

Office of Freight Strategy and Policy

Freight Implementation Plan

November 2002

Introduction

The importance of freight mobility to Washington State cannot be overstated. It is freight mobility that brings materials or components to the worksite to produce value added goods or services. Without efficient freight movement, our agricultural bounty would be unable to arrive at markets and access to foreign markets for all of our products would not happen.

A few facts relative to the importance of freight movement to our economic well being include:

- One in four jobs in the state are dependent on foreign trade¹.
- Forty-three percent of the nation's wheat travels on Washington rivers².
- Since NAFTA (1993), truck traffic at the Canadian border has increased almost one hundred percent.³
- Freight and goods tonnage moved by road in the state has increased 116 percent since 1980.⁴
- Puget Sound deep-water ports have the second highest level of container traffic in the United States.¹

These impressive statistics are due in part to our geographic location, natural deep-water harbors and a developed river system that provides transport, irrigation to croplands, and hydroelectric power. These advantages should not be taken for granted and can be negated by our failure to invest in freight systems and infrastructure.

As part of a 2001 Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) reorganization, the [Office of Freight Strategy and Policy](#) was created. The purpose of this office is to focus, coordinate and provide leadership for freight issues. The Transportation Commission's FY02 Work Program requires the Office of Freight Strategy and Policy to "develop an implementation plan for focusing and coordinating WSDOT freight initiatives within the 2003-2013 Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) and 03-05 budget proposals". In compliance with this directive, the [Freight Implementation Plan](#) was created.

¹ Washington Association of Public Ports

² WSDOT Rail Office

³ IMTC 2001 Resource Manual

⁴ WSDOT CIPP 2001

Purpose

The Freight Implementation Plan is intended to show a comprehensive overview of WSDOT internal freight strategies and elements. Its purpose is to lay the groundwork and create an environment that produces projects that move freight.

The Freight Implementation Plan identifies who is working on WSDOT freight-related issues, what they are doing and when they are going to do it, and how it fits together with existing plans and budgets.

The Freight Implementation Plan is a dynamic document that will change frequently as new information becomes available, programs move forward, and budgets change.

Background

In 1998, the state legislature directed WSDOT to focus on five primary goals, one of which is freight mobility. The goal is to ensure that freight movement is reliable and transportation investments support Washington's strategic trade advantage. The objectives are to reduce barriers that cause delays and maintain freight movement in the event of alterations to the Columbia/Snake River system.

A number of freight mobility and related issues are identified in the 2003-2022 WTP and the 2001 Freight and Goods Transportation System Update, including

- **Removal of Barriers** to freight movement, such as conflicts between rail and highway traffic; highway capacity, congestion, and condition; access to intermodal transfer facilities; and other barriers that cause delays.
- **Collection and Analysis of Essential Data** to guide designation and implementation of a freight and goods transportation system. Immediate data needs include but are not limited to truck origin, destination, and commodity type.
- **Maintain Washington's Strategic Trade Advantage** by enabling competitive freight movement through transportation investments. Delays lead to increased delivery costs and inefficient delivery of goods and services, which will lead to the loss of Washington's competitive edge. Planning for future increases in port imports and exports and gross tonnage for freight moved is essential.
- **Obtain Financial Support** for investments in freight transportation services and infrastructure. Include freight strategy concerns in the development of highway system plans.
- **Streamline Laws and Regulations** impacting freight transportation.

- **Find Alternatives to the Snake/Columbia River** barge freight transport system in the event that Snake River dam breaching proposals become reality.

In order to address these issues with success, coordination between WSDOT freight elements is essential. Of critical importance are junctions where freight is transferred from one mode to another and pathways that connect one freight system to another. The Freight Implementation Plan provides a basis from which improved coordination can move forward.