



Cascadia Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation (UHSGT) Project

2023 Legislative Update

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Foreword

The Cascadia megaregion—connecting metropolitan Portland, the greater Seattle area, and metropolitan Vancouver, British Columbia—has experienced significant growth in recent years. With more than 3 million people expected to move into the region in the next 30 years—a more than 30% increase—regional leaders have an opportunity to choose how to respond to this growth. The Cascadia megaregion needs to grow sustainably, ensuring that people have access to affordable housing, jobs, and transportation systems across communities. Building a resilient transportation corridor can boost the potential of this region for the millions who call it home and conduct business here.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has collaborated with the state of Oregon, the province of British Columbia, the private sector, and other regional partners to explore how a high-speed, high-capacity corridor can better connect the Cascadia megaregion. The Cascadia Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation (UHSGT) Project (the Project), alongside other investments in transportation, has significant potential to link the metropolitan areas of Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia and to transform the future vitality and resilience of this region. The Cascadia megaregion has common challenges and interests, and Cascadia UHSGT could help shape and strengthen regional transportation systems, connect communities, support jobs and the economy, improve access to housing, and help decrease carbon emissions.

Previous studies have shown that Cascadia UHSGT has the potential to attract increased investment from employers in the region and create as many as 38,000 construction jobs, 3,000 operating and maintenance jobs, and 160,000 permanent new jobs across the wider economy. Cascadia UHSGT will increase the transportation network capacity, without adding a burden on existing freight rail tracks. Adding capacity to accommodate future growth will benefit business and freight movement by improving the reliable transportation of goods and people.

As directed by the Washington State Legislature, WSDOT worked together with jurisdictional partners in Oregon and British Columbia over the past year to develop approaches for governance, engagement, scenario planning, and funding for Cascadia UHSGT. These partners made substantial progress, including submitting two foundational grant applications to the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). If awarded, these federal grants would support a comprehensive and technical planning effort across the megaregion to determine how a high-speed corridor can work alongside highways, existing passenger rail, air mobility, transit, and other modes to help achieve shared regional priorities.

Partners supporting Cascadia UHSGT eagerly anticipate U.S. federal funding decisions and are ready to begin the next phase of work to understand how UHSGT can address our megaregion's challenges. An informed decision about whether to advance this transformative Project to development will require strong collaborative partnerships, robust community support and a governance structure that centers around equity, transparency, and accountability.

Project Summary

Introduction

In July 2022, the Washington State Legislature directed and provided funding for WSDOT to continue exploring Cascadia UHSGT as an approach to addressing regional growth and mobility challenges. Working in partnership with Oregon and British Columbia, including the British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure (BC MoTI), Oregon Department and Transportation (ODOT), and Oregon Metro, WSDOT has made significant progress in advancing the Project.

Prior to the Washington State Legislature's action in 2022, the governors of Oregon and Washington and the premier of British Columbia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in 2021 confirming their continued support of the Project and establishing an UHSGT Policy Committee¹ (see Appendix A). Building on three previous Cascadia UHSGT studies² completed since 2017, WSDOT and the Policy Committee advanced work in project governance, strategic engagement, funding, and scenario planning. Notably, WSDOT and the Policy Committee submitted two U.S. federal grant applications to support project planning, totaling \$198.1 million. If awarded, these grants will fund planning work over the next 2-5 years and allow for an informed decision about whether the UHSGT Project should proceed into further project development.

As directed by the Washington State Legislature, 2022 ESSB 5689, Sec. 223 (3)(e), this report details the work completed by WSDOT and the Policy Committee³ for Cascadia UHSGT from

From July 2022 to June 2023, WSDOT and the Policy Committee have made progress in continuing to study a new ultra-high-speed corridor from Portland to Seattle to Vancouver, British Columbia metropolitan areas. The activities are summarized into four workstreams, as defined by the Washington State Legislature.

Funding: Securing funding for future development of Cascadia UHSGT will require a range of strategies from public and private sources.

Governance: A structure is needed that enables Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia to work together to advance planning for the Project.

Engagement: Extensive agency, Tribal, Indigenous and community engagement is needed to ensure equitable outcomes.

Scenario Planning: Trends and uncertainties over time must be considered to make decisions and investments that will be right for the future.

¹ Inslee, Horgan, and Brown, "Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) On Committing to Advance Activities in Support of an Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Project."

² CH2M Hill Inc., "Ultra High-Speed Ground Transportation Study: Final Report"; WSP, "Ultra-High-Speed Ground Transportation Business Case Analysis: Final Report"; Washington State Department of Transportation, "Framework For The Future: Final Report."

³ Made up of public and private sector representatives from the U.S. states of Washington and Oregon and the Canadian province of British Columbia

July 2022 to June 2023. It includes:

- Recommendations for establishing a coordinating entity.
- An assessment of current activities and results relating to engagement, planning, and federal funding applications.⁴

Corridor Location

Cascadia UHSGT is a proposed new ultra-high-speed system that would connect the metropolitan areas of Portland, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia. Travel time from Portland to Seattle or Seattle to Vancouver would be approximately one-hour, with low/no emissions and speeds of up to 250 miles per hour (400 kilometers per hour).

The Project would be located within the federally designated Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor, which extends from Vancouver, British Columbia to Eugene, Oregon, enhancing multimodal connectivity with other intercity and commuter rail systems.

The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor is one of eleven corridors identified by FRA for potential high-speed rail investments to better connect communities across the U.S. and into Canada. Existing intercity travel options in the region are increasingly congested – buses and cars experience unpredictable travel times and delays on I-5; air travelers contend with airport access and security times that are sometimes longer than the actual flight times; and existing rail passengers encounter reliability issues due to insufficient rail capacity. These factors make the Cascadia corridor a strong candidate to explore the benefits of UHGST.

The term “corridor” throughout this document refers to the Project’s current geographic extension from the metropolitan areas of Vancouver, British Columbia, Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon. Extending Cascadia UHSGT to Eugene, Oregon is being considered for study at a later phase of the Project.

The Project is at an early planning stage, and route and station locations have not yet been identified. In the next phase of work, there will be a robust evaluation of project concepts informed by thorough engagement with communities and partners.

Cascadia UHSGT North Star

WSDOT and the Policy Committee agreed to an initial “North Star” as guiding principles for the Project’s planning and decision-making (see Figure 1). These principles were developed through early engagement with project partners and regional agencies. The core tenets reflect the common values of jurisdictional partners and priority outcomes as the Project moves forward. The North Star will be used to guide future Project work to ensure it is consistent with these principles.

⁴ Lias et al., Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5689.

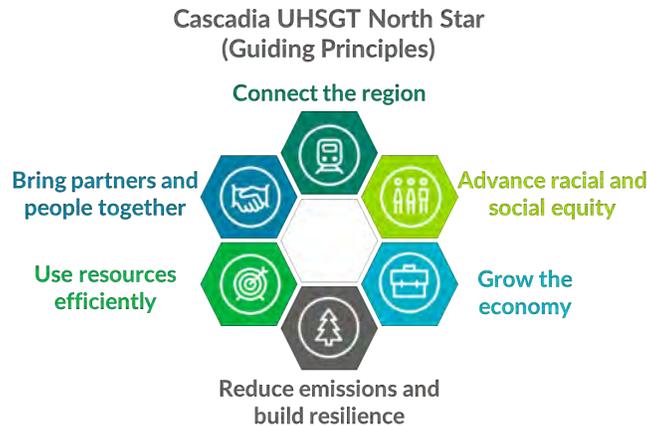


Figure 1: Cascadia UHSGT North Star

These principles confirm WSDOT and the Policy Committee’s commitment to centering environmental and social equity in decision-making, consistent with the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Justice40 and the Washington Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act requirements that 40% of the Project’s benefits accrue to disadvantaged communities. The Cascadia UHSGT engagement strategy also includes early outreach and relationship building with Tribal and Indigenous communities to ensure equitable participation in planning activities,⁵ including British Columbia’s commitment to honoring the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the “Declaration Act”).

As broader engagement and outreach begins, the North Star principles will be revised as necessary to remain relevant to WSDOT and its jurisdictional partners.

Coordination with Other Multimodal Planning Efforts

Western Washington has welcomed considerable growth in recent decades and is poised for a prosperous future. To meet current needs and plan for this growth, WSDOT is investing in significant planning efforts, including Cascadia UHSGT and I-5 planning, that will lead to a more connected, multimodal system. In 2023, WSDOT is integrating both UHSGT and I-5 planning efforts and closely coordinating with air mobility and other related work. These other efforts include transportation planning for state and local roadways, transit, rail, active transportation, freight, port, and Amtrak Cascades systems along the I-5 corridor. The integrated approach to multimodal system planning will foster long-term success, the strategic use of resources and a comprehensive understanding of area communities, their needs, and opportunities in the region.

In addition, this planning integration is responsive to direction WSDOT received from the Legislature in **Section 219 of the 2023-2025** budget proviso:

The department shall continue to **coordinate** planning work focused on the transportation system in western Washington across modes with the goal of maximizing system performance toward the policy goals in RCW 47.04.280 in the most cost-

⁵ Washington State Department of Transportation, “Framework For The Future: Final Report.” P.29.

effective manner. This coordination must include but is not limited to: The Interstate 5 highway corridor, existing rail infrastructure and future high-speed rail alignment, and commercial aviation capacity. The department must report to the transportation committees of the legislature through existing reporting mechanisms on the status of these planning efforts including, but not limited to, a long-term strategy for addressing resilience of the transportation system in western Washington through consideration of changing demand, modal integration, and preservation needs. The coordinated work must include an analysis of different alternatives to promote system resilience, including performance and cost of each scenario.

Achievements to Date

The Policy Committee has guided Cascadia UHSGT progress over the past year. Regular meetings bring together senior staff and executives from agencies in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia, and enable deep collaboration, building the groundwork for the potential award of federal funding.

Over the past fiscal year, major Project accomplishments include:

Funding

- Developing an initial funding strategy for early project planning, including submitting two U.S. federal funding applications for the FRA Federal-State Partnership for Intercity Passenger Rail Grant Program (FSP) and the Corridor Identification Program (CID).⁶

Governance

- Developing a recommended governance structure to guide Cascadia UHSGT through project planning.
- Creating a work plan to establish the planning-phase governance structure and prepare for FSP funds, if awarded.

Engagement

- Developing and aligning key principles to guide Cascadia UHSGT engagement in collaboration with Project partners.
- Drafting an outline for the strategic engagement plan that will support implementation of a potential FSP grant award.

WSDOT and the Policy Committee had an unprecedented opportunity to submit two federal funding grant applications in early 2023 to the U.S. FRA for Cascadia UHSGT planning, totaling \$198.1 million.

The support from the Policy Committee, coupled with \$50 million in matching funds from the Washington State Legislature, enabled the application submissions.

⁶ The FRA CID Program requires use of proven technologies that are ready for deployment and implementation; unproven technologies are not eligible for entry into the Program.

Scenario Planning

- Developing a baseline for analysis and an initial assessment of key trends impacting the potential role for Cascadia UHSGT within the megaregion.
- Creating an approach, integrated with the I-5 Master Plan and other multimodal efforts, for evaluating current and future trends and options for in-depth scenario planning and business case development after potential obligation of FSP funding.

See Figure 2 for a summary of Project activities between July 2022 – June 2023.

Cascadia UHSGT 1-Year Review July 2022 - June 2023

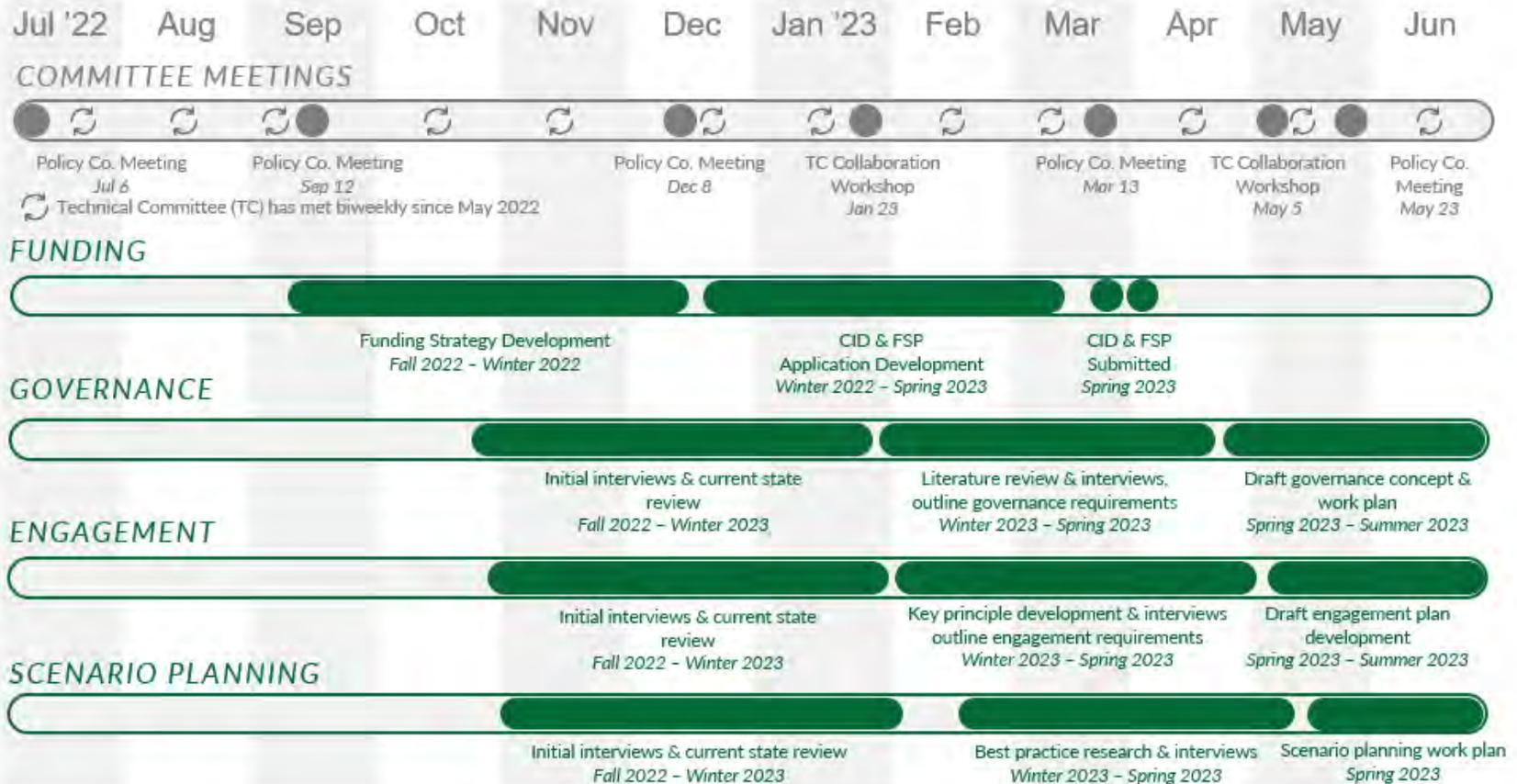


Figure 2: Cascadia UHSGT 1-Year Progress Review

Funding Outlook

WSDOT and the Policy Committee developed a “collaborative approach to prepare and apply for potential future federal, state, and provincial funding opportunities, including strategies involving the private sector.”⁷ This work is supported by \$150 million in matching funds set aside by the Washington State Legislature in 2022 for U.S. federal grant opportunities, with \$50 million available in the coming biennium. In the past year, WSDOT and the Policy Committee have identified and applied for two potential U.S. federal grant opportunities for the Project – the FRA’s FSP and CID grant programs. These grants programs were selected to:

- Maximize federal funding by leveraging available matching funds from Washington state
- Support a thorough and comprehensive planning effort
- Align with megaregion priorities and key principles

WSDOT intends to use this early-stage funding to establish a strong planning foundation for Cascadia UHSGT. Lessons learned from other megaprojects have noted a lack of early project planning undermines the success of a project during development and construction. Consistent with recommendations published by the Mobility Innovation Center at the University of Washington,⁸ WSDOT has committed to invest in early planning for UHSGT, in coordination with other planning efforts across the region, to establish broad-based agency and community consensus before proceeding with development. If federal funding applications are not successful this year, WSDOT and the jurisdictional partners will work together to develop an approach to move the Project forward.

U.S. Federal Funding Applications Submitted

The U.S. Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) was passed by Congress in November 2021 providing up to \$973 billion for transportation investments, including \$66 billion for rail development. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) established a Strategic Plan with the following goals to guide the investment of this historic funding:

- Equity
- Climate and sustainability
- Safety
- Economic strength and global competitiveness
- Transformation
- Organizational excellence

The USDOT Strategic Plan goals are in direct alignment with the Cascadia UHSGT North Star,

⁷ Lias et al., 81.

⁸ Whittington et al., “Keeping It On The Tracks High-Speed Rail Success and Lessons Learned Draft Report.”

creating synergy between the objectives of the UHSGT jurisdictional partners and the USDOT and FRA funding programs. WSDOT and the Policy Committee submitted grant applications to the FRA’s CID and FSP Programs seeking a total of \$198.1 million in U.S. federal funding to support Project Planning, the initial development stage for a capital rail project according to the FRA (Figure 3). The completion of Project Planning, which typically takes 2-5 years, will include developing a detailed business case that will provide enough information to make an informed decision about whether the Project should proceed into Project Development. This follows the design of the FSP and CID Programs where projects advance through planning in stages, evaluating feasibility before proceeding to the next stage.

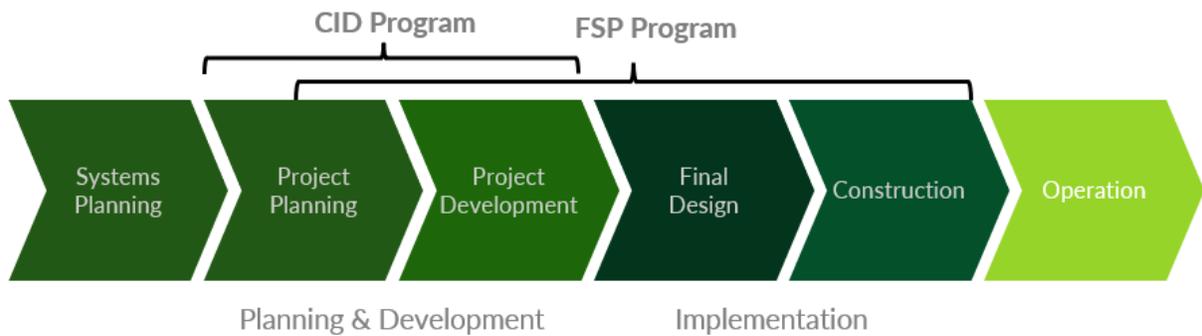


Figure 3: FRA Project Development Lifecycle Overview

CID Program

The CID Program⁹ is a new grant program established under the BIL that will be the primary federal funding mechanism for developing a pipeline of passenger rail projects. Under this program, selected projects will receive an initial \$500,000 to support early planning and will be given priority consideration for other federal programs throughout the Project Lifecycle.

FSP Program

The FSP Program is intended to fund projects that expand or establish new intercity passenger rail service, and for existing services, reduce the state of good repair backlog or improve performance. The BIL allocated \$12 billion in FSP funding for fiscal years FY2022 to 2026 to projects outside the Northeast Corridor, with over \$4.4 billion designated for FY2022 to FY2023. The FSP funding would support the following activities for Cascadia UHSGT:

- Engagement and outreach
- Program management
- Pre-NEPA¹⁰ conceptual engineering and environmental analysis, including appropriate environmental processes in British Columbia

⁹ WSDOT submitted a separate CID application for Amtrak Cascades. Through the CID Program, investments in Amtrak Cascades provide a nearer-term solution to address immediate community and intercity transportation needs, while also building a foundation for future UHSGT service.

¹⁰ National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a U.S. law mandating federal agencies to evaluate environmental impacts of their proposed actions, with pre-NEPA activities being preparatory steps before this assessment begins.

- Organizational capacity and legal and regulatory assessments
- Business case and strategic planning

At the conclusion of these funded activities, Cascadia UHSGT will have completed a high-level conceptual design, developed a blueprint for project delivery capacity building, governance, and organization, and engaged partners and the public along the corridor.

Private Sector Participation and Support

As the Project advances through Planning, engagement with the private sector will be important. This engagement could include gathering input from industry experts, investors, and relevant partners to gain insights; leveraging expertise, innovations, and building relationships; and exploring funding and financing models that will maximize the long-term benefits of the Project. Additionally, WSDOT will consider how to integrate complementary opportunities in the Project, such as broadband, electrification, and utilities services, which may create opportunities for additional public-private partnerships.

While WSDOT and the Policy Committee continue to explore and consider private sector participation and support throughout Project Planning, any decision to engage with the private sector must also consider the long-term sustainability of the Project and partnership beyond the Planning phase. As the Project advances, opportunities for private sector financial participation and the appropriate delivery model(s) will need to be assessed through a robust market sounding, business case analyses, and subsequent procurement processes.

Next Steps

Cascadia UHSGT must have a proactive approach to funding the current and future Project stages. A project of this scale will take many years to develop and will require sustained resources. WSDOT and the Policy Committee will continue to develop the funding strategy to identify, assess, and pursue funding and financing opportunities across funding sources, including U.S. and Canadian federal, state, provincial, private, and other sources. The funding strategy will:

- Target funding opportunities based on priority Project needs.
- Strategically integrate financing opportunities for sustained Project support.
- Update the strategy according to Project activities and evolving needs.
- Assess the potential for private sector participation in the funding strategy and utilize other innovative financing tools.

Governance

As directed by ESSB 5689, Sec. 223 (3)(e), WSDOT and the Policy Committee developed a recommendation for a governance structure to guide Cascadia UHSGT through Project Planning. The recommendation for an initial governance structure (the Coordinating Structure) will pave the way to establish a more formal Coordinating Entity when the Project is awarded federal funding. The Coordinating Entity will have the necessary authority to implement and execute Project Planning work. Before then, the Coordinating Structure will define the roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures, reporting, and communication norms for the Coordinating Entity to enable its success.

A governance structure with balanced and diverse membership, including Tribal and Indigenous communities, equity representatives, and private sector partners, among others, will enable joint decision-making. The governance structure will oversee and implement Project Planning with anticipated funds from the FSP Program.

Current Governance

As guided by the 2021 MOU and 2022 legislation, WSDOT convened a Policy Committee for the Project comprising:

- Four members of the Washington State Legislature
- Representatives from:
 - British Columbia Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure
 - British Columbia Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat
 - Cascadia Innovation Corridor
 - Oregon Department of Transportation
 - Oregon Metro
 - Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)
 - TransLink
 - Washington State Department of Transportation

The Policy Committee established a Technical Committee which consists of senior staff from most Policy Committee organizations. The Technical Committee works closely with WSDOT to co-develop legislative deliverables and seek Policy Committee guidance.

Approach to Developing a Governance Structure

To develop the recommendation for a governance structure, WSDOT conducted an extensive literature review of comparable infrastructure and rail projects and organizations, fact-finding

interviews with relevant project leaders, and multiple Technical Committee working sessions to develop governance concepts. Collaboration with the Technical Committee was instrumental in co-creating and developing consensus around the proposed structure.

Literature Review and Fact-Finding Interviews

Several relevant projects and organizations were researched to understand early-stage governance structures and lessons learned. Projects and organizations examined had one or more of the following features:

- Cross-border in nature (e.g., Gordie-Howe International Bridge, the Columbia River Treaty).
- Pacific Northwest multi-jurisdictional projects (e.g., I-5 Interstate Bridge Replacement, Canada Line).
- Current North American high-speed rail projects (e.g., California High-Speed Rail, Toronto-Ottawa-Montreal High-Frequency Rail).

WSDOT and the Policy Committee also reviewed the 2023 report by the University of Washington on lessons learned for high-speed rail which helped inform the recommended structure.¹¹

Developing a Draft Governance Structure

WSDOT developed a draft governance structure that considered lessons learned from the review of relevant projects and organizations and accounted for the scope of decisions and coordination required during early planning. Some of the key high-level considerations for the structure included:

- Coordination and joint decision-making between the jurisdictional partners are necessary to deliver a multimillion-dollar planning phase and prepare joint planning products.
- WSDOT assumes a lead role in the governance of Cascadia UHSGT given its role as lead applicant for FRA funding.
- Tribal and Indigenous communities will have an important role in the Project.
- The governance structure must create opportunities for all voices to be heard, including disadvantaged and overburdened communities.
- Elected officials should have defined roles.
- The governance structure must consider the distinct regional planning process in each jurisdiction.
- Some Project Planning activities will be corridor-wide¹² in nature while others will be

¹¹ Whittington et al., "Keeping It On The Tracks High-Speed Rail Success and Lessons Learned."

¹² The term "corridor-wide" is defined in the governance structure as "pan-regional" and refers to matters that span across or engage multiple jurisdictions in Washington, Oregon, and/or British Columbia.

localized in a specific region.

Jurisdictional Partner Working Sessions

The draft governance structure was reviewed during multiple discussions with Technical Committee member agencies and organizations. This input was used to refine the structure and identify any potential organizational pitfalls. Based on these discussions, WSDOT and the Policy Committee were able to recommend an initial Coordinating Structure.

Key Features of the Initial Coordinating Structure

The initial Coordinating Structure includes the three levels of decision-making – state and provincial elected officials, the Executive Steering Committee, and Project Leadership. The specific roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures, reporting, and communication norms will be developed in the process of formalizing the Coordinating Entity.

Decision-Making Structure

State and Provincial Elected Officials (jurisdictional leaders, legislative bodies, policymakers): At the highest level, the governors of Washington and Oregon and the premier of British Columbia, along with their respective legislatures and cabinet, establish the mandate and direction of the Project consistent with strategic priorities and policies of each jurisdiction. The specifics of policymaker involvement will be calibrated to align with each jurisdiction's established practices.

Illustrative key decision: Recommendation at conclusion of Project Planning whether to proceed to Project Development.

Executive Steering Committee: Composed of executive leadership from each jurisdiction's state and provincial transportation agencies and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), the Executive Steering Committee offers critical oversight and guidance for the Project, balancing competing objectives and allocating resources effectively. The Executive Steering Committee oversees Project Leadership and makes policy level Project Planning decisions.

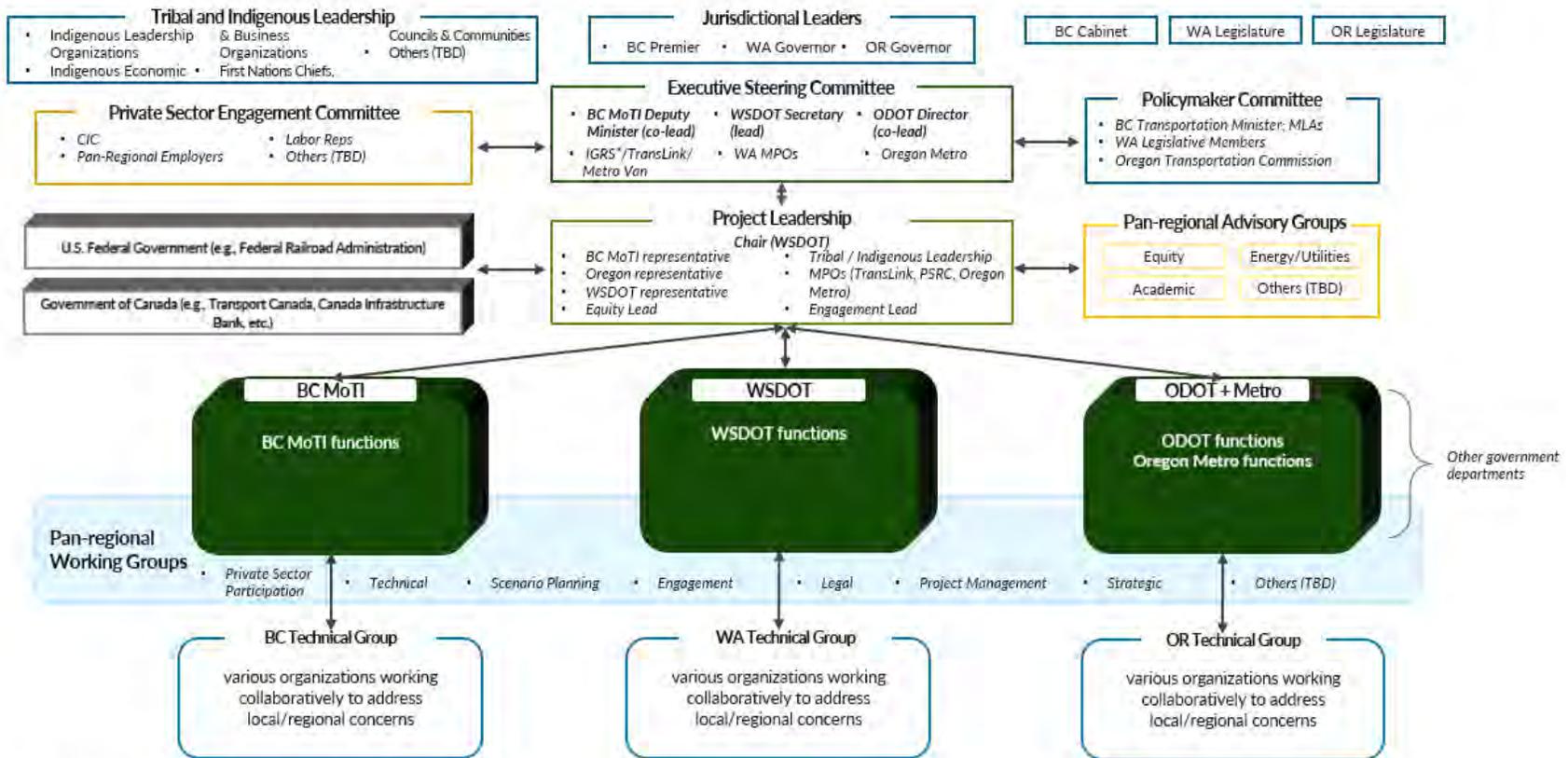
Illustrative key decisions: Allocation of Project Planning funding, determining Coordinating Entity structure, recommendation whether to proceed to Project Development.

Project Leadership: This committee is responsible for managing the Project and coordinating technical groups, working groups, and committees to drive Project execution. Project Leadership makes recommendations on key Project decisions to the Executive Steering Committee. Membership includes one representative from each lead agency (i.e., WSDOT, BC MoTI, and ODOT) who will oversee the work of their respective agency.

Illustrative key decisions: Negotiation of FRA funding (led by WSDOT), recommendations to the Executive Steering Committee, hiring supporting staff and consultants.

Membership and Roles

The following diagram illustrates the recommended initial Coordinating Structure:



*British Columbia Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat

Figure 4: Recommended Initial Coordinating Structure

The initial Coordinating Structure, which will be enacted through appropriate agreements, includes various committees and working groups to guide Cascadia UHSGT through Project Planning as shown in Figure 4:

- **Jurisdictional Leaders and Legislative Bodies:** Sets the high-level policy direction for the Project. The governors and premier are represented to reflect the highest executive decision-making authority in each jurisdiction, where the recommendation whether to proceed to Project Development is made. The legislative decision-making process differs for each of the jurisdictional partners, so a visual representation of the decision-making reporting lines has not been made.
- **Policymaker Committee:** Engages with the Executive Steering Committee and provides input on relevant policy matters. This committee acts as a liaison between the Project and policymakers, ensuring that legislative bodies remain informed on the Project. The committee includes elected or appointed state and provincial officials interested in developing a common understanding of policy matters across the megaregion and is intended to preserve the Project's long-term sustainability through political changes.
- **Tribal and Indigenous Leadership:** Ensures that voices, interests, and rights of Tribal and Indigenous communities are integrated in decision-making at the executive and senior level. The Coordinating Structure identifies the intent to engage broadly with communities and partners at various levels, though Tribal and Indigenous partnership will be determined and defined in partnership with Tribal and Indigenous communities.
- **Executive Steering Committee:** Provides oversight and guidance to effectively allocate resources, oversees the Project Leadership Committee, and holds project decision-making authority. Composed of executives from each lead agency with WSDOT's Secretary as lead, BC MoTI and ODOT counterparts as co-leads, and supported by executives from PSRC, Metro Vancouver, and Oregon Metro to ensure regional transportation and land-use planning considerations are included in decision-making.
- **Project Leadership:** Makes recommendations on key Project decisions to the Executive Steering Committee, manages Project Planning activities, and coordinates technical groups, working groups, and committees to drive Project execution. The Project Leadership is composed of senior staff from each Executive Committee member organization (led by WSDOT), Tribal and Indigenous leadership and representative leads for equity and engagement.
- **Federal agencies:** Liaise with respective lead agencies to support the Project. Ensures project alignment with federal policies, regulations, and grant obligations. WSDOT coordinates with FRA for U.S. federal involvement. BC MoTI will lead coordination with the Canadian federal government entities. The role of federal involvement will be subject to future discussions with their respective provincial and state agencies.
- **Private Sector Engagement Committee:** Informs the Executive Steering Committee of industry perspectives and concerns and identifies opportunities for private sector

partnership opportunities. This committee is comprised of executives from participating organizations and includes representation from a diverse set of industries, bringing together major employers, small businesses, labor representatives, and other private sector representatives.

- **Pan-regional Advisory Groups:** Provides a forum for external parties to address cross-jurisdictional issues and consult at the Project Leadership level.
- **Pan-regional Working Groups:** Fosters technical collaboration between participating agencies on topics that span the entire corridor with a focus on specific Project Planning activities. Includes both internal staff from WSDOT, BC MoTI, and ODOT/Oregon Metro and external resources.
- **Lead Agencies:** The lead agencies of each jurisdiction responsible for executing the day-to-day Project Planning operations are WSDOT, BC MoTI, and ODOT. Oregon Metro will be integrated with ODOT in project leadership given the significant authority Oregon Metro has with respect to planning activities in the Portland area. Lead agencies collaborate with respective Technical Groups and engage Pan-regional Working Groups for cross-jurisdictional issues, working under the guidance of Project Leadership to ensure timely delivery of Project Planning deliverables. Lead agencies will engage other relevant state and provincial government entities to support Project Planning.
- **Technical Groups:** Provide input to respective lead agencies, focusing on jurisdiction- or location-specific tasks within the project. Technical Groups offer a forum for advancing local and regional work and are comprised of various organizations working collaboratively to address local/regional concerns.

Next Steps

The governance of the Project is anticipated to transition to the initial Coordinating Structure during expected negotiations with FRA, to be formalized as a Coordinating Entity with obligation of federal funding. The key milestones in this process (subject to change) include:

- **Coordinating Structure Agreement(s) (Summer-Fall 2023):** Planning for internal/external capacity and developing the appropriate agreement(s) for the initial Coordinating Structure.
- **Potential Negotiations with FRA (November/December 2023):** Responding to possible FRA notices of award, finalizing CID and/or FSP grant funding requirements.
- **Terms of Reference for the Coordinating Entity (Spring 2024):** Describing roles, responsibilities, policies, procedures, reporting, and communication for the Coordinating Entity.
- **FSP Funding (Summer 2024-Late 2025):** Securing resources to enable the activities of the Coordinating Entity if funds are awarded.

Engagement

WSDOT and the Policy Committee have begun work on a strategic engagement plan to guide future Cascadia UHSGT engagement activities “with a focus on equity, inclusion, and meaningful engagement with communities, businesses, federal, state, provincial, and local governments including indigenous communities.”¹³ Over the past year, work to develop the strategic engagement plan has included interviews with partners to hear engagement best practices, identification of foundational engagement principles, and descriptions of outcomes, activities, and tactics for engagement. This strategic engagement plan will provide a framework for future engagement activities, including outreach to the public and community groups to understand how they want to be engaged as the Project moves forward.

Authentic and effective engagement with partners and the public is important to build sustained support for the project over time. Based on interviews and best practices, WSDOT and the Policy Committee developed foundational principles to guide engagement activities in the future.

Importance of Partner and Community Engagement

Effective and extensive engagement with partners and the public is critical to the success of Cascadia UHSGT. Engagement that allows people to be part of Project planning and understand how their input affects the Project will result in broader support for the Project over time. WSDOT and the Policy Committee acknowledge effective engagement requires a significant level of effort, and engagement objectives and activities will need to evolve in support of specific milestones identified for the Project.

Input on Engagement Best Practices

Between January and May 2023, agency partners and transportation program representatives were interviewed to hear their perspectives on engagement planning for the Project. This outreach included:

- Communications and engagement practitioners from partner agencies to hear their best practices and legal/legislative requirements
- Tribal and Indigenous engagement leads in WA, BC, and OR to share their approach and role in Tribal and Indigenous engagement at a regional level
- Several Washington Legislators to hear their perspectives and priorities for the Project
- Business community representatives to share their early perspectives on Cascadia UHSGT and ideas for engagement moving forward

¹³ Liias et al., 81.

- Presentations and dialogue with organizations across Washington, Oregon, and British Columbia to begin conversations and build early awareness around Cascadia UHSGT
- Collaboration within WSDOT to learn best practices and leverage existing outreach to agencies, communities, and organizations

Foundational Engagement Principles

Based on the engagement outlined above and the actions and tactics included in the 2020 Framework for the Future report, WSDOT and the Policy Committee have developed six foundational principles that will serve as guideposts for engagement planning, Project decision-making, and outreach activities. These principles are:

Ensure priorities and feedback from partners and the public are reflected in Project decisions and outcomes.

- Partners, community members and interested parties should understand how their input is reflected in the Project decision-making process.
- Identifying which decisions can be influenced by partners and the public and which decisions are held by Project Leadership will allow for authentic engagement and build trust and accountability with the public.
- Clearly articulating how Cascadia UHSGT has adapted to reflect community values, input, and opportunities, will ensure sustained support over time.

Prioritize perspectives and rights of Tribal and Indigenous communities as stewards of the land, recognizing generational impacts.

- Tribal and Indigenous perspectives need to have a real influence on Project decision-making and outcomes.
- Offer opportunities for Tribal and Indigenous engagement early and continuously throughout the Project.
- Cooperation and consultation will help to build trust and relationships, bringing Tribal and Indigenous perspectives and concerns to light early in Project planning.
- Engaging at the government-to-government level is important for Tribal and Indigenous communities, with engagement coordinated through agency leads and conducted in accordance with treaties or other agreements (e.g., individual treaty and/or the Declaration Act).

Center trust, care, and relationships, especially when engaging disadvantaged and overburdened communities.

- Consider equity as a central tenet in how the Project functions and how decisions are made, to mitigate impacts and maximize benefits and opportunities for disadvantaged and overburdened communities.

- Prioritize equitable engagement practices as a central tenet of the Project to minimize further harm and reduce impacts to disadvantaged and overburdened communities.
- Building relationships with disadvantaged and overburdened communities is critical to Project success and capacity-building but requires time and thoughtful engagement.
- Listening to communities and identifying community needs is critical to reducing and eliminating barriers to participation.

Inspire enthusiasm and curiosity about the future of the region.

- Broad engagement will create opportunities for communities across the region to be part of co-creating a shared regional future.
- Create culturally competent and easy to understand engagement activities and platforms so community members can participate in the process.
- Develop future-focused and aspirational Project language, graphics, and branding to build a coalition of support, including public and private sector partners, advocacy groups, current and future leaders, and communities across the region.

Tell a comprehensive and coordinated story across the region.

- Across two states and a province, partners, and the public need to hear a consistent and complete message about Cascadia UHSGT.
- Implementing the communications and outreach strategy should be led by jurisdictions, with outreach grounded in the overall regional Project vision.
- Providing messaging tools to partners and other groups participating in outreach will promote consistent information sharing.

Invest in future generations by creating and catalyzing community benefits.

- The significant potential investment in Cascadia UHSGT creates the opportunity to align Project goals with priorities identified by communities.
- Partnerships established with groups such as educational institutions and labor and community organizations will help inspire and build a skilled workforce to deliver the Project with meaningful and living wage jobs.

Next Steps

WSDOT and the Policy Committee identified next steps that should occur prior to a potential FSP program notice of award expected in late 2023. This work will support collaborative engagement planning and ensure partners are ready to move forward with Cascadia UHSGT.

- **Strategic engagement planning.** WSDOT will develop a strategic engagement plan for Cascadia UHSGT that builds on the foundational engagement principles to identify outcomes, tactics, timelines, and roles over the next two years. This plan will include collaboration with communities along the corridor and other ongoing planning efforts in

each jurisdiction, including integration with Washington’s I-5 Planning.

- **Early communications planning.** In anticipation of greater media interest and the need for external messaging about Cascadia UHSGT, WSDOT, ODOT, Oregon Metro and BC MoTI will establish communications norms and strategies and build internal agency coordination systems. WSDOT will also continue internal communications collaboration with other broad engagement efforts, such as the I-5 Master Planning program and the air mobility program.
- **Communications materials.** Updates are needed to existing website content, presentation materials and Project messaging to develop a communications toolkit for partners to use and to support scenario planning activities.
- **Coordinating Structure.** Early planning can provide a more detailed outline for committee structure and recruitment as WSDOT and the Policy Committee look toward implementation of the initial Coordinating Structure.

Scenario Planning

WSDOT and the Policy Committee started work on scenario analysis, the precursor to more technical scenario planning, and developed an approach for addressing transportation investments in the context of future trends and uncertainties.¹⁴ WSDOT researched scenario planning best practices, defined key components and principles of scenario analyses, and developed a work plan to guide future scenario planning work for the Project.

Purpose & Background

WSDOT and the jurisdictional partners must identify broad future trends and uncertainties and consider the need for different transportation modes to support the growth of the region. Scenario planning will enable WSDOT and the Policy Committee to consider:

- How Cascadia UHSGT will be integrated into the multimodal (highways, airports, rail, transit, etc.) transportation system.
- How transportation investments can be optimized to support and balance regional objectives around equity, economic growth, climate resilience, sustainability, and land use.

To determine the role of Cascadia UHSGT in the broader transportation network, WSDOT and its jurisdictional partners must consider what the future could look like in 10 to 30 years. Scenario planning provides the conceptual framework to consider uncertainty, change, and complexity throughout the corridor.

¹⁴ Liias et al., 81.

The Cascadia UHSGT scenario planning process will coordinate with and consider the I-5 Master Plan development, air mobility planning, transit, and Amtrak improvements, along with multimodal planning and investments taking place in Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia.

The scenario planning activities (Figure 5) will bring together partners and communities to understand possible futures of the Cascadia megaregion and align on a preferred vision. This vision will inform Cascadia UHSGT decision-making, future Project Planning, and business case development.



Figure 5: Key Activities of Scenario Planning

Best Practices, Initial Analysis, and Key Principles

WSDOT and the Policy Committee reviewed scenario planning efforts by partners in the region (TransLink/Metro Vancouver, PSRC, and Oregon Metro), as well as select best practices from Envision Utah’s regional scenario planning guidebook and a scenario analysis for the Amtrak Northeast Corridor.¹⁵ WSDOT and the Policy Committee analyzed broad trends and uncertainties that may impact transportation systems in the future and developed criteria and preliminary indicators to measure scenario outcomes.

Some best practices from the initial research and analysis include:

- **Assess the impact on regional goals:** Use established regional priorities (e.g., equity, safety, density, emissions reductions, economic development) to evaluate how potential uncertainties may impact the likelihood of making progress in these areas. The North Star principles, together with region-specific goals, will help ensure that Cascadia UHSGT can support desired outcomes through a range of future scenarios.
- **Conduct a megatrend and uncertainty analysis:** Defining pressures and trends impacting the entire region and transportation industry helps to identify critical uncertainties that impact – and may be impacted by – Cascadia UHSGT (e.g., land use, growth assumptions, and transportation technology).
- **Identify indicators:** Indicators measure how uncertainties and scenarios impact our ability to achieve Project and regional goals. Cascadia UHSGT indicators will help draw

¹⁵ Underhill, Chiu, and Lightstone, “Regional Long-Range Growth & Transportation Scenarios”; Puget Sound Regional Council, “Vision 2050: Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement”; Oregon Metro, “Metro Emerging Trends Summary”; Envision Utah, “Regional Visioning Guidebook”; Carlson and Pena, “Transportation in the Northeast Corridor of the U.S.: A Multimodal and Intermodal Conceptual Framework.”

connections to regional goals and the North Star around equity, environment, and the economy, as well as broader federal (e.g., Justice40) objectives.

Next Steps

WSDOT and the Policy Committee developed a work plan for scenario analysis and subsequent scenario planning, beginning with a focus on broad uncertainties to align partners around a corridor vision. A second phase, dependent on award and obligation of FSP funding, will include more technical scenario planning and broad engagement and outreach.

Phase 1 - Broad Uncertainty Scenario Analysis (2023-2024 with existing funds¹⁶):

- Consider how future uncertainties and impacts in the Cascadia megaregion may affect the Project's ability to maintain consistency with the guiding principles in the North Star, which include advancing racial and social equity, building environmental resilience, and growing the economy.
- Engage and align partners around a corridor vision to foster buy-in and incorporate voices from partners, including Tribal and Indigenous communities, community-based organizations, local government, and others across the region.
- Coordinate with other multimodal planning efforts, such as I-5 planning in Washington.

Phase 2 - Technical Scenario Planning (beyond 2024 dependent on FSP funds):

- Refine understanding of uncertainties and impacts through technical scenario analysis of future trends, like population growth or network capacity.
- Conduct broad outreach and engagement around scenario analysis to gain wider organizational, community, and public input and build Project awareness.
- Inform Project planning decisions around costs, benefits, ridership forecasts.

Scenario planning is, in part, a communication and engagement tool to build awareness, excitement, and curiosity about Cascadia UHSGT. WSDOT and the Policy Committee will use the scenario planning process to understand the potential role for Cascadia UHSGT in the transportation network and to provide a foundation for business case and conceptual design activities.

Conclusion

The expected population growth in the Cascadia megaregion will transform how people live, work, and travel across the region. Protecting the natural environment, broadening economic opportunities, and enhancing equitable access to services will ultimately improve quality of life throughout the region. These objectives will require substantial, region-wide investments in all

¹⁶ The timeline for Phase 1 scenario analysis work is subject to change depending on integration with other planning efforts in the region, including I-5 planning.

transportation modes, including road, rail, air, and water.

The commitment and support for Cascadia UHSGT planning from the Washington State Legislature, coupled with a time of historic investment in rail transportation at the federal level, makes WSDOT and the Policy Committee well positioned to continue advancing Cascadia UHSGT.

As WSDOT and the Policy Committee develop the 2023-2024 workplan for the Project (Figure 6), which is subject to the award of federal funding, the objectives are to continue preparing Cascadia UHSGT to receive federal funding to commence Project Planning. The FRA is expected to announce selections for the CID and FSP grant programs in the fall of 2023, and if selected WSDOT will begin negotiations with FRA. The timeline for the 2023-2024 workplan will continue to be coordinated with I-5 and air mobility planning to ensure efficient use of resources and to meet the Washington legislature's intent to integrate multimodal planning. A summary of the 2023-2024 workplan objectives includes:

- Pursuing relevant funding opportunities and private sector partnerships that could be leveraged to advance Cascadia UHSGT planning and development
- Implementing the initial Coordinating Structure with the notice and obligation of FRA CID and/or FSP funding
- Finalizing the Cascadia UHSGT strategic engagement plan
- Creating communication materials in anticipation of a federal funding announcement
- Conducting a corridor-wide scenario planning process, integrated with I-5 and other multimodal efforts

Cascadia UHSGT 1-Year Outlook

July 2023 - June 2024

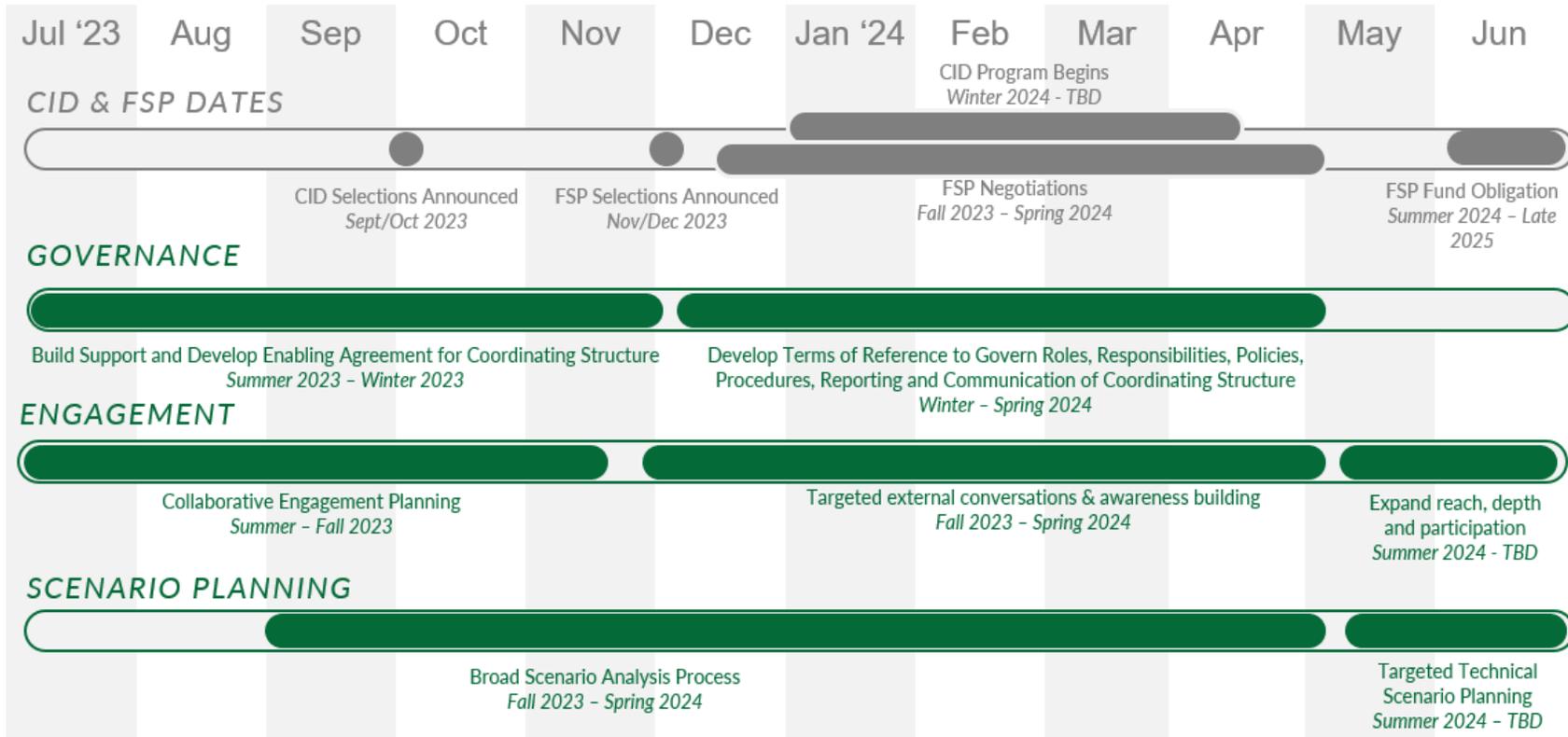


Figure 6: Cascadia UHSGT 1-Year Outlook

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Appendix: Committee Rosters and Meetings

A.1 Policy Committee

Members:

Agency	Representative
BC Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure	Kaye Krishna, Deputy Minister
BC Intergovernmental Relations Secretariat	Silas Brownsey, Deputy Minister
TransLink	Kevin Quinn, CEO
Washington State Department of Transportation	Roger Millar, Secretary of Transportation
Washington State House	Representative Jake Fey
Washington State House	Representative Andrew Barkis
Washington State Senate	Senator Marko Lias
Washington State Senate	Senator Phil Fortunato
Puget Sound Regional Council	Josh Brown, Executive Director
Oregon Department of Transportation	Kris Strickler, Director
Oregon Metro	Lynn Peterson, President
Cascadia Innovation Corridor	Amy Grotefendt
Cascadia Innovation Corridor	David Hoff

Meetings Held To-Date:

January 25, 2022 | Virtual

April 20, 2022 | Virtual

July 6, 2022 | Virtual

September 12, 2022 | Olympia, WA

December 8, 2022 | Portland, OR

March 13, 2023 | Olympia, WA

May 23, 2023 | Vancouver, BC

A.2 Technical Committee

Members:

Agency	Representative
BC Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure	Abid Amirali
BC Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure	Peter Argast
BC Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure	Sean Nacey
Cascadia Innovation Corridor	Amy Grotfendt
Oregon Department of Transportation	Karyn Criswell
Oregon Department of Transportation	Jennifer Sellers
Oregon Metro	Ally Holmqvist
Puget Sound Regional Council	Ben Bakkenta
Puget Sound Regional Council	Craig Helmann
Washington State Department of Transportation	Jason Beloso
Washington State Department of Transportation	Ron Pate
Washington State Department of Transportation	Adam Leuin

Committee has met biweekly since May 2022.