



3. Goals and Policies

Access
Safety
Reliability
Choice
Efficiency

3. Goals and Policies

Goals and Policies

Goals and policies translate the region’s Guiding Principles into a more detailed framework for transportation decision-making at all levels of government. The 20 policy elements in this Plan address four aspects of transportation planning and implementation: Transportation relationships, system management, system components, and process.

Transportation Relationships

These policy elements describe transportation’s most essential relationships: Between transportation and land use, between different modes, and between transportation and people’s ability to connect with their community.

1. Transportation and Land Use Consistency *(page 3-6)*

Goal: Ensure the design and function of transportation facilities are consistent with and support healthy urban, suburban, and rural communities.

2. Multimodal Transportation System *(page 3-8)*

Goal: Work toward an integrated multimodal transportation system that supports adopted land use plans, increases travel options, and reduces overall need to drive alone.

3. Barrier-free Transportation *(page 3-10)*

Goal: Ensure transportation system investments support the special travel needs of youth, elders, people with disabilities, literacy or language barriers, and those with low incomes.

System Management

These policy elements describe the essential functions associated with owning and operating the transportation system. They address enhancing safety and maintenance; increasing system efficiency through demand management; harnessing technologies to improve safety and efficiency; and improving freight mobility.

4. System Safety and Security *(page 3-12)*

Goal: Promote the safety and security of those who use, operate, and maintain the transportation system.

5. System Maintenance and Repair *(page 3-14)*

Goal: Protect investments that have already been made in the transportation system and keep life-cycle costs as low as possible.

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6. Travel Demand Management *(page 3-16)*

Goal: Increase overall operating efficiency of the transportation system through the effective use of measures that reduce the need to drive alone at peak periods.

7. Transportation Technologies *(page 3-18)*

Goal: Use technology-based approaches to address transportation congestion, safety, efficiency, and operations.

8. Freight Mobility *(page 3-20)*

Goal: Promote efficient, cost-effective and safe movement of freight in and through the region.

System Components

Transportation in the Thurston region encompasses many different forms – or modes. These policy elements describe each of the specific modes considered in the Plan.

9. Streets, Roads, and Bridges *(page 3-22)*

Goal: Establish a street and road network that provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while supporting adopted land use goals.

10. Public Transportation *(page 3-24)*

Goal: Provide an appropriate level of reliable, effective public transportation options commensurate with the region's evolving needs.

11. Biking *(page 3-26)*

Goal: Increase the share of all trips made safely and conveniently by biking.

12. Walking *(page 3-28)*

Goal: Increase the share of all trips made safely and conveniently by walking.

13. Rail *(page 3-30)*

Goal: Ensure the long-term viability and continued use of existing rail lines in the region for freight and passenger rail travel.

14. Aviation *(page 3-32)*

Goal: Provide an appropriate level of facilities and services to meet the general aviation needs of residents and businesses in the region.

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15. Marine Transportation *(page 3-34)*

Goal: Provide an appropriate level of facilities and services to meet the region's marine transportation needs.

Process

These policy elements describe the various processes that are integral to transportation decision-making in this region.

16. Public Involvement *(page 3-36)*

Goal: Convene on-going community discussions and public input into regional transportation planning and decision-making processes.

17. Intergovernmental Coordination *(page 3-38)*

Goal: Ensure transportation facilities and programs function seamlessly across community borders and between regions.

18. Environmental and Human Health *(page 3-40)*

Goal: Minimize transportation impacts on the natural environment and the people who live and work in the Thurston region.

19. Performance Measures *(page 3-42)*

Goal: Develop performance measures that are efficient to administer, effective in assessing performance, and meaningful to the public.

20. Transportation Funding *(page 3-44)*

Goal: Ensure that transportation revenues provide maximum public benefit and support adopted land use strategies.

Each policy element in this section includes not only goal and policy language, but also how the element fits into a regional transportation perspective. That context describes:

- Why each element is important;
- The challenges to achieving the goals and policies associated with this element;
- Related public comments received through community outreach; and
- Potential implementation measures that would support the objectives through specific projects or programs.

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Comments are drawn from the various public outreach efforts conducted by TRPC over the last few years. These efforts included community discussion groups held throughout the region, rural and urban focus groups, informal “opinionnaire” surveys, and other roundtables and public meetings. The comments reflect the range of opinion that usually surfaces when community members are given an opportunity to talk with each other in depth about transportation issues. They also point to some of the challenges the region faces in developing transportation strategies that work for everyone.

Whether this section is viewed in its entirety or the focus is on select policy elements, it is likely to generate more questions than answers – more ideas than conclusions. That’s the nature of transportation. Seemingly simple issues become complicated as relationships are understood or implications are realized. Individual perspective and benefit intertwine with objectivity and community benefit. Community objectives often contradict themselves during the implementation phase.

This Goals and Policies section points to some of the potential opportunities and challenges awaiting the Thurston region.

3. Goals and Policies

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1. Transportation and Land Use Consistency

Goal: Ensure the design and function of transportation facilities are consistent with and support healthy urban, suburban, and rural communities.

Policies:

- 1.a Commit to the development and implementation of land use plans, development patterns and design standards that encourage non-motorized travel and use of mass transit, yet recognize the unique needs of the urban, suburban and rural communities in Thurston County.
- 1.b Provide transportation facilities that support the location of jobs, housing, industry, and other activities as called for in adopted land use plans.
- 1.c Meet mobility, access, and economic goals in designated strategy corridors with an appropriate combination of investments, policies, and land use measures.
- 1.d Design and invest in transportation projects that have a lasting positive impact on the communities served, reflect the goals of the people who live and work in the area, and contribute to a sense of place.
- 1.e Support policies, programs, and procedures that promote urban infill.

Why Transportation and Land Use Consistency Is Important:

What can – or cannot – be supplied in the way of transportation facilities, services, and programs is directly related to the kind of community that is built. Low-density, segregated land uses are auto-oriented, no matter the level of service. However, mode choices are a feasible and affordable element of compact development patterns. Shorter trips and convenient connections depend on compact development with a mix of housing types, and appropriate-scale commercial and civic uses. On a per capita basis, this is also a cost-effective and efficient kind of transportation system for government to offer.

Challenges for Transportation and Land Use Consistency:

- Policy makers are struggling with the “Vision/Reality Disconnect” – where adopted community visions don’t seem to be playing out on the ground.
- The incremental changes needed to realize these visions may be worrisome to some residents. For example, established urban neighborhoods sometimes object to infill projects that add housing to adjacent lots. While infill improves the delivery of government services – like transit – it can also change the local neighborhood character.
- Growth management policies protect the diversity of urban, suburban and rural communities, but also limit the range of choices available to both government and individual property owners.

Public Comment and Input:

Because of the way people experience transportation and the way it's impacted by land use, many understand the relationship, even if that understanding takes the form of a question.

"How can we build communities that require less travel? That's the key."

"I like living in a city where I don't have to use my car."

"Part of our problem has to do with land use... We push our communities out to the perimeter and then wonder why our roads are all clogged up."

Some who've shared their views on the transportation/land use relationship talk of the importance of government leadership in promoting and implementing the kinds of land use called for in local plans.

"I've long been an advocate of growing 'up' rather than 'out.' But until we have a local jurisdiction that is willing to allow taller buildings that may impede someone's scenic view, you're going to continue to have sprawl."

The need for leadership is often tempered with a note of caution.

"But we've got to be careful about this. I'm not sure I want government deciding where I'm going to live, work, shop, or play."

There's also recognition that the American Dream is not particularly transit-friendly.

"People want their space, their own home, their own yards. I don't believe we're going to be able to get people to buy into homes at the density that will support public transportation."

Measures to Support Transportation and Land Use Consistency Objectives:

- Identify and reduce barriers that discourage private sector development or redevelopment of close-in urban areas as called for in adopted land use plans, where efficient transportation can be provided.
- Implement parking standards and costs in city centers and core areas that encourage people to use a variety of transportation modes.
- Initiate public/private partnership development opportunities for transportation-efficient projects. Use the regional forum to share information with other jurisdictions during implementation.
- Make appropriate use of access management techniques to moderate the impacts of land use on the regional transportation system.
- Site public facilities in areas with convenient public transportation and activity center access.

Did You Know...?

Between 1996 and 2000, infill development accounted for almost 13% of all residential permits issued in urban areas. Housing units on small lots accounted for only 6% of all residential acres consumed in urban areas. This contrasts with dwellings on oversized lots which accounted for less than 3% of all residential permits issued in urban areas, but constituted 18% of all residential acres developed.

Source: TRPC "Buildable Lands Work Program"

2. Multimodal Transportation System

Goal: Work toward an integrated multimodal transportation system that supports adopted land use plans, increases travel options, and reduces overall need to drive alone.

Policies:

- 2.a Provide for quality transportation choices appropriate to existing and future land uses, including walking, biking, public transportation, rail, and motor vehicles.
- 2.b Ensure that development of transit transfer centers, activity centers, employment centers, schools, rail stations, the waterfront, and the airport accommodates multiple modes of travel and safe, efficient connections among those modes of travel.
- 2.c Invest in individual travel modes in ways that meet mode-specific needs while contributing to the overall development of a seamless multimodal transportation system.
- 2.d Promote public education on the rights and responsibilities of drivers, bikers, and walkers, and ways to travel together efficiently and safely.

Why a Multimodal Transportation System Is Important:

While many adults drive for most of their needs, no one relies exclusively on driving. Walking is usually required during some part of the trip, even if it's only between the car and the building. It's often easier to travel between multiple, close destinations by foot, bike or bus than by driving. Many people who need to travel can't drive – young people, some older adults, and some with physical disabilities. The transportation system has to meet many different kinds of travel needs safely and efficiently. A multimodal transportation system recognizes all travel needs and supports the movement of freight as well as people. A well-developed multimodal transportation system allows some users the choice to own fewer or no vehicles, avoiding the costs of operation, maintenance, and insurance. A multimodal transportation system increases choice and opportunity.

Challenges for a Multimodal Transportation System:

- Over the last 15 years, the road network was retrofitted to serve as a multimodal network, accommodating increasing traffic while providing safe and convenient options for biking, walking, and transit. Government is sometimes criticized for investing in multimodal facilities.
- Many people assume that we can somehow build our way out of congestion. The challenge is to broaden understanding that congestion is something to be managed, not solved.
- One way of managing congestion is to build transportation-efficient communities that offer safe and convenient travel choices and shorter trips, regardless of mode. Freeways and high speed arterials may move cars faster, but are not conducive to concentrated land uses.

Public Comment and Input:

With the exception of transportation planners, engineers, and policy makers, not many people use the term “multimodal transportation system.” But they know how it’s supposed to function.

“It’s crazy that you really can’t get from the train station to the Capitol. We’re the state capitol! People come here from all over. And if they arrive by train, they can’t get anywhere.”

“As drivers, we need more connection in our bike lanes. It’s nerve-wracking when the bike lane ends and the cyclist is suddenly in the same lane I’m driving in.”

Measures to Support Multimodal Transportation System Objectives:

- Continue to serve new development with interconnected public streets that provide safe and convenient pedestrian, bicycle, and motor vehicle access. Work to ensure that neighborhood residents understand that future connections are planned, and what functions those connections are intended to serve.
- Use street design as a tool to influence driver behavior, especially where other travel modes are encouraged or likely, such as in neighborhoods, near schools and civic centers.
- Look for opportunities to make “neighborhood connections” that provide non-motorized access between existing subdivisions and destinations like schools, parks, or major transit routes, where full street connections are not feasible.
- Recognize that a one-size-fits-all approach to developing a multimodal transportation system is not cost-effective. Continue to tailor design standards appropriate to rural, suburban, and urban uses.
- Encourage all travelers to “share the road safely” through public awareness and educational programs.
- Promote multimodal trip-making by locating appropriately-sized park-and-ride facilities near major transit / highway interchanges, smaller park-and-(car)pool facilities along key suburban and rural routes, and park-and-bike facilities adjacent to bike trails such as Yelm-to-Tenino and the Chehalis-Western.

Did You Know...?

All of Intercity Transit’s buses are fitted with bicycle carry racks that enable people to combine transit and biking as a travel option.

Source: Intercity Transit

3. Barrier-Free Transportation

Goal: Ensure transportation system investments support the special travel needs of youth, elders, people with disabilities, literacy or language barriers, and those with low incomes.

Policies:

- 3.a Ensure transportation facilities comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.
- 3.b Construct public transportation stops and walkway approaches that are accessible to those with differing physical capabilities.
- 3.c Provide transportation services, facilities, and programs that minimize barriers to people who don't speak or read English.
- 3.d Present information and provide public participation opportunities for people who have limited literacy skills.
- 3.e Promote land use policies that provide a variety of housing types in core areas near employment and services.

The intent of these policies is to support implementation of state and federal regulations for barrier-free transportation.

Why Barrier-Free Transportation Is Important:

Transportation is considered an essential factor in maintaining independence, economic self-sufficiency and dignity, and in preventing isolation. However many residents face challenges because of physical, economic, or linguistic hurdles – such as negotiating curbs and uneven sidewalks, arranging transportation to work, the doctor's office, and the grocery store, and reading transit schedules and street signs. Barrier-free transportation is based on thoughtful design, diverse travel and housing choices, and policy awareness that reduces these mobility challenges.

Challenges for Barrier-Free Transportation:

The population in the Thurston region is aging rapidly. Fit and healthy baby boomers in their prime wage earning years today will soon begin retiring. As the trend of "aging in place" increases, more people will want to stay in the Thurston region. Services and programs serving seniors, youth, and those with disabilities will see more demand in the next few decades.

Those services and barrier-free improvements to the transportation infrastructure are already underfunded and unable to keep up with current demand. Simply trying to retrofit existing facilities as called for in the Americans with Disabilities Act is beyond the means of most communities. Supporting the independence of our growing senior population depends on the success of establishing cost-effective, convenient travel alternatives and community development patterns.

Public Comment and Input:

People with disabilities are among the most vocal proponents of an efficient, barrier-free transportation system that works. They rely on it, and know the impacts when it's unavailable.

"Transportation for people with disabilities is really important to me because I'm a person who wants to be on the go, and if my husband can't drive me I have to hustle a ride. And I work

with lots of seniors who have to rely on someone else for transportation because the transit service doesn't meet their needs."

"People often see these services and programs as part of an essential "social safety net" that they value in their community."

"Many of the people who need social services in this community don't have cars. And they have a hard time getting around. Transit provides a social safety net."

There's a growing awareness of the needs of elders who were once independent travelers, but can no longer drive. This impacts their adult children, who often assume responsibility for their parents' transportation needs.

"People who've lived in this community and grown old will know they don't have to leave and move to another community that does have public transportation just because they can't drive anymore. Having good public transportation means they can stay here."

"We need to think about the elderly and children when we design our transportation systems. They don't have any way to get around without a car."

Balancing individual choice and demand for government service is challenging.

"It's not that the needs of people in the city rank higher than those of rural people, but a rural lifestyle is a choice. And I know a lot of people who, as they got sicker or more infirm, knew that they needed to be closer to the services they need. So they moved. And there has to be a lot of that, because we don't have the same extended families like we used to have. Society has changed. If people live that far out in the sticks, they need to come to where the services are. We can't keep stretching the limited dollars we have to service every square mile of road system we have in every possible place that people may want to live."

Did You Know...?

Two percent of Thurston's population aged 16-64 have a mobility limitation, compared to 13.6% of people age 65 and over. By 2025, about 20% of the region's population will be 65 or older, up from 12% of the population in 2000.

Source: 2000 Census and TRPC forecasts

Measures to Support Barrier-Free Transportation Objectives:

- Forge partnerships among government, non-profit, for-profit, and faith-based agencies to identify and serve the transportation needs of the region's youth, elders, and people with disabilities or low incomes. With an expanding senior population, providing cost-effective alternatives to Dial-A-Lift is becoming increasingly important. Options may involve land use and service delivery measures.
- Look for innovative ways of funding and providing life-line transportation services.
- Identify ways to offer transportation services that connect low-income populations with employment areas and social services. Identify and address regulatory barriers impacting the ability of non-traditional transportation partnerships to provide services.
- Explore innovative public/private partnerships aimed at increasing affordable, transit-friendly housing choices in the urban area near essential services.

4. System Safety and Security

Goal: Promote the safety and security of those who use, operate, and maintain the transportation system.

Policies:

- 4.a Use a combination of education, enforcement, design features, and investments to mitigate existing hazards and avoid potential hazards.
- 4.b Add shoulders to narrow, high-volume rural roads.
- 4.c Use street designs that encourage safe driver behavior.
- 4.d Use compact urban and suburban development techniques to reduce the overall distance that people need to travel.
- 4.e Invest in projects that improve passenger safety and security on public transportation and at associated facilities like park-and-ride lots and transit centers.
- 4.f Provide for safe school walking routes.
- 4.g Retrofit key transportation facilities to improve their ability to withstand a major earthquake or other natural disaster.
- 4.h Build in system redundancy to support emergency response and reduce community disruption during natural or man-made disasters.
- 4.i Encourage coordination between transportation system providers and emergency response providers who rely on that system.

Why System Safety and Security Is Important:

The ability to travel safely – regardless of mode – is recognized as the most basic of transportation needs.

Challenges for System Safety and Security:

- Engineers are challenged to stretch limited revenues to design and build transportation systems that accommodate driver error, lapse of attention, and poor weather conditions without loss of life or injury to travelers. This is especially difficult to manage in urban areas with frequent conflict between motorized and non-motorized travel.
- Rural roads also pose specific safety challenges. High travel speeds often result in more serious damage when vehicles lose control, as well as endangering others using the system or engaging in nearby activities.

Public Comment and Input:

Safety is a fundamental concern for all travelers, regardless of mode.

“Unsafe roads are of more concern to me than any other transportation issue.”

“I feel very unsafe bicycling in my area. I would love to be able to bicycle, but I can’t do it.”

“I feel really strongly about taking care of the roads, making them safer and adding shoulders. I’m a school bus driver and I see the kids standing out on the narrow roads waiting for the bus. It’s dangerous.”

There’s also a growing sense that part of the problem is driver behavior, not street design or maintenance.

“The aggressiveness with which people drive today is relatively new, and a growing problem. People are regularly running red lights and cutting into traffic.”

“We’ve got safe roads and unsafe drivers. That’s a problem, but whose responsibility is it to fix it?”

Measures to Support System Safety and Security Objectives:

- Implement measures that promote safe and responsible behavior by all travelers.
- Explore innovative methods of making signs, crosswalks, traffic signals and other system elements more visible, such as using size, placement and lighting to improve readability of signs.
- Ensure that local, tribal, and state governments, school districts, Intercity Transit, the Port of Olympia, and emergency service providers can effectively communicate and coordinate their services following a major emergency that disrupts transportation in the Thurston region.
- Evaluate the experience of other communities and assess the feasibility of using cameras and other technologies to detect red light running and speeding, and enforce applicable laws.
- Implement appropriate measures to deter vandalism and crimes at park-and-ride lots and transit centers, and ensure that sites project a sense of safety and security for users.

Did You Know...?

In 2001, the Thurston region had 25 fatal car crashes resulting in 62 deaths. Of those crashes, 18 were on rural facilities. The greatest number of crashes and fatalities happened on rural, non-interstate facilities posted at 50 miles per hour. June and July were the two worst months for fatalities.

Source: Fatality Accident Reporting System, U.S. Dept. of Transportation

5. System Maintenance and Repair

Goal: Protect investments that have already been made in the transportation system and keep life-cycle costs as low as possible.

Policies:

- 5.a Prioritize maintenance, preservation, operations, and repair of the existing transportation system.
- 5.b Use preventive maintenance programs to ensure lowest life-cycle costs.
- 5.c Use street restoration standards, and coordinate utility and street projects to minimize the destructive impact of utility projects on streets. Where possible, leverage investments for both project types to deliver more cost-effective public facilities.
- 5.d Explore innovative programs that reduce infrastructure life-cycle costs or increase efficiency of service delivery, including use of new materials, technologies, and resource partnerships.
- 5.e Coordinate street and road projects with neighboring jurisdictions.

Why System Maintenance and Repair Is Important:

Maintenance and repair are needed to protect investments already made in the system. Maintaining the system keeps life-cycle costs low, minimizes hazards resulting from deteriorating pavement or debris, and reduces the need for costly reconstruction projects.

Challenges for System Maintenance and Repair:

Local budgets cannot adequately maintain the transportation system, let alone rebuild it. Without sufficient funding to take care of existing facilities and make structural investments like shoulder additions that keep the travel lanes from eroding, the challenges of the transportation system will only grow worse.

Public Comment and Input:

Like system safety, maintenance and repair resonates with people. Residents intuitively understand the importance of protecting investments.

“I don’t think it makes sense to let part of the existing system go to ruin in order to have enough money to build something new, that will also add to the base that you’re already not able to support. Take care of the existing system first. After that, you can look for ways to expand or improve the system.”

“We need to keep the roads safe, and it doesn’t make any sense to invest all this money into our roads if we don’t maintain them. Maintenance is a high priority.”

Realizing financial savings of keeping life-cycle costs low is important to residents, even when it seems there isn’t enough money to do it.

“If we don’t maintain it now, it’ll cost us more in the future. Maintenance now is dollars in the bank for the future.”

“I’d love to see us spend less money on roads and more money on the other transportation needs, and one of the best ways is to do a better job of maintaining our roads. The longer we let them degrade, the more expensive they are to fix. We’re building up this maintenance deficit that is going to be tremendously expensive to fix. If we maintain our roads more frequently, it’ll actually cost us less than if we maintain them less frequently.”

People often comment on the importance of maintaining the entire road, not just the vehicle travel lanes.

“Bike lanes also have to be well-maintained. Gravel and ruts make it unsafe, and bikers will move towards the line.”

Measures to Support System Maintenance and Repair Objectives:

- Ensure sweeping and maintenance activities are adequately scheduled and address the entire curb-to-curb or shoulder-to-shoulder need, including bike lanes and multiuse shoulders.
- Continue to support pavement management programs that promote lowest life-cycle costs, including increases to base funding levels where possible to attain optimal paving levels.
- Support legislation giving local jurisdictions additional revenue and revenue authority to optimize maintenance and repair programs.
- Strengthen and improve street cut ordinances to minimize utility impacts on pavement in good condition.
- Explore options for identifying, prioritizing, and funding maintenance and repair projects on streets and roads that cross boundaries between cities, towns, counties, tribes, and state facilities.

Did You Know...?

Funding annually falls \$4.6 million short in pavement management programs across the region. The inability to fully fund basic resurfacing programs at their optimal levels means more roads will need costly reconstruction in the future. Full funding for pavement management programs is imperative in keeping pavement life-cycle costs as low as possible.

Source: TRPC, Survey of local transportation departments

6. Travel Demand Management

Goal: Increase overall operating efficiency of the transportation system through the effective use of measures that reduce the need to drive alone at peak periods.

Policies:

- 6.a Promote mixed-use urban developments that reduce the need for auto travel, including financial and other incentives to encourage transportation-efficient development and redevelopment.
- 6.b Improve access to public transportation, ridesharing, bicycling, and walking.
- 6.c Promote private and public sector transportation demand management programs and services that encourage employees to commute to work by means other than driving alone or to change commuting patterns through teleworking, flex-time, or compressed work weeks.
- 6.d Develop park-and-ride lots throughout the region, including shared use of underutilized parking lots at businesses and other facilities.
- 6.e Encourage the use of technologies that enable people to participate in activities or meet their needs without having to travel.
- 6.f Use travel demand management techniques to provide alternatives during temporary congestion resulting from major construction projects.

Why Travel Demand Management Is Important:

Travel demand management – also known as TDM – provides a variety of tools to increase the operating efficiency of the transportation system. The range of tools in the TDM toolkit may be tailored to specific needs in a corridor or downtown area, or applied region-wide. These relatively low-cost options complement other transportation investments, help to better utilize the capacity of the system, and spread demand for services over a longer period of time. An effective mix of TDM strategies helps people manage the impacts of congestion on their lives by changing when, how, or why they travel.

Challenges for Travel Demand Management:

- Government has the responsibility to both respect residents' freedom to choose how they use the transportation system and to maximize the efficient use of the system. This often results in difficult choices.
- TDM's success often relies on other factors, such as land use, public transportation, and employer support. For example, without supportive land use patterns and sufficient public transportation, parking management strategies cannot be effective.
- Some people think of "travel demand management" as a synonym for the State's "Commute Trip Reduction" (CTR) law, without distinguishing between the two. TDM, however, is broader in scope and its success does not hinge wholly on CTR results.

Public Comment and Input:

Many people don't know the term TDM, but understand the concept and its potential for managing the impact of congestion in their own lives.

"I've been out on Yelm Highway at 5:00, and it's a zoo! Quite frankly, I don't know why people who know that day-in and day-out it'll be a zoo, keep driving into the zoo! There are other ways to schedule your day. Same thing goes for Marvin Road and Black Lake/101. Why don't they do a little flex time, get off at six? Pretty simple math to me. State workers have this ability."

Readily available, free parking impacts the success of transit options.

"Parking fees are user fees. It's unpopular. We get lots of complaints... But there's a direct correlation between how high your parking fees are and how many people use carpools, or take a van, or do some other kind of alternative... It's called economics."

"Why do we put in these new high schools, and put in these mammoth parking lots for the students that encourage them to drive their cars to school? And then, taxpayers are still paying for the school bus!"

Supportive features like park-and-ride lots are recognized as important TDM elements.

"We should be trying to set more land aside for park-and-rides, to support suburban and rural transit alternatives. If we don't start thinking about this now, there won't be any good, accessible land available when we need it."

Measures to Support Travel Demand Management Objectives:

- Optimize the use of public and private parking in core areas, city centers and employment sites through land use policies and pricing to improve consistency with demand management objectives.
- Consider the reduction of wasted road capacity as a means of increasing road capacity.
- Work to meet Commute Trip Reduction goals.
- Establish transportation emphasis areas in activity centers. Pursue parking management and trip reduction with businesses, to free up customer parking and reduce all-day employee parking.
- Integrate TDM in schools, including transit access and siting decisions, parking availability and management, and curriculum-based programs.
- Identify a sufficient and stable source of funding for TDM programs, targeted at demonstrated long-term benefits and effective program sharing ideas.

Did You Know...?

About 15% of south county commuters carpool or vanpool to work. This share is even higher on the Indian Reservations, where over 20% of commute trips are made by car- or vanpool. Overall, almost 13% of commute trips throughout the Thurston region are a shared ride. This underscores the need for adequate park-and-ride facilities.

Source: 2000 Census

7. Transportation Technologies

Goal: Use technology-based approaches to address transportation congestion, safety, efficiency, and operations.

Policies:

- 7.a Use transportation technologies to more effectively utilize the existing transportation system.
- 7.b Use transportation technologies to better integrate transportation modes.
- 7.c Make short-range technology investment decisions that support future technology implementation strategies.
- 7.d Look for opportunities to integrate transportation technology considerations into all projects.
- 7.e Recognize that transmittal of electronic information is an important function of a transportation system, and integrate this into transportation system evaluation, policies, and implementation strategies.
- 7.f Coordinate transportation technologies among jurisdictions and with other transportation planning regions.

Why Transportation Technologies Are Important:

Those who provide, maintain, operate, or use transportation facilities are finding increasing benefit from the use of technology. These technologies have tremendous benefit for improved communications, increased coordination within and among government agencies and other organizations, and safer and more efficient travel conditions. They are powerful tools in the effort to maximize system performance and safety.

Challenges for Transportation Technologies:

Effective deployment of technology strategies requires coordination among agencies and divisions that have often never worked together. New ways are needed to think about problems, and consider and implement solutions. This also requires compatible protocols for system design, which may mean relinquishing proprietary systems to accomplish the full benefit of these investments.

Public Comment and Input:

TRPC is working with a variety of transportation providers to further define and implement a long-range technology plan and deployment strategy for the Thurston region. Participants in this process include those who build and maintain the transportation network as well as those who rely on it to provide services and emergency assistance. They speak to the importance of technology doing what needs to be done efficiently and cost-effectively, even if they don't use the words "ITS" or "Intelligent Transportation Systems."

"Our biggest challenge is the human one – of being able to get in contact with someone when you need to. That (2001) earthquake was a major challenge – the phone system was jammed with calls outside the county trying to come in. It took me six or seven hours to get through to the department from where I was."

“Customers could use more real time traffic information. Anything that helps our customers avoid traffic and move freight faster... Our stretch of I-5 is more competitive than Seattle or Tacoma because of less I-5 traffic. If I-5 is not viable, then the Port is not viable.”

“Freight is moving towards the technology of a paperless truck. For truckers, the weigh station by-pass is a major issue.”

Measures to Support Transportation Technologies Objectives:

- Update the regional ITS (Intelligent Transportation System) architecture as necessary to ensure it remains a relevant and useful tool for guiding transportation technology decisions and investments.
- Develop an implementation strategy for a center-to-center radio connection between the Washington State Patrol Region 1 Dispatch, WSDOT Tacoma Traffic Management Center, and Capitol Communications Enhanced 911 (CAPCOM).
- Develop an inter-regional deployment strategy to link Thurston County transportation and emergency service providers with those in Pierce, King, Kitsap, and Snohomish counties using a government-dedicated, alpha-numeric pager system.
- Pursue funding and potential partnerships for short- and mid-term deployment strategies identified in Intercity Transit’s technology plan.
- Encourage the continued deployment of ITS technologies along I-5 and US 101, such as traffic cameras, variable message signs, road and weather information systems, and highway advisory radio.
- Consider ways to improve the traditional scoping and design process for transportation projects that include technology elements. As appropriate, promote system integration, coordination, and resource sharing to enhance operations, safety and cost containment.
- Explore new technologies to improve the availability and dissemination of schedule, route, transfer, and other transit service information.
- Implement technology-based system management devices that improve transit operating efficiency along primary routes as congestion increases in these corridors.
- Support efforts to expedite statewide implementation of the 511 Traveler Information System, and other systems that help travelers plan a trip.
- Create a regional source of traffic and traveler information, consolidating local, regional, state, and private sector transportation information for easy access. Coordinate with other regional, state and interstate resources.

Did You Know...?
Every minute that lanes on Interstate 5 are blocked due to an incident creates 5-10 minutes of back-up. In other words, an accident that closes I-5 for 30 minutes can result in 2½ hours or more of back-up.
Source: WSDOT

8. Freight Mobility

Goal: Promote efficient, cost-effective and safe movement of freight in and through the region.

Policies:

- 8.a Promote access among highways and other major freight corridors, and among the region's intermodal transportation facilities and industrial areas.
- 8.b Increase the amount of freight that is moved by rail to enhance efficiency, productivity, safety, and mobility.
- 8.c Reduce weather-induced weight restrictions on streets, roads, and bridges that are important freight routes.
- 8.d Review transportation and/or land use actions' potential conflicts with freight movement, and address outstanding issues as part of the action.
- 8.e Minimize conflict caused by the growth of freight movement into and out of industrial areas in highly urbanized settings.
- 8.f Promote policies and design standards that minimize congestion impacts on local streets caused by delivery trucks, while maintaining economic support to businesses and services.

Why Freight Mobility Is Important:

The ability to efficiently move goods to and from market is a critical element of a sound economy. Whether that means transporting raw materials into manufacturing centers and finished products out, or moving goods and supplies on time to local retailers, the specific mobility needs of freight must be considered.

Challenges for Freight Mobility:

- As traffic increases, so do the impacts of big trucks on roads, so more investments are needed in the system to accommodate freight. Large trucks also require more turning space than other vehicles, take up more room in intersections and city blocks, and wear pavement more quickly than automobiles. These big rigs and their smaller kin in the local delivery fleet feed the economic engines of the region.
- Rail can only serve a portion of the region's freight mobility needs. Even if more freight rail opportunities were available, the need for highway access would still be strong.
- While some freight moves at night, much is moved by day. This leads to conflicts at major highway intersections and industrial centers like Fones Road at Pacific Avenue. It also leads to operational conflicts on city streets as local delivery vehicles stop to off-load goods.
- Heavy gravel and log trucks contribute to increased road wear, especially in rural areas, requiring more frequent repairs to keep the roads safe.

Public Comment and Input:

Most people experience freight and goods movement through their own interactions in a car.

“Freight rail is important because if it’s not on a freight car I have to drive around it on I-5.”

“Nobody pays much attention to freight rail, but if we could utilize that part of the transportation system better than we do then we could take a lot of trucks off the highway. And trucks on the highway are a huge usage factor.”

While people are not overly fond of big trucks, many recognize the need for a transportation system that balances the mobility needs of both people and goods.

“It’s a real balancing act to meet the increasing needs of trucks that serve businesses with the driving needs of citizens. Back when our roads were built, most of them weren’t planned for the kind of traffic that they’re serving today, and the weight of some of that traffic. It’s a tough balancing act. But we have to remember that our transportation system needs to meet the needs of both business and resident. We have to co-exist.”

Measures to Support Freight Mobility Objectives:

- Deploy technologies on freight corridors that improve predictability of travel time for freight, such as weigh-in-motion devices, automated truck counters, and enhanced signal timing.
- Identify and address deficiencies on key streets, roads, and bridges that limit freight mobility.
- Develop a coordinated strategy that identifies existing and future freight mobility problems and opportunities, and ways to maximize the use of ship, rail, air, and truck in an efficient multimodal freight transport system.
- Regularly review and update the region’s Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS), which designates important freight routes on state and local facilities.
- Monitor federal and state legislation regarding truck size to ensure that proposals do not result in adverse increases in legal size or undue restrictions on local governments’ ability to regulate truck size and weight on local streets.

Did You Know...?

As a percent of total traffic, trucks account for 26% of all southbound traffic leaving Thurston County and entering Lewis County on I-5 from 6am – 6 pm, and 35% of all traffic headed southbound from 6pm – 6am.

Source: WSDOT Traffic Data Office, 2001 data for site R019.

9. Streets, Roads, and Bridges

Goal: Establish a street and road network that provides for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods while supporting adopted land use goals.

Policies:

- 9.a Support design and construction of multimodal streets and roads.
- 9.b Encourage new regional connections for cross-town or cross-region travel that provide more direct routes and reduce vehicle miles traveled, where those connections do not promote sprawl or otherwise undermine adopted land use plans.
- 9.c Limit the addition of travel lanes to those areas that can demonstrate long-term benefit, and where an increase is determined to be the best alternative.
- 9.d Avoid widening any local arterial or collector to more than two through lanes in each direction and an auxiliary turn lane where warranted (five lanes, maximum) to preserve an acceptable community scale for the Thurston region, and minimize transportation impacts on adjacent land uses.
- 9.e Use roundabouts as a tool for safely and efficiently managing the flow of traffic at intersections when they are an appropriate alternative to traffic signals or stop signs.
- 9.f Consider the use of access management techniques to preserve roadway capacity, minimize operating inefficiencies resulting from land use and development pressures, and increase overall system safety.
- 9.g Develop an interconnected grid of local streets and roads to increase individual travel options and neighborhood connectivity while improving efficient use of the overall regional network.
- 9.h Ensure that street, road, and bridge projects adequately meet transportation needs, function in harmony with their surroundings, and add lasting value to the communities they serve.

Why Streets, Roads and Bridges Are Important:

Streets, roads, and bridges are the backbone of the region’s transportation network. They support the mobility needs of cars, trucks, and buses, and in most circumstances, bikes and pedestrians. Streets and roads connect residences to businesses and activity centers, providing access for essential services such as waste disposal, emergency response, and mail delivery.

Challenges for Streets, Roads and Bridges:

- Many people face a daily challenge of congestion on the way to and from work.
- Finding sufficient funds to take care of existing streets, roads, and bridges is a growing challenge for government. Pavement preservation, retrofit of old rural roads to modern standards, and safety projects often compete for the same limited resources.

- Another challenge is designing safe and efficient facilities that can carry growing numbers of vehicles through neighborhood corridors without having undue impact on the quality of life in those neighborhoods.

Public Comment and Input:

When talking about the condition of streets and roads in the Thurston region, residents support taking care of the existing system over trying to solve congestion with more widening.

“I think we should focus on better connections instead of widening. Widening roads is very costly. And that widening actually increases traffic, so we don’t solve the problem.”

“There are bridges around here that are antiquated and need to be replaced. That’s a higher priority than road widening.”

“We have lots of little things – like people turning left in the middle of a block, or short left-turn signal timing – that make the congestion even worse.”

“What we need is a grid system of streets. There are no connector streets. We have to get on the highway to go half a mile, and that puts a burden on the highway. If we had better connector streets we could save the highway capacity for through-use. A grid system would help make the highway work better and relieve congestion.”

Did You Know...?

Many of the region’s streets and roads were originally Indian trails, wagon roads, or farm-to-market roads. Today they serve a burgeoning suburban population living very different lifestyles. Often these roads still use the original alignments. Retrofitting them to meet today’s needs costs anywhere from \$2-\$5 million a mile, depending on the terrain, the volumes to be carried, and how built out the area is.

Source: TRPC, 2025 RTP Estimate Template

People are frustrated by congestion, although there’s a growing awareness it isn’t a simple problem to address.

“Congestion is not just a function of the amount of growth we have, but how and where it occurs.”

“Part of the problem is our reliance on I-5 to get around this local area. That is going to grow as a problem.”

Measures to Support Streets, Roads and Bridges Objectives:

- Identify key east-west and north-south corridors essential to the region’s traffic flows, and develop comprehensive mobility and access strategies for them.
- Identify priority regional connections and determine rights-of-way. Undertake early, comprehensive public education and involvement to increase awareness of the need for these corridors and how to complete these connections.
- Explore the reasons why implementation of interconnected streets policies is so difficult, and identify strategies for improving that implementation.

10. Public Transportation

Goal: Provide an appropriate level of reliable, effective public transportation options commensurate with the region’s evolving needs.

Policies:

- 10.a Support implementation of Intercity Transit’s “The Route Ahead” long-range regional transit plan, which emphasizes trunk and primary routes serving core areas and designated strategy corridors.
- 10.b Increase the share of all trips made by public transportation.
- 10.c Invest in the commuter vanpool program to provide cost-effective, flexible alternatives to driving.
- 10.d Develop inter-regional transit partnerships for long-distance commute trips to and from destinations outside Thurston County.
- 10.e Provide safe, convenient, and cost-effective transportation service to youth, elders, people with disabilities, or other people with special needs.
- 10.f Increase awareness of public transportation and how to use it through expanded education and public information tailored for various age groups and interests.
- 10.g Consider a broad range of public transportation programs and services, including but not limited to local street trolleys, bus rapid transit, flex car programs, commuter rail, and high speed passenger rail to ensure a full mix of options for meeting transportation needs as they evolve.

Why Public Transportation Is Important:

Public transportation can be a very efficient way to move people in urban communities and can stimulate compact urban development. Besides supporting urban mobility, public transportation is a critical part of the social safety net that ensures access and independence for many members of the community, including those who do not own or drive a car. A good public transportation system is an indicator of a well-developed, complete urban network.

Challenges for Public Transportation:

- The Thurston region contains large expanses of relatively low-density residential areas isolated from activity and employment centers. This type of land use is difficult and expensive to serve with fixed route public transportation.
- To support transit, adopted land use plans promote infill and mixed-use urban development. However, large government facilities and major employers often locate outside centers targeted for such development and cannot be served efficiently by transit. Neighborhood opposition may block infill. The cumulative effect of these individual land use compromises undermines the ability of public transportation to fulfill its role as part of a mature urban transportation system.
- Public transportation has been criticized by residents living in rural or isolated urban areas who expect efficient, inexpensive transit service. Traditional transit service can’t serve these areas well and, some argue, providing it is counterproductive to other Growth Management goals. Yet viable alternatives are not readily available.

Public Comment and Input:

Views on public transportation encompass its urban mobility function as well as the important role it plays in helping people with disabilities maintain their independence and dignity.

“I believe people should have an opportunity to work, and many people are stuck at home if they don’t have transportation. Mass transportation is really important to enable people to work. It’s important to the economy.”

Dial-a-Lift is a service many residents hope they’ll never need, but value in case they do.

“When we look at transit for people with disabilities we realize we might need it ourselves someday, or need it for someone in our family.”

People are also increasingly aware of the potential role public transportation can serve in linking communities throughout the Puget Sound region.

“My hope and my dream is that the (Puget Sound Region’s) Sounder will be really effective, and that they’ll extend it down to this area.”

Finally, people recognize that public transportation includes a wide variety of mobility services and that an effective approach will tailor the appropriate service to the specific need.

“Public transportation doesn’t have to be 40-foot buses. It can be anything that gets people where they need to go.”

Measures to Support Public Transportation Objectives:

- Place a high priority on the availability of public transportation service and access when evaluating alternative locations for public facilities. Make special effort to keep these facilities and activity centers close to other transit-friendly areas or adjacent to Intercity Transit’s primary service corridors.
- Develop a commuter rail strategy for Yelm-to-Lakewood service. Include coordination with the Regional Transit Authority, Intercity Transit, and short-line rail operators, as well as land use strategies for managing the projected impacts of this service on the Yelm community and its surrounding areas.
- Work with community partners to explore alternate forms of public transportation, including the applicability of street cars or trolleys along the old routes in downtown Olympia, the economic viability of a Flex-Car program modeled after that in Seattle and Portland, and the long-term feasibility of bus rapid transit (BRT) as a strategy for linking Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater.
- Identify and implement innovative models and partnerships with non-profit and other groups to supply life-line services to people in the outlying areas where traditional bus or Dial-a-Lift service is not feasible.
- Explore ways of improving Intercity Transit bus service to area high schools, including potential replacement of school bus service with I.T. service where appropriate.

Did You Know...?

Intercity Transit underwent massive service cuts in 2000. However, by eliminating its least productive routes, I.T. increased its ridership productivity from 17 passengers per vehicle revenue hour in 1997 to 21 in 2002. That’s a 24% increase in overall ridership productivity.

Source: Intercity Transit, 2002 Annual Report

11. Biking

Goal: Increase the share of all trips made safely and conveniently by biking.

Policies:

- 11.a Develop a continuous, safe, and convenient regional bicycle network that functions as an integral part of the overall transportation system.
- 11.b Provide safe and convenient bicycle routes to all schools in the region.
- 11.c Invest in a regional network of contiguous and connected north-south and east-west dedicated corridors to serve as the backbone of the non-motorized system.
- 11.d Provide bicycle parking facilities at existing and future transit centers, park-and-ride locations, train stations, and other multimodal facilities.
- 11.e Encourage provision of short- and long-term bicycle parking and other supporting facilities at schools, employment sites, and major activity centers.
- 11.f Develop an education program for bicyclists to increase understanding of bicycling laws and encourage appropriate riding behavior.
- 11.g Consider long-term strategies for funding bicycle facilities and services.

Why Biking Is Important:

A well-balanced transportation system offers a variety of safe and convenient travel options. Many people are able to take advantage of biking for some of their trips – children pedaling to school and urban commuters riding to work. Bicycling also furnishes independence for those who are not able to drive. It is a “clean” mode of transportation that is good for the environment and the health of the cyclist, and an integral part of the overall regional transportation strategy. State law recognizes bicycles as vehicles and many local governments provide safe facilities consistent with overall traffic demands and local resources.

Challenges for Biking:

- Many people still see bicycling solely as a recreational endeavor instead of a legitimate mode of transportation, and oppose spending transportation funds on bicycle facilities.
- Despite compliance by a majority of riders, cyclists who don’t obey the rules of the road exacerbate negative public opinion.
- The cycling experience – much like that of walking – is influenced greatly by the actions of drivers. Many motorists don’t see cyclists and inadvertently crowd or cut them off. Additionally, the difference in speeds between driving and biking can create an intimidating travel environment for cyclists, which limits the willingness or ability of people to bike.

Public Comment and Input:

People often offer strong opinions about bicycling.

“Bikes drive me insane!”

“We have to learn how to accommodate bicycles on our roads because bikes are resented in this community, and that’s ridiculous!”

Unlike some other forms of transportation, though, those who don’t ride are often opposed to investments for this mode.

“We shouldn’t allow bikes on the road, period. They shouldn’t be allowed to mix with cars. I don’t want to pay for separate bike lanes, but I don’t want bikes on the road. I think separated bike trails are important to have, but the bike clubs should pay for them.”

“My feeling is that we’re putting a lot of money into bicycling in a community that makes very little sense, weather-wise. I mean, I know there are die-hards out there who’ll ride their bikes in any kind of weather. But for us to put millions of dollars into that side of the equation boggles my mind.”

As local and regional investments make progress toward an integrated bike network, more people recognize that cyclists add to – not detract from – the community.

“Olympia added a new bike lane past my store on 4th Avenue. Bicycle traffic has increased dramatically, regardless of what letters to the newspaper say. And I have from 4-10 bike customers coming into my store each week, where I didn’t have any before. It takes a while to catch on, but the more we do it the easier it is.”

More drivers support the need for bike lanes as a safety feature.

“I worry a lot when I’m passing a bicyclist who is in the driving lane because there is no bike lane. I feel safer in my car if the bicyclists have their own lane of travel and I have mine.”

Measures to Support Biking Objectives:

- Reconvene a regional bicycle advisory committee, with diverse representation, as a constructive way for regional bike interests to provide input into policy discussions and address issues.
- Initiate a public discussion on the function of bike lanes and how they’re financed to determine whether current funding mechanisms are appropriate.
- Explore the feasibility of levying and administering a bicycle license fee or other user fee. Revenues from such a fee could underwrite a variety of bike safety and bike education efforts for both riders and drivers, and could provide facilities and signage.
- Incorporate in-pavement or other effective sensing devices at signalized intersections to facilitate responsible and efficient on-street bike riding.
- Update the Trails Plan, extending its scope region-wide. Priorities include completing connections between Tumwater and the Chehalis-Western Trail, and strategies for completing the westside “Capitol-Campus-to-Capitol Forest” bike network.
- Continue to include appropriate biking and walking improvements (such as wide shoulders, sidewalks and bike lanes) as part of road projects.

Did You Know...?

In May 2002, 611 people participated in Climate Solution’s annual Bicycle Commuter Challenge. About 70% of the participants turned in their mileage logs at the end of the month. Those logs accounted for over 52,100 miles pedaled to and from work in one month.

Source: Climate Solutions

12. Walking

Goal: Increase the share of all trips made safely and conveniently by walking.

Policies:

- 12.a Provide a direct, safe, interconnected pedestrian network that supports existing and desired land uses.
- 12.b Construct safe sidewalks and effective crosswalks within an appropriate radius of every school in the region.
- 12.c Provide frequent pedestrian crossings, especially in urban areas, along primary transit routes, and near activity centers.
- 12.d Develop direct, “cut-through” connections for pedestrian and bike travel within and among neighborhoods and destinations such as major transit routes, schools, activity centers, and other destinations where pedestrian travel is anticipated.
- 12.e Require pedestrian-friendly building design in areas where foot travel is likely and encouraged, such as city centers and regional activity centers.
- 12.f Provide street lighting, trees, benches, and other elements that make walking safe and pleasant.

Why Walking Is Important:

Every traveler is a pedestrian at the beginning and end of the trip, since even drivers need to move safely and conveniently to and from the car. Beyond this most basic need, though, walking is often the only way that some members of the community can visit parks, shops, libraries, or neighborhood friends. This is important not just for their independence and mobility, but also as an effective way of countering the effects of the nation’s sedentary lifestyle. When it comes to city centers and activity centers, pedestrians are often referred to as the “indicator species” of a healthy downtown. Often, in a well-designed and established downtown area, travel is much easier on foot than by car. Walking is healthy, easy on the environment, cost-effective, and, with the right facilities and community design, a pleasant way of traveling.

Challenges for Walking:

- For decades, communities built around the car, often resulting in an inhospitable environment for walkers. Increasing density in some areas and speed in others creates the need for facility improvements to support access and safety for walkers.
- Until recently, sidewalks were sometimes viewed as an optional amenity to be funded and maintained by adjacent property owners, not as an integral part of the transportation network.
- Fast moving vehicles on larger streets and roads make walking alongside unpleasant and often dangerous. Effective measures are needed to discourage speeding and unsafe driving, such as stricter law enforcement or innovative design that encourages different driving behavior.

Public Comment and Input:

In discussion groups and public meetings, the need for sidewalks is uniformly recognized.

“Sidewalks in neighborhoods and near schools are important. This should be a priority. Especially to provide access within one mile of schools. Otherwise we have to provide the kids with school bus transport. Sidewalks would be cheaper.”

“Downtown sidewalks are important. It’s too dangerous if there are no sidewalks or if the sidewalks are in bad shape, especially when its congested with people and traffic.”

“I think sidewalks have a lot of bang for the buck, not just transportation-wise, but for community livability.”

Measures to Support Walking Objectives:

- Continue to include appropriate pedestrian facilities as a part of all publicly and privately funded transportation projects.
- Make completion of gaps in the sidewalk system a priority, especially in city centers, core areas, urban corridors, and within a quarter mile of any major activity center.
- Provide frequent and convenient pedestrian access points between on-street sidewalks and dedicated non-motorized facilities like the Chehalis-Western Trail, the Yelm-to-Tenino Trail, or the future Olympia Woodland / Lacey St. Clair Trail.
- Ensure safe sidewalks within ½ mile of all schools.
- When feasible, incorporate public places and pedestrian plazas in city center building design.
- Use design features like “bulb-outs” to minimize the street-crossing distance for pedestrians in busy intersections. Incorporate other appropriate design features to slow vehicular travel speed in neighborhoods and activity centers where pedestrians are common.
- Develop more public funding options to plan, construct, and maintain sidewalks and pedestrian facilities where they support transportation priorities.

Did You Know...?

Walking accounts for about 8% of all trips made region-wide. In areas with a compact mix of land uses – such as Olympia’s city center – almost 20% of all trips are made on foot.

Source: 1998 Household Travel Survey and 2025 Travel Demand Model

13. Rail

Goal: Ensure the long-term viability and continued use of existing rail lines in the region for freight and passenger rail travel.

Policies:

- 13.a Support appropriate short- and long-term opportunities for the potential shared use of freight rail lines for commuter rail or other passenger rail opportunities.
- 13.b Facilitate the acquisition and continued operation of short-line railroads by local jurisdictions where needed to support current and future economic development needs.
- 13.c Use design techniques, ITS and operations coordination to minimize potential conflicts between trains and other modes of transportation, and between trains and adjacent land uses.
- 13.d Prioritize the acquisition of rights-of-way threatened with abandonment in order to preserve these corridors for potential high capacity transportation use in the future.
- 13.e Participate in the partnerships necessary to foster efficient, high-speed passenger rail service in the Pacific Northwest rail corridor.

Why Rail Is Important:

Rail offers one of the most cost-effective and efficient forms of transportation for many mobility needs. Freight trains can quickly and profitably move many raw and finished materials long distances. Heavy goods like gravel and logs can be shipped by rail, reducing significant wear on roads. Commuter trains offer predictability and affordability to long-distance commuters in major metropolitan areas like Seattle. Intercity passenger rail is increasingly popular for travel between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, B.C., helping to ease pressure on highways and airports. Rail service also benefits some community development patterns. It stimulates complementary land use activities, such as industrial growth in an area served by freight rail, or transit-oriented development in areas served by commuter rail.

Challenges for Rail:

- A pressing regional challenge is the loss of transportation corridors through rail line right-of-way abandonment by Burlington Northern Sante Fe or Union Pacific, the region's two primary rail owners. Without a sufficiently funded, proactive acquisition strategy, these difficult to assemble corridors could be lost to future transportation uses.
- Another challenge is establishing passenger rail service on tracks owned by the major railroads, whose primary business is moving freight.
- Making shortline connections to the major railroads, for either freight or passenger movements, can be challenging, as is maintaining shortline tracks to keep them operational.
- Land use patterns in the western United States dictate that rail travel complements – not replaces – car, bus and truck travel, requiring good intermodal transfer locations and facilities.

Public Comment and Input:

Train travel appeals to a wide segment of the public.

“If we had commuter rail to Seattle, you know you’d be there in time for work or a meeting, whereas on the freeway, you can’t be certain. There are always tie-ups. The freeway has gotten to the point that we need to look at rail alternatives.”

“You asked if I’d take the bus if it were more frequent and quicker, since I supported light rail. No. It’s a confidence thing, even if it’s just perception. The times I’ve been on buses, it’s been really frustrating. I don’t know where they’re going to stop. But when I go to Vancouver (B.C.), the train stops are predictable. I understand the rail system so it boosts my confidence to try it.”

“We should be working now to secure access to existing rail lines so we can increase passenger service between Portland and Vancouver. Right now, the best we can do is to wait in line behind the freight trains, and that’s not going to get us anywhere as a region in the future.”

People also appreciate the value of freight rail for its role in economic development and in relieving highway congestion.

“Freight rail is important for the economy of the county as well as for improving highway capacity and safety.”

“I support freight rail because of roadway safety aspects. It gets trucks off the road. And it’s important for our economy.”

Measures to Support Rail Objectives:

- Update and expand the Regional Rail Strategy to ensure information is current, realistic strategies are in place to keep rail corridors intact if faced with abandonment, options are explored to expand passenger and freight rail services in Thurston County, and safety issues are identified and addressed.
- Coordinate efforts among Tacoma, Yelm, Rainier, short-line rail operators, and public and private economic interests to evaluate the feasibility of increasing rail travel along the Tacoma Rail Mountain Division line through eastern Thurston County.
- Explore the long-range potential of shared use of the eastern segment of the St. Clair line for freight rail and commuter rail, with a commuter rail terminus and its associated park-and-ride needs in the vicinity of Marvin Road and Union Mills Road.
- Identify rail segments that conflict with safe and efficient operation of streets and roads – such as the overpass on Rainier Road north of the City of Rainier – and develop an implementation and funding strategy for retrofitting these facilities to improve safety.
- Support the state and other partners in promoting very-high speed passenger rail service between Vancouver B.C. and Eugene, Oregon.
- Identify opportunities to facilitate development of dense urban centers near existing and future rail stations.

Did You Know...?

By 2018, WSDOT anticipates 13 round trips per day between Lacey’s Centennial Station and both Seattle and Portland. Travel time between Centennial Station and Portland is expected to be about one and a half hours, and just under an hour to Seattle.

Source: WSDOT, Amtrak Cascades Plan for Washington State

14. Aviation

Goal: Provide an appropriate level of facilities and services to meet the general aviation needs of residents and businesses in the region.

Policies:

- 14.a Encourage coordination between the Port of Olympia, the cities of Olympia and Tumwater, and Thurston County to maintain consistency between adopted land use plans and long-range airport development strategies, and to encourage land use compatibility in affected areas adjacent to the airport.
- 14.b Maintain and upgrade the Olympia Regional Airport for small jet and prop aircraft.
- 14.c Support efforts to maintain regional passenger air service at the Olympia airport.
- 14.d Develop a multimodal transportation system that better serves the needs of air travelers by including viable travel alternatives to the Olympia Regional Airport and to SeaTac International Airport.

Why Aviation Is Important:

Air travel in the Thurston region serves passenger and freight mobility. Those with access to private planes and helicopters enjoy a convenient alternative to highway travel and increasingly time-consuming procedures at Sea-Tac International Airport. Small, commercial planes offer that same convenience to business travelers. Air travel also provides expedient options for time-sensitive missions like helicopter med-evac, or for access to remote areas. For certain freight delivery needs, air travel into and out of a small, regional facility like the Olympia Airport is a timely alternative to highway delivery.

Challenges for Aviation:

- State and federal laws govern the kinds of land uses that can be located within a certain distance of public use airports. These laws necessitate increasing coordination and communication between airports and their surrounding jurisdictions.
- Once located at the outskirts of the urban area, the Olympia Airport is increasingly surrounded by industrial, office, and residential uses. As the vacant lands around the airport develop, the Port is faced with fewer and more costly options for revising runway alignments or expanding the size of the mandated safety buffer zone off the runways.
- The Port's ability to retain a commercial air carrier has been challenged over the years by insufficient market demand. This makes it difficult to establish the facilities and critical user base needed to ensure such a venture remains profitable in an industry plagued with financial troubles.
- Many people are concerned about the environmental impacts of increased air travel, whether from the high fuel consumption or pollutants and noise impacts on nearby neighborhoods. If aircraft size and flight frequencies increase, even long-established neighborhoods and communities far from the airport will feel increased impacts.

Public Comment and Input:

Since the debate in the early 1990s regarding the possible use of the Olympia Airport for Sea-Tac’s “third runway” expansion, airport activities have not generated any comment in TRPC’s public outreach efforts. Absent such comments, this section focuses instead on long-range plans for the airport, to promote awareness of the region’s planned aviation future.

Activities at the airport are under jurisdiction of the Port of Olympia, and are guided by periodic updates to the Airport Master Plan developed in 1990. That Master Plan includes alternatives analysis and recommendations for short- and long-range development strategies to accommodate projected growth in commercial aviation. The most recent revision, an August 2003 update to the Airport Layout Plan (ALP), identifies allowable land uses on the airport property, and extends aviation forecasts to 2020. The 2003 ALP Update:

- Considers the Port’s difficulties in attracting and retaining commercial aviation ventures at the airport, and emphasizes instead the steady growth in corporate and commuter jet activity.
- Identifies the Olympia Airport’s proximity to SeaTac, the strong growth in corporate plane travel out of the airport, and to a lesser degree, trends in commercial regional carrier service as factors that make it difficult to attract and retain commercial airlines at the airport.
- Includes analysis of existing facilities, take-off and landing needs by type of aircraft, and impacts of weather on operating conditions. The ALP concludes that 2020 projected air travel can be accommodated at the existing facility by shifting Runway 17-35 about 758 feet to the south, improving taxiways, and expanding the corporate aviation area and commercial passenger terminal facilities as needed to meet demand. The ALP emphasizes that construction of these support facilities should be based on actual market demand and not on forecasted demand.
- Recommends land use development and infrastructure investments for areas identified in the past for a potential future new runway, laying to rest the question of whether a new runway is in the airport’s future.
- Entails modifications to the street and road system south of the airport to accommodate changes to the alignment of Runway 17-35.

Did You Know...?

The Port of Olympia forecasts operations at the Olympia Airport will reach 138,000 flights per year by 2020. This forecast does not include potential commercial flights that may be operating then.

Source: Port of Olympia

Measures to Support Aviation Objectives:

- Periodically review Olympia Airport Master Plan forecasts and assumptions to ensure that long-range goals and objectives for the airport are consistent with other local and regional objectives. In particular, ensure long-range airport plans, Tumwater town center development plans and urban growth area plans are compatible. Pursue a focused sub-area study south of the airport, identifying impacts and appropriate strategies for the Port of Olympia, Tumwater, Thurston County, and WSDOT.
- Look for innovative public/private partnership opportunities between the Port of Olympia, commercial passenger airlines, Intercity Transit, and private transportation providers to deliver appropriate shuttle connections serving in-bound and out-bound scheduled commercial flights.

15. Marine Transportation

Goal: Provide an appropriate level of facilities and services to meet the region’s marine transportation needs.

Policies:

- 15.a Maintain a marine terminal for water-borne freight movement.
- 15.b Encourage coordination among the Port of Olympia, the City of Olympia and other stakeholders to maintain consistency between adopted land use plans and long-range marine terminal development strategies, including adequate truck and rail access.
- 15.c Consider long-term strategies for integrating maritime passenger service into the regional transportation system as alternatives develop.

Why Marine Transportation Is Important:

Puget Sound waterways are natural transportation corridors. Historically, marine transportation has been vital to this region and continues to be important for passengers, and domestic and international trade. Although passenger ferries in south Puget Sound have been replaced with other modes of travel, shipping continues through the Port of Olympia’s marine terminal, as well as privately owned facilities on Budd Inlet. Marine terminals are a limited commodity, given their location in a sensitive marine environment and the unlikely creation of new deep water ports.

Challenges for Marine Transportation:

- Marine cargo shipping into and out of the Port of Olympia is challenged by its location at the southern terminus of Puget Sound. Major ports of call in Seattle and Tacoma offer shorter trips and larger facilities designed to handle the massive trans-oceanic ships arriving from or departing to Asia.
- The Port of Olympia concentrates on breakbulk export logs or lumber shippers who may be overlooked by the bigger ports, or who need more customized service. The current trend in cargo shipping is toward the consolidation of containerized freight through the Ports of Tacoma and Seattle. The Port of Olympia is cultivating a reputation as a “specialty port” catering to the needs of the breakbulk and project cargo shippers.
- The ability of the Port to increase the output of its marine shipping terminal is contingent upon freight movement into and out of the Port area. The Port peninsula is surrounded by downtown Olympia as well as its own Swantown and Market districts. These areas are the focus of redevelopment and reinvestment efforts. As the downtown area becomes busier and built out, it will be increasingly difficult to move either freight trains or trucks through without negative impacts to the Port, the adjacent transportation system, and land uses.

Public Comment and Input:

TRPC's community outreach efforts have not generated public comment on marine travel issues or opportunities. Hence, this section focuses instead on long-range plans for the Port's marine facilities, to promote awareness of the region's planned maritime future.

Activities at the marine terminal are under jurisdiction of the Port of Olympia, which is operating from its 1995 Comprehensive Plan. That Comprehensive Plan and periodic amendments to the Capital Facilities Plan provide guidance and recommendations for short- and long-range development strategies for the Port's Ocean Terminal District to accommodate projected growth in water-borne freight trade.

- The Port's strategic plan affirms the role of the Port of Olympia as the port-of-entry for international and domestic shipping by way of the marine terminal, with a commitment to continue growing and diversifying freight transported through the terminal.
- The marine terminal is a unique facility in limited supply. It is unlikely any new deep water ports will be developed on Puget Sound, given the environmental and economic climates. The Port's Comprehensive Plan recognizes this uniqueness and infrastructure investment, and the importance of the marine terminal as a source of existing family wage jobs.
- Planned uses for the terminal area include industrial, commercial, warehousing, and accessory.
- The Comprehensive Plan identifies truck and rail routes necessary to make intermodal connections with the marine terminal. The plan includes a proposed truck route realignment for access to the Port Peninsula.

Did You Know...?

The Port's foreign waterborne trade in 2001 was 29,377 metric tons. The value of that trade - \$6.4 million – accounted for about 1% of the State's waterborne trade.

Source: U.S. Maritime Administration

Measures to Support Marine Transportation Objectives:

- Periodically update the 1995 Comprehensive Plan to reflect changing conditions and evolving development strategies for the Port.
- Ensure that land use and market assumptions reflect short- and long-range priorities for redevelopment of land adjacent to the marine terminal, including the Port's Swantown and Market Districts, and City of Olympia efforts.
- Identify any areas of conflict between future plans for the marine terminal and adjacent land use plans in Olympia, and develop a coordinated strategy with all affected interests for addressing those issues to ensure that all user needs are met.
- Monitor development of passenger ferry proposals for service into and out of Olympia. Incorporate any final implementation strategy into transportation and land use plans as appropriate.

16. Public Involvement

Goal: Convene on-going community discussions and public input into regional transportation planning and decision-making processes.

Policies:

- 16.a Provide broad-based, early, and continuing public involvement in all aspects of the transportation planning process.
- 16.b Ensure equal access to participation, including measures to ensure access to people and groups who have been traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system or public processes.
- 16.c Promote increased community understanding of the relationship between land use choices and transportation consequences facing communities at local, tribal, regional, and state levels.
- 16.d Engage in consultation with tribal governments within the region to ensure tribal participation.
- 16.e Explore innovative participation techniques to increase overall public involvement.

Why Public Involvement Is Important:

When it comes to transportation policies and investments, the region faces difficult choices and trade-offs. The public has a vested interest in the outcome, whether in 20-year regional decision-making processes or day-to-day local decisions. Effective public input informed by an understanding of issues and choices produces better decisions and results.

Challenges for Public Involvement:

- Transportation issues have many different facets. To realize effective involvement, the community needs an opportunity for on-going education and dialogue to understand the issues, and evaluate choices and consequences. However, personal time is limited and valuable, discouraging in-depth lengthy education efforts. Government is challenged to make the best use of the public’s time with meaningful process, clear and effective materials, and sincere consideration of input.
- Government is also challenged to gather the views of those who may be intimidated by the process or unable to participate by traditional means. Special efforts are needed to make information available in alternate formats and languages.

Public Comment and Input:

People find that the effectiveness of public process sometimes has to do with how it’s conducted.

“Don’t involve the public and get their input, and then do something different. There’s a perception that government just doesn’t listen. The public gets jaded.”

“You have to be clear about the information you’re requesting. Are you truly asking for input? Has a decision – for the most part – already been made? If so, tell us that. Be clear on what the information will be used for.”

“I think you need to be constantly looking for ways to communicate with the public in an interactive, two-way forum.... It is an iterative process, and it’s painful at times. And in some cases, it’s art. But you have to do it.”

The topic is an important motivator to public participation.

“Transportation isn’t really a high priority for me when I’m looking for information on the Internet. I’m satisfied as long as I can get from Point A to Point B.”

“Nowadays, for people to go to meetings, the issue has to affect them directly.”

“The people who show up at meetings are 99% against that project. The only reason people take the time to express their opinion is when it’s something they don’t want. ‘Majority opinion’ is an idealistic goal about how to pick projects and make decisions, but there’s a silent majority that has to be considered.”

“I don’t think you have to worry about reaching out to people. You do a good job of that. Your problem is that people aren’t interested in what you have to say. I don’t know that you can educate the public at large about what government is doing if they don’t give a hoot about it. I think they have to become involved in their own way.”

Measures to Support Public Involvement Objectives:

- Create and implement a curriculum designed to educate citizens on the local, tribal, regional, state, and federal roles in transportation decision-making. Include information on how and when to become involved and key points of contact. This program could be used to educate community members on a regular basis, empowering them to play a more active role in their community’s transportation decision-making process.
- Use the internet for on-going community dialogue on a range of transportation topics, including funding priorities, trade-offs, revenue options, and the effects of individual choices on regional consequences. This could also provide a virtual forum for comment on specific plans or policies.
- Take advantage of data generated by the COMPASS 2000 study to more effectively tailor outreach efforts to minority and socio-economically disadvantaged communities.
- Routinely offer “Transportation 101” briefings to new elected officials and planning commissioners on local, state, and federal transportation issues and opportunities.

Did You Know...?

Region-wide, 3.5% of the population is unable to speak English very well. In fact, over 1,300 households are linguistically-isolated, meaning no one in the home speaks English well. Lacey and Olympia have the highest concentrations of linguistically-isolated households, 23.4% and 26.9% of the regional total, respectively. Asian and other Pacific Island languages, and Spanish, are predominant in these households.

Source: 2000 Census

17. Intergovernmental Coordination

Goal: Ensure transportation facilities and programs function seamlessly across community borders and between regions.

Policies:

- 17.a Encourage coordination among the local, regional, and state governments in the operation of the transportation system.
- 17.b Work with government agencies to coordinate land uses, implement county-wide planning policies, and refine the tools needed to accomplish land use plans.
- 17.c Coordinate the development and update of local, regional, and state transportation plans to ensure consistency.
- 17.d Serve as a regional forum for the exchange of ideas, information, and issues among local jurisdictions and tribal, state and federal transportation authorities, to facilitate informed, reasoned decision-making processes.
- 17.e Establish government-to-government relations with tribal governments within the region to encourage coordination of land use and transportation plans.

Why Intergovernmental Coordination Is Important:

Travelers expect a high level of transportation service throughout the region and seamless transitions between communities. Therefore, the transportation network should function like a single system, not a collection of independent systems. Governments at the state, tribal, local, and regional levels must coordinate their investments, policies, operations, and standards to ensure this continuity.

Challenges for Intergovernmental Coordination:

- To function seamlessly across community borders, the transportation system must be planned, funded, and constructed in a coordinated way. This requires coordination among more than a dozen traditional transportation providers in the Thurston region alone and many service providers who rely on that system to supply assistance and mobility programs.
- Coordination of facilities and services is challenged by differences in funding abilities and processes, land use pressures, prioritization processes, time, and other government needs.
- A key challenge is the competitive nature of much of the region’s transportation funding, which often pits one community against another in the effort to secure scarce transportation revenue.

Public Comment and Input:

For many people, services and facilities operate so seamlessly that they are often unaware of the number of agencies responsible for their ease of mobility. But as more people become engaged in decision-making processes at all levels of government, awareness is growing of how decisions or actions in one community impact another. People expect governments to work together.

“Part of our problem with all issues – not just transportation – is that we are one community. But we don’t understand that, or at least we don’t always act like that.”

“Can’t we get government agencies to work together to be more efficient?”

“I think part of our problem is that we have a regional issue here, and we have several different jurisdictions in Thurston County each trying to find the solution on their own.”

Residents are more aware of our region’s connection to the greater Puget Sound area.

“We can’t think of ourselves as ‘outside’ the greater Puget Sound region. We need to be planning our future public transportation with the rest of that region. We are short-sighted if we think we can isolate ourselves from the rest of the growing megalopolis when we’re located right on the I-5 corridor. So we need to plan for it to minimize its impact and increase our options.”

Some people believe better coordination is needed.

“You can’t have transit with low residential densities. But when we propose the kind of communities that can benefit from transit, we can’t get them approved. We’re crucified by the public for proposing high density development and government listens to them. You’ve got one hand of government over here saying, ‘This is what we want,’ and when we bring it to them, another hand says, ‘No, you can’t do that.’ You’ve got to make up your mind.”

Did You Know...?

TRPC was created in 1967, to provide an intergovernmental forum for addressing land use and transportation issues, and other common concerns of its members.

Source: TRPC

Measures to Support Intergovernmental Coordination Objectives:

- Continue to explore common issues and identify appropriate next steps through TRPC’s policy maker forums.
- Reach out to Grays Harbor, Lewis, Mason, and Pierce Counties to identify possible issues meriting further inter-regional coordination. One example may be the need to develop an inter-regional corridor strategy for State Route 507 to ensure that increasing through-put does not jeopardize livability of the small rural communities who call SR 507 “Main Street.”
- Increase communication and understanding between tribal and non-tribal governments.
- Continue active participation on established intergovernmental bodies and look for ways to increase the effectiveness of these organizations.
- Explore new ways of coordinating and delivering transportation service among various providers and agencies to leverage investments and improve public service. One such example may be evaluation of service overlaps between school buses and Intercity Transit. Untapped opportunities may exist to share select service responsibilities and improve the delivery of service while reducing costs.
- Continue to educate elected officials, planning commissions and other decision makers on the relationship between land use and transportation, with an emphasis on public transportation. This common understanding recognizes that neither the transportation system nor land uses stop at community borders.

18. Environmental and Human Health

Goal: Minimize transportation impacts on the natural environment and the people who live and work in the Thurston region.

Policies:

- 18.a Protect water quality by minimizing impervious surface area and stormwater runoff where possible, and effectively treating and managing unavoidable runoff.
- 18.b Minimize road crossings through designated environmentally sensitive areas and habitat corridors to avoid fragmentation and degradation of the region’s open spaces and wildlife habitats.
- 18.c Use transportation planning, design, and construction measures that minimize negative impacts on priority fish-bearing streams.
- 18.d Develop a transportation system and support compact, mixed-use development policies that curb the growth in miles of motor vehicle travel as a means of increasing regional energy efficiency and reducing environmental impacts.
- 18.e Promote use of alternative fuels and technologies that reduce pollution emissions and other environmental impacts from motorized vehicles.
- 18.f Use compact urban development and the non-motorized forms of transportation it supports as a means of encouraging overall physical activity and community health.
- 18.g Ensure that minority populations and people with low incomes do not incur disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects from transportation programs, policies, and investments.
- 18.h Coordinate with the Olympic Region Clean Air Agency, the Washington State Department of Ecology, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration to ensure federal Clean Air Act transportation requirements are met.
- 18.i Support efforts to improve motor vehicle maintenance to reduce air and water pollution.
- 18.j Strive to balance appropriate levels of environmental protection with the costs of achieving it, recognizing that environmental and human health impacts of the transportation system cannot be completely eliminated.

Why Environmental and Human Health is Important:

The Thurston region has a legal responsibility to ensure that transportation investments don’t reverse the good results achieved in air quality over the last 10 years. It’s also important to ensure the negative impacts of the transportation system on the social and built environment don’t outweigh its benefits. Transportation investments should add to – not detract from – quality of life in neighborhoods, rural communities, and city centers.

Challenges for Environmental and Human Health:

- The Thurston region – like most of the U.S. – is dependent on fossil-fuel technologies for virtually all of its transportation. The way the region developed created many mobility needs. These fossil fuels, and the many square miles of impervious surface required to meet daily travel needs, have long impacted air and water quality, wildlife habitat, and community livability.

- Health experts are blaming the nation’s increasing obesity and associated health problems in part on auto-oriented lifestyles and associated community sprawl.

Public Comment and Input:

People feel strongly about the importance of healthy environments, both natural and social:

“We’ve got to make people a higher priority than cars.”

“The problem is our future dependence on cars, and the impact of that on our air quality. If we value clean air we’re going to have to ask whether we can really continue to rely on the gas-guzzling car. Can we, do we want to, wean ourselves from the independence and luxury of our cars?”

“Government needs to decide whether a project will pay for itself, of course. But more important to me is whether a project will improve the environment. We need to consider the quality of life, and try to preserve it.”

Did You Know...?

Biodiesel is an organic, non-toxic alternative to petroleum diesel. It has similar properties, and can be blended with petroleum diesel. A blend of 80% petroleum diesel and 20% biodiesel (called a B20 blend) reduces airborne particulate matter by about 10%. It also produces significant reductions in carbon monoxide and other greenhouse gases. This low-emissions B20 alternative only reduces vehicle mileage by 2% and entails minimal vehicle modifications.

Source: Environmental Protection Agency

At the same time, there’s a growing call for common-sense approaches to addressing problems.

“Environmental protection pushes my buttons. We’ve lost the balance somewhere. Save the fish, but put 3,000 people out of their homes. It’s out of whack. I know the pendulum is way over to one side right now – 10 or 15 years ago it was way over to the other side. But with all these environmental rules they have now, there has to be a common sense approach, too. We need more balance, somehow.”

“You can’t do ‘one-size-fits-all’ environmental regulation. It’s going to cost society too much if we keep going this way. The cost of housing, the cost of transportation, the cost of everything will go through the roof.”

Measures to Support Environmental and Human Health Objectives:

- Pursue “clean fuel” technology like biodiesel in the Thurston region. Take advantage of the size of government vehicle fleets (Intercity Transit, school districts, government agencies) to create the initial market demand. If necessary, consider some kind of market incentive to encourage suppliers to make biodiesel available and promote it widely to Thurston County consumers.
- Evaluate fish-bearing streams to better target resources to the highest priority culvert retrofits.
- Explore participatory processes inherent in Context Sensitive Design as a way to include citizens and businesses in evaluating specific transportation problems, determining needs, and designing solutions.
- Pursue legislation mandating statewide motor vehicle emissions and inspection programs.
- Actively support policies and implementation measures in the “Transportation and Land Use Consistency” element of this Plan to support the objectives of this section.

19. Performance Measures

Goal: Develop performance measures that are efficient to administer, effective in assessing performance, and meaningful to the public.

Policies:

- 19.a Use transportation performance measures to evaluate, monitor, and respond to the performance of regional policies and investments.
- 19.b Use transportation performance measures that reflect priority regional objectives, such as consistency of transportation and land use decisions, improved mobility and access, adequate maintenance and repair of the existing system, environmental protection, and safety.
- 19.c Develop performance measures that reflect the contribution of all modes of travel.

Why Transportation Performance Measures Are Important:

Performance measures can be useful tools in evaluating how well policies and investments support key transportation objectives. These measures provide a basis for understanding current situations, assessing decisions and outcomes, and perhaps making future course corrections. This can be helpful in prioritizing issues, allocating resources, and marking progress on complex issues. Performance measures can also be powerful tools for explaining issues, strategies, and outcomes to constituents and other interests.

Challenges for Transportation Performance Measures:

- A serious downfall of many programs is the urge to develop too many performance measures. Unless key objectives are narrowed and meaningful measures developed for those select priorities, collecting data, monitoring, and reporting on performance measures can be time consuming and expensive. It is difficult, but essential, to prioritize among the list of objectives and select only a few performance measures.
- Another challenge is posed by the limited availability of reliable data that can be updated periodically. Again, measures that rely on creation of new data are likely to be costly or difficult to maintain over time.
- Regional performance measures may be different from many measures implemented at the local, tribal, or state levels because missions and priorities differ.
- Without a commitment to monitor, report on, and evaluate performance measures in a meaningful way, the public and other stakeholders will grow disillusioned. A thoughtful process is needed to establish measures that identify appropriate objectives and avoid over-committing resources.

Public Comment and Input:

The specific question of performance measures has not been posed to community discussion groups through any of TRPC's outreach efforts. However, some input was offered on the only measure used in previous regional plans for evaluating system performance – a congestion measure based on designed roadway capacity compared to actual or forecasted traffic volume. Participants indicated congestion is not an adequate measure to judge total transportation system performance.

“We used to think we could build our way out of over-crowding on the highway. Now, we’re beginning to wonder if we really can, or if widening roads will just attract more cars.”

“Congestion, while it’s annoying, isn’t very high on my priority problem list.”

Measures to Support Transportation Performance Measures:

- Identify three or four performance measures to augment the region’s current level of service (LOS) standard that is based on volume-to-capacity ratio. Identify the specific goals and the intended outcomes of policies and/or investment decisions that will be evaluated using these measures. Ensure that this information is clear and easy to understand.
- Explore whether a multimodal level of service standard is a workable and desirable measure for local or regional system evaluation.
- Develop an appropriate reporting format, evaluation schedule, and process for monitoring performance measures over time.
- Develop a communication strategy to report findings.

Did You Know...?

One measure of how well transportation and land use are working together is reflected in the “drive-alone rate.” Often based on the commute trip, the drive-alone rate indicates whether a larger or smaller share of commuters are traveling by alternate modes. In 1990, 79% of people in the region were commuting by driving alone to work. By 2000, the share of commuters driving alone dropped to 77%. While this is a reduction of only 2% of commuters, it represents a reversal of trends over the last few decades in which increasing percentages of people were making the drive-alone commute. Even lower drive-alone rates are found in the Lacey-Olympia-Tumwater urban area (74%). However, the lowest rates in the Thurston region are found on the Chehalis and Nisqually Indian Reservations, which have a combined drive-alone rate of 64%.

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census

20. Transportation Funding

Goal: Ensure that transportation revenues provide maximum public benefit and support adopted land use strategies.

Policies:

- 20.a Provide timely and comprehensive public information about transportation funding issues and opportunities to better enable citizens to participate on complex funding decisions.
- 20.b Prioritize the maintenance and preservation of the existing transportation system to minimize life-cycle costs.
- 20.c Consider costs and benefits in the allocation of transportation funds to ensure best long-term investment decisions.
- 20.d Make strategic transportation investments that reinforce well-planned growth and redevelopment decisions.
- 20.e Ensure that transportation investments are equitable to all segments of the community – in terms of costs such as relocations, adverse health impacts, and land use disruptions – and in terms of benefits derived from the system, such as levels of service or travel choices.
- 20.f Support efforts to improve the availability, predictability, and flexibility of transportation revenues.
- 20.g Use transportation funding policies and investments to make development decisions predictable, fair, and cost effective.

Why Transportation Funding Is Important:

The facilities that are built, the programs and services that are implemented, and the education and outreach that is conducted, all rely on sufficient funding.

Challenges for Transportation Funding:

- No single funding source is available for governments to build, maintain, and operate the region’s transportation system. Instead, funding is pieced together from a variety of revenues. This challenges orderly and thoughtful prioritization and implementation strategies.
- Voters in Washington State and Thurston County alike have been divided on the subject of transportation funding in recent years, often along rural/urban lines. Recent state gas tax and local sales tax increases do not offset earlier losses of revenue sources or inflationary effects on fixed revenues. In some cases, delaying program investments – as in pavement preservation programs – results in higher life-cycle costs later.
- Funding issues are further compounded by the lack of true market mechanisms to manage the demand for travel. As more than one person commented through community discussion groups, individuals have an unlimited appetite or “demand” for transportation facilities, the “supply” of which falls on the public sector. Unlike utilities or any other goods, few pricing structures are available for effectively balancing supply and demand, and those that exist are difficult to implement.

Public Comment and Input:

When questions about transportation funding are posed, the public often responds “Spend money wisely.”

“Part of ‘finding more money’ is not necessarily to come up with new sources, but to use the ones we already have more efficiently and effectively.”

There’s a growing awareness of the challenge facing government in meeting demands for transportation facilities without effective pricing or market tools.

“I don’t think we have a transportation problem – I think we have a pricing problem.”

“There are two different opinions that the general public has about transportation. In terms of willingness to pay additional taxes or fees for services, transportation is a low priority. In terms of wanting service at their door every 10 minutes, transportation is a high priority. There is a difference between what people are willing to pay for, and what their expectations are.”

“What we would like to have is usually a whole lot more than what we’re willing to buy if we have to pay for it. And most plans I’ve seen don’t take that into consideration.”

Impact fees and other developer contributions surfaced as a frequent topic.

“It’s unfortunate that impact fees are so narrowly defined in what they can be used for because I think that there are other alternatives to accommodating new growth than just widening roads.”

“Impact fees should be charged in the outlying areas, where people really depend on their cars. People who live further out from the city are creating a larger burden on government than those who live in the cities, so they should pay a larger share of the costs.”

“A big part of the finance equation that’s missing are facilities built by private development. There’s a lack of understanding – or misunderstanding – about this share of the costs that are paid by development. This is above and beyond what we pay in fees. Average cost for a typical lot I developed in Lacey is \$14,000 for transportation infrastructure alone, and I give this infrastructure to the city when it’s complete. We are out there constructing a huge amount of public infrastructure that most people are not aware of.”

Did You Know...?

Taking care of the existing system, making it safer and more efficient, accounts for about 75% of transportation costs local agencies incur. The need to expand the system represents about 25% of costs.

Source: TRPC, Guide to Financing the Regional Transportation Plan

Measures to Support Transportation Funding Objectives:

- Consider ways to refine development fee structures for transportation to better support local and regional investment goals, improve predictability and equity for developers, and generate appropriate contributions attributed to all development impacts.
- Improve funding and programming predictability at the local and regional levels. Increase the amount of revenue over which agencies have decision-making authority, either through the provision and implementation of workable local revenue options, or through an increase in state revenues distributed directly to local or regional agencies for programming.
- Explore issues and options regarding the funding of infrastructure and services in urban growth areas.
- Monitor legislative consideration of local revenue options like city street utility, local option gas tax, motor vehicle license fee and other local revenues for priority transportation needs.