

# Executive Summary

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is committed to maintaining our existing infrastructure and improving the operations and safety of our transportation system. One of the integral parts of our project development and construction program is WSDOT's environmental policy and implementation efforts. As a part of being good stewards of the environment, WSDOT conducts all of its activities in accordance with the most current environmental protection practices. The Department also meets or exceeds its commitments by either avoiding, minimizing or appropriately mitigating adverse environmental impacts. Fulfilling these commitments requires considerable effort during all phases of a project including planning, development, construction, maintenance, and operation of our transportation systems and facilities. Strategic measures are taken in order to integrate the built and natural environments, protecting our state's environmental assets and resources. These measures are the "mitigation" we do to facilitate successful projects and meet our agency's environmental objectives and commitments.

The environmental documentation on our projects, such as an EIS, communicates to the public and other agencies exactly how impacts will be *avoided*, *minimized*, and/or *mitigated*. Specific mitigation features and related costs are project specific and vary considerably based on the proposed work and location. Plans for mitigation generally take shape as WSDOT works with other agencies at federal, tribal, state, and local levels to develop specific conditions to reconcile a project with requirements that grow from concerns about adverse impacts on the environment and other public values. Often these conditions are expressly written into the project's legally required permits; for example, under the Clean Water Act or the Shoreline Management Act.

Permit conditions might include wetland restoration, stormwater runoff treatment and control facilities, conservation of historic properties and noise walls. Each case study year has included some projects with features for the specific purpose of actually avoiding an impact, such as the placement of a retaining wall adjacent to a stream or wetland.

# Executive Summary

Two previous studies were conducted, one in 2003 that evaluated 14 projects and a second one in 2006 that evaluated seven. This study evaluates another 14 projects and follows that same methodology in its development, including the cost items listed on page 9 of this report. Context Sensitive Solutions are incorporated into the other associated mitigation categories as applicable. This study attempts to highlight only those Context Sensitive Solutions that were a significant part of the projects mitigation costs. In addition, temporary (construction) mitigation efforts are included with the particular mitigation category as applicable. As with the previous studies, this one is intended to quantify the mitigation efforts associated with our highway projects and try to identify any significant findings.

Environmental mitigation costs on WSDOT highway projects are considered by some to be too costly while others believe that it's the right thing to do regardless of cost. This presents the challenge of striking a balance between costs and providing the appropriate amount and type of mitigation. These case studies illustrate mitigation features provided for specific projects, their costs, and the drivers behind their incorporation into the projects.

The following bullet points illustrate some of the key findings from this study:

- The percent of a project's cost spent on mitigation varies greatly with the project type and location.
- Projects west of the Cascade Mountains typically have higher levels of mitigation and related costs.
- More stringent requirements for managing stormwater is one of the primary drivers that has resulted in a steady increase in stormwater mitigation costs.
- 40% of the stormwater mitigation costs for this study are related to temporary mitigation efforts.
- Right-of-way costs associated with mitigation for this study are a relatively minor portion of the total costs for mitigation.