

Washington State Rail Plan

Technical Note 1: Vision and Goals

Final Report

prepared for

Washington State Department of Transportation

prepared by

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

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Introduction

The State Rail Plan builds on numerous previous statewide and regional transportation plans. WSDOT presently has vision and goals attached to numerous other transportation related documents. These include:

- Washington State 2010-2030 Freight Rail Plan.
- 2007-2026 Washington Transportation Plan.
- Statewide Rail Capacity and System Needs Study.
- Sound Transit Regional Transit Long-Range Plan.
- Transportation System Policy Goals outlined in the Revised Code of Washington State Statutes.

The set of vision, goals, and objectives presented in this technical note complements and recognizes these efforts.

Vision

Most rail plans present a long-term vision, while some have both a short- and long-term vision. Common approaches include:

- A single unified vision for freight and passenger rail.
- Separate visions for freight and passenger rail.
- A hybrid with a combined statewide rail vision and more detailed separate visions for freight and passenger rail.

Table 1 Other Statewide Vision Statements

Plan	Vision
Washington State 2010-2030 Freight Rail Plan	<p>The Washington State freight rail system is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reliable.• Cost effective.• Energy efficient.• Environmentally friendly transportation mode for domestic and international cargo deliveries. <p>As a critical part of Washington’s multimodal transportation system, the rail system leverages intermodal connections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To provide a seamless system for cargo deliveries to customers.• To improve the mobility of people and goods.• To support Washington’s economy by creating and sustaining family-wage jobs and livable communities.

Plan	Vision
2007-2026 Washington Transportation Plan	Washington's transportation system should serve our citizens' safety and mobility, the state's economic productivity, our communities' livability, and our ecosystem's viability.
Statewide Rail Capacity and System Needs Study	N/A
Sound Transit Regional Transit Long-Range Plan	Easy connections to more places for more people
Transportation System Policy Goals	N/A

Further guidance was provided by AASHTO's State Rail Planning Guidebook and rail plans from other states including:

- Kansas
- Michigan
- Minnesota
- New York
- North Carolina
- Texas
- Virginia
- Wisconsin

Examples of unified visions and key themes from these states are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Example Vision Statements from Other State Rail Plans

State	Unified Vision	Key Themes
Kansas	<p>The future Kansas rail system will provide safe, reliable mobility for people and goods. In addition, it will contribute to a more balanced transportation system, economic growth, a better environment and energy conservation. The State’s rail infrastructure and levels of service will expand to provide increased transportation efficiency, cost effectiveness, accessibility, capacity, and intermodal connectivity to meet freight and passenger market demands through an investment plan which includes public-private partnerships.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety • Reliability • Goods • Economic growth • Environment • Energy • Accessibility • Capacity • Public-private partnerships
Michigan	<p>A rail system that provides enhanced mobility for travelers and the efficient movement of goods, while supporting economic development and environmental sustainability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freight and passenger • Mobility • Goods movement • Economic development • Environment
Minnesota	<p>The vision for freight rail is that Minnesota should develop a balanced multimodal freight system which can respond to increased regional and international economic competition, constrained highway capacity, environmental challenges, a diverse customer base, and rising energy costs.</p> <p>The vision for passenger rail is that Minnesota should develop a robust intrastate and interstate intercity passenger rail system which results in improved travel options, costs and speeds for Minnesota and interstate travelers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic competition • Addresses future challenges (energy, capacity, etc.) • Improvements of status quo (costs, options, etc.)
Texas	<p>The Texas Rail System will provide cost-effective, energy-efficient, sustainable personal mobility and goods movement that connects Texas communities and links Texas businesses with domestic and international markets, minimizing environmental impacts, reducing road congestion, improving air quality, and promoting economic growth.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility • Goods movement • Energy efficiency • Economic growth • Environment
Wisconsin	<p>An integrated multimodal transportation system that maximizes the safe and efficient movement of people and products throughout the state, enhancing economic productivity and the quality of Wisconsin’s communities while minimizing impacts to the natural environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods movement • Multimodalism • Economic growth • Community impacts • Environment

Process

The Washington State Department of Transportation invited the public to participate in three workshops during fall 2012. Over 150 participants shared their views about rail in the public workshops held in Spokane and Seattle in October and November. Participants included members of the public and representatives from industry, advocacy groups and public agencies who expressed interest in preserving and strengthening freight and passenger rail, funding sources and rail connectivity. Safety, maintenance and preservation issues were emphasized and economic impacts discussed. The input was used to develop the vision and goals for this state rail plan.

Workshop discussion revealed a number of priorities for the state's rail transportation system. The information was used to establish the vision and goals for the state rail plan.

The vision and goals set the direction for what we want to achieve. This helped identify and prioritize needs. The objectives and implementation strategies described how the vision and goals were achieved by identifying recommended future state investment in Washington's passenger and freight rail system.

Vision Statement

The unified vision statement incorporated elements of existing Washington state transportation vision statements, while also adding key themes represented from other states. Highlights included:

- Mobility and Accessibility
- Reliability
- Goods Movement
- Economic Development/Growth
- Environment and Energy Efficiency
- Multimodalism
- Safety and Security
- Capacity
- Community Development
- Improvement of the Status Quo

As an integral part of Washington's multimodal transportation network, the rail system provides for the safe, reliable and environmentally responsible movement of freight and passengers to ensure the state's economic vitality and quality of life.

A number of key concepts were highlighted in this vision. Brief explanations of each of these are provided below. These are not intended as separate visions, and merely elaborate on what was provided in the vision statement.

- **Sustainable** - A sustainable rail system is one that supports conservation efforts and helps protect from adverse environmental, mobility, and economic impacts of transportation.

- **Reliable** – A reliable transportation system is one that gets travelers and goods to their destination on time, with minimal delays, and works to remove bottlenecks and increase system capacity.
- **Mobility and accessibility** – Mobility and accessibility is enhanced by an integrated rail network and extensive connections to other transportation modes. Automobile and truck trips may be replaced with rail travel, if the rail system is effectively connected to urban and rural transit systems.
- **Economic and Community Development** – Economic and community development will help support Washington’s economic competitiveness and quality of life.
- **Safety** – Safety and security of passengers and freight is paramount to encouraging increased rail use. This can be improved through traditional and enhanced technologies (i.e. positive train control).
- **Environmental Impacts** – A rail system that minimizes environmental impacts is one that prioritizes improving air quality and other environmental factors through technology enhancements, overall system improvements and shifting of automobile trips to rail.

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives are nested beneath an overall vision. Goals break down the vision into manageable pieces, while objectives are actions or policies to achieve the goals. In other words, objectives are measurable targets and/or actions for each goal, often including who needs to do what by when. Goals from other Washington transportation-related plans include economic competitiveness, preservation, safety, energy efficiency and environmental, and mobility. Furthermore, goal areas from other states are outlined in Table 3.

Examples from Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plans:

- A transportation system that meets the needs for sustained economic growth. (Benton-Franklin)
- A transportation system that provides access for goods, services, and people while minimizing total system costs. (Benton-Franklin)
- Support economic development and community vitality. (SW RTC)
- Provide reliable mobility for personal travel and freight movement as well as access to locations throughout the region and integrity of neighborhoods accomplished through development of an efficient, balanced, multi-modal regional transportation system. (SW RTC)
- Maximize efficient management and operation of the transportation system through transportation demand management and transportation system management strategies. (SW RTC)

- Protect environmental quality and natural resources and promote energy efficiency. (SW RTC)
- Provide a financially-viable and sustainable transportation system. (SW RTC)
- Maintain and preserve the regional transportation system to ensure system investments are protected. (SW RTC)
- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency. (WCOG)
- Increase accessibility and mobility for people and freight. (WCOG)
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns. (WCOG)
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight. (WCOG)
- Promote efficient system management and operation. (WCOG)
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system. (WCOG)
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users. (WCOG)
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users. (WCOG)

Table 3 Goal Areas/Themes from other State Rail Plans

Goal Areas/Themes	States Including this Goal
Intermodal Connectivity	Michigan, Virginia, Wisconsin
Accessibility and Mobility	New York, North Carolina, Virginia
Economic Development/Competitiveness	Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Virginia
Environmental Sustainability	Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Wisconsin
Safety and Security	Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin
Capacity, Reliability, Travel Time	New York, Wisconsin
Community Impacts, Quality of Life	North Carolina, Virginia, Wisconsin
System Preservation/Maintenance	New York, North Carolina, Virginia
Program Funding and Delivery	New York
Passenger Efficiency	Michigan
Freight Efficiency	Michigan

Goals

Planning goals for Washington transportation plans are set in state law, RCW 47.04.280:

Table 4 Planning Goals and State Rail Plan Focus Areas

Washington’s transportation system policy goals (RCW 47.04.280)	Freight and passenger rail focus areas for the state rail plan
<p>Economic vitality: To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the reliability of existing rail services. • Expand to meet future demands. • Improve connections between rail and other modes. • Strengthen rail as a competitive transportation option for freight and passengers.
<p>Preservation: To maintain, preserve and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain infrastructure in a state of good repair. • Prevent rail abandonments. • Encourage compatible land use development near rail infrastructure.
<p>Safety: To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhance safety on the rail and at crossings. • Preserve rail transportation to contribute to transportation system redundancy.
<p>Mobility: To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve efficiency. • Decrease travel times. • Preserve and expand facilities and services to accommodate future demands. • Improve competitiveness of rail with other modes for long-distance travel.
<p>Environment: To enhance Washington’s quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities and protect the environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage the shift from highway travel to an environmentally sustainable and competitive rail system. • Minimize negative impacts through collaboration with communities.
<p>Stewardship: To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the transportation system.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop interagency and public-private partnerships. • Consider cost effectiveness and return on investment of public investments and monitor success. • Achieve financial sustainability. • Employ new technologies to gain efficiencies.

Table 5 Selected State Laws and Rules

Issue	Washington State Laws/Rules
Overall	
Grants eminent domain (<i>condemnation power</i>) to every corporation organized for the construction of any railway in the state.	RCW 81.36.010
Authorizes the Utilities and Transportation Commission (UTC) to fix and regulate train speeds within the city limits (unless authority is granted to the federal government).	RCW 81.48.030
Authorizes the UTC to regulate grade crossings.	Chapter 81.53 RCW
If a new highway/street/county road is approved by the UTC to be constructed across a railroad or an existing grade crossing is altered – the Utilities and Transportation Commission shall apportion the costs associated with the crossing between the railroad and WSDOT/city/county.	RCW 81.53.110
Requires the UTC to administer rail safety, to the extent allowed under state and federal requirements.	RCW 81.04.550
Requires railroad companies to not block a grade crossing with a stopped train from more than ten consecutive minutes, if reasonably possible. Blocked crossings must be cleared immediately if law enforcement or emergency vehicles have lights flashing.	WAC 480-62-220
Requires highway authority to maintain and keep approaches in good repair.	WAC 480-62-225
Requires passenger trains to carry certain equipment.	WAC 480-62-240
Rules for operating passenger trains.	WAC 480-62-245
Requires railroad companies to report accidents.	WAC 480-62-310
UTC may establish fund for public grade crossing signals and other warning devices.	WAC 480-62-410
Requires the Office of Financial Management to establish transportation system performance measures for WSDOT and other state agencies with transportation-related responsibilities.	RCW 47.04.280
Authorizes the Transportation Commission to develop and recommend statewide transportation policies to the legislature. Requires Transportation Commission to update a statewide transportation policy plan every four years.	RCW 47.01.071

Issue	Washington State Laws/Rules
Overall	
Establishes statewide transportation system policies for the planning, operation, performance of, and investment in the state's transportation system. The goals are Economic Vitality; Preservation; Safety; Mobility; Environment; and Stewardship.	RCW 47.04.280
Requires WSDOT to develop a statewide multimodal transportation plan consistent with the goals in RCW 47.04.280 and with the policy plan in RCW 47.01.071.	RCW 47.06.040
Sets framework for WSDOT to enter into Transportation Innovative Partnerships (<i>Public-Private Partnerships</i>) for capital or operating expenses on any mode except those for primarily recreational purposes. Grants authority to approve contracts or agreements to the Transportation Commission.	Chapter 47.29 RCW
Commuter Rail	
Establishes and grants powers and authorities to regional transit authorities in the central Puget Sound area (<i>Sound Transit</i>) to: plan, operate, and maintain a high capacity transportation system and develop revenues to support this system; exercise eminent domain; submit a system safety program plan to WSDOT; and implement the safety program.	Chapter 81.112 RCW
Authorizes regional transit authorities (<i>Sound Transit</i>) to operate or contract for commuter rail service with voter approval and to use funds collected under RCW 81.100.030 (<i>employer excise tax</i>) or RCW 81.100.060 (<i>surcharges on vehicle excise taxes and on sales taxes for car rentals</i>).	RCW 81.104.120
As a condition of receiving state funding, a regional transit authority (<i>Sound Transit</i>) must submit a maintenance and preservation management plan for certification by WSDOT.	RCW 81.112.086
Passenger Rail	
Requires WSDOT to develop and update an Intercity Passenger Rail Plan that: serves as a state-interest component of the statewide multimodal transportation plan; analyzes and recommends improvements to the existing service (<i>Amtrak Cascades</i>); is consistent with other modal plans, policy system goals in RCW 47.04.280, and with the policy plan in RCW 47.01.071.	RCW 47.06.090

Issue	Washington State Laws/Rules
Passenger Rail	
Requires WSDOT to develop and update a Rail Passenger Plan that: is subject to legislative appropriation; includes refined ridership estimates; preliminary location and environmental analysis on new corridors; detailed station location assessments; and is coordinated with Oregon and British Columbia.	RCW 47.79.040
Requires WSDOT to prepare a proposed list of intercity passenger rail service (<i>Amtrak Cascades</i>) projects for appropriation by the state legislature.	RCW 47.79.030
Authorizes WSDOT to acquire interest or rights in real property adjacent to or associated with intercity passenger rail service (<i>Amtrak Cascades</i>).	RCW 47.79.050
Authorizes WSDOT to plan, design, construct, improve, repair, operate, and maintain real property adjacent to or used in association with the intercity passenger rail service (<i>Amtrak Cascades</i>) including real property owned or controlled by another entity.	RCW 47.79.070
Requires WSDOT to coordinate with local jurisdictions to develop a program for improving Amtrak service (<i>Empire Builder and Coast Starlight</i>).	Chapter 47.82 RCW
Freight Rail	
Requires WSDOT to develop and update a Freight Rail Plan that: serves as a state-interest component of the statewide multimodal transportation plan; identifies issues; establishes criteria for preserving service and lines; recommends priorities for use of funds; fulfills the federal freight rail planning requirements; and is consistent with the modal plans, policy plan in RCW 47.01.071, and statewide policy system goals in RCW 47.04.280.	RCW 47.06.080
Requires WSDOT to implement a state freight rail program that can include: projects and strategies that support branch lines and light-density lines; provide access to ports; maintain adequate mainline capacity; and preserve or restore rail corridors and infrastructure.	RCW 47.76.210
Requires WSDOT to develop a State Rail Plan that: identifies, evaluates, and encourages essential freight rail services.	RCW 47.76.220

Issue	Washington State Law
Freight Rail	
Establishes essential rail assistant account in the state treasury and establishes how WSDOT can use or distribute the funds to cities, county rail districts, counties, economic development councils, ports, and railroads to: acquire or improve rail lines; purchase equipment to maintain essential rail service (<i>Grain Train</i>); construct rail improvements; and preserve rail corridors for future use.	RCW 47.76.250
Requires WSDOT to develop, operate, accept funding, and manage a railcar program for perishable commodities.	RCW 47.76.400-47.76.450
Creates the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB); defines strategic freight corridors (includes railroads); and sets framework for FMSIB to make grants or loans to finance freight mobility projects.	Chapter 47.06A RCW