routes, deviated routes, demand



response service, vanpools and ridesharing.

The majority of transit agencies provide fixed route and demand response service (including complementary paratransit, Americans with Disabilities Act service), vanpool and rideshare services and programs, and park and ride facilities.

Coordination

WSDOT works closely with transit systems, local jurisdictions and non-profit agencies to administer state and federal funds for the following programs:

- ParaTransit/Special Needs grants to transit and non-profit agencies
- Rural Mobility grants communities underserved or not served by transit service in rural areas
- Vanpool grants for transit to expand their programs
- Commute trip reduction program and performance grants
- Business and Occupational tax credit for private businesses that invest their own funds in reducing drive-alone commuting

In addition, WSDOT distributes federal funds through:

- Rural Public Transportation grants
- Intercity Bus grants
- Elderly and Persons with Disabilities grants
- Job Access and Reverse Commute (JARC) grants

In 2003, WSDOT administered state and federal grant funds for 84 vehicle purchases and 1.2 million trips for people with special transportation needs and individuals living in rural areas.

Transportation Demand Management

Park and Ride Facilities

Park and ride lots are integral to a multimodal system. According to the WSDOT Summary of Public Transportation there are 294 park and ride lots statewide with more than 35,000 parking stalls with WSDOT owning 1/3 of the park and ride facilities. The lots create an artificial density that supports transit, vanpool and carpool uses, and make transit more efficient by reducing the number of transit stops.

Vanpools

Washington State has the largest public vanpool program in the country. There are approximately 1,389 vans operating in the Puget Sound region and statewide over 1,650 vehicles statewide each workday. Additional vanpool vehicles are provided and used by nonprofit groups, employers and private individuals.

Commute Trip Reduction

The goals of the CTR Program are to reduce traffic congestion, air pollution, and fuel consumption by working with local jurisdictions and major employers to reduce drive-alone commuting. Nearly 1,100 worksites in Washington State participate in the WSDOT program.

Emerging Directions

Public Transportation provides two primary transportation functions: congestion relief through service, and mobility through geographic span of service.

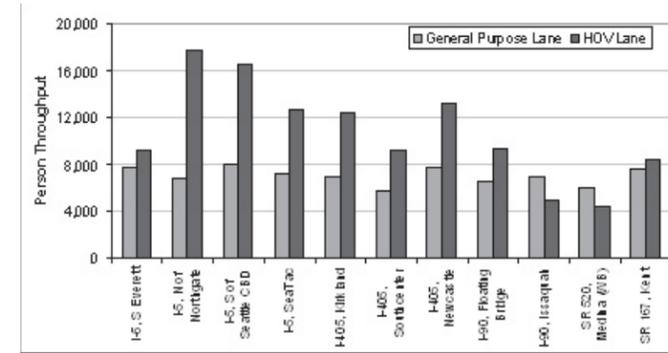
Congestion Relief Through Public Transportation

- Conserving travel with high occupancy vehicles and facilities contributes to an efficient transportation system.
- Increased person throughput with limited vehicle capacity requires investments in transit and high occupancy investments. Although in general HOV lanes move fewer vehicles, they tend to move more people. HOV's are more efficient; for example, a 40-foot bus carries 20-40 times as many people per vehicle as an auto.

General Purpose and HOV Lane Person Throughput 2002 PM Peak Direction

As illustrated in the following chart, most HOV lanes are moving

more people than General Purpose lanes. HOV lanes provide transit a reliable travel time that encourages ridership. The HOV lane mode choice by vehicles and people is:



People Moved in General Purpose and HOV lanes (2002) PM Peak Period Peak Direction

While transit buses account for only 3% of the total vehicles on the HOV system, they move 15% of the people in the lane.

Mode Choice	% of Vehicles	% of People
Buses	3%	15%
Vanpools	2%	6%
Carpools	89%	72%
Other	6%	7%

Emerging Strategies

- HOV lanes on freeways, with direct access ramps
- Arterial HOV lanes in congested locations
- HOV bypasses and queue jumps
- Transit Signal Prioritization
- Trip Planner – online transit trip planning system
- ITS: Automated Vehicle Locators and Smart Cards

Providing fast reliable travel time is key to maintaining and attracting transit riders. Incentives to encourage higher occupancy could increase person throughput on the existing highway system.

Efficiency Tools

- ITS Automated Vehicle Locator
- 511 Traveler Information
- Transit Transponder use
- Interagency coordination of transit service
- Transit Signal Prioritization
- Queue jumps for transit buses
- Coordinated dispatch/radio equipment
- Trip Planner – online transit trip planning system
- Smart Cards
- Biodiesel Facilities and Hybrid Bus Fleet provide environmental efficiencies

Mobility Through Geographic Span of Service

Washington state citizens require access to transportation services for basic necessities, or activities enhancing the quality of their lives. Not all people have access to an automobile or the ability to drive and face increasing isolation. This subject is further discussed in the Transportation Access folio.

While critically important to the state network, providing mobility options to suburban areas, rural communities and underserved locations are financially and logistically challenging for both rural and urban transit systems.

Rural Public Transportation systems maintain a greater reliance on state and federal funding for capital and operational services. This is due in large part to a lower local share per capita as well the challenging recovery for smaller transit agencies following the discontinuation of MVET revenue. A number of rural transit agencies may have the ability to apply a higher tax rate. However, many are unable to secure local support in the face of competing local revenue needs for basic general services, like fire fighting and criminal justice.

This funding constriction is further exacerbated by the need for asset preservation. Statewide, vehicle replacement costs total over \$1 billion and rural transit agencies may be unable to find the local support needed for replacement of their existing fleets.

Emerging Use of Technology Options

Addition capital investments are projected for emerging modal technologies such as bus rapid transit, light rail, monorail and transit oriented development. Several transit agencies are working on implementation plans and more are developing plans across the state to incorporate these technologies.