



Partnering More Effectively with Local Governments Using Up-Front SEPA

WSDOT transportation planners are exploring how to participate more effectively in local, up-front State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) processes. In September, they attended a one-day workshop and discussion featuring three consultants with expertise and experience working with local governments using up-front SEPA.



*Workshop Trainers
(from left):
Chris Breiland, PE
Fehr and Peers
Richard Weinman, JD
Weinman Consulting
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inova*

What is up-front SEPA? Up-front SEPA refers to the review and mitigation of environmental impacts at the planning level instead of at the project level. There are several types of up-front SEPA processes, including:

- Planned actions ([RCW 43.21C.440](#)).
- Subarea plans for mixed use/transit centers ([RCW 43.21C.420](#)).
- Infill exemptions ([RCW 43.21C.229](#)).

As an example, a city may use a SEPA planned action to complete an environmental review for a subarea. Then, if a developer proposes a project in the subarea that is consistent with the type of development analyzed in planned action environmental documents, the city would require no additional environmental review for that project. Local governments typically use up-front SEPA to stimulate economic development and streamline environmental review.

Why is WSDOT interested in local up-front SEPA processes? WSDOT is interested in learning how we can be a more effective partner in up-front SEPA processes. This will allow us to provide the information local governments and the private sector need at the planning level to ensure our shared transportation system continues to support the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.

How can WSDOT be a better partner to local governments during up-front SEPA processes? The workshop generated many ideas for fostering stronger state and local partnerships during up-front SEPA processes, including:

- **Early and Continuous Engagement.** Get involved in local government planning on an ongoing basis outside the SEPA process; and engage early in local up-front SEPA processes (i.e. during scoping or before).
- **Set Priorities Together.** Work together across modes and jurisdictions to identify priority corridors and strategies, instead of identifying our priorities separately.
- **Work Together on Long-Term Plans.** Create partnerships and focus resources in key areas to develop proactive long-term transportation plans on which to base mitigation for development impacts
- **Execute Joint Mitigation Agreements.** Develop agreements with local governments to incorporate mitigation measures for state transportation facilities into local plans and ordinances.
- **Expand the Menu of Mitigation Options.** Consider low-cost mitigation options (e.g. demand management) as part of the overall mitigation strategy.
- **Provide Guidance.** Better define WSDOT's objectives and approach to up-front SEPA actions and better communicate our expectations to local governments.

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Planning Resources

[Removing Barriers to Smarter Transportation Investments.](#)

The Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) has partnered with Smart Growth America to increase its efficiency and ensure the greatest possible return on transportation investments. As a result TDOT has compiled a series of recommendations designed to pin down areas for improvement, prioritize projects, and streamline processes. (August 21, 2012) (Website and Final Report—pdf 4.70 mb)

[Complete Streets, Local Policy Workbook.](#)

This guide is based on examples from around the country. It incorporates the thoughts and opinions of a broad group of stakeholders, transportation planners and engineers, elected officials, transit agencies, public health departments, and members of the community. (August 2012) (Website and Workbook—pdf 4.89 mb)

[Partnership for Sustainable Communities.](#)

The Partnership for Sustainable Communities works to coordinate federal housing, transportation, water, and other infrastructure investments to make neighborhoods more prosperous, allow people to live closer to jobs, save households time and money, and reduce pollution. (Website)

[Building Passenger Rail: A Game-Changing National Enterprise.](#)

AASHTO's look at high-speed and intercity passenger rail projects and the progress made in the last 12 months (including state examples). (Website)

Do you have ideas for how WSDOT can be a better partner to local governments during up-front SEPA processes? Let us know! Contact Karena Houser, 360.705.7876, houserk@wsdot.wa.gov.

Three Projects in 2013 will Improve State and Local Collaborative Planning for Transportation and Land Use

WSDOT's Community Transportation Planning Office is working on three projects that will help WSDOT and its partners collaborate more closely on transportation and land use issues. The projects will be complete by June 30, 2013. They include:

New Tool: Data for the Growth Management Act (GMA) Update Cycle

Many local governments are starting the process of scoping the periodic updates of their GMA comprehensive plans. WSDOT is working to make it easier for local and regional planners to access the information they need from our agency for these updates, as well as for other planning efforts that may affect the state transportation system.

We're developing a website using ArcGIS on-line. This website will allow local and regional governments to access state transportation data through interactive maps and fact sheets that are customized for their jurisdiction.

Our goal is to provide local and regional planners, decision-makers, and citizens a better understanding of the condition and future plans for the state transportation system within their jurisdictions. This coordination should lead to a closer partnership so that together we can identify opportunities to operate our transportation system more efficiently, manage demand and where appropriate, fund strategic capacity improvements.

To learn more about WSDOT's planning portal, please see the [WSDOT Community Planning Portal Folio](#) (pdf 2.98 mb).

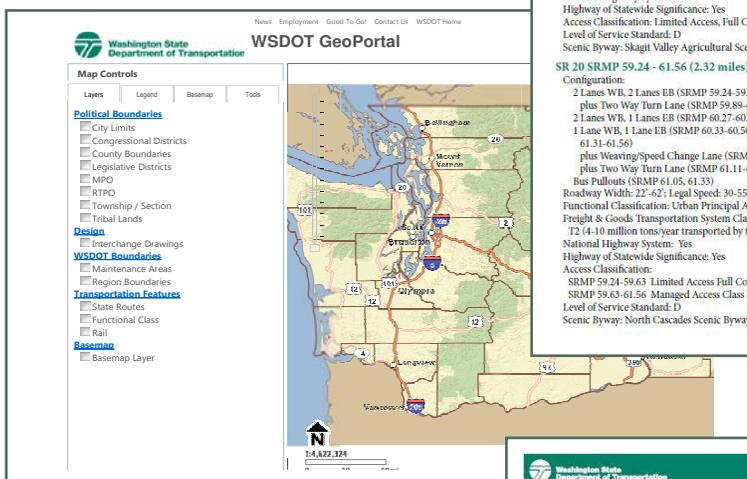
Pilot Project: The GMA Transportation Element and the State Transportation System

WSDOT is developing a pilot project to test how the state transportation data from the project described above and greater coordination with local planners can be stepping stones to a more collaborative planning process for transportation and land use. The goal is to better align WSDOT's objectives with those of its local government partners to achieve an integrated and cost-effective transportation and land use strategy.

Research Project: Identifying and Managing Land Development Risks Along State Transportation Corridors

WSDOT and the Washington State Transportation Research Center are working to develop a data-driven method to identify and prioritize sections of state transportation infrastructure that are vulnerable to land development and to create a menu of appropriate collaborative strategies for managing the impact of that development on the state transportation system. This project will help WSDOT strategically target our limited planning resources to the state transportation corridors that are most likely to be affected by development.

WSDOT envisions providing an interactive map, such as the WSDOT Geoportal map pictured below. Cities and counties will be able to zoom to their jurisdictions, turn map layers on and off, and link to a planning fact sheet customized for their jurisdiction.



Planning Fact Sheet

CITY OF BURLINGTON:

County: Skagit
MPO/RTPO: Skagit MPO
Skagit/Island RTPO
WSDOT Region: Northwest - Mt. Baker
WSDOT Planning Contact: Elizabeth Sjostrom, 360.757.5984, elizabeth.sjostrom@wsdot.wa.gov
WSDOT Development Review Contact: Roland Storme, 360.757.5961, roland.storme@wsdot.wa.gov

State Routes:
1-5 SRMP 228.37 - 230.45 (2.08 miles)
Configuration: 2 Lanes EB, 2 Lanes SB
Roadway Width: 48' - 104'; Legal Speed: 60 MPH
Functional Class: Urban Interstate
Freight & Goods Transportation System Class: T1 (6-10 million tons/year transported by truck)
National Highway System: Yes
Highway of Statewide Significance: Yes
Access Classification: Limited Access, Full Control
Level of Service Standard: D
Scenic Byway: Skagit Valley Agricultural Scenic Corridor

SR 20 SRMP 59.24 - 61.56 (2.32 miles)
Configuration:
2 Lanes WB, 2 Lanes EB (SRMP 59.24-59.89; 60.06-60.17)
plus Two Way Turn Lane (SRMP 59.89-60.06; 60.17-60.27)
2 Lanes WB, 1 Lane EB (SRMP 60.27-60.33)
1 Lane WB, 1 Lane EB (SRMP 60.33-60.50; 60.56-61.11; 61.31-61.56)
plus Weaving/Speed Change Lane (SRMP 60.50-60.56)
plus Two Way Turn Lane (SRMP 61.11-61.31)
Bus Pullouts (SRMP 61.05, 61.33)
Roadway Width: 22'-62'; Legal Speed: 30-55 MPH
Functional Classification: Urban Principal Arterial
Freight & Goods Transportation System Class: T2 (4-10 million tons/year transported by truck)
National Highway System: Yes
Highway of Statewide Significance: Yes
Access Classification: Limited Access Full Control
SRMP 59.24-59.63 Limited Access Class 4
SRMP 59.63-61.56 Managed Access Class 4
Level of Service Standard: D
Scenic Byway: North Cascades Scenic Byway

Average Annual Daily Traffic (2011)

Park and Rides:

- **Chuckanut 1-5 (Exit 231) and Chuckanut Drive**, 380 spaces.
- **George Hopper**, 3 Burlington Blvd and George Hopper Rd (1-5, Exit 229), 70 spaces.
- **Cook Road**, Cook Road and Old Hwy 99 at I-5 Interchange, 60 spaces.

WSDOT Community Planning Portal
January 1, 2012

What is the Community Planning Portal?

WSDOT's Community Planning Portal will be an online forum for state, regional, and local transportation planners to share transportation and land use data. The intent of the portal is to foster collaborative planning to achieve common goals, including the provision of a reliable, responsible and sustainable transportation system for the citizens of Washington.

WSDOT is currently compiling state transportation data we think will help local and regional planners, decision makers, and citizens better understand the story of the state transportation system in their jurisdictions. We hope sharing this data will lead to a closer partnership so that together, we can identify opportunities to operate our system more efficiently, manage demand, and where appropriate, fund strategic capacity improvements.

Why Create a Community Planning Portal?

Many local governments are starting the process of updating their plans and regulations, as required periodically by the Growth Management Act. WSDOT wants to make it easier for local and regional planners to access the information they need from us for these updates, as well as for other planning efforts that may affect the state transportation system.

How Will the Community Planning Portal Work?

WSDOT will share information about the state transportation system using ArcGIS Online through WAPLAN, a collaborative information site under development at WSDOT.

The Community Planning Portal will allow local and regional governments to access interactive on-line maps and fact sheets that are customized for their jurisdiction. They will be able to print the maps, or download the data layers to use in their own GIS systems. They will also be able to upload their own geographic data to an online forum which presents an exciting opportunity for planners across Washington to better integrate local, regional, and state transportation and land use planning.

What Kind of Information Will the Community Planning Portal Include?

To get started, WSDOT is working on developing a basic set of data about the state transportation system that will help local governments complete the transportation element inventory required by the Growth Management Act. This will include basic, descriptive data about the state transportation system such as airport locations, state highway designations and classifications, roadway characteristics, and traffic counts.

Additional data will depend on the feedback we get from our partners. We want to know what information local and regional planners would find particularly helpful as they plan for their communities.

How Can Planners Get Involved?

While the Community Planning Portal is being developed, we invite local and regional planners to talk to the planners in their WSDOT region offices about what data they would like to see included and how that data might be most effectively presented.

Once the Community Planning Portal is up and running, we hope local and regional planners use the online forum to access information about WSDOT, share their own data, and engage WSDOT region planners in discussions of how we can work together to support economic vitality, preserve our transportation systems, improve safety and mobility, protect the environment, and better steward our limited financial resources.

When Will the Community Planning Portal be Available?

The Community Planning Portal will be available in the Summer of 2013.

For More Information Contact:

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Katherine Klockenteger, CTPO Planner klockek@wsdot.wa.gov, 360.705.7257

Title VI Information:

WSDOT ensures full compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 by prohibiting discrimination against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin or sex in the provision of benefits and services resulting from its federally assisted programs and activities. For questions regarding WSDOT's Title VI Program contact Jonté Sulton at 360.705.7082 or sultonj@wsdot.wa.gov.

ADA Information:

Materials can be provided in alternative formats for people with disabilities by calling Shawn Murinko at 360.705.7097 or murink@wsdot.wa.gov. Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may contact Office of Equal Opportunity through the Washington Relay Service at 7-1-1.