

Introduction

A. Mission Statement

The mission statement of the Northeast Washington RTPO is to provide a Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Plan that fosters a positive quality of life, encourages economic development and provides a safe, reliable, efficient system to transport people, goods and services.

B. Purpose

On October 22, 1990, the Commissioners of Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties, by resolution, formed The Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NEW-RTPO) under the provisions of the 1990 Growth Management Act (SHB 2929). They designated the Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) as the lead agency for this organization.

The purpose for the creation of the NEW-RTPO was to more efficiently use the resources available to the region in meeting growing transportation needs. Upon evaluation of those needs by the organization, adoption of this Regional Transportation Plan occurred.

C. Organization

A Regional Transportation Policy Board (RTPB) directs the NEW-RTPO. It is made up of 17 elected local officials who are responsible to oversee the planning process. The RTPB meets on an as needed basis (generally, once per quarter) to review program activities and take formal actions as required. Also, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), consisting of 13 professional and technical staff members representing regional and local agencies was established to participate in all phases of the transportation planning process. The TAC meets as necessary to address planning issues in the ongoing development of the RTP.

D. Intergovernmental Coordination

The development of transportation facilities in the Northeast Washington Region has historically been fostered by a cooperative effort from all levels of government. As needs became apparent, local citizens, working individually or in cooperation with their neighbors worked to provide access to and from their homes, work places, commercial and industrial sites. Often this effort has taken the form of organizing and influencing city, county, tribal and state authorities to develop and apply program solutions to meet their needs.

These agencies have worked diligently within their resources to meet ever-increasing needs and have struggled with the limitations of both their jurisdictional and fiscal authority. The value of coordination with other agencies to meet growing transportation needs has always been highly regarded. The creation of the Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization is an extension of this ongoing coordination process.

The level of coordination between local, county, state, tribal and federal entities marks the quality and viability of this plan and the accomplishments of the regional program. It is the nature of this broad range of involvement that provides the opportunity for a high degree of success in identifying and addressing the needs of the region.

Regional Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Create a Regional Transportation system that will optimize/maximize resources, including but not limited to: economic, fiscal, natural and human.

Objectives:

- a. Economic: Transportation facilities will accommodate growth by coordinating with regional and local economic development goals and plans.
- b. Fiscal: Coordinate strategies for development of appropriate infrastructure, i.e., roads, bridges, airports, railways, transit, and maintenance facilities.
- c. Natural Resources: Coordinate strategies for environmental considerations in such areas as: water quality, air quality, noise abatement, wetlands, fish and wildlife, aquifer recharge areas, lakes and rivers, forest, agricultural, mineral and range lands.
- d. Human: Balance the considerations of all aspects of the planning process to recognize and incorporate the rights and needs of citizens in the region.

Goal 2: Plan for a multi-modal transportation system that will accommodate growth and enhance the economy based on regional priorities.

Objectives:

- a. Identify and prioritize regional modes of transportation that are critical to the future of Northeast Washington.
- b. Develop long-term plans for the modes of transportation that are deemed as critical to the region.

Goal 3: Provide a plan, which identifies regionally significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans. Perform ongoing evaluation and modification necessary to keep current with the needs and desires of the public.

Objectives:

- a. Review and incorporate local comprehensive plans into the Regional Transportation Plan through the following criteria for the development of new routes, new construction or reconstruction:
 - 1. These activities should avoid where possible, areas designated by local jurisdictions to be critical areas in accordance with the Growth Management Act.
 - 2. Activities occurring along the regionally significant roads designated within the RTPO plan shall be consistent with locally adopted comprehensive plans for cities and counties.
- b. Coordinate comprehensive plan implementation, including facility plans, as appropriate.

Goal 4: The plan shall recognize areas of cultural, historic and environmental significance.

Objectives:

- a. Identify cultural, historic and environmental areas and sites of regional importance.
- b. Recognize that transportation systems are sensitive to such areas.

Goal 5: The Regional Transportation Plan shall be coordinated with federal, tribal, state, county and local governments, and businesses and industries.

Objectives:

- a. Establish intergovernmental coordination.
- b. Incorporate other existing transportation plans and elements.
- c. Develop and initiate public participation and review for each phase of plan.
- e. Encourage public participation in the planning process and during implementation.

Designated Regionally Significant Transportation Systems

A. Criteria for Designation of the Regional Transportation System

Development of transportation planning by the Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NEW-RTPO) is based on the designation of the Regional Transportation System (RTS). In order to identify transportation facilities, such as roads, structures, services and projects that are of regional significance, the following criteria have been adopted in identified phases or steps.

1. State Established Criteria for the Regional System

A transportation facility may be included in the RTS if it meets one or more of the following criteria established in the Growth Management Act:

- a. Physically crosses member county lines;
- b. Is or will be used by a significant number of people who live or work outside the county in which the facility, service or project is located;
- c. Has significant impacts that are expected to be felt in more than one county;
- d. The potentially adverse impacts of the facility, service or project can be better avoided or mitigated through adherence to regional policies; and,
- e. The transportation needs addressed by the project have been identified by the regional transportation planning process, and the remedy is deemed to have regional significance.

2. Additional Criteria for the Regional System

Following an evaluation of existing facilities and planning documents, it was determined that transportation facilities meeting one or more of the following criteria may also be included in the RTS if they are identified in each county's respective transportation plan or as an element:

- a. Links major employment, industrial, commercial or emergency services sites;
- b. Provides access to a major recreational, historic, cultural, or tourist attraction;
- c. Provides for interconnections to other modes of transportation, such as, transit, airports, etc.; and,
- d. Could provide for logical future connection between existing identified links where deficiencies are currently exhibited in the system.

3. Regional Transportation System Facilities

Based on the preceding criteria, the NEW RTPO has identified the following transportation facilities and services as potential components of the Regional Transportation System:

- a. State and Federal Highways;
- b. Local Freeways, Expressways and Principle Arterials;
- c. Selected Secondary Arterials and Classified Collectors;
- d. Airports;
- e. Bridges;
- f. Ferries;
- g. Transit, including Para-Transit and Van Pools;
- h. Park and Ride Lots;
- i. Ports;
- j. Scenic Roadways;
- k. Trails; Paths; and Routes (Bicycle, pedestrian, equestrian or ORV);
- l. Trucking Freight Routes; and,
- m. Rail Routes

4. Reassessment of the Regional Transportation System

Designation of the regional transportation system is based on existing and proposed facilities and services that are known. The NEW-RTPO will review and revise the regional significance criteria as necessary to accurately reflect the needs and conditions of the region.

B. Inventory of Existing Facilities (Miles) by County

	Ferry County	Stevens County	Pend Oreille County
07 – Major Collectors	122.1	309.78	106.74
08 – Minor Collectors	99.76	253.13	74.59
09 – Local Access	501.94	928.01	368.12
State Highways	155.59	242.78	115.60
Totals	879.39	1733.70	665.05

Highways, Roads and Streets:

Aside from a six-mile section of four lane divided highway on US 2 in southern Pend Oreille County and the urban portion of U.S. 395 in Colville, all highways and roads within the region are two lanes with truck climbing lanes on some portions of U.S. 395.

Ferry County has 879.39 miles of roadway with 360 miles paved. The Colville Confederated Tribe maintains a road system in the south half of Ferry County. The mileage is undetermined at this time, but is estimated to be between 100 and 150 miles. Stevens County has a total of approximately 1733.70 miles of roadway with 600 miles paved. Pend Oreille County has a total of 665.05 miles of roadway with approximately 240 miles paved. WSDOT is responsible for just over 513.97 miles of highways. All state routes are paved.

Issues of Significance

U.S. 395

U.S. Highway 395 from Spokane to the Canadian border at Laurier has been identified as a High Priority Corridor in TEA-21 and is named as a route on the National Highway System, which is the top priority classification for highways. It has been recognized as an important economic link to Spokane for Stevens, Ferry and northern Pend Oreille counties, as well as, a large area of southeastern British Columbia. It is also recognized that U.S. 395 will be an important part of the development of the North-South Freeway in Spokane.

The growth of northern Spokane and southern Stevens counties is necessitating the need for capacity improvements on U.S. 395 in the near future. Substantial public support for these improvements has been seen.

These issues and others regarding U.S. 395 are the subject of a corridor study performed by WSDOT. The results of that study address potential transportation alternatives within Chewelah, Colville and Kettle Falls.

Of critical concern to the region, is to insure that incremental improvement of U.S. 395 in the form of additional lanes, truck climbing lanes and intersection channelization occurs in a timely manner to improve safety and traffic flow.

All Weather Surfaces for State Roads

Sections of SR 31, SR 20, and SR 21 are not capable of carrying truck traffic during all seasons of the year. Placing weight restrictions on these roads during freeze/thaw cycles to prevent road wear results in economic hardships on regional employers, and hence the economy of the region. Specific measures to resolve this problem have been discussed with WSDOT and potential solutions have been identified. However, justification of funding for these projects in a competitive process is difficult. There is high regional emphasis for an expedited solution to this problem.

Local Projects

Local projects are a high priority that generally seek additional funding sources. Those projects include:

- replacement of the Usk Bridge;
- construction of the Inchelium-Gifford Bridge;
- construction of Flowery Trail;
- Hwy 395 to 4-lanes from Spokane to Kettle Falls;
- Scenic Byways within all three counties; and

- comprehensive community revitalization efforts in Newport, Lone, Usk, Cusick, Metaline, Metaline Falls, Springdale, Chewelah, Colville, Kettle Falls, Marcus, Northport and Republic.

County Byway Plans

Tri-County Economic Development District is coordinating efforts to receive scenic byway designation for approximately 18 miles of Highway 2 from Newport to the Pend Oreille County line to complete byway designation the length of the county. Currently TEDD is doing a study of recreation and tourism in conjunction with the Forest Service and feel the byway program in the county is a major component of our recreation and tourism planning. Byway development has the support of all of the Mayors and the Pend Oreille County Commissioners.

The Highway 2 portion would provide the last leg of a new scenic loop. Newport to Usk, Usk to Highway 211/Highway 2 junction, and the new proposed link, Highway 211/Highway 2, junction to Newport.

This would also provide a Scenic Byway link from the South Pend Oreille County line to the Selkirk Loop. TEDD is currently working with the Selkirk Loop to develop a corridor development plan for the Newport to Tiger leg on Highway 20 and it would be beneficial to be able to incorporate Highway 211 and Highway 2 and Flowery Trail into the planning for this scenic corridor.

The proposed Flowery Trail designation would form the third leg of a scenic loop. Colville to Tiger Junction, Tiger Junction to Usk, Usk to Chewelah (Flowery Trail), only the Chewelah to Colville portion would be left to complete the loop. TEDD is also looking into grants to upgrade the county portion of Flowery Trail to 211 as an all weather road.

In addition, TEDD is working with a group in Idaho to develop a corridor development plan for Newport, WA to Sandpoint, ID to ISL Partners in Canada for similar designations. This would form the first ever two nations Scenic Byway Loop.

Railroads

Two railroads operate within the region, the largest operator, Burlington Northern Santa Fe, serves Stevens, Ferry and the southern end of Pend Oreille Counties. Central and northern Pend Oreille County is served by the Pend Oreille Valley Railroad which came into existence following the withdrawal of service by Milwaukee Rail. Continued rail service is vital to the economy of the northeast region primarily for the exportation of products and materials.

Air Service

The 1993 Washington State Airport System Plan identified four airports in the region capable of accommodating small aircraft. Two are located in Stevens County at Colville and Chewelah, while Ferry and Pend Oreille Counties have one each at Curlew Lake and Lone, respectively. Additionally, there are two state maintained airfields, Avey Field, near Laurier in northern Ferry County and Sullivan Lake Field in northern Pend Oreille County. One heliport was also identified at Republic in Ferry County. There are also an unknown number of private landing strips within the region which have minimal use at this time, but could become areas of concern when and if development near such facilities occurs.

Waterborne

Two ferries operate on Lake Roosevelt carrying traffic between Stevens and Ferry Counties. The Inchelium Ferry is operated by the Colville Confederated Tribes and the Keller Ferry is operated by WSDOT. These facilities provide vital access to and from southern Ferry County. Other waterborne transportation includes tourism and some commercial shipping service on Lake Roosevelt and the Pend Oreille River.

Public Transportation

Rural Resources provides other transportation services for special needs populations (including those persons that are unable to provide their own transportation due to age, disability or income) in Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille Counties, including: Public commuter routes between Chewelah and Colville or Kettle Falls and Colville in the morning and evening.

- Meal site transportation for seniors in Republic, Kettle Falls, Colville, Newport, and Chewelah.
- Dial-a-ride transportation for all special needs populations to access basic services including shopping, nutrition, social service appointments, medical care (for non-Medicaid eligible clients) adult education, job training, or employment in Republic, Kettle Falls, Colville, Cusick, Usk, and Newport.
- Twice monthly public fixed route service is provided for outlying residents to Colville and Kettle Falls. Five separate routes reach remote locations in all three counties
- Head Start transportation for children three to four years old at six centers (Selkirk, Cusick, Newport, Springdale, and two in Colville).
- Carpool Coordination services. This service links low income people (many that are referred by WorkSource or DSHS) to drivers willing to form carpools.

Bicycling

The region has experienced a growth in bicycling during the past ten years. While there are three primary categories of bicycling as a means of transportation, touring, recreation and commuting, only touring has demonstrated a level of activity that merits consideration on a regional scale.

State Route 20, which crosses all three counties in the region, has been identified among the top ten routes nationally for cross country touring. Growing numbers of touring groups are using this route and other links, such as U.S. Hwy 395, SR 21, and SR 25. WSDOT has recognized the significance of bicycling on a statewide level and has included improvements to accommodate projects when funding is available. The bicycling public should also evaluate other regionally significant routes for access and safety.

Regional Service Objectives

1. Maintenance Service Objectives

a. Highways, Roads and Streets

1. Provide all-season travel on all Regional Transportation System (RTS) roadways open to the public.
2. Provide safe, reliable roadways through timely pavement patching, sealing and surface treatments.
3. Maintain signs, pavement markings, guideposts, traffic signals and illumination.
4. Emphasize safe work zone practices.
5. Control roadside vegetation to provide sight distance, visibility of signs, fire control, surface drainage and noxious weed control.
6. Provide pleasant roadside appearance by maintaining landscaping and controlling litter.
7. Maintain all drainage facilities, ditches and fences in proper working condition.
8. Inspect all structures every two years.
9. Perform timely, preventative and corrective maintenance of all structures.

b. Aeronautics

1. Maintain regional airport facilities in landable conditions for the maximum amount of time that weather will permit.
2. Inspect air facilities annually.

c. Marine

1. Provide ferry riders with clean, reliable and pleasant facilities at terminals and on-board vessels.
2. Perform preventative maintenance on all vessels to minimize service disruptions due to mechanical failure.

d. Railroads

1. Maintain efficient rail service to all established service points in the region.
2. Maintain all public At-Grade-Crossings.

2. Preservation Service Objectives

a. Highways, Roadways and Streets

1. Where cost effective, stabilize known unstable slopes.
2. Resurface highways in accordance with the locally adopted Pavement Management System.
3. Preserve the capacity of roadways by managing access to them.
4. Paint steel bridges at cost effective intervals to preserve their service life.
5. Preserve the structural integrity of all bridge decks.

b. Aeronautics

1. Refurbish airport facilities to cost effective service capacity.

c. Marine

1. Refurbish terminals to extend the effective service life.
2. Refurbish vessels to extend the effective service life.

d. Railroads

1. Preserve essential rail lines in the region.

Land Use Assumptions

Regional Profile

Addressing the transportation needs of the region may best be facilitated by the creation of a realistic and functional regional development strategy. Such a strategy requires the identification and consideration of the conditions of the region and the relationship of existing regional and local plans and studies to those conditions. It also requires an evaluation of the specific issues directly affecting and affected by transportation needs as they relate to ongoing and future planning efforts, both independently sponsored and those required under the Growth Management Act.

Existing Land Uses

In developing a regional transportation plan, the fundamental relationship between transportation and land use must be recognized and the effect that land use and growth have on transportation must be taken into consideration.

The linkage between land use and transportation can be thought of as working in two ways:

- 1) The spatial distribution and type of land use activity influences both the demand for travel and travel characteristics. Different types of land use generate and attract differing traffic rates. For example, retail land uses will generate more trips than residential land uses.
- 2) Improving access by expanding the transportation system can allow for the development of land that was formerly inaccessible.

The Washington State 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA) recognized the importance of the linkage between land use and transportation and included in the act were requirements that local comprehensive land use plans include a transportation element. Under the GMA, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) were established to extend transportation planning to rural areas. The RTPOs were authorized to review local comprehensive land use plans and certify that they comply with GMA requirements.

Sustained economic development and growth within a region is desirable because of the economic benefits that increased employment and a larger tax base can bring. However, while growth can contribute to the health of a region's economy, it can also have negative impacts. Unmanaged, fast rates of growth can have severe impact on the ability of a community to provide needed infrastructure and services. The costs of growth can include worsening levels of traffic congestion, decline in air quality, and overall degradation of the quality of life.

The need to maintain economic viability and, at the same time, quality of life is a challenge. Components, which contribute to a desirable quality of life, include job employment opportunities, a healthy environment with clean air, and recreation opportunities. An efficient, safe transportation system also contributes to the quality of life for residents of a region by providing unrestricted mobility and can act as an attractor for economic development.

Population

Changes in population and resulting population densities are major factors affecting transportation needs in urbanized areas. Traditional transportation study methods use these factors as primary indicators for developing travel forecasts to identify future transportation needs.

For rural areas with urbanized populations under 50,000, the accuracy of such forecasts tend to become very unstable because error margins, normally acceptable when dealing with large numbers, reflect a disproportionate impact for smaller populations. As a result a different methodology for evaluating rural transportation issues must be identified. Population data is useful for other considerations, such as comparison to urban areas to establish rural needs in contrast to urban methodologies.

From 1950 through 1970 the region of northeast Washington experienced gradual population decline following the traditional rural to urban migration pattern common to the rest of the United States.

With nearly 10% of Washington State's land area, the region has only 1% of the state's population resulting in a low population density of 9.3 persons per square mile. By comparison, Washington State's population density is 88.5 persons per square mile. This low population density is a primary factor inhibiting the region's ability to compete for transportation improvement funding. Historically, transportation-funding allocations have used population as the basic criteria in funding formulas.

Housing

The change in the number and occupancy of housing over time compared to population change during that same time period can provide either corroborative or transitional support in identifying trends in population growth. Between 1990 and 2000, housing data reflects an increase in housing of 26%, and a population increase of 28%.

A significant factor to consider in looking at housing data for the region is the high percentage of housing in the unincorporated areas of the three counties. In a rural area, the dispersal of residences over a wider area may increase the need for development of

new or improved access to facilities. Typically, these are county roads, which then feed into the regional transportation system requiring additional improvements to the facility.

Employment

Another major factor that is used as a determinate for land use impacts on transportation is employment. Increases in the employment base of an area can be used as a gauge on the growth of the area and incumbent needs for access to and from the workplace. Transportation models in urban transportation planning use "home to work" trips as the basic component in measuring the potential loads that transportation systems must bear in the future. While rural areas lack the magnitude of scale required to calibrate such modeling tools, employment data can still be useful to identify and project needed transportation improvements.

According to Washington State Employment Security Department figures, from 1990 through 1999, employment in the three counties increased from 17,624 to 23,660, an increase of 34%. Comparatively, the population grew by 28%, which tends to show consistency in the stability of growth in the region.

The location and concentration of jobs in a region can produce severe constraints on transportation facilities. Historically, resource based industry has provided the majority of jobs available in the region. However, recent declines in access and availability of resource materials has caused a decline in timber and mining jobs while government and service type employment have increased. Further study of these factors could be helpful in determining the basis for job location and concentration and provide information on trends developing that will change transportation needs in the future.

Land Supply / Ownership

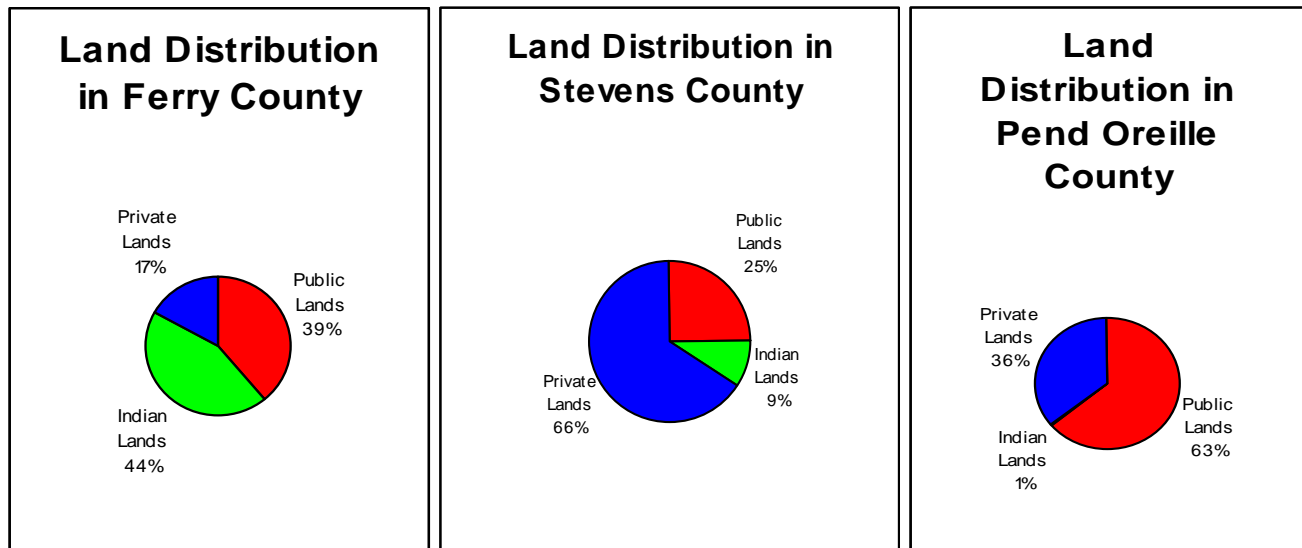
A relatively large percentage of the region is publicly owned, particularly in Ferry and Pend Oreille counties. The majority of property in the region is held either as public property or as Tribal Lands. Private land is becoming more and more expensive as the population grows and more property is developed. This factor combined with the mountainous nature of the geography is expected to produce significantly higher demands on privately held land in the future.

Management of access and use of both, publicly owned lands and Tribal lands, in the future is also a major factor affecting the adequacy of transportation facilities serving those areas.

LAND DISTRIBUTION IN NORTHEAST WASHINGTON

	Total Land	Public Lands		Federal Lands		State Lands	
		All Federal, State & Co. Acreage	% of Total Land		% of Total Land		% of Total Land
<u>County</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Land</u>
Ferry	1,409,280	575,184	40.81%	532,496	37.78%	38,256	2.71%
Stevens	1,587,840	525,280	33.08%	353,052	22.23%	162,649	10.24%
Pend Oreille	897,280	571,152	63.65%	529,532	59.02%	34,537	3.85%
	Total Land	Indian Lands		County Lands		Private Lands	
			% of Total Land		% of Total Land		% of Total Land
<u>County</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Land</u>	<u>Acreage</u>	<u>Land</u>
Ferry	1,409,280	602,492	42.75%	4,432	0.31%	231,604	16.43%
Stevens	1,587,840	131,400	8.28%	9,579	0.60%	931,160	58.64%
Pend Oreille	897,280	4,557	0.51%	7,083	0.79%	321,571	35.84%

Figure 1



Major Development Proposals (EIS required)

Industrial

A review of available environmental impact assessments and statements for major industrial development in the region between 1970 and 1990 shows that transportation issues were typically addressed in a generic manner assuming that the impacts of development would not significantly affect existing transportation facilities. In all cases, little or no comment on these statements is evident. Emphasis on transportation issues in rural areas has only recently become a criteria for extensive evaluation in such developments.

Commercial

Because of the rural nature of the region (having no city over population 5,000) commercial development has typically occurred on a small scale and only occasionally has a project been developed that required transportation site analysis. Typically, these projects are located along State routes and within incorporated cities. Normal State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review, in these cases by local agencies, has included site analysis by the Washington State Department of Transportation resulting in recommendations and or conditions to minimize the impacts of the project on transportation. During the past several years few projects have been proposed and/or constructed that included such analysis. Since 1990 these types of development appear to be increasing such as seen in the Wal-Mart, Arby's and Hearth & Home Technologies developments west of Colville and adjacent to US 395.

Recreational

The northeast region is rich in natural recreation opportunities. It is well known for a wide variety of outdoor activities and economic growth in the area has used this resource as one of its foundations. Planning efforts for recreation development have been done by the National Park Service for the Lake Roosevelt area, the U.S. Forest Service for the Colville National Forest and by Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) for the region. Other recreation planning has been done by the respective counties and cities in the region. Discussion of transportation issues in these documents is limited for recreation.

The Washington State Department of Transportation has recognized the scenic value of the region in designating portions of SR 20, SR 21, SR 31, and SR 25 as part of the Scenic Highways system. Further, a portion of SR 20 between Kettle Falls and Republic has been identified as the Sherman Pass Scenic Byway under the National Scenic Byways Program.

Housing

Commercial development of housing in the region has had and will continue to have impacts on the regional transportation system. Review of the impact is handled by the applicable city or county planning agency with technical review by WSDOT, Eastern Region when projects are anticipated to affect state routes.

Cultural Resource and Historic sites

The Washington State Department of Transportation has identified fourteen historical and cultural resource sites within the region. Because of their ability to attract visitors, the transportation facilities serving them should be evaluated recognizing existing and future service needs. Additionally, there are other sites that are being identified and/or developed that should be included as well.

Relationship to Existing Comprehensive Plans

Established Goals and Objectives

Review of available planning documents revealed that all three counties and a number of the incorporated cities of the region have addressed transportation issues. Specific goals, policies and objectives stress the importance of transportation safety, efficiency, convenience, and maximum circulation.

Cities, Towns and Counties

As cities, towns and counties update their Comprehensive Land Use Plans the RTPO will review as outlined in the Growth Management Act (GMA).

State of Washington

The Washington State Department of Transportation and the Department of Natural Resources both have extensive program responsibilities in the area. These agencies have established on-going statewide goals and objectives applicable to the region.

Indian Tribes

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) has an ongoing transportation planning process that addresses the jurisdictional responsibilities and improvement efforts to be accomplished on highways and roads to, from and within the Kalispel, Spokane and Colville Indian reservations. Transportation plans have been developed for each of the three reservations within the region and are an integral part of the development of county road improvements on the reservations. The relationship between this plan and the improvement plans of the BIA will be coordinated to fully compliment the needs and goals of the tribes, as well as, the region. Further, each tribal government has developed or is in the process of developing comprehensive plans for their jurisdictions and has addressed transportation issues in them.

Federal Agencies.

The U.S. Forest Service, the National Park Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs all have program responsibilities in the region with broader goals and objectives applied to the area.

Linkages to Growth Management and Other Future Planning Goals

Critical Areas and Resource Lands

Under the conditions of the 1990 Growth Management Act, all three counties in the region have identified the critical areas and resource lands located within their jurisdictions. Those areas will be considered in the development of transportation projects in the region by each jurisdiction.

Countywide Planning Policies

Planning under Growth Management, Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties have undertaken the development of planning policies to act as guidelines during the development of their Comprehensive Plans. Those policies will reflect consideration of local and regional transportation issues.

Comprehensive Plans

With the development of each county's Comprehensive Plan under GMA, a separate transportation element will address the transportation concerns and needs of each county. Those elements will be integrated into this regional transportation plan upon their adoption.

Water Quality

The State of Washington's Water Resources Act of 1971, states that "perennial rivers and streams be retained with base flows necessary to provide for preservation of wildlife, fish, aesthetic and other environmental values, and other navigational values" (Chapter 90.54 RCW). Also, lakes and ponds are to be retained substantially in their natural condition.

The State of Washington has an antidegradation policy which states: "Existing beneficial uses shall be maintained and protected and no further degradation which would interfere with or become injurious to existing beneficial uses will be allowed (WAC 173-201-035 [8][a])." State policy also provides for reduction in the quantity of high quality waters when "it is clear that overriding considerations of the public interest will be served". (WAC 173-201-035 [8] [c]).

The Washington Forest Practices Rules and Regulations (1/88), written to comply with State water quality laws, regulate timber management activities, including road construction, on non-federal lands except the Colville Indian Reservation throughout the region.

The State of Washington, the Bureau of Land Management, the Province of British Columbia, the Colville Confederated Tribes, the Spokane Tribe of Indians, the Kalispel Tribe of Indians, the U.S. Government, and the State of Idaho all-own land in or adjacent to the northeast region. Their plans, policies and controls vary from agency to agency, but all address water quality issues as they are affected by road construction.

Nonpoint source pollution refers to general pollution that cannot be traced or pinpointed to a specific source. Highways and motorized traffic are known contributors as highway runoff carries pollutants to waterways through both infiltration and uncontrolled drainage ways. The State of Washington reviews monitoring information, addresses revisions or additions, identifies problems, proposes treatment, and writes and submits reports to the Environmental Protection Agency. Water Quality Standards for waters of the State of Washington (Washington Administrative Code Chapter 173-201 WAC) are intended to be met through the application of Best Management Practices.

The State also manages impacts on water quality through the development and implementation of the Shorelines Master Program, which requires counties to develop guidelines and regulations to protect the quality of the State's waterways.

The U.S. Army, Corps of Engineers, under the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, monitors and regulates the placement of fill materials in "Waters of the United States". Their jurisdiction extends to streams with flows greater than 5 cubic feet per second and to adjacent and contiguous wetlands greater than 5 acres in size. Water quality is one of the specific issues addressed in the Corps' permitting process.

Air Quality

The region has not been identified as having any non-attainment areas as defined by national standards for air quality.

A factor affecting air quality, especially in rural areas, is dust produced by traffic on unimproved roads. To date, only two regionally significant roads, Flowery Trail and Meadow Creek/Smackout Pass are unpaved. Air quality concerns have been raised because of dust on these roads.

Noise Abatement

Noise abatement measures are typically required only when high volume facilities are constructed near residential areas. No facilities within the region have been identified that would require such action.

Land Use Forecasts

Population

The 2000 Census and OFM projections through the year 2010 for the three counties are represented below in Figure 2. Recent increases in actual population growth are exceeding the 1990 based growth projections. Further data will be required to establish the significance of the current growth trend and how it will affect longer-range forecasts. In order to more clearly evaluate population growth it is necessary to consider other relevant data such as housing and economic development.

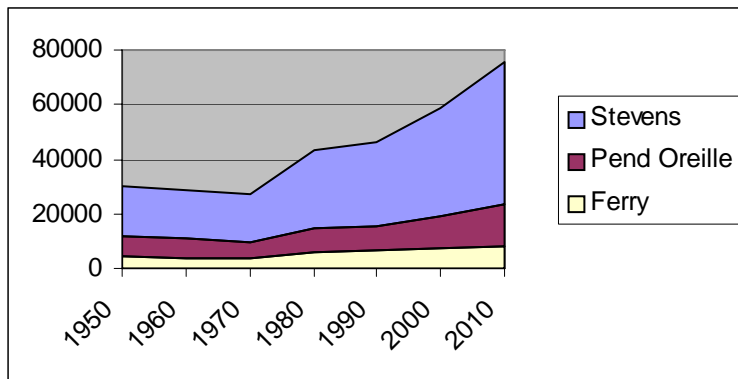


Figure 2¹
Population Projections

Housing

In 1992, Stevens County used housing data combined with population and county building permit information to produce a 15-year population growth forecast. This type of study done on a district or block level within the three counties could provide specific growth projections that would identify future transportation issues.

Employment

Another consideration, although less directly applicable to primary transportation issues, are unemployment percentages. Unemployment is one of the major factors used in measuring economic vitality. Extended to transportation, unemployment can be used as a secondary indicator in balancing growth measurements. In this region, average annual unemployment percentages have consistently ranged between 9 and 17% roughly twice that of the percentages statewide. When evaluating population and employment growth, regional unemployment figures would tend to dampen anticipated growth because of their higher rates.

¹ Data Source: 2000 Census, U.S. Census Bureau, Projections: Tri-County Economic Development District 2001

Land Supply / Ownership

In *Public Lands in Washington: Statistical Summary*, Richard Dunford and David Zander identified the public lands held in each of the counties in the region. This study was published in 1983. The amount of land available for development and/or access and use by the public varies widely between each county. The availability of land will be a critical factor in the region along with population densities and current uses.

Concurrency

The Growth Management Act, which authorized this plan, also mandates that counties planning under the act establish concurrency standards that insure adequate facilities are in place concurrent with development. Concurrency is defined as being met when facilities and services are in place within six years of the completion of a new development requiring those new services or facilities.

Ferry, Stevens and Pend Oreille Counties will address these issues when they reach the appropriate stage of their respective planning processes. The WSDOT is also moving forward in their policies to insure that proposed development address concurrency issues before construction, where applicable.

Economic Development Plans and Strategies

Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD) prepares an annual Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for the region, addressing a broad range of issues that affect economic development. This document reviews previous actions, addresses known conditions, identifies potential solutions and establishes goals for future implementation.

As a direct result of long-term regional economic instability and the need to diversify the region's economic base, TEDD has an ongoing priority of encouraging the formation, retention, recruitment and expansion of existing business/industry. The CEDS identified adverse economic conditions that are causes of the underdeveloped nature of the region's economy. These conditions have been addressed in six goals established in the CEDS. Among these goals are specific transportation improvements that are considered essential to the economic well being of the region and its communities.

Other organizations within the region are actively engaged in developing and promoting economic growth in their respective areas. These groups include local business organizations, such as Pend Oreille Economic Development Council, Colville Economic Development Committee, Chewelah Economic Development Committee, Republic Public Development Authority, respective Chambers of Commerce established in the regions cities, towns and tribal business development organizations.

Current and Future Deficiencies

Identified needs for state highways within the NEW-RTPO area:

- US 395 MP 188.79 to MP 193.65 Montgomery Rd to Loon Lake add lanes
\$24.70 million
- US 395 MP 193.65 to MP 234.48 Loon Lake to Colville add lanes
\$121.00 million
- US 395 MP 237.72 to MP 246.38 Spanish Prairie Rd to Ferry Co Line add lanes
\$45.00 million
- SR 20 MP 301.79 to MP 305.16 Republic to SR 21 add lanes
\$6.70 million
- SR 25 MP 75.44 to MP 81.07 Nichols Rd to SR 395 add passing lanes
\$6.70 million
- SR 291 MP 11.07 to MP 13.06 Spokane Co Line to Swenson Rd
Nine Mile Bypass
\$11.00 million

The most significant deficiency identified is all weather serviceability on county and some state roads that produce economic impacts by posting reduced weight limits for trucks at certain times of the year. Recognizing that the service objectives are consistent with WSDOT statewide service objectives, it is not surprising to see limited deficiencies in this analysis.

Level Of Service Standards

The level of service standards (LOS) establish a gauge for evaluating the performance of existing systems and planning for future systems to meet future needs. Essentially, level of service is defined as a qualitative measure describing operational conditions within the traffic stream or on the transit system, and the perception by motorists and/or passengers. A “level of service” generally describes these conditions in terms of such factors as speed and travel times, freedom to maneuver, traffic interruptions, comfort and convenience, and safety.

The NEW-RTPO considered the different level of service categories. Because of the lack of local highway development funds, a higher LOS could not be considered. Also, a higher LOS could hamper economic development in the region.

Therefore, the following LOS has been established for the three-county area:

- LOS C for rural areas;
- LOS D for urban areas is established for all State Highways; and
- LOS D is established for all other designated regionally significant transportation systems.

Financial Plan

Analysis of Funding Capability

The responsibility for determining the application of funding for transportation projects (programming) in rural areas is significantly different from urban areas. In urban areas over population 50,000, a federally mandated regional Metropolitan Planning Organization performs planning and some programming functions. In rural areas, there are no such federal mandates and individual state and local jurisdictions are required to plan and program for their own specific projects. Consequently, the involvement of the RTPO in planning and programming is on the basis of support and recommendation to its participating members.

Each jurisdiction in the region funds its projects through a variety of sources. Often the type of project determines the source of funding.

Application of future funding to needs

Complicating the funding issue are the varying sets of construction standards and regulations that apply to federal, state and local projects. As an example, while federal funding may be more readily available for state and county projects, the extensive list of federal project standards and conditions tend to drive project costs significantly higher than state or locally funded work.

As a result, the cost of any given project, regardless of priority, may range widely from as little as a few thousand dollars per mile to over one million dollars per mile.

Another consideration in funding a given project is the determination of when the project is required. A project with high regional priority may not receive the same ranking from the responsible jurisdiction; therefore, a regional project with a high regional priority may not be constructed as early as a regional project with a lower regional priority.

These conditions again point to the programming jurisdiction as a key factor in determining the specifics of how and when funds will be applied to projects.

Regional Transportation System Improvement Strategy

Identification of Future Project Implementation

Each City, County and Tribe maintains a current six-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Each project is listed with its corresponding regional road segment. The purpose of this comparison is to match planned projects with regional needs to show where additional funding and programming are required.

Identification of Alternative Solutions

It is recognized that some regionally prioritized needs will be difficult to program. In these cases, consideration of alternative sources of funding or other means of meeting those needs must be found. These include the Enhancement, Statewide and Safety elements of the Surface Transportation Program of the federal TEA-21.

A further alternative is to identify common project needs by type and work to promote the creation of a program element to address the specific need. An example of this alternative can be seen in the recent development of the Rural Economic Diversification Support Program promoted by the RTPO, member counties and WSDOT to address the severe economic hardships brought on rural communities when essential freight routes are weight restricted due to seasonal conditions.

All alternatives should be considered and the most viable should be actively pursued to successful resolution. Some alternatives may not appear to meet the apparent need, but should be evaluated until they're shown to be inapplicable. Cost benefit analyses or least cost planning must be used when determining project outcomes and funding.

Regional Transportation Plan Implementation

In the region, each jurisdiction is responsible for identifying, planning, programming and constructing any transportation projects within the scope of their responsibility. The RTPO has no specific authority to fund or direct jurisdictional transportation improvements. The involvement of each jurisdiction in the RTPO (with the exception of WSDOT) is voluntary and consequently the results of the regional planning process takes the form of recommendations for consideration in each jurisdiction's overall program responsibilities.

Consequently, this plan is a tool to be used by those participating jurisdictions to assist them in programming efforts. For cities and counties, these recommendations should be viewed as positive options that recognize their own needs as well as their neighbors' needs and the needs of the region as a whole.

The same perspective is true for WSDOT with the additional consideration that state legislation requires the incorporation of these recommendations in WSDOT plans for transportation improvements on state routes within the region. Implementation of the Regional Plan following its adoption will consist of the following elements:

- A. Consideration of regionally significant (prioritized) projects in city, county and WSDOT TIPs. This action should include scheduling and programming as appropriate within each jurisdiction.
- B. Action by the RTPO, its lead agency and member jurisdictions to seek and obtain alternative funding for regionally significant projects not fundable under normal programs and not programmed in the TIPs.
- C. Review of the inventory and data to verify accuracy and improve forecasted needs. Verification shall be an ongoing cooperative process involving appropriate members of the RTPO to insure consistency with State and local guidelines.
- D. Continuation of public involvement that includes open opportunities for review and comment on the scope and actions of the plan and allows for timely revision of relevant aspects of the document in conformance with State guidelines and the desires of member jurisdictions.
- E. Amendments to the Regional Transportation Plan may be requested, at any time, by the public, the RTPO Technical Advisory Committee or the Regional Transportation Governing/Policy Board. The RTPO will consider amendments to the plan concurrently with its biennial review of the plan and annual review of the TIPs of the participating jurisdictions.

The amendment process for the plan shall include timely (30 day) public notification to the regions newspapers in coordination with the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Performance Monitoring

Performance monitoring should focus on the accuracy of the regional data and priorities compared to jurisdictional application and the ability of the participants to access alternative funding sources to complete regional priority projects. It is projected that those actions incorporated into the ongoing regional planning process will accurately monitor the implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan and lead to the overall success in addressing the significant transportation needs of the region.