

## The Whatcom region’s transportation strategies

Previous sections of Whatcom Mobility 2040 have described the Whatcom region’s transportation system, the current condition and level and types of use the system serves today, and what our region’s goals for the system are over the next 20 years. This section of *Whatcom Mobility 2040* will discuss our region’s strategies for meeting our goals. Figure XX at right illustrates very generally the sequence of discussion so far – the policies, information, and analysis that the Whatcom region’s current and future strategies are based on.

As shown in **Figure XX**, to structure this discussion, seven types of strategies are listed. WCOG’s level of involvement with each type of strategy, and thus the corresponding amount of strategy discussion in this plan, varies from direct to indirect. A description of each strategy type and the resulting depth of discussion in this plan is below.

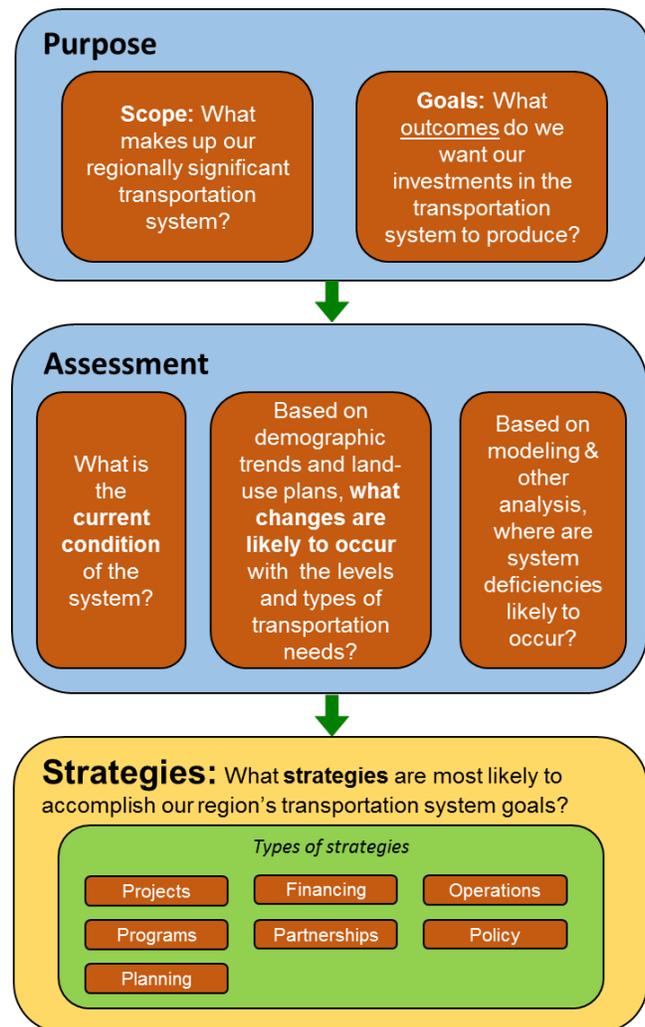
**Projects:** Specific investments in preservation or improvements to the transportation system. This is the part of the regional/metropolitan transportation plan typically referred to as the regional project list. This is a central part of the five-year plan update.

**Programs:** Ongoing efforts that optimize the effectiveness of one or more parts of the transportation system. Programs like Smart Trips (a regional transportation demand management program) and the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC) for coordination of regional cross-border transportation with Canada, are directly administered by WCOG. The programs of regional jurisdictions and of partner agencies are also important to consider in planning how to accomplish our regional goals.

**Planning:** The comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing processes, reflected in this plan, carried out through the WCOG MPO and RTPO to collectively advance regional, state, and national goals. This subsection of *Whatcom Mobility 2040* will present component functions and planning activities that compose the ongoing work in required activity areas (Intelligent Transportation Systems and Human Services Transportation). This subsection will also cover strategies for adopting performance-based planning and programing, assessment and plans for incorporating safety related data into the regional planning process, and discuss the development of longer range strategies with the region’s public transit operators.

**Financing:** The ways our region pays for the costs of its transportation system. This is a critical subsection that presents summarized data and discussion of how reasonably expected revenues

Figure XX: The lead-up to strategies.



will cover the expected costs (along with planned improvements) over the next 20 years. While this section includes discussions of alternate financial strategies that jurisdictions could consider in order to make investments beyond estimated future revenue, it is the individual jurisdictions, not WCOG, that would implement any such changes.

**Partnerships:** Proactive communication and cooperation with various entities to improve the success of shared goals. While there is not a separate subsection below on partnerships, the encouragement of and reliance on quality partnerships is present throughout WCOG's planning work and other programs.

**Operations:** The ongoing management of transportation system facilities and other assets (roads, airports, vehicles, communications infrastructure, etc.) From a planning perspective, observations of *how well* facilities and networks operate is the basic function of measuring and tracking performance. WCOG does not own or control facilities like its member jurisdictions and agency partners do. While there is not a separate operations section of this plan, ongoing involvement system operators (e.g. the Transportation Technical Advisory Group) to best understand how various strategies will benefit operations, is part and parcel of WCOG's planning functions.

**Policy:** Relative to our regional transportation system, policies are any number of formal decisions by local government administrations or facility agencies (e.g. WTA, WSDOT), made within the parameters of legal authorities, to influence the likelihood of a desired outcome. Typically implemented with public consultation, some examples of policy strategies are dedication of road lanes for high-occupancy vehicles, ramp-metering, pricing of publically owned parking spaces, etc. While the WCOG transportation policy board has responsibilities for formulating and approving regional investment priorities, its role has not included developing policies that would apply across multiple jurisdiction's facilities or with respect to regional financing strategies.

Some of the Whatcom regional goals are addressed by WCOG more as a matter of policy than programs or specific projects, namely safety and environmental quality.

## Projects

### Whatcom regional project list

Each of the jurisdictions in the Whatcom region annually updates a transportation improvement program (TIP). While local TIPs vary in format, they are essentially six year lists of planned projects – the first four years have secure funding and the fifth and sixth years are considered planned. In compiling a *regional* project list for updating the 20-year plan, WCOG has consulted with the individual jurisdictions to identify projects that 1) advance one or more of the region's transportation goals, 2) provide regional benefit and pertain to the regionally significant system, and 3) are fiscally constrained – together with other projects identified by a jurisdiction do not present total costs that exceed the jurisdiction's reasonably expected available revenue over the planning period.

More information on these three project-selection requirements as well as the list of projects adopted as part of this plan is presented in [Appendix XX](#).

<[The project list is currently available on the WCOG Whatcom Mobility 2040 web page as a separate document.](#)>

<[place full table here](#)> <[link to tableau in web-based version](#)>

## Environmental mitigation strategies

A federal requirement for updating the regional & metropolitan transportation plan (Title 23 Part 134 (i)B) is that public land-management agencies be consulted to identify any needs for the environmental impacts of identified projects or other strategies to be mitigated or minimized. This can also facilitate the identification for opportunities for coordination.

Appendix XX includes a table of agencies who were provided draft versions of this plan for consultation.

## Programs

The following programs are administered by WCOG to advance regional transportation goals as well as support state and national objectives.

### Transportation demand management (TDM) – Whatcom Smart Trips

Transportation demand management (TDM) describes an array of strategies to reduce demand for roadway travel, particularly travel in single occupancy vehicles. **TDM strategies primarily advance the Whatcom region’s goal of Efficiency, effectiveness, and system sustainability.** The more trips that are served by modes other than single-occupant vehicles, the more efficient and affordable our transportation system, and our public infrastructure in general, becomes.

Most local jurisdictions in the Whatcom region (*let's make this a link to a page where we have links to all the Whatcom region transportation elements*) undertake various TDM strategies such as commute trip reduction, providing parking for van pools, collaboration with transit agencies, parking policies, etc.

One regional TDM strategy, administered by WCOG, is the [Whatcom Smart Trips](#) program.

The program is currently funded by a partnership of the City of Bellingham, the Whatcom Transportation Authority, and the Northwest Clean Air Agency.

Whatcom Smart Trips is a collection of initiatives and tools that help and encourage community members to use more efficient and sustainable transportation modes. These include:

- **An online trip diary** that helps community members identify opportunities for making trips by walking, bicycling, sharing rides and riding the bus
- **Smart Trips Incentives**, which include discount cards, gift certificates, cash prizes and recognition to motivate community members to try new forms of transportation
- **Emergency rides home** using limited, free taxi service so bus riders and other Smart Trips participants who experience an emergency or become ill at work can get home
- **Smart Trips employer partners** to provide support to businesses and organizations that want to promote sustainable transportation to their employees
- **Community outreach** provides education, assistance and incentives by partnering with community groups that wish to promote walking, bicycling, sharing rides and riding the bus
- **School Smart Trips** program, which provides classroom activities for middle school students and bicycle skills courses for elementary school students
- **An ongoing public awareness campaign** that includes advertising and public presentations to make the community aware of the benefits of participation in the Smart Trips program.

The Whatcom Smart Trips program also advances the Whatcom regional goals of:

- **Environmental quality** – Increased walking and biking advances healthy communities both as a function of increased physical activity and avoided vehicle-related emissions.
- **Multimodal transportation system** – Increasing people’s awareness of the transportation options they have and informing them how to use more modes directly increases the viability and value of transit, ride-share services, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and indirectly improves effectiveness of roads.

### **Coordination of cross-border planning, programming, and operations – The International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC)**

The Whatcom region’s northern boundary is the United States’ international border with Canada. While the Whatcom region is home to about 212,000 people, just across that border, the Metro Vancouver area is home to about 2,500,000 people. As an international border region, the Whatcom transportation system includes the national facilities of U.S. and Canadian federal border inspection agencies. The Whatcom region’s location on the coastal transportation corridor between Vancouver, BC; Seattle, WA; and other western U.S. states results in high volumes of nationally significant truck and rail freight through this area. Additionally, the asymmetrical population density is a very important dimension of transportation demand in the Whatcom region. In 2015, approximately 4.2 million vehicles trips by Canadians crossed into the Whatcom region with approximately 46 percent of those trips (1.9 million vehicles / 4.4 million person trips) having destinations in the Whatcom region (per 2013 IMTC travel survey). This level of activity has a significant positive impact on the Whatcom region’s economy but also generates a large share of the vehicles using the regional road system. These added cross-border flows of freight and travel are important considerations for the Whatcom region when planning system capacity and funding system costs.

Since 1997, the WCOG has been the lead agency of International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC). IMTC is a voluntary, binational, regional coalition of government, business interests, and non-governmental entities established to support the improvement of safety, mobility, and security for the Cascade Gateway – the five land-border ports of entry connecting Western Washington State and Lower Mainland British Columbia. Through the IMTC Program, participants coordinate planning, identify shared system needs, and optimize investments and operations through collaboration, innovation, and partnership.

The IMTC Program is participated in by regional and binational partner entities including: U.S FHWA, Transport Canada, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Canada Border Services Agency, WSDOT, B.C. Ministry of Transportation & Infrastructure, B.C. and WA at-border municipalities, U.S. Consulate-Vancouver, Canadian Consulate-Seattle, industry associations (trucking, customs brokers, duty-free stores), legislative offices, non-governmental organizations, and other government agencies.

Being a broad program working on planning, programming, and operations, IMTC advances all Whatcom regional goals in various ways. Primarily though, considering the alternative of a less functional border connection, IMTC more directly supports **efficiency, effectiveness, and system sustainability; a multimodal transportation system; access and convenience; and freight transportation.**

Read more about the objectives and strategies of the IMTC Program, in the [IMTC Purpose, Goals and Strategies](#) document.

More information about the IMTC Program, regional border data, and specific project reports, is available at the IMTC website: [www.theimtc.com](http://www.theimtc.com)

## Planning

This section will review the planning work that WCOG does that is required by our state and federal laws. While these core functions are prescribed by legislation, there is sufficient flexibility in the laws and regulations for WCOG to adopt strategies and undertake activities that both meet our region's state and federal responsibilities and allocate attention commensurate with our region's transportation goals.

### MPO & RTPO planning activities

As a federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) ([corresponding federal regulation](#)) and a state designated regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) ([corresponding state administrative code](#)), WCOG is responsible for carrying out a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing planning processes and other responsibilities. As reflected in this plan, this work will continue in advancement of the region's transportation goals as well as support state and national planning and programming objectives.

### Performance based planning and programming

#### *Federally required measures & targets:*

With the passage of the federal Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) in 2012, MPOs are now required to establish and use a performance-based approach to transportation decision making and regional planning in support of national planning factors (discussed above).

In addition to this general approach, MAP-21 rules (carried forward into the current federal transportation act, The FAST Act) also established requirements for states and MPOs to adopt specific performance measures and targets in the areas of safety, infrastructure condition, system performance, and environmental sustainability. At the time of this writing, the deadline for adoption of measures and targets is next year (2018) and the consultative process between WSDOT and MPOs is still underway. WCOG (along with other MPOs) will be working with WSDOT to formally adopt coordinated metrics and targets over the next year. When these MAP-21 performance measures and targets are agreed to with WSDOT and adopted by the WCOG MPO policy board, this plan will be updated to include them.

#### *WCOG regional corridors*

As part of its regional efforts to adopt performance based planning practices, WCOG has started identifying a limited number of priority, regional, inter-jurisdictional corridors. Selection of corridors is based on the following objectives and characteristics:

- Transportation connections between two urban areas.
- A generalized geography that accounts for all modes, roads, and system components that serve transportation between the two urban areas (trails, ferry, etc.).
- Identification of corridors is intended to provide a framework to support coordination between jurisdictions and agencies with operational responsibilities on the corridor (WTA, WSDOT, etc.)
- Corridor performance measures can track progress towards goals and help identify system needs and investments.

This regional corridor strategy was discussed with the Whatcom Technical Transportation Advisory Group (TTAG) who agreed with the merits of trying it out.

**Figure XX** below illustrates eight corridors identified that WCOG will be developing performance measures for and testing as a basis for ongoing planning discussions with the involved system owners, operators, and users.

Figure Xy below takes one example corridor (Ferndale-Bellingham) and shows a possible application of performance measures. Corridor measures are intended to assess the availability and effectiveness of all modes and support comparison over time so that targets can be set and worked towards.

Figure XX also lists the jurisdictions and transportation agencies with responsibilities on this corridor as well as additional performance measures to develop metrics and targets for in support of the Whatcom regional transportation goals.

Figure XX. Concept map of Whatcom regional corridors

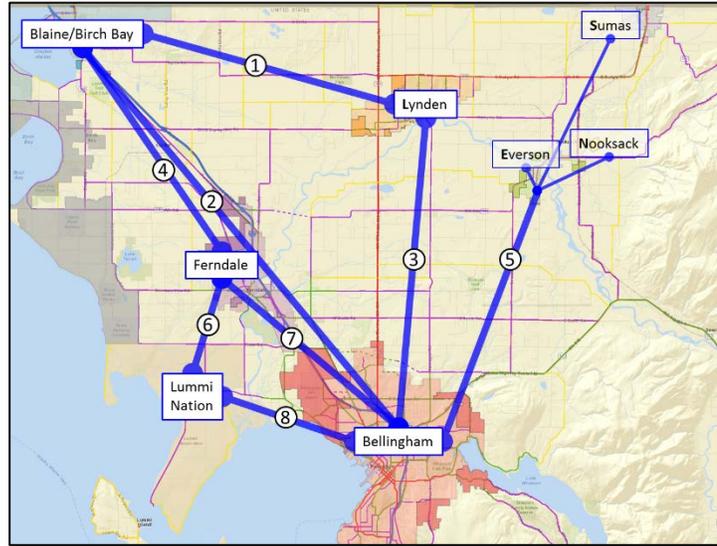
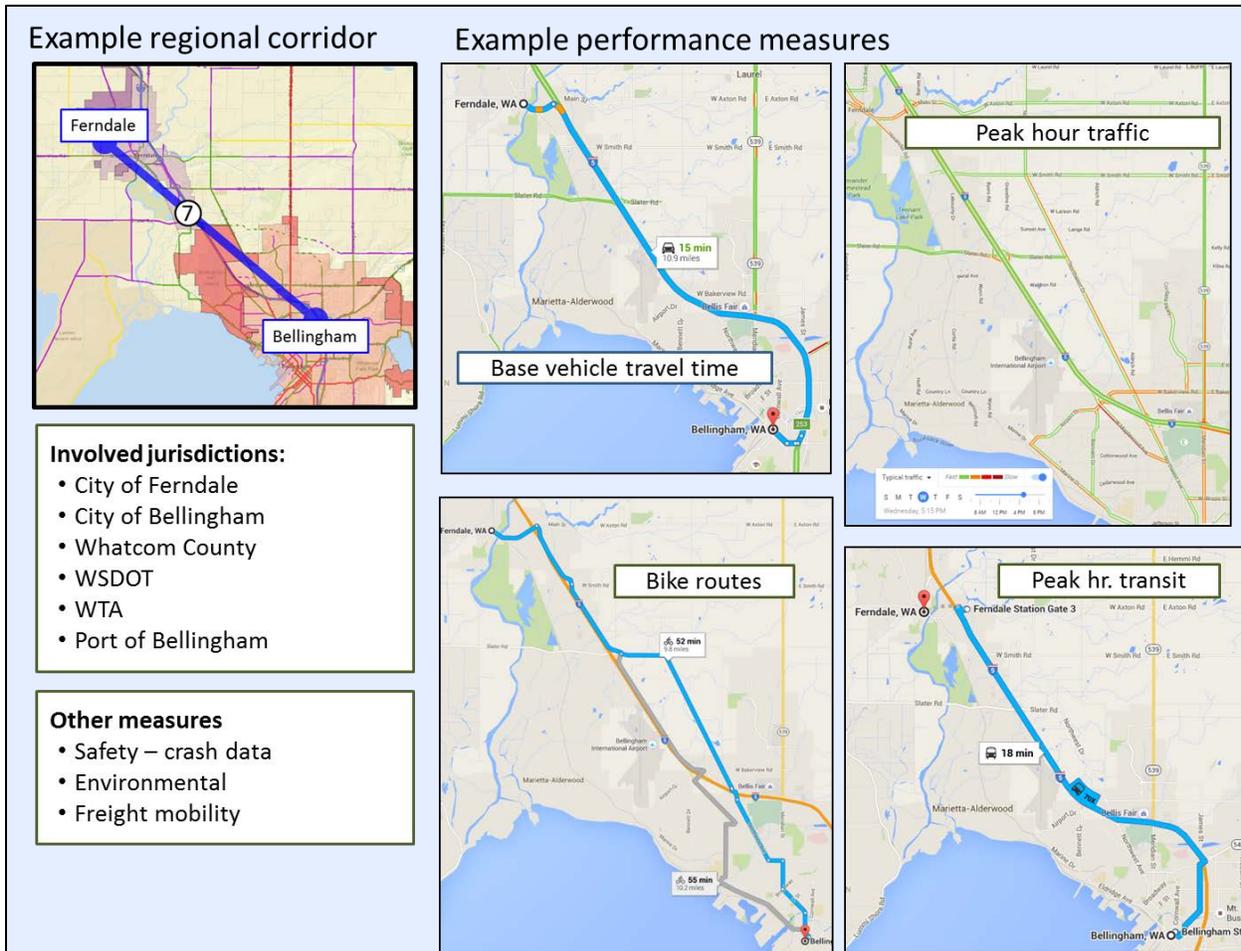


Figure Xy. Concept dashboard of corridor performance measures





whatcom council of governments

Over the next year, WCOG will continue working with the region’s jurisdictions and transportation agencies to develop the regional corridor performance measurement framework and use it to form strategies for best serving inter-jurisdictional travel and goods-movement across all modes.

*Regional coordination of level of service (LOS) standards*

Level of service (LOS) is a broad term used to describe a measurement of how well a transportation facility or service (traditionally a road) is operating. LOS is mentioned in multiple sections of Washington State’s Growth Management Act (GMA) and in the legislated responsibilities of RTPOs so, it is important to acknowledge this context before discussing how LOS does and does not fit into WCOG’s planning strategy.

There are various reasons that LOS measures are adopted and applied.

In Washington state law, LOS is defined as “an established minimum capacity for both transit and regional arterials.” Under GMA, cities, counties, and the state are required to establish minimum LOS standards. If, through required land-use and transportation planning analysis it is determined that development will cause enough added vehicle trips to cause arterial roads or transit systems to fall below the adopted LOS minimums, that jurisdiction must then show how it can pay for needed facility improvements or change its land-use plan to maintain the adopted LOS. This state GMA policy of requiring jurisdictions to keep their adopted level of transportation capacity in running balance with vehicle demand is called concurrency. So, one big reason that cities and counties adopt LOS standards is to monitor and comply with GMA’s concurrency requirement.

**For example: Traditional LOS measures for roadways**

Applied to road segments; intersections; or traffic corridors; LOS measures have typically been based on traffic volume, vehicle travel time, or a combination of variables such as distance traveled, road conditions, or safety hazards.

Measures, such as those based on comparing observed vehicle travel times to a free-flow condition or comparing observed vehicle counts (volume) to the road’s designed vehicle capacity, are usually batched and associated with a corresponding range of letter grades from “A” (indicating free-flowing vehicle traffic) to “F” (indicating that traffic is at a standstill).

In Whatcom County, most jurisdiction use (not exclusively) an A-F LOS measure based on a road’s vehicle volume compared to its designed vehicle capacity during the PM peak-hour of traffic.

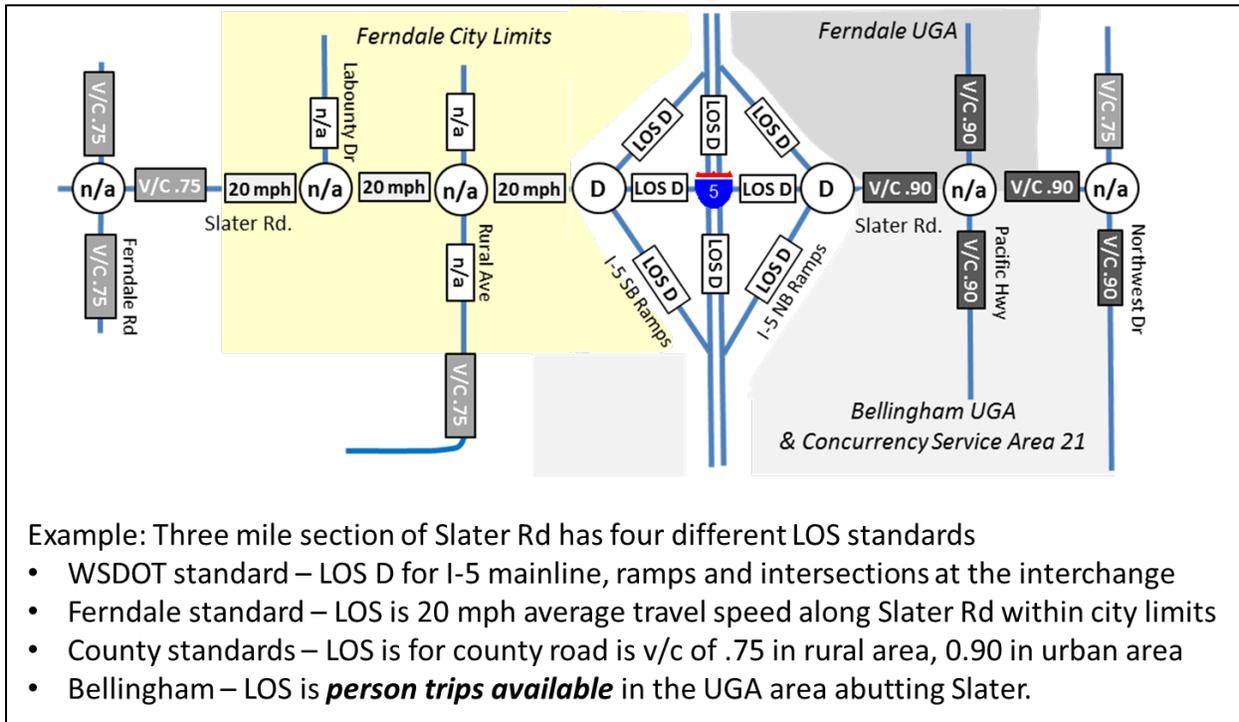
LOS Designation	Volume/capacity range	Sample application:
A	0 – 0.59	Per the table at left, if a city has adopted an LOS standard of “C,” and a road with a designed capacity of 400 vehicles/hour has a 4-5 PM vehicle count of 350, then since $350/400 = 0.875$ , that road, scoring a LOS of “D,” is operating below the adopted standard.
B	0.60 – 0.69	
C	0.70 – 0.79	
D	0.80 – 0.89	
E	0.90 – 0.99	
F	>1.00	

Another reason that jurisdictions adopt LOS standards is to assess **impact fees** – payments required of developers to offset the costs of transportation improvements necessitated by the development. This is very much related to how jurisdictions finance compliance with concurrency requirements.

WCOG, as an MPO and RTPO, does not use LOS for assessment of concurrence or for any type of fee calculation. As an RTPO, [state law requires](#) WCOG to 1) review level of service methodologies used in the planning area and promote a consistent regional evaluation of transportation facilities and corridors and 2) work with cities, counties, transit agencies, the department of transportation, and others to develop level of service standards or alternative transportation performance measures. So, for WCOG and the region as a whole, LOS

measurement encompasses a range of methodologies and applications that we use in various ways to measure performance and inform planning. When it makes sense, WCOG encourages consistent measurement. Consistency can be helpful when assessing future investments alternatives on facilities owned and operated by multiple jurisdictions. For example, **Figure Xlg** below illustrates a section of Slater Road which overlays from left to right Whatcom County, the City of Ferndale, WSDOT I-5 right-of-way, Cities of Ferndale and Bellingham’s urban growth areas, and back to Whatcom County.

**Figure Xlg.** Example of how LOS measures vary along routes, across jurisdictions



As a matter of planning strategy, WCOG has adopted the position that jurisdictions’ adoption and use of different LOS methods and standards is not, by itself, an inconsistency with respect to our regional planning efforts and regional transportation goals. As discussed above, these various measures and standards are used by jurisdictions for other-than-planning purposes and are based on local preferences for metrics (e.g. travel time vs. vehicle volume), different expectations for system effectiveness (LOS C vs. LOS E), and responses to the amount of funding available to maintain or achieve a given LOS standard.

For regional studies that WCOG participates in (e.g. sub area study or a corridor study), WCOG will encourage the use of a consistent LOS method.

For measures and forecasts of the regional road network generated by its regional travel demand model, WCOG uses the same LOS scale as Whatcom County (shown in the *for example* box above). So, with respect to the regional road network, operating conditions (**as shown in previous sections of this plan**) are assessed and visualized in a consistent way. This application of LOS helps communicate the expected operational effects of forecast future population changes along with planned and or notional investments in transportation system capacity or operations.

### *Least-cost planning methods*

Washington state requires RTPO's regional transportation plans (after July 1, 2000) to be based on a "least-cost planning methodology appropriate to the region." ([WAC 468-86-070](#))

Washington State Administrative Code defines [least-cost planning](#) (LCP) as a process by which a region pursues its transportation goals using the most cost-effective mix of options. Further, the process should:

- Consider both transportation supply strategies (e.g. adding or widening roads, adding buses, etc) and demand strategies (e.g. high occupancy vehicle lanes, transportation demand management programs, work-from-home),
- Consider both direct costs (e.g. infrastructure, operations, preservation, debt service) and indirect costs (e.g. safety, travel time, air quality & public health, habitat).

In alignment with adopting an LCP planning process, and as reflected in *Whatcom Mobility 2040*, WCOG has done the following:

- WCOG has adopted regional goals that reflect the expectation that the future effectiveness of our region's transportation system will, and should rely on a *mix of options*.
- In addition to *supply strategies*, WCOG has adopted regional demand strategies. WCOG's most notable transportation demand management (TDM) strategy is the Whatcom Smart Trips Program. Related to WCOG's TDM strategies is its continuing work with jurisdictions and transit providers to support the future effectiveness and attractiveness of transportation modes other than single-occupancy vehicles.
- By adopting both regional goals and strategies to develop and continuously improve performance measures, WCOG's regional planning activities can include benefit-cost analysis that includes indirect cost factors (e.g. safety, travel time, health, environment) essential to a LCP approach
- Towards the desired LCP outcome of "the most cost-effective mix of options," WCOG has adopted the regional goal of efficiency, effectiveness, and system sustainability. Applying this to the goal of "most cost effective" is taken to mean:
  - Making the best use of *available* information to identify alternatives,
  - Evaluating the relative direct and indirect costs and benefits as described above,
  - Using the strategy that the region can both afford and that provides the most expected benefit for the least cost.

### **Longer range planning in support of public transit**

The Whatcom region has two public transit services – the Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) and the Lummi Nation's transit system (Lummi Transit).

In 2017, WTA completed an update to its [six-year strategic plan](#). Since WTA does not make land use decisions, it has historically made more sense for the agency to respond to where demand for their service emerges rather than plan services years ahead based on forecasts. WTA's strategic plan focuses on adjusting services (routes, frequency, etc.) to current community needs and on the changing demographics of user groups and corresponding shifts in costs. But looking out beyond six years, and in the context of WCOG's ongoing 20-year planning horizon, we know that important dimensions of our community and our transportation system will change. In view of this, WTA and WCOG intend to collaborate on supporting a regional, longer-range planning discussion about how our transportation system will need to function to

optimally provide future transit services. This planning strategy is intended to be as much about coordinating transit-supporting strategies of local jurisdictions, agencies, and other institutions as about transit agency operations. Example strategies include roadway design, park-and-ride facilities, bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to transit hubs, information and data sharing, public-private partnerships, and others.

### *Some specific longer term transit planning strategies*

The most obvious intersection of WTA's service goals and WCOG's regional transportation goals is the goal of a multimodal transportation system. Identifying the best strategies to help our region make the highest and best use of all available transportation modes – and in this case, transit – depends on knowledge of where the potential ridership is and will be in the future. Thus, WCOG and WTA will be looking to ensure that:

- Future household travel surveys (undertaken to refresh trip-tables for the regional transportation demand model) include sampling strategies, information fields, and temporal parameters to generate useful information for longer term transit planning.
- Explore GIS applications, census data products, and analytical techniques to improve the quality of demographic data on quarter-mile bands (approximate walking distance) around existing and proposed bus routes.
- Consider strategies for more productive operation of park-and-ride facilities.
- Monitor system conditions that, in the future, may rationalize strategies such as congestion bypass.
- Evaluate demographic trends relative to expected transit use rates such as age and income.
- Continue to support inter-regional transit services like the County Connector and facilitate continuing dialog with WSDOT on shared interests in service along state routes.
- Continue to monitor the feasibility of cooperating with regional transit providers in British Columbia to provide an effective cross-border public transit connection.
- Monitor current and potential future activities of private bus companies that serve regional transportation demand and consider how public facilities can complement various bus service options to make the overall system more efficient and successful.
- Monitor the evolution of other transportation services and technologies that could have implications for transit operations and alternatives. Examples include the augmenting of rural transit service through partnership with ride hailing services like Lyft or Uber, and the possibility of autonomous transit vehicles.

### *Current analysis of potential transit growth areas*

In developing background information on opportunities for service growth, WTA prepared an analysis attached as **Appendix XX**.

## **Freight**

In support of the regional goal to provide mobility for freight, WCOG employs several strategies.

- **Regional freight system assessment:** In 2015, with funding from WSDOT, WCOG undertook a region-wide survey, mailing requests to over 1,000 local companies to complete a questionnaire about their freight-transportation needs (current and future), their assessment of the current freight system in the region, and recommendations for improvements and other changes.

For findings and analysis please see the report: 2015 [WCOG Freight System Assessment \(make this an available link\)](#)

- **FGTS:** WCOG participates in WSDOT's data-based designation of a Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS). WCOG works with local jurisdiction to provide truck counts on primary roadways that are used to estimate the tonnage of freight moving on those roads. More information about the FGTS classification system is available on [WSDOT's FGTS webpage](#).

WCOG uses the FGTS system to improve regional awareness of freight flows and trends and to inform the application of freight criteria in project selection and project prioritization.

- **Participation in state and federal freight initiatives:** In addition to statewide freight planning, WSDOT's Freight Systems Division undertakes and supports various freight activities that are important for our region to participate in. Examples include:
  - Stakeholder committee to evaluate an approach to statewide modeling of freight flows.
  - Stakeholder review and participation of a process to designate critical urban freight corridors.

WCOG also works closely with the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Washington Division Office to stay aware of federal funding opportunities such as the FAST Freight programs.

- **IMTC:** WCOG's International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC) includes a focus on regional cross-border trade flows between Canada and the United States. The IMTC forum supports important discussion among federal, state, and provincial agencies who have shared interests in collaborating on freight planning and systems operation. IMTC participants also include private sector freight interests including the BC Trucking Association, the Washington Trucking Association, and the Vancouver Airport Authority. In support of these interests, IMTC has conducted a series of cross-border commercial vehicle studies over its 20-year history, compiling a time-series of valuable data on regional cross-border commodity flows, origin-destination, and many other trip and conveyance characteristics relevant to cross-border system planning, inspection program strategies, and identification of operational efficiencies.

## Human Services Transportation Plan

In 2006, the Washington State Department of Transportation directed WCOG and the state's other Regional Transportation Planning Organizations to convene stakeholder groups comprising local human services agencies, schools, transportation providers and others to develop consolidated human services transportation (HST) plans to ensure that the mobility needs of people who do not drive due to age, income or disability reasons, are being met. This process results in a prioritized list of project proposals within Whatcom County based on the rankings of WCOG's HST stakeholder group and reviewed by the TTAG and CTAG. Project proposals included on the list become eligible for consideration for state and federal public transportation grant funding. The WCOG's 2014 HST Plan was approved by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board in October 2014 and [amended in October 2016](#).

## Intelligent transportation systems (ITS)

*<Description of ITS plan and citation / link to full plan as an appendix.>*

## Public participation plan

Public participation is essential to the development of successful regional transportation solutions and to minimizing adverse project impacts. It's also a requirement of both the federal

government and Washington State. The Whatcom Council of Governments' [Public Participation Plan](#) was adopted by WCOG in October of 2009 and updated in November 2014. It provides guidelines for establishing and maintaining robust public involvement throughout the transportation planning process.

### **Environmental justice**

Environmental justice (EJ) is the practice of identifying and addressing disproportionately high and adverse effects of programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income population to achieve and equitable distribution of benefits and burdens.

WCOG strives to maintain an awareness of potential EJ issues in the region and promote regional actions to achieve equitable distribution through planning and programming efforts. Specific and overlapping strategies include:

- Inclusion of EJ as a specific objective related to environmental quality scoring criteria for regional evaluation of STBG funding proposals.
- Inclusion of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's environmental justice screening and mapping tool ([EJSCREEN](#)) on [WCOG's GIS portal](#).
- WCOG's human services transportation (HST) planning activities (described above) include focused attention on transportation needs of low-income populations.

### **Policy**

For WCOG, two regional goals (and state and federal planning requirements) that are implemented primarily as a matter of policy are safety and environmental quality. While individual jurisdictions often advance these goals with more direct actions, as an MPO, WCOG advances these desired outcomes through integration with various other planning strategies.

### **Safety**

As described in [<a previous section>](#), the objective of maximizing safety applies to everyone using the transportation system – motorized and non-motorized users. WCOG has adopted the following strategies to advance this goal.

- In administering the process for awarding the regional appropriation of FHWA Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) funds, WCOG has made safety the highest weighted scoring criteria. Under the safety criterion, projects that address system locations with history of fatal or serious injury crashes are emphasized. Projects that address any documented history of crashes (of all types) are also advanced under the criterion.
- WCOG uses the crash data resources compiled and made available through the WSDOT Transportation Data, GIS, & Modeling Office – especially its Crash Data Portal – to monitor and visualize locations in the region that exhibit problematic crash trends. WCOG works with member jurisdictions to interpret these data and support efforts to identify and fund strategies to address safety issues.
- WCOG will continue to work with WSDOT to formally adopt upcoming standardized FHWA safety performance measures and targets. As suggested in current federal regulations, these will likely consist of region-wide measures of annual fatal and serious injury crashes, assessed on a five-year rolling average.

### **Environmental quality**

As described in [<a previous section>](#) WCOG's connection to advancing the regional transportation goal of environmental quality overlaps with state and federal goals which, together, highlight some specific outcomes: •greenhouse gas emissions reduction, •energy



conservation, •protection of the natural environment including habitat and water quality, •enhancement of community health, and •promotion of consistency between planned land-use and economic development. WCOG has adopted the following strategies which advance these goals:

- In administering the process for awarding the regional appropriation of FHWA (STBG) funds, WCOG has made environmental quality a second-tier criterion (along with efficiency and multimodal). Only the safety criterion is weighted more. Under the environmental quality criterion, projects that result in improvements to the environment related to the above-listed outcomes, is emphasized. WCOG has also added outcomes to the project selection guidance that include addressing environmental justice issues and project implementation strategies that make use of recycled materials.
- WCOG acknowledges Whatcom County's adoption of [Resolution 2015-038](#), "Committing Whatcom County to adopt a 'Healthy Planning Approach'." With this acknowledgement, WCOG will strive to pursue the other strategies listed in this plan with ongoing consideration of how they could be implemented to best support the desired outcomes of health and well-being of our region's residents.

## Financing

<[The financial strategy is currently available on the WCOG Whatcom Mobility 2040 web page as a separate document.](#)>