

Freight Elements at WSDOT

[The Washington Transportation Plan](#)

The Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) is the state's blueprint for implementation programs and budget development to be pursued in coming years. The 2003-2022 update of the 1997-2016 WTP contains an overview of current conditions facing the statewide transportation system, an assessment of the state's transportation investment needs for the next 20 years, and a statewide policy for transportation.

Modes of freight movement identified in the WTP include air freight, rail freight, short-haul intermodal (trucks and trains moving commodities less than 700 miles), highway freight, and water freight (barges). Also included are ports and junctions where these transportation modes meet. The tonnage of goods and freight moved on state roads and through state ports has increased steadily since 1980 and is expected to double from 1995 to 2020. Washington State enjoys a strategic trade advantage due to its heavy volume of import/export business. When goods cannot be moved efficiently from origin to destination, this trade advantage and the economic vitality it provides are threatened.

As previously stated, the freight policy goal of the WTP is to ensure that freight movement is reliable and transportation investments support Washington's strategic trade advantage. The main objectives are to remove barriers that delay the effective and reliable movement of freight and to maintain the ability to move freight and goods in the event of alterations to the Columbia/Snake River system as a transportation right-of-way. Problems that undermine the freight policy goal include:

- traffic congestion, which causes delays in freight movement and increased delivery costs,
- conflicts between rail and roadway traffic,
- substandard bridges and roadways unable to safely convey freight traffic,
- delays at the U.S./Canadian border,
- delays at weigh stations, and
- inefficient port access.

WSDOT Freight Programs and Elements

The movement of freight and goods in Washington occurs in a wide variety of ways via several modes of transportation. Freight programs and freight-specific elements at WSDOT are found in several places within the organization, depending on the nature of the freight movement ([Figure 1](#), p. v). These programs and elements include:

- [Highway System Plan](#) (Planning and Capital Program Management Division)
- I-1 Mobility/Congestion Relief Program (Planning and Capital Program Management Division)
- I-3 Economic Initiatives Program (Planning and Capital Program Management Division)
- [Advanced Technology Branch](#) (Engineering and Regional Operations Division)
- [Motor Carrier Services](#) (Engineering and Regional Operations Division)
- [Freight Rail](#) (Public Transportation and Rail Division)
- [Freight Action Strategy \(FAST\) Corridor](#) (Urban Corridors Office)
- Air Cargo and Air Freight (Aviation Division)
- Private Sector Economic Development (Transportation Economic Partnerships Division)
- Commercial Vehicle Management (Washington State Ferries)
- [Strategic Freight Transportation Analysis \(SFTA\)](#) (Transportation Research Office)
- [Transportation Data Office](#) (Planning and Capital Program Management Division)

More details about these programs and elements are provided in [Table 1: WSDOT Freight Programs Information](#), following page 8. [Table 2: WSDOT Projects with Freight Applications](#) provides past and current WSDOT freight project information by program. Completed and current law projects with freight elements are shown on maps in [Figures 2 & 3](#) (pp. vi & vii) (Washington State map and Puget Sound Region map). [Table 3: How WSDOT Freight Programs Meet Washington Transportation Plan Freight Investment Goals](#) shows the relationship of WSDOT freight programs to the Washington Transportation Plan. A list of 2002 current law WSDOT freight improvement projects is presented in [Appendix A](#).

[Strategic Freight Transportation Analysis \(SFTA\)](#) (Updated Nov. 1, 2002)

The Strategic Freight Transportation Analysis (SFTA) is a statewide research and implementation project sponsored by WSDOT, the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board, cities, and counties via contract with Washington State University. The project is designed to analyze existing conditions and recommend enhancements to the freight mobility transportation system in Washington State. SFTA will update and broaden the very successful Eastern Washington Intermodal Transportation Study ([EWITS](#)) of 1992-1999.

While EWITS had an Eastern Washington freight needs focus, SFTA will address the entire state. Also, SFTA will incorporate the changes to our dynamic freight system brought about by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and changes to our base economy.

The SFTA research project received funding in the amount of \$600,000 during the 2001-03 biennium. The request for funding totaled \$1.8 million over a six-year period.

The current SFTA phase (2001-03) focuses on:

- Full project scoping;
- Statewide origin and destination truck survey;
- Analysis of short line railroad economic issues with an emphasis on identifying capital and operational needs;
- Identification of a strategic resources access road network. This effort will identify the state and local road network essential for the flow of commodities vital to our economy.
- Adaptive research management, including research for identification of freight chokepoints and demand for 24-hour US/Canada border crossings.

Future efforts in the 2003-05 and 2005-07 biennia include a continuation of current work and identification of trade and traffic flows, identification of freight corridors, updating and verifying databases, identifying emerging trends, and additional adaptive research management techniques that allow the SFTA work to contribute in a timely fashion to emerging political and economic issues and assist decision makers at all levels with investment choices.

In formulating policy, SFTA will provide new data sources and analyses that will allow for strategic coordinated decision-making.