

Introduction to proposed amendment

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), The Whatcom region’s federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) will be considering an amendment to the regional transportation goals identified in its current regional/metropolitan transportation plan – [Whatcom Mobility 2040](#).

This would be an incremental modification to the existing seven goals in response to observed policy emphases of local and state member jurisdictions and agencies. Generally, this modification would:

1. Elevate the priority of two current goals – *preservation* and *environmental quality*.
2. Make explicit that *environmental quality* is fully inclusive of climate action.
3. Increase the clarity of the goals’ names and move more towards a straight, 1-7 prioritization.

The scope of proposed changes pertains to one section of the current plan – Whatcom Regional Transportation System Goals. This section is copied below.

- Proposed **deletions** are ~~lined-out-in-red~~.
- Proposed **insertions** are **in green**.
- **Notes** about proposed changes are in the right margin **in blue**.

Proposed modifications:

Whatcom Regional Transportation System Goals

To plan for our region’s transportation future, we need to first know what our goals are – what we as a region want to accomplish with our chosen strategies and investments.

Whatcom Mobility 2040 draws on the transportation goals adopted in the comprehensive plans of WCOG’s member jurisdictions – Whatcom County, the seven cities, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Tribe – in establishing the goals for the Whatcom region. The transportation elements of all of the jurisdictions’ comprehensive plans were carefully reviewed, and the goals emphasized in each of them were compiled in a matrix to identify those shared by a majority of the jurisdictions.

Whatcom regional transportation goals selected from local transportation plans

Priority No.	Goal (and number of jurisdictions that established it as a goal in local comprehensive plans)
1	Safety (10)
2	Climate & environmental quality (8) A multimodal transportation system (8)
32	Preservation (6) Efficiency, effectiveness and system sustainability (8)
42	Mobility (All modes and an emphasis on trip capacity) (8) Environmental quality (8)
53	A multimodal transportation system (8) Access and convenience (7)
64	Access (7) Maintenance and preservation (6)
	Freight transportation (6)

- ← *Environmental quality* is renamed to clearly include *Climate* and moved to priority 2.
- ← *Maintenance and preservation* is renamed *Preservation* and moved to priority 3
- ← *Efficiency, effectiveness and system sustainability* is renamed, *Mobility*.
- } There is no basis at this time for setting a relative priority for these two goals. They remain together in a 6th priority tier.

Each of the above goals is more fully described below. These seven regional goals – which largely overlap with the more numerous planning factors that federal and state law, respectively, require MPO and RTPO transportation plans to address (Section xx) – will take precedence in prioritizing project funding requests and developing performance measures and targets (see Section xx).

Note: The goal descriptions starting at left have been re-ordered to match the ordering-change proposed above.

Safety

All ten of the Whatcom region’s jurisdictions included safety as one of their transportation goals. The safety of all users of the region’s transportation system – pedestrians, bicyclists, automobile drivers and passengers, and truckers – must be maximized to the greatest degree practicable in the establishment of regional transportation policies and investment decisions.

Since preparation *Whatcom Mobility 2040*, WCOG member jurisdictions, the state, and others have adopted climate policies and action plans. Transportation figures heavily into carbon emissions and policy responses. This proposed change is a way recognize a much-increased emphasis among MPO members.

Climate (greenhouse gas reduction) & Environmental quality

Whatcom region local governments, tribal governments, and Washington State government have initiated actions to reduce carbon emissions and prepare for the effects of climate disruption. Reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and more broadly advancing environmental mitigation and restoration (e.g. ~~Residents of the Whatcom region are second to none in their commitment to environmental quality, and, at the very least, they expect transportation investments’ negative impacts to the region’s environment to be minimal if not neutral, or, ideally, positive.~~ Energy conservation, ~~reducing greenhouse gas emissions~~, habitat preservation, and ~~ensuring air and water quality~~) are ~~among the many environmental values that are~~ **outcomes** of paramount importance in the region.

Maintenance and p Preservation

The high priority of the preservation goal indicates the Whatcom region’s intent to ensure that its existing transportation systems are kept in a state of good repair before pursuing system expansions. This goal **complements** ~~the goal~~ principle of sustainability: the importance of ~~first~~ choosing investments in facilities and programs that our region has the fiscal capacity to pay for, ~~and willing to~~ operate, and ~~/or~~ maintain into the future, ~~and then—as reflected in this goal—appropriately prioritizing the necessity of keeping our regional transportation system in a state of good repair.~~

For this high-level statement of goals, maintenance is considered to be part of preservation and so the name of this goal is proposed to be shortened.

Mobility Efficiency, effectiveness and system sustainability

Mobility refers to the summation of qualitative measures of travel and goods movement including travel time, travel-time predictability and reliability, and comfort. The goal of mobility and our region’s strategies to optimize it **pertain to all modes** (i.e. walking, transit, biking, driving, freight & service trucks, etc.). Mobility depends on adequate transportation system capacity. To advance this mobility goal (and its other goals), the Whatcom region measures capacity primarily as the number of *trips* that the transportation *network* can accommodate. Secondarily, traditional, mode specific measures of road-capacity for *vehicles* are appropriate for certain analyses. ~~A program or project is efficient if it can be implemented for an appropriate cost relative to both its projected benefits (its effectiveness) and the cost of reasonable alternatives. It should also be sustainable, i.e., it will last as long (or longer) than projected and be able to be kept in a state of good repair and/or operated at or below its projected cost.~~

The element of *sustainability* included in the original goal name is now addressed more directly above as part of the *Preservation* goal. The elements of *efficiency* and *effectiveness* are more succinctly captured by the industry-standard term, *mobility* (described in proposed new text)

A multi-modal transportation system

To efficiently and equitably serve the movement of people and goods that our region needs in the years ahead, our transportation network must provide multiple types (modes) of transportation (e.g. walking, buses, trucks, cars, bikes, paratransit, rail, etc.) and good connections between them. While the above goal, mobility, addresses the *quality* of transportation provided by all modes, this goal affirms a commitment to the continued development and integration of the options themselves.

Updated text is proposed here to make a clearer distinction between the *Multi-modal* and *Mobility* goals.

~~Residents of the region consistently express their support for a transportation system that provides mobility for people—all people—and not just those who drive. All modes of transportation should be considered when choosing among the many possible investments in projects to meet the demand for travel and goods movement, and in support of the other goals, notably efficiency and sustainability.~~

Access ~~and convenience~~

The region's transportation system is intended to serve all people and acknowledge and reduce barriers related to age (seniors and youth), income, and disability. ~~mobility that exist for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.~~

The word "convenience" is removed to make the title of the goal more succinct. Convenience is also a qualitative aspect that can be considered part of the mobility goal above.

Freight transportation

Given Whatcom County's adjacency to the Canadian border, along with the presence of one of the nation's premier trade corridors within its boundaries (Interstate 5) and BNSF freight rail, goods movement has a significant impact on the region's transportation system.

For questions or comments about this proposed amendment, please contact:

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