



***Whatcom Council  
Of Governments***

**State Fiscal Year 2011  
Unified Planning Work Program  
Annual Narrative and Financial Report**

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This annual report details work completed between July 1, 2010 and June 30, 2011 in meeting Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and Washington State Department of Transportation planning requirements as set forth in United States Code of Federal Regulations and the Revised Code of Washington under continuing resolutions extending **Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)** and the Washington State Growth Management Act, respectively.

*Cover photo: Fossil at Canyon Lake Community Forest, 2008 Courtesy Gord Rogers Photography*

## **OVERVIEW**

The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Whatcom County Metropolitan Planning Area and the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the region comprised of the entirety of Whatcom County.

This report provides a narrative summary of the work completed by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), under agreements with FHWA, FTA, WSDOT, and other entities, during the entire 2011 State Fiscal Year. Transportation planning work completed by WCOG was authorized and funded by FHWA, FTA and WSDOT for SFY 2011, and organized in the 2011 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Goals identified in the 2011 UPWP are listed below along with a narrative description of how each goal was met during SFY 2011. Individual work tasks are organized in the same manner.

Budgeted and expended amounts for each funding program for the 2011 SFY are reflected in **TABLE A**.

## **AMENDMENTS**

The 2011 UPWP was amended once, in July 2011, to include a reference to notification that the WA State Legislature has set aside FHWA Coordinated Border Infrastructure funds (\$500,000) "solely for continued support of the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project and for the Department to work with WCOG to examine potential improvements to international border freight and passenger rail movement and the use of diesel multiple units.

## **GOALS**

The following categorized goals are those identified in the WCOG SFY 2010 UPWP. The information in the box below each goal describes the work done toward achieving that goal during the State Fiscal Year.

The Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations (FHWA and FTA) did not issue formal guidance in the form of Primary Emphasis Areas for SFY 2010. FHWA and FTA have suggested a focus on compliance with the planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU, and continue to ensure the WCOG work programs are tied to the federal planning factors identified in CFR 450.306, which include the following:

- Support economic vitality of the metropolitan area
- Increase safety of the transportation system
- Increase security of the transportation system
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system
- Promote efficient system management and operation
- Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system



WSDOT FY 2011 guidance emphasized a need to address six State-legislated Transportation Policy Goals, and incorporate those into all Unified Planning Work Programs:

- Preservation
- Safety
- Mobility
- Environment
- Stewardship
- Economic Vitality

As a result of State legislation from the 2011 session, due dates for city and county GMA Comprehensive Plan updates have been extended to 2016. Whatcom cities now intend a more minimalist approach to any Plan updates they may intend to complete. Whatcom County still plans a moderate update of its transportation element.

WCOG has provided support for all transportation-related Comprehensive Plan work done by jurisdictions over the previous year. Work included in this latter category consist of providing data and information, reviewing plan materials, participating in meetings, coordinating with cities, county, ports and other agencies, providing modal information, hosting and/or attending public forums and providing assistance and technical support for corridor studies.

The themes, schedules and programs identified in the Washington Transportation Plan were reflected in preliminary work updating the Whatcom Transportation Plan. Emphasis in those identified areas was applied in work toward accomplishing goals as shown below, including substantial work with jurisdictions in improving the WCOG regional travel demand model.

The following goals, appearing as bullets and organized categorically, along with the actions taken by WCOG over the preceding State Fiscal Year in shaded text, identify the ways in which WCOG worked over the last year to comply with Federal SAFETEA-LU requirements as well as State DOT emphasis areas.

### **Transportation Demand Modeling**

Continue refinement and use of the Whatcom Bi-national and Regional transportation demand model to forecast future transportation demand in the region

The WCOG Senior Transportation Planner developed detailed travel pattern tables by jurisdiction, mode and time period from the WCOG Regional Travel Demand Model, and developed a 2010 network and traffic counts for the next model update.



Assist Whatcom County, its cities, WSDOT and other interested parties including consultants in using and applying the WCOG transportation demand model.

The WCOG bi-national model was used extensively over the last year to assist WSDOT, Transport Canada and other border interests in improving the cross-border modeling capability, as well as to assist WSDOT in corridor analysis.

Consult with cities, County and others in updating model base year to 2010 including TAZ boundary alignment and centroid selection

Worked with local agencies in developing Traffic Analysis Districts and Traffic Analysis Zones for the year 2010 Census

Consult and work with cities, County and others in obtaining fresh, timely and accurate traffic counts

WCOG staff completed travel demand forecasts based on scenarios provided by member jurisdictions.

Use the model to forecast future regional and cross-border demand for commercial operations and provide forecast results to federal, regional, State, local and other interested parties

WCOG staff attended multiple webinars related to technical aspects of transportation planning.

Collaborate with County and cities to complete travel demand forecasts specifically for GMA Comprehensive Plan updates

The WCOG Senior Transportation Planner worked with city and County staff in reviewing jurisdiction-specific scenarios for growth, development and anticipated improvements in the 20-year planning period.

Continue enhancement of the technical capacity of MPO/RTPO staff through formal and informal training and education

WCOG staff attended training classes and multiple webinars related to technical aspects of transportation planning.



## **Freight Mobility**

Support WSDOT Freight Strategy and Policy office efforts to increase focus on freight transportation demand and operations

WCOG staff led CTAG and TTAC discussions concerning regional and statewide aspects of freight mobility and provided analyses of cross-border freight flows and commercial vehicle trips to IMTC partners and other interested parties. WCOG began participation in a WSDOT Statewide freight study project.

Work with local system users in bringing focus to regional and cross-border freight and mobility needs and issues

The WCOG IMTC staff worked with regional and cross-border freight interests in identifying impediments to efficient freight flow in the region and worked toward resolution.

Encourage multi-modal freight transportation planning among regional and local parties

WCOG staff encouraged local jurisdictions and citizens to consider freight movement and connections in their overall transportation considerations and planning. WCOG staff also worked with the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) to develop better

Monitor and report on U.S. – Canada commercial trip trends and assess future demand

The WCOG-led IMTC stakeholder group completed and participated in multiple efforts in these areas including preconstruction project funding, research and data-gathering efforts.

Coordinate and facilitate local, State and Federal entities in emphasizing system improvements that are related to freight mobility, including implementation of intelligent transportation systems (ITS) technologies

By working with International Mobility and Trade Corridor stakeholders, including FHWA, Transport Canada and WSDOT, WCOG has taken a leadership role in developing a cross border ITS and communication protocol known as the Border Information Flow Architecture (BIFA). This has been funded by both federal entities and WSDOT. Approximately 75% of this work was completed during SFY 2011.



Complete the 2011-2016 Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) to accurately reflect the region's project priorities and funding sources

The Whatcom Transportation Policy Board adopted the 2011 Metropolitan and Regional TIP prepared in cooperation with local jurisdictions and WSDOT. Numerous amendments were also approved by the Board over the course of the last year.

Develop information and data, for use by MPO/RTPO members and others, to ensure regional freight mobility is considered in investment-based decision-making

Through participation in the IMTC forum, a Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) a Washington Transportation Plan Advisory Group and participation in Transportation Research Board activities, WCOG has had an active role in advocating, seeking and generating freight mobility related data.

Refine the WCOG travel demand model to more accurately portray and forecast freight movement demand at the Whatcom County portion of the Washington – BC border

By working with IMTC partners including Transport Canada, and leading a Lynden Aldergrove sub-committee, WCOG staff has participated significantly in developing future freight -related demand scenarios for use in identifying projects and contributing to the Border Circulation Plan with funding from Canada and other partners.

## **Management and Operations**

Help fund and develop a border operations model as a component of the Whatcom transportation demand model to forecast need for capital improvement programs

WCOG staff, in cooperation with bi-national partners has developed the first phase of a Border Circulation Plan and has been working on moving into phase II over the last year. This work is acknowledged and supported by WSDOT's WA-BC Joint Transportation Executive Committee.

Expand the concepts being used in the current Traveler Information Kiosk project to provide information to the traveling public about transportation options and alternatives

The Farmhouse Gang kiosk project has been sustained by updating the Transportation Connections map information and data. Updated maps and data have been printed and added to a brochure folio prepared and distributed in alignment with the WCOG RTPOs Human Service Plan (EACH or Employment Access and Coordinated Human Services Plan) The folio has been distributed to various service provider and information center and kiosk locations. Information made available thusly creates a more informed, and therefore efficient, traveling public.



Seek better border system operations by working with border stakeholders including security and enforcement agencies

WCOG staff members have and will continue to meet with border and regional stakeholders including CBP, CBSA and trucking associations to improve border-crossing and county thru-put efficiency for people and goods.

Encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority to enhance ridership through operational and system management improvements such as provision of cross-border transit services in cooperation with British Columbia, Canada operators

WCOG continued to encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) (Transit) to review ways in which cross-border transit connections might be made. These efforts continue to be frustrated by multiple factors, including regulation and lack of funding.

### **Security and Safety including Facility Safety in the Transportation Planning Process**

Through the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project, consult with agencies responsible for physical security at ports of entry such as airports, seaports and border crossings to help identify ways to ensure safe and secure public travel

WCOG has, by forming partnerships with regional and federal partners including enforcement agencies, identified and helped implement ITS technology in the region. This has been done by encouraging system users to take advantage of existing technology as well as identifying and promoting use of ITS technologies. Much of this work was focused on the four Cascade Gateway border crossings.

Help implement safety and security improvements in the region by seeking funding from federal, state and other programs intended to support transportation safety and security

Project prioritization criteria have been amended to encourage additional emphasis on safety.

Build safety and security into all MPO/RTPO transportation-planning activities by continuing to ensure these considerations are reflected in regional project selection criteria

Activities at both Technical Advisory Committee and Policy Board meetings have included amendment of project selection criteria to encourage additional emphasis on safety considerations as part of planning and project prioritization.



Plan for emergency vehicle access as an integral part of all long range MPO/RTPO plans

Early planning for updating the WCOG Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plans included substantial consideration for improving their safety and security content. This work included collaborating with jurisdictions to on

### **Intelligent Transportation Systems**

Revise and update the Whatcom region's adopted ITS architecture to improve its use as a guide in implementing ITS projects and programs in the region by incorporating it into the Whatcom Transportation Plan

The Whatcom region ITS architecture has been used to guide ITS projects and program implementation in the region. WCOG staff began working with federal partners (FHWA and Transport Canada) on protocols for data-based information flow and exchange over the last year.

Advocate use of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and other technologies in conjunction with, and where practical, in lieu of new road construction through implementation of the principles identified in the ITS architecture.

By continuing and expanding partnerships with regional and national partners, WCOG has, encouraged implementation of ITS technology in the region.

Incorporate ITS strategies in long and short range planning efforts

Ongoing discussions continued, especially with border related partners, to emphasize value and efficiency gains achieved by use of these technologies.

Continue working with officials of local jurisdictions to encourage ITS technologies in plans and projects by adding ITS policies to the transportation chapters of their GMA Comprehensive Plans

Discussion with TTAC members were facilitated to emphasize the importance and cost saving benefits associated with applying ITS technology wherever possible.

Encourage Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to use ITS technologies to integrate safety and security into public transit operations

WCOG staff recommended and supported WTA's consideration of increased ITS application for operations, safety and security as part of project planning.



Cooperate and collaborate with partner agencies; including cities, County, and state; on projects relating to Interstate 5, by encouraging integration and implementation of ITS technologies in the interest of overall system efficiency, safety and security

By participating in WSDOT-organized committees and work groups, WCOG staff has strongly encouraged and provided guidance on including ITS technologies for State owned and operated facilities.

Add an ITS chapter in the Whatcom Transportation Plan

Plans were made to add an ITS chapter to the Transportation when it is updated during SFY 2012.

### **Transportation Project Funding**

Continue long-range financial planning, including assessment of existing conditions, identification of future needs, and assessment of fiscal ability to meet future needs

WCOG has identified imperatives and funding sources for long- and short-range regional and border-related transportation projects and programs. Vehicle miles traveled have been reduced in Whatcom County, for example, as a result of one such program: Smart Trips. Additionally, WCOG has identified city, County and WSDOT projects of regional significance for which funds have been, and continue to be, sought through a variety of funding sources.

Search for and identify new and innovative resources, actively seek and react quickly to any new, diverted, or innovative funding sources for projects beneficial to the region

WCOG, in working with WSDOT headquarters and regional staff, along with Region and Headquarters FHWA staff has secured funds for continued operation of the border stakeholder coalition, IMTC, as well as the Whatcom Smart Trips program.

Increase project completion in Whatcom County by working with WSDOT staff and officials to cooperate on funding projects on both local and State facilities

Partnerships with local, State, Provincial and national IMTC members, have enabled WCOG to identify long- and short-range border-related transportation efficiency needs and funding sources for many of those projects in Blaine, unincorporated Whatcom County, Sumas and Bellingham. WCOG continued to lead and administer IMTC.

security and safety



WCOG has secured funding this year to ensure future operation of IMTC.

Advise and assist MPO and RTPO members in seeking non-traditional resources to complete needed transportation projects

WCOG has worked with its local members to seek funding for their projects from programs, grants and other non-traditional sources including State and federal sources.

Assist Whatcom County and its cities, as well as other entities, in seeking funding for projects that contribute to transportation safety, efficiency and modal choices for system users

WCOG has identified and helped to obtain funds for these projects including trails and bicycle education programs. WCOG has been a recipient of funds for these purposes, for programs such as Whatcom Smart Trips.

Ensure the regions TIP projects meet SAFETEA-LU Final Rule requirements.

WCOG works with Whatcom County and its cities to ensure compliance with TIP-related rules and regulations.

### **Public Participation in Transportation Planning**

Update WCOG Public Participation Plan to expand efforts and methods for involving the public and in meaningful and informed participation in processes used to identify all transportation-related needs, issues, and solutions. Include consultation with elected officials of non-Metropolitan planning areas

WCOG continues to provide staff support and leadership for the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG), which contributes substantially to regional transportation planning efforts of the MPO/RTPO.

Promote wide use of the WCOG Transportationtown.com web site to increase public understanding of transportation issues

As a result of FY 2011 Transportationtown.com marketing, WCOG received over 1,000 page visits with many repeat visitors.



Provide on-going leadership and administration for the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG), a geographically representative group of citizens with widely varied interests, whose community-envisioned charter is to provide a broad base of community perspectives for transportation planning and project implementation. CTAG will continue working with other citizens and advising the Whatcom Transportation Authority and the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board

WCOG staff has continued to support and lead the Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG). Over the last year, CTAG has embraced Complete Streets concepts and made County-wide implementation of Complete Streets methodologies a core goal.

Using Transportation Demand Management programs and tools such as Commute Trip Reduction, the Whatcom SmartTrips program and other methodologies, broaden public roles and information access in determining the future look of the Whatcom transportation system

Through Smart Trip programs, WCOG staff presented results of a finding of a 2009 follow-up survey showing a 15% VMT reduction to local, State and National groups. Smart Trips efforts also posted a new high of 13,000 participants in the Smart Trips program. Additionally, Smart Trips programs resulted in 131 employer partners, year-round bicycle education and new outreach for women and seniors.

### **Non-Motorized and Public Transportation**

Partner with local agencies and other organizations in offering multiple opportunities for bicycle safety education for all ages, such as Bike month, everybodyBIKE, and human services transportation.

WCOG staff continued to lead and administer the five-county, so-called Farmhouse Gang coalition which has as its mission, better non-motorized and public transportation access. As a result of the last year's activities, Whatcom, Skagit and Island Transit organizations were able to continue inter-county transit connections from Bellingham to Everett through FY 2011. Additionally, through the Whatcom Smart Trips program, 2011 saw continuation of Whatcom Bike month of programs providing bicycling education for adults and children of all ages. WCOG has also worked with the Human Services program (EACH) advisory committee, in implementing identified projects, including bicycle and pedestrian mobility.



Through administration of the Farmhouse Gang and Whatcom Smart Trips, WCOG staff continued coordination with adjacent county and city staff in working toward more complete and connected bicycle and pedestrian trail systems. Whatcom Bike Month activities included more than 10,000 people participating in Bike to Work day, a new Bike to Shop promotion, many bicycle skills courses for children and 500 participants in the Team Up promotion campaign for non-motorized travel.

Continue work with the County and its cities in encouraging a regional system approach to transportation and recreational trails as a means to attract tourism and provide local transportation options

WCOG continues involvement in substantial work toward non-motorized access including participation in Parks Department efforts to provide non-auto transportation. Examples include Bay-to-Baker Trail, work with Whatcom Parks Foundation, and bicycle education programs.

In working with Whatcom Transportation Authority, continue emphasis on connections with other modes and with other transit providers

WCOG completed local bicycle education programs (Bike Rodeo, Bike Month, Bike to Work and School Day and young rider education programs). WCOG worked closely with WTA as strong partners in the Smart Trips programs managed by WCOG staff.

Coordinate non-emergency human service transportation by working with existing human services organizations such as Northwest Regional Council, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Whatcom Department of Health, DSHS and others to identify gaps in access to transit and seek means of closing those gaps. Implement the regions recently-adopted Human Services Plan (EACH)

WCOG has continued work to find resources for implementing the priorities set out in the EACH plan.

### **Coordination with Others**

Participate whenever and wherever possible and work with State staff to promote consistency among the Whatcom Transportation Plan; Washington Transportation Plan; Regional, County and Bellingham Commute Trip Reduction Plans and the Human Services Plan to ensure a comprehensive approach in contribution to meeting Statewide transportation needs

WCOG staff worked closely with WSDOT staff, Transportation Commission staff and local jurisdictions in striving for consistency among State, Regional and local transportation goals as set forth in respective Transportation Plans. This work included substantial participation as a working member of the Washington Transportation Plan Technical Advisory Group, facilitation of the "Farmhouse Gang" and leadership and cooperation with other MPO/RTPOs.



Consult with local officials through the Whatcom MPO/RTPO Transportation Policy Board and Transportation Technical Advisory Committee, as well as through direct contact with elected and appointed officials such as city and County Council members, Planning Directors, Operations Managers, Public Works Directors and their staff of non-MPO cities, and other entities

Many local elected officials are members of the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board (WTPB), including nine State representatives. Meetings of the WTPB offered substantial opportunities for such consultations over the last year. CTAG membership includes Planning Directors to provide technical oversight for the group.

Maintain and enhance communication, cooperation and coordination between WCOG and WSDOT, FTA, FHWA, WTA and other entities as directed by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board

Relationships between WCOG MPO/RTPO staff and WSDOT regional representatives continued to strengthen over the last year. WCOG continues to work in close cooperation and partnership with WTA over the last 12 months through the Smart Trips program and the transit advisory portion of CTAG. FTA and FHWA relationships and communication continue to be strong.

Work with Whatcom County and Bellingham staff in meeting CTR Efficiency Act planning requirements

WCOG worked over the last year to help ensure Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham CTR Plans and supportive ordinances were completed and adopted.

Continue leading the International Mobility and Trade Corridor project (IMTC)

Under WCOG leadership, IMTC operated effectively over the last year (its 14<sup>th</sup> year of operation) initiating new projects, continuing others and finishing some.

Infrastructure with integrated ITS technologies based on the Whatcom Regional ITS Architecture and priorities identified by IMTC



Under WCOG leadership, IMTC members worked effectively with WSDOT and BC Ministry of Transportation staff in implementing and maintaining an effective ATIS system and archiving derived data in the Border Data Warehouse. The Regional ITS Architecture was reviewed, and WCOG staff presented pertinent information at an ITS-Canada conference.

The border system conjoins Washington State and British Columbia through the Cascade Gateway, and is the portal through which substantial trade and tourism enters and departs the U.S. and Washington, so it is critical to continue work intended to ultimately provide efficient access and mobility for people and goods by reducing travel delay while maintaining safety and security

Under WCOG leadership, IMTC identified and conducted important new projects to ensure cross border trade efficiency, including border freight movement studies and surveys and worked with WSDOT Mt Baker Region staff in providing information and data to the WA-BC Executive Council. Specifically, during the last year WCOG staff worked with IMTC partners to accomplish substantial work and produce specific products:

A Lynden - Aldergrove Border Assessment

An evaluation of the WCOG bi-national travel demand model

A successful grant application for a \$245,000 Border Infrastructure Flow Architecture Pilot

A border sector profile for Transport Canada

A spreadsheet model to examine feasibility of adding a port-of -entry NEXUS lane

With WWU's Border Policy Research Institute collected and analyzed FAST data

Initiated cross-border pedestrian facility improvements

Co-hosted a US-Canada rail peer exchange

NEXUS lane feasibility study for City of Sumas

NEXUS program marketing blitz

Track major transportation projects that are being implemented from the region's 2010 and 2011 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP)

WCOG continually tracked major projects including Federal funding and/or part of the regional system.

revisions of functional or other classification of Whatcom County's road system



WCOG has assisted and supported Whatcom County, Bellingham, Everson, Blaine, Ferndale, Lynden and Sumas in applying for Federal Highway Functional Classification requests and amendments.

### **Growth Management Act**

Review County and city GMA Comprehensive Plan Transportation Elements for consistency with the Whatcom Transportation Plan (WTP), and biennially review the WTP for currency updating and revising as needed and providing new information to the WSDOT Planning Office

WCOG continued its support for Whatcom County, and its cities in applying for Federal Highway Functional Classification requests and amendments. Due to legislated changes in GMA-imposed Comprehensive plan update rules, the County and cities generally did not complete updates during the last year.

Work with city and County planning staff during Comprehensive Plan updates and revisions to ensure a high level of consistency with the Whatcom Transportation Plan

The WCOG Senior Transportation Planner has worked extensively over the last year with jurisdictional staff in ensuring the Whatcom travel demand model accurately portrays anticipated land use scenarios.

Work with city and County planning staff to ensure consistency between County Wide Planning Policies and the Whatcom Transportation Plan

Due to new 2011 legislation, Comprehensive Plan update deadlines have been pushed back. Whatcom County has begun a discussion on revising County transportation planning goals and policies. The WCOG Community Transportation Advisory Group has been and will continue to be involved in these discussions.

Coordinate level of service methodologies with cities and County

WCOG has worked with the County and its cities in discussing this option. The Complete Streets program is part of that discussion.

Evaluate and discuss how Comprehensive Plan transportation elements consider and support pedestrian and non-motorized transportation, efficient circulation, access, economic



development and jobs, encourage mixed-use development, incorporate demand management and improve intermodal connections

WCOG staff has collaborated with jurisdictions in working toward a more multi-modal system sensitive to economic vitality, and has completed substantial work in the travel demand management arena.

Evaluate and discuss how implementation of local transportation policies might affect regional facilities and how they align with the Whatcom Transportation Plan and other regional growth and transportation strategies

Through discussions and review of STP-R project priority criteria WCOG has re-evaluated the regional system and associated more distinct regional values with local investment decisions. The WCOG Senior Transportation Planner completed revision of the Regionally Significant System.

### **State Transportation Goals**

1. **Economic Vitality** to promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.

WCOG has encouraged Whatcom County and its cities to focus on economic impacts and importance of the vitality of local economy as it relates to and is affected by the transportation system, especially with regard to freight movement and access.

2. **Preservation** to maintain preserve and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services.

WCOG has encouraged Whatcom County and its cities to focus on preservation through discussions at both technical and Policy Board levels. Discussions included the emerging decrease in transportation system funding availability, and meager prospects for increased revenues in the near term.

3. **Safety** to provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.

Over the last year, WCOG staff has emphasized safety through Whatcom's Technical Transportation Advisory Committee and Policy Board discussions, and continued to apply strong safety criteria to any project selection processes.



WCOG has taken steps over the last year to revise and identify gaps in the regional transportation system (Regional Significant System). This Policy-Board-designated system includes only routes and facilities of regional significance.

5. Environment to enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities and protect the environment.

WCOG has, through the Whatcom Smart Trips program, assisted the County and its cities in reducing vehicle miles traveled. Smart Trips teaches people of all ages how to travel without an automobile and how to do it safely, thereby reducing congestion and auto-based emissions.

6. Stewardship to continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the transportation system.

By completing calibration and validation of its travel demand model WCOG has provided the tools and opportunity to model fastest and shortest path scenario analyses and identify system choke points. WCOG also improved the utility of the cross-border truck model in cooperation with IMTC.



## **WORK ELEMENTS**

The SFY 2011 WCOG UPWP is divided into six Program Work Elements:

- I. Management, documentation and communication**
- II. MPO and RTPO Program Management**
- III. Transportation Modeling, Data Collection and Technical Support**
- IV. Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning**
- V. Other**
- VI. Unfunded Work**

Each work element is addressed separately in this annual report. The description of specific work accomplished during the year is preceded by a statement of purpose for each element, and followed by a list of work products resulting from the year's accomplishments.

### **Element I. Management, Documentation, Communication and Administration**

*Management, Documentation and Communication, includes the record keeping, training, and the business of WCOG for activities relating to transportation planning.*

For SFY 2011 WCOG staff provided administrative support to manage and coordinate the SFY 2011 Unified Planning Work Program. Associated administrative actions included creation of public participation opportunities, budget review, office administration, grant administration, dissemination of records and documents to the public and to member and non-member jurisdictions and satisfactory completion of State and federal audit processes. Appropriate federal and state financial records were kept, organized and externally audited. All the above were accomplished within the guidelines and requirements of FHWA Title VI.

WCOG staff coordinated, facilitated, attended and summarized monthly, quarterly and annual meetings of the WCOG Executive Board, Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, the WCOG Full Council, the Community Transportation Advisory Group, the "Farmhouse Gang" and the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC); and since January 2011, the Deputy Director chaired WSDOT/MPO/RTPO Coordinating Committee meetings. The Director chaired the West Coast Corridor Coalition.

WCOG staff members also participated in transportation-related meetings and events hosted by other agencies and organizations including various divisions of WSDOT, WTA, multi-county,



multi-state, and international groups focused on transportation as well as the Bellingham-Whatcom Chamber of Commerce, Northwest Economic Council and attended multiple state and federal legislative briefings and other activities.

WCOG continued in a leadership role administering the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project to facilitate cooperation and joint planning among U.S. and Canadian border related transportation interests. The Project Manager led and the Deputy Director attended monthly meetings of IMTC. Several IMTC projects were completed, others begun, and others formulated.

The WCOG Smart Trips program was administered by dedicated WCOG staff. Meetings were held with Commute Trip Reduction employers and Employee Transportation Coordinators (ETC) staff and the overall program was managed according to pertinent regulations.

The Director prepared agendas and led quarterly Policy Board meetings. the Office Manager and Clerk of the Board prepared monthly and quarterly Executive Board and Whatcom Transportation Policy Board agendas and meeting summaries, as well as two annual Full Council meetings, and attended Human Resources training. The Senior Transportation Planner attended transportation planning and modeling workshops, and assisted with TTAC meetings. The Finance Manager completed CGFM classes. The Deputy Director chaired the Transportation Research Board's International Trade and Transportation Committee until April 2011.

### **Management, Documentation, Communication and Administration Work Products:**

- Annual budget and necessary amendments
- Grant management and reporting
- Payroll and associated documentation
- Appropriate files and records accurately portraying staff work on transportation activities for the current year
- Appropriate files and records relating to sub-contractors and others providing professional services for WCOG sponsored or managed projects
- Communication with the public, elected officials, and staff of other organizations
- Staff reports, agendas and summaries of regular and special meetings
- Properly conducted staff, board, and technical meetings
- Annual Indirect Cost Plan
- Staff trained and well-qualified in current technical and funding issues

### **Element II. MPO and RTPO Program Management**

*Meet state and federal requirements for maintenance and completion of regionally coordinated MPO and RTPO tasks and planning. Act as coordinating body linking the transportation interests and preferences of jurisdictions within the region with the requirements of the FTA, FHWA, WSDOT and others.*



WCOG staff worked with local jurisdictions to complete FY 2011-2016 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) in the WSDOT-prescribed format, combined the County and City TIPs into the WCOG Metropolitan and Regional TIP and submitted it to WSDOT for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). WCOG staff participated actively in the Advisory Group established by the Washington State Transportation Commission to draft the Washington Transportation Plan.

WCOG convened monthly Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC) meetings with activities including TTAC recommendations to the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board regarding regional priorities. Additionally WCOG continued to provide staff support and leadership for the MPO/RTPO Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) providing community input and perspective to both the TTAC and the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, and working on ways to improve the region's transportation system for the future.

WCOG staff led and facilitated decision-making processes of the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board including emerging transportation and related funding issues such as ARRA and TIGER programs.

WCOG combined jurisdictional (including WSDOT) 2010 – 2015 Transportation Improvement Programs into the Metropolitan and Regional TIP (WCOG TIP), reviewed the WCOG TIP with the Whatcom Transportation Technical Advisory Committee and conducted a public hearing at which the WCOG TIP was approved by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, and subsequently forwarded to WSDOT for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

WCOG staff provided mapping and transportation modeling services including travel demand forecasting to State and local organizations, officials and individuals. More specifically WCOG provided Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham and WSDOT with modeling products and services needed for specific project analyses by staff and consultants of those agencies. The SFY 2012 UPWP was completed and adopted by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board. Additionally, WCOG completed, adopted and processed amendments to the 2011 Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program through TTAC, and through public hearings held by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board. TIP amendment requests were coordinated with local, state and federal agencies to amend Metropolitan and Regional TIPs and the UPWP as needed. Such requests were advertised, processed, approved and submitted according to state guidelines. Additionally, WCOG completed work necessary to begin the transition to a more current travel demand model base year (2010). Preliminary work was completed in anticipation of updating the Whatcom Metropolitan and Regional Plan (the Whatcom Transportation Plan).

WCOG is a U.S. Census affiliate, and accordingly tracked progress and process concerning availability of Census 2010 data sets. Staff also responded to requests for census data; to the



extent available; including mapping, demographics and census-based land use projections throughout the year.

International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) project activities continued throughout the year with monthly steering committee, and quarterly core group meetings. WCOG staff led the IMTC organization through identification of border infrastructure needs and coordinated cooperative, international partnerships and project teams to meet those needs. WCOG staff also managed and participated in several border-related projects including a commercial vehicle survey to evaluate possible modifications to the Free And Secure Trade program (FAST Optimization), and developed supporting information for the BC-WA Executive Committee. A final report was prepared for the Lynden–Aldergrove study, work was completed on improving the cross-border commercial vehicle model, Phase II of the Cross-Border Circulation Plan was strategized, a NEXUS marketing effort was planned for early FY 2012 and several IMTC objectives were embraced by the BC-WA Task Force Executive Committee.

The WCOG web site was kept current with reports, summaries, and agendas of WCOG activities.

As Chairman of the MPO/RTPO/WSDOT Coordinating Committee, the Deputy Director worked with members of the committee in ensuring MPO and RTPO perspectives were clearly understood by State Legislators and their staff, and in cooperation with WSDOT organized and conducted Coordinating Committee meetings.

The WCOG Senior Transportation Planner worked persistently with jurisdictional planners and engineers as well as Caliper Corp. staff, in successfully refining the TransCAD-based travel demand model for forecasting transportation demand in the Whatcom/BC region.

WCOG staff also worked to identify freight mobility shortcomings in infrastructure and policies. By identifying needed mobility projects, new initiatives such as feasibility studies for modal shifts and other freight mobility alternatives and future projects. Finally, WCOG has coordinated closely with WSDOT by providing data, information and participation in transportation process planning such as for I-5 and SR 539. WCOG has also continued to support multiple RTPO and MPO efforts aimed at an improved transportation system, including continued operation of the West Coast Corridor Coalition (WCCC). The WCOG Executive Director acted as Chairman of WCCC during the last SFY.

WCOG continued to lead and facilitate the multi-county forum known as the "Farm House Gang," a five-county, grant-funded, effort to better coordinate transportation choices by encouraging implementation of alternatives to the single occupant vehicle. WCOG also continued meeting Commute Trip Reduction responsibilities as well as continuing and expanding the Whatcom Smart Trips program. This is an on-going incentive program to encourage walking, bicycling and transit use.

### **MPO and RTPO Program Management Work Products:**



Well-managed TTAC, Transportation Policy Board activities, and decision-making processes, open to, and encouraging public participation  
 Forums for discussion of regional transportation issues among local/regional jurisdictions and for increasing cooperation, through IMTC, among adjacent jurisdictions including adjoining counties, and British Columbia, Canada  
 Appropriate, effective and well-organized public meetings  
 Regionally approved WCOG TIP  
 Progress toward updating the Whatcom Transportation Plan  
 Regional Transportation Strategies  
 Efficient use of RTP and MPO funding  
 Completed data sets and research related to freight mobility  
 An active community advisory group (CTAG) focused on improving the system over time  
 An organized West Coast Corridor Coalition  
 Inter-county transit services enabled through Farmhouse Gang activities  
 Improved performance and accuracy of the transportation demand model  
 On-going Smart Trips incentive-based transportation demand management and commute trip reduction program.

### **Element III. Transportation Modeling/Data Collection/Technical Assistance**

*The objective of this element is to continually improve modeling capabilities, and gather and provide accurate and current transportation data to member jurisdictions, WSDOT, the public, and other interested parties; and, provide technical planning assistance to entities in the region desiring such assistance.*

During the preceding SFY, the Whatcom Regional Transportation Demand Model has been improved through iterative and cooperative evaluation by WCOG staff, local jurisdictions and the software vendor, Caliper Corp. The cross border and truck models were also markedly improved. The model has been updated and extensively improved this year as a much more effective tool for use by member jurisdictions and WCOG for updating the Whatcom Transportation Plan, and local Comprehensive Plans.

Data gathering methods were developed and used, and existing datasets obtained, to acquire and disseminate transportation-related data such as U.S. Census CTPP information and jurisdictional traffic counts. Additionally a process was completed in cooperation with Census 2010 staff to delineate Traffic Analysis Districts to align with Census data as a new analytical tool. In relation to IMTC border activities, a new commercial border crossing data collection project was designed, implemented and completed.

WCOG provided technical support for and coordinated with member jurisdictions on local and regional transportation issues including substantial assistance with meeting WSDOT and FHWA Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) requirements. Extensive coordination with local



jurisdictions was completed to afford better travel demand modeling services to the regions transportation interests.

### **Transportation Modeling/Data Collection/Technical Assistance Products:**

- Forums for reaching consensus on data-related regional transportation issues among local jurisdictions.
- Ability to produce higher quality transportation demand forecasts as requested by members and others.
- Conduct of Transportation Technical Advisory Committee meetings
- Properly prepared Metropolitan/Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP)
- Regional Transportation Strategies and priorities
- Assembled traffic count data set for future use in updating traffic count manual
- Written and direct communications with member jurisdictions regarding technical aspects of state and federal transportation policies and funding
- High-quality and timely modeling services provided to local and State entities
- Preliminary work toward updating the WCOG Regional ITS Architecture.

### **Element IV. Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning**

*Integration of public transportation considerations into the Regional Transportation Plan and, to the extent possible, in jurisdictions' land use plans. Cooperate with local public transportation providers in long and short range planning efforts and in implementation of ADA and Title VI requirements.*

WCOG staff provided leadership and facilitation for a five county forum (Farm House Gang) focused on transportation alternatives including transit, rail, passenger-only ferry and non-motorized modes. This effort resulted in continuation of inter-county transit between Whatcom and Snohomish Counties, as well as studies of rail issues and opportunities.

WCOG was identified by the State Legislature as the recipient of funds intended to produce North Sound Rail studies to examine issues and opportunities for passenger, freight and Diesel Motive Unit (DMU) rail services from Everett, WA to Vancouver, BC. These studies were contracted with Cascadia Center, and completed.

The Executive Director, Deputy Director, IMTC Project Manager, and other staff members attended and participated as speakers in multiple national and regional transportation conferences this year including those sponsored by TRB, ITE, FHWA, WSDOT, the BC Province, Transport Canada and other national, State, regional, and local entities. They also continued to work with Skagit-Island RTPO as well as British Columbia, Canada in coordinating cross-border movement and opportunities to promote transit connections among adjacent counties and lower-mainland British Columbia.



WCOG staff continued working closely with WTA staff to develop and promote the Smart Trips Program and other aspects of commute trip reduction and transportation demand management in the interest of reduced congestion and pollution, and increased transit use.

WCOG staff worked with an ad hoc advisory committee to update the WCOG Human Services Plan (Whatcom Employment Access and Coordinated Human-services Transportation plan [EACH]).

Staff worked with Whatcom County and City of Bellingham staff in complying with the requirements of the Washington State CTR Efficiency Act.

### **Multi-Modal and Public Transportation Planning Products:**

Forums for discussion and recommendations on regional transportation issues, including provision of transit services.

Regional public transportation priorities and strategies

Completed data sets and research related to public transportation and other transportation alternatives

A transportation demand model

Continued implementation of an evolving plan to provide cross-border transit and related connections

A current "EACH" Human Services plan with associated prioritized project list.

### **Element V. Other**

*Other areas of MPO/RTPO activity reflect a regional demand based not on regulatory requirements, but more on regional needs and opportunities for greater co-operation and potential partnerships for a higher level of transportation efficiency. Planning support is frequently needed in these areas and is supported by MPO and RTPO planning requirements.*

Through the International Mobility and Trade Corridor (IMTC) border stakeholder group, WCOG has identified and sought funding for U.S.-Canada border related projects aimed at improving freight and auto flow efficiency and preserving economic trade stability. These projects are held by border stakeholders to be important medium- and long-term solutions contributing to a more efficient overall border transportation dynamic.

Projects funded and underway in the Whatcom/Cascadia border region completed during the last year included improving the Border Advance Traveler Information Systems (ATIS) and related Data Management System, plans for marketing of NEXUS pre-approval programs, rail studies identifying issues and opportunities for North Sound rail travel, and a program to generate data concerning the Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Free and Secure Trade (FAST) program.



The West Coast Corridor Coalition (WCCC) met multiple times during the year and refine goals and objectives under the leadership of WCOG's Executive Director as Chairman. The WCCC hopes to coordinate standards and work to solve other north/south I-5 corridor transportation issues collectively.

Using funding obtained from local and State sources, WCOG has instituted and continued to operate over the last year, a TDM program aimed at reducing reliance on autos. The program is entitled Smart Trips, is internet web-based, and employs a variety of incentives to encourage travel by foot, bicycle and public transportation. Whatcom Smart Trips has become a popular and successful program offering benefits to all transportation system users. Its membership now numbers in excess of 12,000 people (6% of current Whatcom County population).

**"Other" Products:**

Transportation planning support for regional projects

An organized process for promoting integration of ITS technologies and methodologies into existing and future regional transportation planning

Transportation alternatives and information for tourists and commuters

A properly funded, organized and staffed cross-border stakeholder coalition for border mobility improvements and data

Better informed travelers, enhanced safety and reduced congestion in border communities

Integration of ITS technologies to enhance speed and efficiency for the flows of commercial vehicles crossing the Whatcom region's border with British Columbia, Canada

The West Coast Corridor Coalition

An effective TDM program

**Element VI. Unfunded**

*Accomplish additional work identified as significant and appropriate for the Whatcom MPO/RTPO by the Whatcom Transportation Policy Board, as well as local, state or federal agencies; and seek funding for completion of these tasks from appropriate sources. These responsibilities fall within or parallel to other elements but remain unfunded.*

Little work has been accomplished in evaluating the economic impacts on this region created by policy decisions on both sides of the border. WCOG continues to seek ways to fund development of an econometric model for this purpose. Multiple webinars were attended by WCOG staff.

WCOG remains willing to expand the Smart Trips program, including its direct marketing approach to the remainder of the City of Bellingham, and to other areas of the State. Work in that direction remains unfunded.

**"Unfunded" Products:**

Efforts to bring together partners interested in econometric analyses of transportation issues  
 Expanded Smart Trips Program

**TABLE A: Synopsis of UPWP Budget for SFY2011**

Program (FHWA, FTA, RTPO, etc.)	Amended UPWP Budget	Expenditures for SFY 2011	% Budget expended	End of Biennium carry forward amount
<b>FHWA PL</b>	\$ 152,601	\$ 169,258	111%	73,138
<b>FTA</b>	52,035	51,239	98%	246
<b>WSDOT RTPO</b>	87,967	117,534	133%	n/a
<b>FHWA STP(U)</b>	115,607	183,058	158%	n/a
<b>FHWA CBI</b>	500,000	6,693	1%	493,307
<b>FHWA CBI, Freight, &amp; Border Planning</b>	245,000	139,693	57%	105,307
<b>Transport Canada</b>	245,000	139,693	57%	105,307
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$1,398,210</b>	<b>\$ 807,168</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>777,305</b>

Expenditures include local match and carry-forward unless noted otherwise.