

Executive Summary

By 2045, Thurston County is expected to be home to more than 380,000 people – a 36 percent increase over the next 25 years. *What Moves You* serves as a strategic blueprint for the Thurston region’s transportation system. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) takes the long view. Looking 25 years into the future, the RTP considers what our community’s transportation needs may be in the coming decades and how to meet them.

The RTP is divided into seven chapters:

- Introduction
- Recommendations
- Guiding Principles, Goals, and Policies
- WSDOT Facilities
- Future Conditions
- Finance
- Environmental Considerations

COVID-19 Pandemic and the RTP

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Governor Inslee issued a series of proclamations and declarations aimed at reducing the spread of the virus in Washington State, including requiring all non-essential workers stay home and stay healthy. As a result, significant changes in how/whether people travel in the Thurston Region occurred. This also has impacted transportation funding. The data and statistics used in this plan were developed prior to the outbreak, and the transportation model and financial forecast do not take into account the radical changes in transportation choices that continues to occur in the region as of the drafting and adoption of this Plan.

Introduction

Beyond a simple statement of purpose, the RTP serves many functions – from implementing local plans (such as Sustainable Thurston) to balancing social, financial, and environmental costs and impacts to acknowledging the diversity of transportation needs in our region.

The RTP fulfills both state and federal requirements for transportation planning at the regional level.

Our region’s geographical factors draw people to the area but also constrain where development occurs. The weather and latitude –

with gray days and long winter nights – require a transportation system with safe, well lit, well maintained, clearly marked sidewalks, roads, crosswalks, and trails.

Our region continues to grow at one of the fastest rates in the state. Such growth challenges our ability to plan for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, public transportation, technology, changing climate, changing population and issues of equity. We also need to plan for funding our transportation system and collaborating with our legislators to make sure our highest priorities are taken care of.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS	COMBINED REQUIREMENTS	STATE REQUIREMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address 20+ year planning horizon• Include short- and long-range strategies• Review and update every 4 or 5 years, depending on air quality conformity status• Include performance measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Address all modes of travel• Preserve existing system• Make efficient use of system• Reflect long-range land use plans• Model future travel demand• Identify projects and strategies• Conform with air quality rules• Address environmental impacts• Be financially feasible• Promote public involvement• Use performance measures to evaluate system	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect county-wide planning policies, local comprehensive plans, and the Washington State Transportation Plan• Include goals, objectives, and land use assumptions• Establish level of service standards• Review at least every 2 years to ensure plan is up to date

2016 to 2020: What's Changed

There have been a few major changes to this Plan since 2016:

- **System Performance Report.** Federal planning requirements launched a system performance report, which establishes regional and state-wide performance measures. See Appendix I, System Performance Report for more information.
- **Project List.** The project list, which makes up the bulk of this Plan's recommendations, has been updated:
 - Completed (or mostly completed) projects removed from the project list include the Boulevard Road Corridor Project (City of Olympia) and the Transit Transfer Station (Intercity Transit).
 - Deleted projects removed from the project list include those that are no longer relevant or necessary and assessment areas, which were not actually projects but are areas of potential concern for the future. See Chapter 5, Future Conditions for a discussion of assessment areas.
 - New projects added to the project list include a capacity project, a new street connection project, two trail projects, three Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) projects, 19 studies (including 12 Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) studies), and three Intercity Transit projects.

See Chapter 2, Recommendations and Appendix L, Regional Project List Detail for more information on the project list.

- **WSDOT Facilities.** The RTP now includes a robust discussion of how Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) facilities such as Interstate 5 and US 101 fit into our regional transportation system. See Chapter 4, WSDOT Facilities for more information.
- **Public Outreach Effort.** The Plan adopted in 2016 asked how folks wanted to invest their transportation dollars. For this Plan, we've asked about the impacts and importance of emerging transportation technologies, the importance of different types of transportation investments and transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, and the types of high capacity transit options the region needs over the next 25 years.

In the end, the biggest challenge to planning 25 years into the future is striking the right balance – between individual and community needs, short- and long-term strategies, costs weighed against benefits, urban and rural considerations, and investing now and sustaining the future.

Recommendations

Under the framework of the guiding principles, goals, and policies, a set of recommendations were developed to address the region’s transportation needs over the next 25 years. Each of the recommendations supports one or more of the plan’s goals and policies. The recommendations in this Plan fall into two general categories: maintenance and regional projects.

Maintenance. Over the next 25 years, approximately \$957 million will be spent by our cities, towns, and county to preserve and maintain the region’s road network. As of 2017, approximately 71 percent of major roadways in the Thurston region were in good or very good condition. With regular maintenance, these roadways can remain in good condition indefinitely. The remaining 29 percent are in fair or poor condition and will eventually need to be rebuilt.

Preserving and maintaining public transportation service is also vital to the region’s transportation system. Efficiency measures – such as Transportation Demand Management – help increase the functional life of our transportation infrastructure.

Regional Projects. Regional projects include specific construction projects, programs, and preliminary studies that impact travel over a large area. The funding to construct/complete such projects must be available or reasonably anticipated (i.e. fiscally constrained). A total of 69 projects representing an investment of more than \$686 million are included in this plan:

- 15 capacity projects: \$258 million
- 14 new connections and alignments: \$163 million
- 6 trail projects: \$64 million
- 7 public transportation projects and studies: \$104 million
- 4 Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) projects and studies: \$92 million
- 23 studies (including 12 TRPC studies): \$5 million

Maintaining and preserving the existing transportation system is one of the most important transportation solutions for individuals and the community at large.

Source: Community Survey, TRPC 2020.

Guiding Principles, Goals, and Policies

The Regional Transportation Plan is founded on essential values that are true throughout the region, even if their expression may differ between city and town, port and transit, tribe and state, urban and rural, civilian and military. These shared values guide our region's decisions:

- Sustainable, balancing needs today and in the future.
- Supportive of communities and people.
- Responsive to needs and change.
- Fiscally responsible, making wise investments.
- Safety conscious for all users.
- Environmentally sensitive to our natural, social, and built settings.
- Collaborative in making informed, strategic choices.

Goals and Policies translate the region's Guiding Principles into a more detailed framework for transportation decision-making at all levels of government. The RTP includes 20 goals in four topic areas:

- **Transportation Relationships.** Three goals describe transportation's most essential relationships between various modes of transportation; their connection to land use; and people's ability to connect with their community.
- **System Management.** Five goals describe the essential functions associated with owning and operating the transportation system.
- **System Components.** Seven goals describe the various modes of transportation and how they play a part in our region.
- **Process.** Five goals describe the various processes that are integral to transportation decisionmaking in our region.

More than 100 policies have been identified to aid in implementing these goals.

WSDOT Facilities

The Thurston Region has seven state facilities including Interstate 5, US 101, and State Route 507. These routes are an integral part of the region's transportation system. Based on 2018 estimates, WSDOT's Olympic Region will fall approximately \$13 million short on an annual basis of funding the current transportation needs for state facilities in the Thurston Region. With a growing population and new technologies, WSDOT and local government approaches to managing the entire transportation system are evolving to find innovative ways to address such funding shortfalls. As WSDOT and local transportation partners in the region collaborate, they can implement innovative, timely, and cost-effective solutions to help keep us all moving.

WSDOT uses a Practical Solutions approach to achieving safe, reliable, and cost-effective transportation options. WSDOT's core responsibility is to preserve the structural integrity of the state highway system, thereby keeping the most heavily used roads in our region open to the traveling public. Maintaining a state of good repair covers all aspects of the state transportation system from road pavement to bridges to seismic preparedness to clearing snow and ice to caring for plantings alongside roads.

I-5 is the most important north-south freight corridor in the Puget Sound region, carrying more than 10 million tons of freight each year. Maintaining and preserving this vital route is

critical to the state's economic well-being and to the economic strength of the communities it passes through and serves. Our region's anticipated growth over the next 25 years, combined with interstate improvements in Pierce County, led to a series of local planning efforts to identify near-, mid-, and long-range strategies that address congestion on I-5 between Mounts Road and Tumwater. Over the next few years, work on I-5 planning will continue and result in stronger relationships with affected stakeholders, improving delivery times for future I-5 projects, and result in more responsive and effective transportation solutions.

The Future of our Transportation System

The Future Conditions chapter takes a broad look at the impacts the region's forecasted population and employment growth will have on our transportation facilities. It also highlights implications for future travel patterns and environmental considerations. The RTP uses a set of regional travel demand models to quantify both current and future travel conditions.

More than 70% of people believe alternative fuels for vehicles will have a positive impact on how they travel in the next 25 years.

Source: Community Survey, TRPC 2020.

What type of large-scale travel options does the Thurston Region need over the next 25 years?

79% Want expanded passenger rail service between Olympia, Tacoma, and Seattle

71% want high speed rail service between Portland, OR and Vancouver, BC

Source: Community Survey, TRPC 2020.

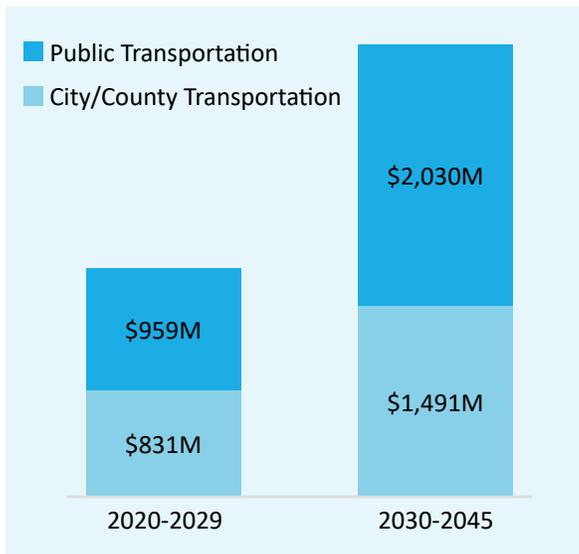
The 2045 conditions described in this chapter give us a glimpse into the future of travel within Thurston County. The analysis indicates that:

- Roadway efficiency will increase in the future. We'll experience a 43 percent increase in vehicle miles travelled (VMT) and a three percent increase in roadway capacity by 2045.
- Our region's planned land use and capacity improvements alone will not be sufficient for the region to meet our VMT targets described in Chapter 3.
- Transit use will increase in the future; walking and bicycling percentages will remain about the same.
- Travel mode is strongly influenced by land use characteristics, and access to transportation facilities and services strongly influences travel mode.
- Travel time on I-5 will increase in the future, and the region is examining various strategies to mitigate the increase.

Funding Transportation Improvements

Over the next 25 years, TRPC estimates that more than \$5.3 billion will be spent on the region’s local transportation system. This doesn’t include improvements to WSDOT facilities like Interstate 5, US 101, and State Route 507.

Figure ES-1: Thurston Region Transportation Expenditures, 2020-2045



Per state and federal law, the RTP must be a financially constrained plan, meaning only projects the region can afford to complete with existing revenues or with revenues reasonably expected to be available are included. State law also requires the RTP to consider least cost planning. This means the region should factor all transportation costs and benefits into

evaluating projects so that solutions result in the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people for the longest period of time at the lowest ultimate cost. This echoes WSDOT’s Practical Solutions approach to state facilities.

We forecast revenues based on the various local, state, and federal funding sources local jurisdictions and transit providers use to support the infrastructure and services they provide.

We forecast expenditures based on funds needed to both maintain and expand the existing transportation system, including the following:

- Local Construction
- Maintenance, Preservation, and Operations
- Administration
- Debt Service and Other
- Regional Projects

By state and federal law, regional transportation projects cannot be included in local comprehensive plans and capital facilities plans unless they are also in the RTP. Without consistency between the local and regional plans, local jurisdictions cannot apply funding from development fees, federal grants, and most state grants toward the project.

Projects included in the RTP are not guaranteed to be funded; local jurisdictions have very little discretion over most of the money they use to fund big projects, and it generally falls to granting agencies to make most funding decisions.

Environmental Considerations

This chapter highlights some of the central environmental issues raised by projects included in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Consideration of the environmental impacts of the RTP expands well beyond the discussion in this chapter. Each project will undergo environmental analysis prior to building.

It is helpful to consider our environmental impacts in three distinct layers: natural, built, and social:

- Natural Environment – how transportation choices impact air quality, water quality, habitat and energy use.
- Built Environment – how we use land and travel upon it, as well as historic and cultural preservation.
- Social Environment – how location and access to transportation impacts how society functions today, including issues of environmental justice and personal health.

These core concepts are consistent with those in the Sustainable Thurston Plan. Therefore, the goals, targets, and actions in the Sustainable Thurston Plan related to air quality, water quality, habitat, energy, land use, and transportation are consistent with the RTP's goals and policies.

How important is it to you that the region's transportation strategies reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

74% It's important
8% It's not important

Source: Community Survey, TRPC 2020.

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