

Washington State Freight Mobility Plan: MPO/RTPO Meetings / Customer Interviews / Tribal Outreach

MPO/RTPO Meetings

As part of the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan, WSDOT held meetings with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) throughout the state with the goal being to solicit input on some of the draft deliverables of the Plan. The main deliverables that were presented for comment were Task 3, a draft of proposed freight connectivity criteria and Task 7, a draft of proposed truck freight benefit methodology.

WSDOT meet with the following MPOs and RTPOs:

MPO / RTPO	Date
Benton-Franklin Council of Governments	June 7, 2012
Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Government	May 24, 2012
Lewis Clark Valley MPO	August 16, 2012
Northeast Washington RTPO	June 27, 2012
Palouse RTPO	August 16, 2012
Peninsula RTPO	February 17, 2012
Puget Sound Regional Council	April 11, 2012
Quad-County RTPO	May 8, 2012
Skagit/Island RTPO	May 3, 2012
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council	April 17, 2012
Spokane Regional Transportation Council	June 26, 2012
Thurston Regional Planning Council	April 26, 2012
Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council	May 9, 2012
Whatcom Council of Governments	May 17, 2012
Yakima Valley Conference of Governments	May 10, 2012

The agenda for these meetings included:

- Overview of the Washington State Freight Mobility Plan
- Discussion of draft criteria to identify the state's essential freight economic corridors
- Discussion of draft truck freight benefit methodology
- Discussion of local freight issues

Comments from MPO/RTPO Meetings

Comments on Draft Connectivity Criteria

The main truck freight corridors in Washington State are identified as T-1 and T-2 routes based on the 2011 Freight Goods and Transportation System (FGTS). T-1 routes carry more than 10 million tons per year and T-2 routes carry 4 to 10 million tons per year. Additional connectivity criteria were defined by the three state freight plan technical teams in the summer of 2011. They recommended adding:

- Truck freight routes between strategic national defense facilities and the interstate system.
- Over-dimensional truck freight routes connecting significant intermodal facilities to the interstate and divided-four-lane highway system
- In urban areas:
 - To-and-from the Interstate system and the (1) closest major airport with air freight service, (2) marine terminals, ports, barge loaders and other intermodal facilities, and (3) warehouse/industrial lands and (4) industrial lands with close port and/or waterway access
 - From high-volume urban freight intermodal facilities to other urban intermodal facilities, e.g. from the Port of Seattle to the BNSF rail yard in Seattle
- In rural areas:
 - To-and-from the Washington State T-1 and T-2 truck routes to significant state agricultural processing centers, (2) distribution centers, (3) intermodal facilities, and (4) industrial/commercial land within five miles of major port and/or the interstate highway system
 - Routes that carry 1 million tons during three months of the year (reflecting seasonality) of agricultural, timber or other resource industry sector

Overall the comments on the draft connectivity criteria were positive. Many of the comments from MPO's and RTPO's were related to whether or not WSDOT had accurately identified specific T-1 and T-2 routes correctly. WSDOT recorded these comments to ensure the accuracy T-1 and T-2 routes identified on the truck freight economic corridor map and replied to each truck freight data request. For example, there were a number of request for WSDOT to confirm the classification of various routes and provide the background data that was used to generate the maps associated with the connectivity criteria.

Many of the MPO's and RTPO's in central and eastern Washington were concerned with rural connectivity especially with agricultural products, such as wheat, potatoes, and timber traveling on Washington highways and county roads. Concerns ranged from ensuring that intermodal connections to agriculture processing centers were accounted for, to taking into account the seasonality of agricultural products. The additional connectivity criteria suggested by the technical teams accounts for many of these issues.

Additionally, there were several questions about the definition of "urban areas" WSDOT is using in these criteria. Based on these comments WSDOT determined that the most appropriate definition of urban areas is as defined in Federal-aid highway law (Section 101 of Title 23, U.S. Code) as follows:

"The term 'urban area' means an urbanized area or, in the case of an urbanized area encompassing more than one State, that part of the urbanized area in each such State, or an urban place as designated by the Bureau of the Census having a population of five thousand or more and not within any urbanized area, within boundaries to be fixed by responsible State and local officials in cooperation with each other, subject to approval by the Secretary. Such boundaries shall, as a minimum, encompass the entire urban place designated by the Bureau of the Census."

Comments on Draft Truck Freight Benefit Methodology

WSDOT has collaborated with the University of Washington and Washington State University to develop a new method to evaluate the truck freight benefits associated with highway projects. The three state freight plan technical teams helped to identify and prioritize key truck freight benefits. They determined that the following benefits are strongly aligned with state and federal freight policies, and are most important to shippers, freight carriers, and state residents. The draft truck freight benefit methodology incorporates the benefits prioritized by the technical teams which include:

- Reducing:
 - Travel time
 - Direct truck operating costs
 - Truck engine emissions
- Improving:
 - Economic output
 - Network resiliency

Overall there were more questions than comments about the truck freight benefit methodology. One of the questions that was asked several times was how the change in travel time for projects located in areas that do not have associated regional travel demand models will be computed. WSDOT has considered this and devised a way to use ArcGIS Network Analysis to estimate changes in travel distance for projects located in areas where there are no regional travel demand models available.

There were also several questions about the overall accuracy and comparability of different regional travel demand models. In the absence of a statewide travel demand model, which is presently not available for Washington state, it was determined that regional travel demand models were the best option as they allow network effects to be captured that are not captured when using a segment based volume capacity ratio adjustment. Although there are some limitations to using regional travel demand models, they are accepted as state of the practice, vetted, tested, and regularly applied for transportation planning applications.

Many MPO's and RTPPO's throughout the state were interested in future updates about how this project is progressing and were interested in more information about the quantitative tools that WSDOT is developing for quantitative analysis of projects with truck freight benefits.

Comments from State Freight Plan Advisory Group

As part of Task 9 in the original scope of work for the State Freight Mobility Plan WSDOT formed a State Freight Plan Advisory Group to help review some of the interim work products of the State Freight Mobility Plan. This group was asked to review and comment on the same materials as the MPO's and RTPPO's, the draft connectivity criteria and the draft truck freight benefit methodology. The following groups and organizations were represented the meeting:

Represented Groups*	Date
Port of Tacoma	May 21, 2012
Port of Seattle	
Washington State Association of County Engineers	
Washington State Transportation Commission	
Washington State Farm Bureau	
Washington State Department of Commerce	
Associations of Washington Businesses	
Washington State Department of Ecology	
Washington Trucking Associations	
Pacific Merchant Shipping Association	
International Longshore Warehouse Union/Pacific Maritime Association	
Whatcom Council of Governments	
University of Washington – Civil Engineering Department	
Washington State University – Economics Department	
Washington State DOT – Budget Office	
Washington State DOT – Freight Systems Division	
Washington State DOT – Rail Division	
Washington State DOT – Research Office	

* This list is representative of the groups and organizations in attendance and does not include the invitees that did not attend.

Comments on Draft Connectivity Criteria

Many of the comments on the draft connectivity criteria echoed those from the MPO’s and RTPO’s. There were several clarification questions about the urban and rural connectivity criteria. A question about the inclusion of the Kent Valley Warehouse district in the urban criteria (3) Routes to-and-from the Interstate system and warehouse/industrial lands and was posed and WSDOT’s response is that it is included. Another question about rural connectivity criteria (4) Routes to-and-from the Interstate system and industrial/commercial land within 5 miles of major/ports interstates was posed. The question was why was the 5 mile distance specified? WSDOT’s response is that businesses tend to be located within about 1 mile, so 5 miles was chosen as a reasonable distance to make sure all relevant corridors were captured.

Another question was about what happens to connectivity of the freight system in the case of a natural disaster? WSDOT’s response is that resiliency of the system is something we take into consideration and strategic sections of Highway 2 and Highway 12 have been included for this reason as well as the Highway 7 detour.

Comments on Draft Truck Freight Benefit Methodology

There were several specific questions about the draft truck freight benefit criteria. First, it was asked if WSDOT had considered including the reliability (predictability) of travel time in the benefit calculation. WSDOT’s response is that we do not yet have the technical capability to include this in the analysis, we have good information for the past and the present, but no way to forecast travel time reliability in a defensible way. This issue is planned to be addressed in phase 2 of this research project.

Another question about the benefit calculation taking into account safety was posed. WSDOT’s response is that safety is taken into account in WSDOT’s existing benefit cost analysis for mobility projects and was excluded from the truck freight benefit calculation to avoid double counting.

Comments from Meetings with Ports

WSDOT held meetings with some of the ports throughout the state to present the same draft deliverables that were presented to MPO’s and RTPO’s. The ports that were visited include:

Port / Organization	Date
Port of Seattle	April 5, 2012
Port of Tacoma	March 27, 2012
Port of Gray’s Harbor	July 23, 2012
Port of Pasco	June 6, 2012
Port of Vancouver	April 17, 2012
Washington Public Ports Association	June 28, 2012

Many of the comments and concerns from the ports echoed those of the MPO’s and RTPO’s. In addition to the previously discussed truck freight issues, the ports were very concerned with freight rail issues as well. Freight Rail issues will be addressed as part of the State Rail Plan.

Customer Interviews

WSDOT also conducted interviews and focus groups with shippers, carriers, and other freight dependent companies throughout the state in order to understand customer requirements for the state freight system and how the freight system can best support business needs. Overall, WSDOT interviewed 39 companies throughout the state. Figure 1 and Figure 2 show the geographical distribution of companies as well as the type of business they are involved in. It can be noted the “Other” category includes two associations that were visited as part of the interview process.

Figure 1. Distribution of Company Locations by WSDOT Region

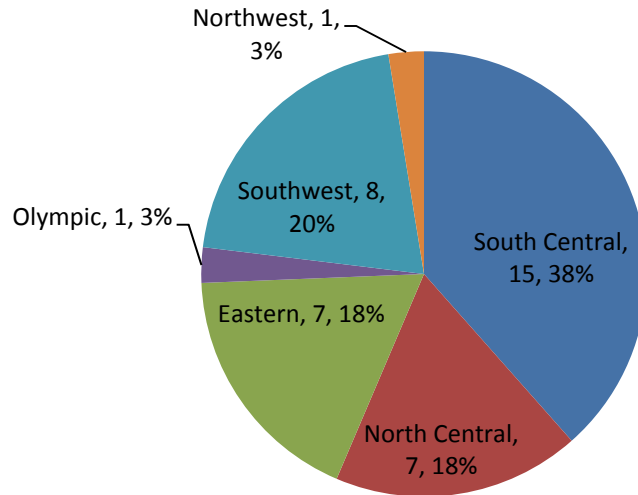
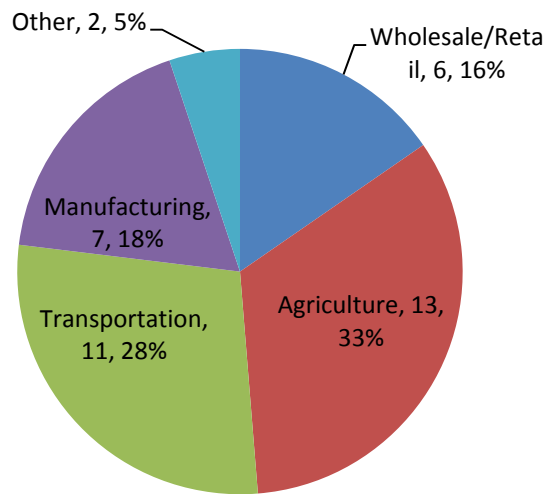


Figure 2. Distribution of Business Type by Category



In order to ensure that feedback from a good representative sample of freight dependent businesses was collected, a variety of different companies, in different industries, located across the state were selected for interviews. The following set of questions were used to guide the discussion with representatives from each company:

- Primary line of business?
- Does the company operate as a freight carrier?
 - If so, how many what type of equipment (trucks, barges, etc.) do you operate?
 - What freight routes do you use most frequently?
 - Input on WSDOT identified truck bottleneck locations
- If the company is shipping goods, what are their primary and secondary locations and what percentage of the total is going to these locations?

- If the company receives goods, what are their primary and secondary origins and what percentage of the total is coming from these locations?
- What are the most important freight transportation drivers for your company’s success and why? Examples of drivers include:
 - Truck trip travel time
 - Truck trip reliability or predictable travel time
 - Cost per move
 - Number of turns from distribution center to port per day
 - Cold chain capacity/access during peak shipping seasons
 - On-time delivery within specified time window (hours, days, weeks?)
 - Rail capacity and/or reliability
 - Waterway capacity and/or reliability
 - Access to major airports with freight service
 - Access to other intermodal facilities
- Why is the state freight system important to your company’s bottom line?
- To support and attract freight-dependent business to this area, what service requirements does the state freight system need to provide?
- What global and local industry trends could impact freight system demand in the future?
- Are there other issues you would like to address?

WSDOT Freight Systems Division frequently engages with the freight community throughout Washington to discuss issues, priorities, current WSDOT projects, and freight related research. Prior to the 2012 interviews that were conducted for this Plan, a similar series of interviews were conducted as part of the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) most recently updated and published by the Washington Transportation Commission in December 2010. Additionally, WSDOT Freight Systems Division makes an effort to conduct customer visits and interviews, when possible, throughout the year.

Important Freight Transportation Drivers for Successful Companies

The 39 companies that WSDOT visited and interviewed were asked to identify the top three most important freight drivers to their company’s success. The following table summarizes the responses.

Important Freight Driver	Number of Top 3 Responses
Truck trip travel time	19
Truck trip reliability or predictable travel time	18
Cost per move	16
On-time delivery within specified time window (hours, days, weeks?)	11
Number of turns from distribution center to port per day	4
Rail capacity and/or reliability	4
Access to other intermodal facilities	4
Cold chain capacity/access during peak shipping seasons	2
Access to major airports with freight service	1
Other Response	1
Waterway capacity and/or reliability	0

Of the 39 companies surveyed, 80 total responses to the top three important freight drivers question were received. The most frequently cited important freight drivers were truck trip travel time, truck trip reliability, cost per move, and on-time delivery with 24 percent, 23 percent, 20 percent, and 14 percent of the responses respectively. The top four most frequently cited important freight drivers accounted for 80 percent of the total responses.

In addition to the information about important freight drivers that was collected, WSDOT gained valuable information about different freight dependent industries thought the state and the needs and concerns of our customer base.

Tribal Outreach

In addition to MPO’s, RTPO’s, and customers, WSDOT does a significant amount of outreach to the tribal community. The following table summarizes some of the key tribal outreach that WSDOT conducted in 2011 and 2012:

Tribal Outreach	Date
Letter sent to Tribes requesting review of the State Freight Mobility Plan Draft Scope of Work and Timeline and analysis of the connectivity of state freight systems in Task 3	April 28, 2011
WSDOT provided a freight plan update at the Washington Indian Transportation Policy Advisory Committee meeting	November 9, 2011
WSDOT met with Lennea Magnus, Skokomish Indian Tribe, regarding the State Freight Mobility Plan and connectivity analysis	January 31, 2012
At the request of Lennea Magnus, Barbara Ivanov spoke at the Peninsula RTPO Executive Council Policy meeting to discuss the State Freight Mobility Plan process and deliverables	February 17, 2012
Washington Indian Transportation Policy Advisory Committee	September 12, 2012

The following is a summary of the comments were received from WSDOT’s initial tribal outreach effort as well as what WSDOT has done to address these comments.

- Electronic copies of documents that are not in pdf format are preferred to make it easier to record comments
 - Electronic copies of documents have been provided for all interested parties on WSDOT’s Freight Plan website:
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Freight/freightmobilityplan>
- The objectives of the freight plan could benefit from being more complete clear sentences and less jargon and slogans.
 - The objectives of the freight plan are as follows:
 1. An improved Freight Benefit/Cost methodology to evaluate and prioritize state truck highway and truck intermodal improvement proposals.

2. Integration of the state truck highway and truck intermodal analysis findings with the findings of state modal freight rail, highways, ferries, and aviation plans.
 3. Priority freight system improvement strategies to support the plan's three objectives:
 - Urban goods movement systems that support jobs, the economy, and clean air for all, and provide goods delivery to residents and businesses.
 - Washington's competitive position as a Global Gateway to the nation with intermodal freight corridors serving trade and international and interstate commerce, and the state and national Export Initiatives.
 - Rural economies' farm-to-market, manufacturing and resource industry sectors.
- Holding one to two public workshops across the state doesn't constitute "across the state".
 - WSDOT has held many meetings with various groups including MPO's, RTPO's, Ports, and customers throughout the state to discuss the deliverables of the freight mobility plan.
 - The annual October TTPO/WSDOT conference should be added to WSDOT's tribal outreach plans. Webinar presentations would be a way to be more inclusive of remote tribes. MPO/RTPO presentations could be a way to reach both tribal and non-tribal stakeholders.
 - WSDOT attended the annual Washington Indian Transpiration Policy Advisory Committee in September 2012 to present the draft deliverables of the state freight mobility plan.
 - Asking for comment on the draft plan throughout the process, rather than just at the end would be preferred.
 - WSDOT has solicited comment on the draft deliverables throughout the development process in 2012 and will be holding
 - The Skokomish tribe remains concerned about the lack of inclusion of Highway 101 around the entire Olympic Peninsula in the state's truck freight economic corridors.
 - WSDOT has confirmed that majority of Highway 101 on the Olympic Peninsula does not meet the truck volume threshold for inclusion in the state's truck freight economic corridors as it is not classified as a T-1 or T-2 route (annual truck tonnage greater than 4 million tons). Although Highway 101 does not meet the criteria to be included in Washington's truck freight economic corridors, it can be noted that it is included in the Washington's highways of statewide significance as defined by RCW 47.05.022. WSDOT recognizes that every community in the state relies on goods delivery and there are important routes for some communities that do not meet the criteria to be included in the state's truck freight economic corridors.