

## Aligning regional, state, and national goals

Building on the previous section that introduced the Whatcom region's transportation system goals, this section explains how these goals will be related to national and state goals in subsequent sections of Whatcom Mobility 2040.

A basic requirement of metropolitan transportation plans is that they "consider factors described in CFR §450.306 [the *federal planning factors*] as they relate to a minimum 20-year forecast period." Additionally, CFR §450.324(f)(2) notes that the MPO plan's discussion of existing and proposed facilities gives "emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions.

A notable recent addition to original federal planning factors are seven "national goals" introduced as part of the National Goals and Performance Management Measures introduced as part of the 2012 U.S. transportation funding authorization act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21). These are included in the discussion below.

In addition to the Whatcom regional goals (identified in the preceding section), and the federal objectives noted above, Washington State also has legislatively identified transportation policy goals. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) has also developed a set of goals called Results WSDOT. Some of these goals are applicable and are included in this section's discussion.

In acknowledgement of both the MPO requirement to consider and emphasize national and regional planning factors and Whatcom Mobility 2040's dual function as the state mandated regional transportation plan (RTP), this section discusses how these three levels' (regional, state, national) multiple sets of goals for transportation strategies can be applied as guidance for the Whatcom region's continuing regional transportation planning process and to the strategies identified in this plan.

## Aligning regional goals with state and national goals

Across the three levels of government discussed above (regional, state, & national) are five overlapping lists of transportation system goals. Using the lists separately would not be an effective or coherent way to inform planning and decision making. [Table XX](#) below organizes these five lists so that the state and national goals are grouped into sets that correspond to the seven Whatcom region goals. This supports the prioritization of strategies that advance the seven Whatcom regional goals ahead of the remaining important goals and planning factors. As shown by the table, the seven Whatcom region goal align well with all but four of the 34 state and national goals: economic vitality (state & federal), security (national), resiliency (national), tourism (national), and reduction of project delivery delay (national). This is not to say that the Whatcom region has no interest in these outcomes, only that, unlike the other goals, they were not consistently mentioned in transportation plans of the Whatcom region's local jurisdictions.

**Table XX.** How Whatcom regional transportation goals align with Washington state legislative policy goals, Results WSDOT goals, and U.S. federally required planning factors.

Whatcom regional		Washington		United States	
Seven most commonly listed goals, in jurisdictions' comprehensive plan transportation elements, in descending order of frequency		Statewide transportation policy goals (RCW 47.04.280)		FAST Act planning factors 23 U.S. Code § 134(h)(1)	
1	<b>Safety</b> 10 listings	"Safety: To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system."		"(2) Increase the <b>safety</b> of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users."	
2	<b>Efficiency, effectiveness, &amp; system sustainability</b> 8 listings	<p>"<b>Mobility</b> (congestion relief): To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility."</p> <p>"<b>Stewardship</b>: To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the transportation system."</p>		<p>"(3) <b>Congestion reduction</b>: To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System."</p> <p>"(7) Promote <b>efficient system</b> management and operation."</p>	
2	<b>Environmental quality</b> 8 listings	<p>"<b>Environment</b>: To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment."</p>		<p>"(5) Protect and enhance the <b>environment</b>, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns."  <i>Also, see (9) below regarding storm water impacts.</i></p>	
2	<b>A multimodal transportation system</b> 8 listings	<p>"<b>Modal integration</b>: Optimize existing system capacity through better interconnectivity of all transportation modes."</p>		<p>"(6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, <b>across and between modes</b>, for people and freight."</p>	
				<p>National goals 23 U.S. Code § 150(a)(b)</p> <p>"(1) <b>Safety</b>: To achieve a significant reduction in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads.</p> <p>"(3) <b>Congestion reduction</b>: To achieve a significant reduction in congestion on the National Highway System.</p> <p>"(4) <b>System reliability</b>: To improve the efficiency of the surface transportation system.</p> <p>"(6) <b>Environmental sustainability</b>: To enhance the performance of the transportation system while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.</p>	

**Continued from previous page - Table XX.** How Whatcom regional transportation goals align with Washington state legislative policy goals, Results WSDOT goals, and U.S. federally required planning factors.

Whatcom regional	Washington		United States	
	Statewide transportation policy goals (RCW 47.04.280)	Results WSDOT goals that pertain to the transportation system.	FAST Act planning factors 23 U.S. Code § 134(h)(1)	National goals 23 U.S. Code § 150(a)(b)
3 Access & convenience 7 listings			"(4) Increase <b>accessibility and mobility</b> of people and freight."	
4 Maintenance & preservation 6 listings	" <b>Preservation:</b> To maintain, preserve and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services."	" <b>Strategic investments:</b> Effectively manage the system assets and multimodal investments on corridors to enhance economic vitality."	"(8) Emphasize the <b>preservation</b> of the existing transportation system." Also, see (9) below regarding <i>reliability</i> ."	(2) <b>Infrastructure condition:</b> To maintain the highway infrastructure asset system in a state of good repair.
4 Freight transportation 6 listings	<i>Freight included as part of Mobility and Economic Vitality policy goals.</i>  <b>Economic vitality:</b> To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.		<i>Freight included with FAST Act planning factors 4 and 6.</i>  (1) Support <b>economic vitality</b> of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.	(5) <b>Freight movement and economic vitality:</b> To improve the national freight network, strengthen the ability of rural communities to access national and international trade markets, and support regional economic development.
			(3) Increase the <b>security</b> of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.  (9) Improve the <b>resiliency</b> and <b>reliability</b> of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate storm water impacts of surface transportation.  (10) Enhance travel and <b>tourism</b>	(7) <b>Reduced project delivery delays:</b> To reduce project costs, promote jobs and the economy, and expedite the movement of people and goods by accelerating project completion through eliminating delays in the project development and delivery process, including reducing regulatory burdens and improving agencies' work practices.

## How the Whatcom regional goals encompass state and national goals

Compiled from ten local comprehensive plans, the seven Whatcom regional goals are captured mostly as one or two-word phrases. Reading through **table XX**, the logic of grouping the state and national goals under the seven regional goals may not be obvious. To explain the groupings and to provide expanded definitions of the regional goals, each is described further below.

**Safety** – Safety of everyone using the transportation system – motorized and non-motorized users. There is a primary interest in advancing strategies expected to reduce fatalities and serious injuries.

**Efficiency, effectiveness, and system sustainability** – The objective here is that:

- Strategies are implemented for an appropriate cost relative to benefits and alternatives (efficient). Also linked to the regional sub-goal of efficiency are the state and national themes of congestion reduction (mobility), and broader operational efficiency, especially related to system management and information technology strategies.
- The transportation system or components of it will work as intended (effective).
- System components will last as planned and over that time can be kept in good repair and operated for an appropriate and affordable cost (sustainable).

**Environmental quality** – State and national elements specifically note several aspects that complement and further inform this regional goal.

- Greenhouse gas emissions reduction
- Energy conservation.
- Protection of the natural environment – including natural habitat and water quality.
- Enhancement of healthy communities.
- Promoting consistency between transportation investments and planned land-use and economic development.

**A multimodal transportation system** – The corresponding state and national descriptions of this goal align very well with the region’s policy-based interests in supporting a multimodal system. All modes of transportation should be considered when choosing the investments needed to meet demand for travel and goods movement, and in support of the other goals (notably efficiency and sustainability), strategies should strive to provide for optimal modal connections and systems integration.

**Access & Convenience** – Also reflected in the corresponding federal planning factor, our region’s transportation system is intended to serve all people and acknowledge and reduce the barriers to mobility that exist for older adults, people with disabilities, and people with low incomes.

**Maintenance & preservation** – This goal very much compliments the above goal of sustainability – the importance of first choosing investments in facilities and programs that our region is fiscally willing and able to operate into the future and then giving appropriate priority (reflected by this goal) to keeping our system in a state of good repair.

**Freight transportation** – Like the state and the nation, our region’s local plans reflect a common interest in ensuring that our transportation system provides mobility for freight (goods movement, large service vehicles, etc.). Specific attention to freight transportation also appears as part of previously listed goals that apply to travel, too especially mobility (congestion reduction) and modal integration (optimized use of and connection between highway, rail, marine, air, etc.).

## **The Whatcom region’s approach to goal oriented strategy selection**

WCOG is in the early stages of using ranked regional goals in its ongoing planning process but some initial applications have begun.

### **Project selection**

WCOG is responsible for administering allocation of federal funds from the regional portion of the U.S. Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program – approximately \$2.75 million per year for the Whatcom region. Under this process, local jurisdictions and other eligible entities submit proposals for funding specific projects. Leading to the project-selections recommended to the WCOG Policy Board by the Transportation Technical Advisory Group (TTAG), point-based selection criteria are applied – criteria that are ordered and weighted in to reflect the relative number of the region’s local planning policies that identify that goal. This is one way to better connect documented local priorities to regional investment outcomes.

### **Project prioritization in the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

WCOG facilitated STBP and Transportation Alternative (TA) funds are prioritized in the TIP based on their project ranking resulting from the review and selection process. All federally funded projects programmed in the first four years of the TIP are fiscally constrained (must have funding identified) and prioritized on an annual basis: first year is priority one, second year is priority two, etc. through the fourth year.

### **Identifying needs in Whatcom inter-jurisdictional corridors.**

Discussed in greater detail in the *Performance-based planning and programming* section of *Whatcom Mobility 2040* (pg. XX), WCOG plans to use the ranked regional goals as a way to support ongoing discussion between local jurisdiction and agencies about coordinating strategies and investments on a set of transportation corridors that serve significant trip volume between the Whatcom region’s cities, tribal lands, and other urbanized areas.