



Executive Summary

Washington State's transportation system connects us to our families, friends, neighbors, jobs, and communities. Transportation is also the key to economic development, connecting businesses with customers and suppliers. Washington citizens live and work in the most trade-dependent state in the country, and our transportation system links Washington to the global economy.

This complex infrastructure network supports a variety of modes, from ferries and highways, to trains, buses, and barges. Individuals, businesses and governments—from counties and cities to ports, transit agencies, and tribal nations—all own and operate parts of our state's transportation system. Local streets, roads, and sidewalks are the starting and ending points of most trips.

20-Year Transportation Vision

Washington's transportation system should serve our citizens' safety and mobility, the state's economic productivity, our communities' livability, and our ecosystem's viability.

Moving away from the historical practice of using gas tax revenue and attempting to build our way out of congestion, this 20-year plan warns that as we grow, we must choose strategies to manage growth and strategically invest to better move people and goods.

Using current information and data, the Washington Transportation Plan identifies a combined need of \$67 billion of transportation investments, both funded and unfunded. These investments over the next 20 years will build our state's economy, meet citizen's social and recreational needs, and enhance personal health and safety.

Even after the recent significant transportation infrastructure investments supported by voters, the Governor, and the Legislature, this plan projects an estimated \$38 billion shortfall in meeting the identified \$67 billion need (2005 dollars). Given the size of this unmet need, the WTP builds on three key findings to identify investment guidelines that set priorities for future spending and improvements statewide.

The core principle of the investment guidelines is that the existing system cannot be allowed to deteriorate. Investment in our existing transportation facilities is the cornerstone for improved safety, economic vitality, mobility, and personal and environmental health. We must build on the strong safety record we have achieved by making strategic investments on public roadways.

Policy:

A principle or course of action chosen to guide decision making.

Plan:

A method or scheme for achieving or doing something.

Funding and Investment Strategy

Current funding for the 20-year WTP period provides almost \$29 billion dollars for transportation investment. The 2003 (Nickel) funding package raises \$4.7 billion over 10 years and the 2005 Transportation Partnership Act raises \$9 billion over 16 years. Despite this significant investment, this Plan projects nearly \$38 billion (2005 dollars) in unfunded need.

Recognizing the difficulty of securing this much revenue, the Transportation Commission has taken a strategic approach to future investment by establishing guiding principles for investments in current and future facilities. These investment guidelines are meant to direct funding and resources toward programs and investments that yield the greatest benefits.

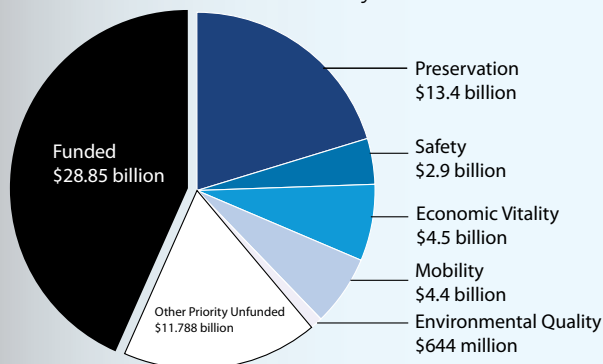
Investment Guidelines

1. **Preservation**—Preserve and extend prior investments in existing transportation facilities and the services they provide to people and commerce.
2. **Safety**—Target construction projects, enforcement, and education to save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property.
3. **Economic Vitality**—Improve freight movement and support economic sectors that rely on the transportation system, such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing.
4. **Mobility**—Facilitate movement of people and goods to contribute to a strong economy and a better quality of life for citizens.
5. **Environmental Quality and Health**—Bring benefits to the environment and our citizens' health by improving the existing transportation infrastructure.

20-Year Transportation Investment Needs

\$67 Billion (2005 dollars)

*Unfunded High Priorities
By Investment Guideline*



This plan also sets the stage for incorporating more data and a more flexible, adaptive approach toward projecting and meeting future needs. Over the last year, major changes unfolding in the global economy have significantly raised construction costs and gas prices, causing changes in travel and purchasing decisions. Early reactions by individuals, businesses, and governments to the increased energy costs and global warming indicate lower gas tax revenues over time. The rapid cost escalation of construction materials and fuel, occurring simultaneously with accelerated efforts to reduce reliance on oil-based transportation fuels, serves to remind us that the assumptions underlying transportation planning and revenue sources over the next 20 years are volatile and uncertain, requiring frequent re-examination.

Key Findings

The following key findings, derived from data review and analysis were confirmed during the public outreach process.

Mobility

The mobility of people and goods is fundamental to the functioning of society. Investment must shift from moving vehicles to moving people and products. To provide acceptable mobility in a society that is increasing in population and tied closely to the global economy, transportation systems require constant and repeated attention to operations, maintenance, and investment.

Priorities

The amount of additional investment, on top of existing resources, required to meet the state's projected needs is nearly \$38 billion in the next 20 years. Because that entire amount is unlikely to be available at one time, priorities must be established. First, the existing system cannot be allowed to deteriorate. Accordingly, preservation continues to be the first order of business. Second, we should build on the strong safety record we have achieved. Finally, improvements also are needed to enhance the state's economic vitality, its general mobility, the health of its citizens, and the environment in which they live, work, and play.

Innovative Solutions

There are limits to how much revenue can be raised through the gas tax. Innovative technological, operational, and planning solutions can lower costs, target revenue generation, and impact strategic planning for the future. Implementing the latest technologies has potential to yield benefits for the application of user fees, availability of optional transportation modes, and realizing efficiencies in operating the existing transportation system. Innovation should also facilitate readily available alternative transportation, including bicycles and walking, which conserve energy and contribute to personal health.

Key Policy Recommendations

In addition to the investment guidelines, the Transportation Commission makes several policy recommendations in various areas. Additional details on these and other policy recommendations can be found in the main body of the plan.

Funding

- Identify strategies and methods to provide sustainable revenue sources for transportation needs, including tolling and innovative approaches.
- Identify innovative financing approaches aimed at meeting the long-term capital investment needs of the ferry system.
- Develop a policy that defines the state's role and level of investment in public transportation.

Land Use and Transportation

- Improve concurrency between transportation and land use decisions to ensure complementary development of land with transportation infrastructure.
- Clarify the state and local responsibility and options for addressing highway congestion that are driven by local permitting decisions.

Safety

Identify cost effective ways in which the state and local agencies responsible for safety on highways, streets, and roads can coordinate their efforts to achieve statewide safety goals in a comprehensive manner.

Reduce Reliance on Fossil Fuels

- Support development and implementation of a state policy on alternative fuel development and use which could include the identification of possible regulatory and tax structures.
- Identify opportunities and strategies for addressing the growing demand for alternative fuels and their benefits to the environment.

Emergency Preparedness

Clarify the role of state and local governments in providing personal mobility and freight service in the event of a major disruption to the transportation system or in case of catastrophic events.

Transportation and the Economy

- Measure the economic impacts and benefits of making transportation investments in the different regions and economies of the state.
- Define the state's role in making these investments, considering cost and benefit trade-offs.
- Identify the transportation system elements that are critical to maintaining and improving Washington State's global competitiveness.

Rural Economic Vitality

- Improve farm-to-market access by determining strategic investments in rail.
- Define the state's role in establishing and funding a year-round, statewide, core all-weather road system in rural areas.

The Future—Where do we go from here?

The WTP recognizes that due to funding limitations, it is not possible to fund all transportation needs. This plan is a new direction and foundation for the future which prioritizes how investments in Washington's transportation system are to be made, without a project list.

Working Together

The next, most crucial step toward a better transportation future requires a shift in our state's transportation policy framework. Because we cannot build our way out of congestion given the financial cost and the land constraints, we must find alternative ways to accommodate growth. The state, cities, counties, tribes, ports, and transit agencies must coordinate and work as partners to innovatively and strategically invest in improvements that will make the system more efficient and more effective.

Corridor efficiencies, safer county roadways, connectivity between modes, improved port access, expansion of our Intelligent Transportation System network, congestion management, and high capacity transit are pieces of the solution. There is no silver bullet to the overall problem.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) of 1990 was intended to coordinate growth and public services like transportation. Although the state as a whole has begun to do this and to address congestion more effectively, there remains much to learn about whether the GMA's mix of incentives and disincentives and its concurrency requirements go far enough in affecting individual actions that impact our transportation system. Improving the mobility of people and goods will require more serious and focused efforts to create strategic partnerships between government and business to address land use and the everyday decisions people make about where to work, live, and recreate.

An example of a new partnership is the creation of a regional transportation investment district (RTID) with the specific task of developing a proposal for improving transportation in Snohomish, King, and Pierce counties. Currently, RTID and Sound Transit are working together on a joint roads-transit package that focuses on the most highly congested corridors, with a plan to submit the package at the 2007 general election. The RTID/Sound Transit effort could provide a model for other partnerships across the state, using transportation benefit district authority or other approaches.

Several major studies, including the Commission's tolling and rail studies, the Joint Transportation Committee's Ferry Finance Study, the Growth Management Act Concurrency Analysis, and the Multimodal Concurrency Study also will help guide future direction for strategic transportation investment and coordination among the transportation providers.

Current state funding for investment offers very little beyond the current Nickel Package and Transportation Partnership Act to deliver new projects. In the near future, the state must tackle how to innovatively address funding and financing opportunities and challenges. These include increased usage of congestion pricing and tolling to respond to citizens' tax concerns; public and private investment in rail and multiple transportation modes; revenue slippage due to use of alternative fuel sources; and the overall uncertainty of system demands and revenues. Stronger and more consistent partnerships among levels of government and the private sector are needed to define and deliver transportation improvements and operations.

Implementing the WTP

Planning and implementation are on-going and continuous processes. Just as the development of the WTP was a collaboration between the Transportation Commission and the Washington State Department of Transportation, implementation will require a similar cooperative effort. As the projects currently underway move forward and the investment priorities are implemented, future planning efforts will build on what we learn about system operations, the pace and challenges of global warming, and the opportunities and limitations of different travel modes such as rail, bike, and transit. The Commission expects to adjust plans, priorities, and investment strategies over time as innovative technologies and new funding and financing tools are tested and evaluated. This ongoing, data-driven, and adaptive approach to transportation should help effectively improve mobility, connectivity, and safety in the future.



For more detail, see the full Washington Transportation Plan at: www.wstc.wa.gov

or call: **Washington State Transportation Commission**
360-705-7070.