MOVE SKAGIT
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Move Skagit 2050
Regional Transportation Plan

SCOG
SKAGIT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
315 South Third Street, Suite 100 • Mount Vernon • WA • 98273 www.scog.net

RESOLUTION 2026-06

TO ADOPT MOVE SKAGIT 2050 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

WHEREAS, the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) is the designated regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) for the Skagit region and is required to prepare a regional transportation plan under Washington state law (RCW 47.80);

WHEREAS, SCOG is also the designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Skagit region and is required to prepare a metropolitan transportation plan, and update it no less than every five years, under federal law (23 USC 134 & 49 USC 5303);

WHEREAS, the planning boundaries for the RTPO and MPO, referred to as the "metropolitan planning area" under federal law and the "region" under state law, are the same as the boundaries of Skagit County and the Mount Vernon-Anacortes, WA Metropolitan Statistical Area;

WHEREAS, the last update to the integrated metropolitan and regional transportation plan occurred in March 2021 with adoption of the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan;

WHEREAS, the Move Skagit 2050 Regional Transportation Plan replaces and supersedes the March 2021 plan as an integrated metropolitan and regional transportation plan, meeting both federal and state requirements for the Skagit region;

WHEREAS, a 15-day public comment period was held January 23 – February 6, 2026, and all comments received were considered before final action on the Move Skagit 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SKAGIT COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS:

The Move Skagit 2050 Regional Transportation Plan, as attached herein, is hereby approved.

Adopted: March 18, 2026

DocuSigned by:
Peter Browning
9FB11B1D22C2430...

Commissioner Peter Browning, Skagit County
Transportation Policy Board Chair

Signed by:
Jill Boudreau
93A31B8730E94D0...

Jill Boudreau
Executive Director

MOVE SKAGIT
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Tables

List of Appendices

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
CAC	Community Advisory Committee
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
County	Skagit County
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GHG	Greenhouse Gas Emissions
GMA	Washington State Growth Management Act
LOS	Level-of-service
MMLOS	Multi-Modal Level-of-service
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NMAC	Non-Motorized Advisory Committee
OFM	Washington State Office of Financial Management
PAPI	Precision Approach Path Indicators
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
REET	Real Estate Excise Tax
REIL	Runway End Indicator Lights
RSAP	Regional Safety Action Plan
RTP	Move Skagit 2050 Regional Transportation Plan
RTPO	Regional Transportation Planning Organization
SCOG	Skagit Council of Governments
SEPA	Washington's State Environmental Protection Act
SHSP	Strategic Highway Safety Plan
SR	State Route
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TAM	Transit Asset Management
TBDs	Transportation Benefit Districts
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TPB	Transportation Policy Board
TRIP	Transportation Resiliency Improvement Plan
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
VPD	Vehicles per Day
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation
WTP	Washington Transportation Plan

1: Introduction

What is the RTP?

The Move Skagit 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a long-range transportation plan that establishes a framework for meeting the Skagit region's existing and future transportation needs. The Plan includes regional priorities and serves as a link between local government comprehensive plans, tribal transportation plans, Skagit Transit plans, and the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP). This plan is an update to Skagit 2045 and is intended to guide the region's transportation needs through 2050.

Federal law requires preparation of a metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) for the Skagit region, while the Washington state Growth Management Act (GMA) sets forth the requirements for the regional transportation plan (RTP). The RTP addresses both federal and Washington state transportation planning requirements.

The RTP builds on strategies identified by Washington state and local agencies to address short-, mid-, and long-term transportation needs for the Skagit region. The projects in the Plan are constrained by available funding and therefore, the RTP identifies the goals and policies for defining and prioritizing improvements. The Plan is multimodal, with individual projects and strategies serving multiple travel modes and meeting a range of regional priorities. Strategies for expanding funding for regional transportation needs are also identified.

Regional Transportation Planning

Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) has a federal- and state-enabled role in transportation planning in the Skagit region. SCOG is the authorized metropolitan planning organization (MPO) in Skagit County. Established as the MPO in 2003, SCOG is responsible for continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning in the metropolitan area. The metropolitan planning area for the MPO is Skagit County, which is also the federally designated metropolitan statistical area (see Figure 1). The MPO was established in Skagit County following the 2000 decennial census when the urbanized area surrounding Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley reached over 50,000 people, a requirement for the establishment of an MPO.

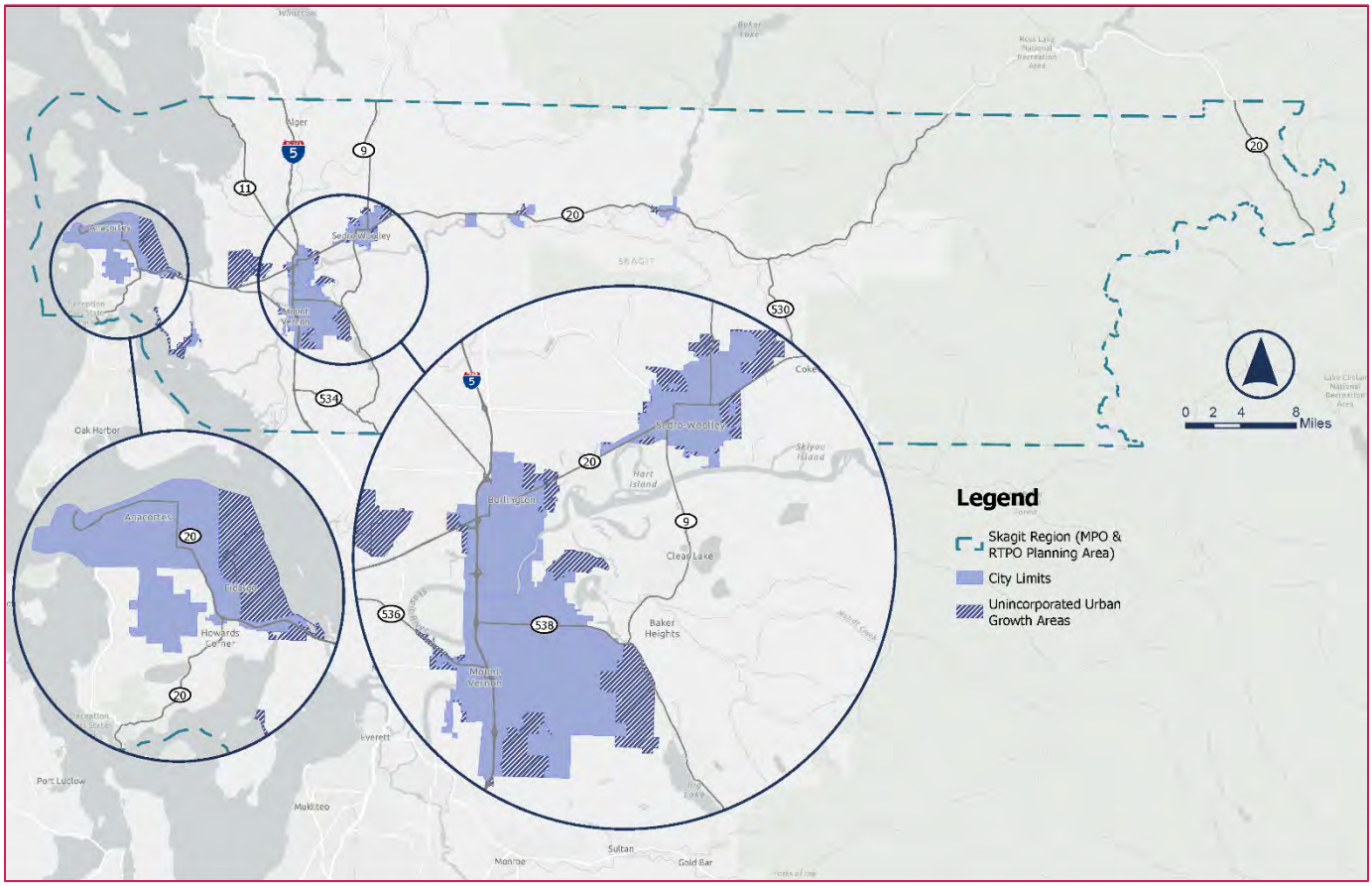


Figure 1. MPO and RTPO Planning Area

SCOG is also the authorized regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) in Skagit County. The authority for RTPOs was included in Washington state's GMA of 1990. Soon after, in 1991, Skagit County joined Island County to establish a two-county RTPO. RTPOs coordinate transportation planning at all jurisdiction levels, including the state, to ensure an interconnected regional transportation system. The RTPO statute indicates that in urbanized areas, the RTPO is to be the same as the MPO. SCOG became a single-county RTPO after the Skagit–Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization dissolved in 2015. The MPO and RTPO boundaries are now the same for SCOG.

For the RTP, the term "Skagit region" is used for SCOG's planning area, which is the same as the metropolitan planning area under federal law and planning area under Washington state law. The boundaries of Skagit County and the Skagit region are the same. "Skagit County" is not used in RTP to describe the planning area boundaries to avoid confusion with Skagit County government and its jurisdictional boundaries.

SCOG is governed by a Board of Directors and the Transportation Policy Board (TPB) comprised of elected officials representing 15 member jurisdictions (see Table 1).

Table 1. SCOG Member Jurisdictions

SCOG Member Jurisdictions	
City of Anacortes	Skagit County
City of Burlington	Skagit PUD #1
City of Mount Vernon	Skagit Transit
City of Sedro-Woolley	Town of Concrete
Port of Anacortes	Town of Hamilton
Port of Skagit	Town of La Conner
Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	Town of Lyman
Samish Indian Nation	

Washington state legislators from the 10th, 39th, and 40th legislative districts are ex-officio members of the Transportation Policy Board. Representatives from Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and a major employer representative also sit on the TPB.

In addition to the governing bodies, development of the RTP and regional transportation planning is supported by SCOG's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and SCOG's Non-Motorized Advisory Committee (NMAC). The TAC provides technical advice to the TPB and is comprised of staff from SCOG member jurisdictions, including: public works directors; transportation planners and engineers; and other staff. This committee provides input on plans, programs, projects, and priorities used to support the development of Move Skagit 2050. The NMAC is a committee of volunteers with interests in modes of non-motorized transportation that provides advice to the TAC.

Federal and State Transportation Planning Requirements

Federal law requires that MTPs be developed in coordination with statewide transportation planning and local land use planning. Under 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) § 450, MTPs must: use a 20-year (or longer) horizon; consider all modes and major facilities; address capital, operations, and management strategies; and include a financial plan demonstrating fiscal constraint.

At the state level, coordination is guided by the GMA (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 36.70A) and regional planning requirements in RCW 47.80.030. SCOG works closely with WSDOT to ensure consistency with the WTP 2040 and Beyond, as well as corridor and modal plans. Recent updates, including HB 1181 (2023), which added climate change and resiliency into the GMA, and the HEAL Act (RCW 70A.02), which requires evaluation of environmental health disparities, reinforce the need to address greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), climate adaptation, and environmental justice within this Plan. The HEAL Act does not directly apply to SCOG and the RTP but is a consideration in regional transportation planning, as it applies to WSDOT. Furthermore, Goal 14 within the Countywide Planning Policies addresses the recent updates that require local governments to set targets to reduce VMT and GHGs, as well as regional planning requirements in RCW 36.70.210 and RCW 47.80.

Coordination also extends across county boundaries, recognizing strong commuting, freight, and tourism connections with neighboring Whatcom, Snohomish, Island, San Juan, Chelan, and Okanogan counties, and with the Puget Sound Regional Council. At the local level, the RTP incorporates land use assumptions from adopted comprehensive plans and population and employment projections prepared by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM), aligning transportation strategies with growth patterns and concurrency requirements.

Federal and Washington state requirements for the RTP guide much of its content. Federal requirements apply to the RTP as a MTP and include:

- A 20-year planning horizon;
- Coverage of all major modes and facilities;
- Identification of capital projects and operations/management strategies that preserve and enhance system performance and safety; and

- A financial plan showing how improvements can be implemented with reasonably expected revenues.

At the state level, per RCW 47.80.030, the RTP must be prepared in cooperation with WSDOT, ports, transit operators, and local governments in the region. Skagit 2050 is required to:

- Be based on a least-cost planning methodology that provides the most cost-effective transportation facilities, services, and programs;
- Identify existing and planned transportation facilities and programs that should function as an integrated regional transportation system;
- Establish level-of-service standards for certain state highways and ferry routes, to be developed jointly with WSDOT;
- Include a financial plan showing how the regional transportation plan can be implemented;
- Assess regional development patterns, capital investment, and other measures; and
- Set forth a proposed regional approach to guide development of the integrated, multimodal regional transportation system.

WSDOT provides standards and guidelines to assist RTPOs with preparing the RTP, including data identification and use, project identification, financial evaluations, and coordination activities.

Plan Development Process

RTP is prepared on a five-year cycle to comply with federal requirements and to ensure that transportation priorities remain aligned with the region's needs. The planning process is continuous, involving data collection, forecasting, policy development, and public engagement.

For this update, SCOG followed a structured process that included:

- Review of existing conditions and trends. Staff compiled data on travel demand, freight movement, system performance, and demographic change. This work established a baseline for identifying future needs.
- Integration with related planning efforts. The RTP builds upon parallel initiatives such as the Regional Safety Action Plan (RSAP) and the Transportation Resiliency Improvement Plan (TRIP), ensuring that safety and climate adaptation are fully incorporated into the regional vision.
- Coordination with federal, state, and local partners. SCOG worked with WSDOT, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), member jurisdictions, and neighboring regions to ensure that regional strategies support broader policy goals and maintain consistency with state and federal plans.
- Public and stakeholder engagement. Community input was gathered through public meetings, surveys, and consultation with advisory committees. This outreach shaped the plan's priorities and ensured that diverse perspectives were represented.
- Fiscal analysis. SCOG assessed available revenues and funding programs, including federal and state grants, to determine the level of investment that can reasonably be expected through 2050. This financial framework guided the identification of projects and strategies that are both needed and achievable.

Summary of Compliance Requirements

Federal:

- IIJA emphasis areas (resiliency, safety, system reliability, carbon reduction, emerging technology)
- Performance-based planning and programming
- Consideration of fiscal constraint
- 20-year horizon
- Consistency with statewide plans and targets

State:

- GMA integration (RCW 36.70A)
- Consistency with Countywide Planning Policies (RCW 47.80.023)
- RTPO requirements (RCW 47.80.030)
- VMT reduction (RCW 47.01.440)
- GHG reduction (RCW 70A.45.020)
- HB 1181 (2023) climate/resiliency requirements
- WSDOT plan consistency
- OFM-based growth assumptions.
- State Environmental Policy Act compliance

A detailed federal/state compliance crosswalk is provided in Appendix A.

The planning process is iterative. Early findings on needs and priorities were refined through discussion with partners and stakeholders, leading to the final set of goals, policies, and projects included in the plan. This approach ensures that the RTP is both forward-looking and grounded in the realities of implementation.

2: Planning Context

Coordination with Other Planning Efforts

The RTP has been prepared alongside plans led by SCOG's members and partners so that assumptions, priorities, and timing are consistent across the region. Coordination uses the same baseline inputs throughout the planning cycle: regional population and employment forecasts, adopted local comprehensive plans and transportation elements, and the most current system condition information maintained by member agencies and WSDOT. Technical review and interagency coordination occur through SCOG's established TAC and NMAC, so that data, modeling assumptions, project concepts, program needs, and fiscal assumptions align before they are advanced in this plan.

To connect the 2050 vision with near-term delivery, this plan identifies regionally significant capital projects and programmatic investments that have a reasonable path to funding in the first decade, states the lead agency for each, and explains the intended outcomes regarding safety, reliability, resiliency, and multimodal access (see Section 7 for the project and program list). The project and program list serves the implementation functions described in RCW 47.80.030, including least-cost planning, development of an integrated multimodal system, and an implementable financial plan prepared in cooperation with WSDOT, ports, transit operators, and local governments.

Travel and goods movement in the Skagit region are closely linked with Whatcom, Snohomish, and Island counties and with the central Puget Sound. SCOG coordinates with adjacent MPOs/RTPOs and regional partners where corridors cross jurisdictional boundaries, where transit services interface across jurisdictional boundaries, and in matters related to ferry access and freight routes affecting regional mobility. This collaboration also covers emergency detours and incident management and includes exchanging modeling assumptions, comparing performance measures, and coordinating project sequencing on shared facilities. The sections below describe partner agency and SCOG planning efforts that helped shape the RTP.

Washington Transportation Plan

In 2025, the State of Washington updated the Washington Transportation Plan. The WTP Vision 2050 is a 20-year vision and transportation policy plan for all of Washington State. It provides an overarching transportation policy framework along with strategies for use by state, regional, and

local jurisdictions and entities statewide. The RTP was developed in close collaboration with the WTP and incorporates regional priorities within WTP. Additionally, federally mandated performance measures are incorporated into the RTP policy framework and implementation strategies outlined in Section 4 and in Appendix B, System Performance Report.

Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Target Zero

In 2024, the State of Washington updated their Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) titled Target Zero. The plan outlines the state's goal of eliminating traffic-related deaths and serious injuries by 2030. Despite past successes in reducing fatalities through new laws and safety measures, recent years have seen a troubling rise in crashes, prompting a renewed commitment to the Target Zero goal. The plan commits to the Safe System Approach while modifying the approach slightly to integrate safer road users, speeds, roads, vehicles, post-crash care, and a new element, safer land use planning. In addition to the commitment to the Target Zero goal, the SHSP also reports on the five federally required safety performance measures documented in Section 4 and expanded upon in Appendix B.

Regional Safety Action Plan

The RSAP uses the USDOT Safe Systems Approach as the guiding framework to address roadway safety in the Skagit region. The RSAP evaluates crash trends and safety performance to understand locations and systemic factors associated with serious injuries and deaths and developed the High Injury Network (HIN) as a statistical method to determine the region's roadways that experience the most serious injuries and fatalities. The RSAP compiled a list of USDOT proven safety countermeasures for the consideration of SCOG's member jurisdictions and applied countermeasures to the top eight issues throughout the region. Additionally, the plan provided SCOG with additional criteria for determining regional significance for the RTP. The new criteria are listed in Section 6 and within the RSAP and included in Appendix C of this plan.

Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan

The TRIP evaluates vulnerabilities on the regional network, including flooding, seismic risk, landslide-prone slopes, and other disruptions that can sever access to critical facilities. Findings from the TRIP are reflected here through resilience-oriented design considerations for regionally significant projects, programmatic investments that reduce vulnerability on identified segments, coordination with emergency management and lifeline partners, and documentation of incident diversion routes where appropriate. Additionally, TRIP informed the RTP regionally significant criteria related to resilience and priority locations and recommended measures from the TRIP, as shown in Appendix C and located in the TRIP.

Related Planning Efforts

The RTP is coordinated with planning efforts that shape travel demand, access needs, and project timing. These include Skagit Transit's service and facilities planning; port planning by the Port of Anacortes and the Port of Skagit related to marine, industrial, and freight access; active

transportation planning by cities, towns, and the county for bikeway and walkway networks, regional trails, and access to schools; transportation systems management and operations work such as incident response, traveler information, and intelligent transportation systems; and aviation or ferry planning where it affects regional connectivity.

Concurrency with standards under the GMA framework are set and applied by local jurisdictions. This plan supports concurrency by coordinating regional forecasts and adopted land use assumptions across jurisdictions, identifying regionally significant constraints and mitigation strategies, advancing multimodal investments that improve access to planned growth areas, and aligning the timing of regionally significant investments with local capital facilities plans.

Transportation strategies in this plan are linked with non-transportation planning that drives demand and access requirements. Housing elements in city, town, and county comprehensive plans inform where units and services will be located and what types of access will be needed into the future. Economic development strategies identify employment centers, industrial and commercial areas, and freight and tourism access needs that the transportation system must serve. Climate and hazard planning identifies greenhouse-gas reduction and adaptation strategies and maintains access to critical facilities. The RTP reflects these connections so that regional transportation investments support adopted growth and economic goals while maintaining a system that is reliable and safe.

SCOG convenes cities, towns, Skagit County, Skagit Transit, the ports, and tribal governments to identify shared priorities, align funding strategies, and coordinate delivery. WSDOT, FHWA, and FTA provide policy guidance and technical review. Through committee work and interagency consultation, concepts are vetted regionally, sequenced for delivery, and incorporated into the fiscally constrained program.

Additionally, the RTP supports regional planning efforts which intersect with transportation related issues, including recovery plans for Chinook and Steelhead. Historically, culverts were installed to guide and control stream flows where roadways cross waterways, which inadvertently prevented native fish and other wildlife from a continuous path of travel up and down streams. The Recovery Plan for the Puget Sound Steelhead identifies the primary pressures contributing to the decline and

listing of Steelhead and guides protection and recovery efforts in the Puget Sound. The Skagit Chinook Recovery Plan, a chapter of the Recovery Plan for Puget Sound Chinook Salmon, requires roadway owners to account for a plan for future fish-passage structures that follow a set of performance measures related to fish passage and environmental upkeep to ensure high-quality habitat connectivity. Performance measures include:

- Hydrology – allowance for a range of water flows;
- Sediment Transport and Deposition – allow sediment to be transported downstream, rather than accumulating upstream in watersheds;
- Woody Debris Transport and Storage – allow for the transport and storage of wood of the size appropriate for the watershed and location in question;
- Alluvial Fan Processes – roadway crossing structures must not disrupt natural alluvial fan processes such as sediment and large woody debris movement, channel creation, and more;
- Floodplain Processes – allow for hydrologic connections to off-channel and side channel habitats;
- Habitat Connectivity – provide the appropriate level of habitat connectivity at roadway crossings;
- Tidal Influence – allow for the full natural extent of tidal influence; and
- Fish Passage – provide for the passage of native fishes, particularly anadromous salmonids, at all life stages.

Additionally, Chinook salmon are listed as endangered, and Steelhead are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act. As such, careful consideration is given to road improvements that could impact Chinook and Steelhead populations. See Appendix D for additional information related to fish passages corrections in the Skagit Region to improve fish passage along the state and regional highway system.

Projected Growth and Travel Demand

While the history of the Skagit region establishes the background for the Plan, forecast growth patterns also affect priorities, with forecast population and employment growth affecting transportation needs throughout the region and connections outside the region.

Local population dynamics are highly influenced by an area's employment climate. Generally, population growth is based primarily on immigration, driven by people moving into an area in search of, or taking, new jobs. In large part, population growth depends on how favorable an area's employment opportunities are in relation to other areas. Stated generally, people follow jobs and in turn create demand for local goods and services, such as housing. While natural increases and decreases in population growth have an effect, due to births and deaths, these trends tend to

be steady influences on population dynamics, unlike the swings associated with people moving into and out of an area.

Historical Population Growth

The RTP considers historical population growth as it relates to forecasting future population and the effects on future travel demand and regional transportation improvements. Historical estimates were obtained from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM).[1] Between 2010 and 2025, Skagit County has experienced steady and sustained population growth. The county added over 17,000 residents, representing a 15 percent increase over the period. This growth has been strongest in the region's urban growth areas, where Sedro-Woolley and Burlington saw the greatest percentage gains, followed by Anacortes and Mount Vernon. Mount Vernon added the most overall residents (4,307), reflecting its continuing role as the region's primary population and employment hub.

As stated above, most population growth between 2010 and 2025 has occurred within designated urban growth areas. Approximately 70 percent of new residents during that timeframe located in the County's incorporated areas, with the remaining growth occurring in rural or unincorporated places. The distribution of growth has varied across specific communities. Larger cities saw the greatest increases in both absolute and relative terms, while some smaller towns had fewer than 500 residents and Hamilton showed a slight decrease in population. Overall, the long-term trend shows continuing movement toward the region's urban growth areas, with growth patterns broadly aligned with local goals to direct most new development into incorporated areas and urban growth areas.

Regional Growth Projections

As in past decades, projected growth in the Skagit region is closely linked to economic opportunities – people tend to move where jobs are available. By 2050, the region is expected to experience substantial increases in population, housing, and employment:

- Population (2050): ~166,000 residents (a 27% increase from 131,250 in 2022);
- Housing Units (2050): ~73,000 units (a 29% increase from 56,628 in 2022, expanding the housing stock to accommodate growth); and
- Employment (2050): ~85,000 jobs (a 43% increase from 59,570 in 2022).[2]

[1] Historical estimates of April 1 population and housing for the state, counties, and cities - Office of Financial Management
[2] Skagit Council of Governments, 2025

Local growth management policies direct the bulk of this growth into urban growth areas. This growth pattern not only supports efficient land use but also makes it easier to serve new development with infrastructure and transit.

The expected increase in residents and jobs will have a direct impact on regional travel demand and could create more demand for transit and non-motorized transportation options. More people and employment centered in and around communities such as Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Sedro-Woolley means more trips on the transportation network. Key regional arterials and state highways in these areas are forecast to see increased traffic volumes, which, without system improvements, could strain capacity and increase congestion (see Section 7 for travel demand forecast scenarios).

To support anticipated regional growth and preserve mobility, strategic transportation investments will be needed across all modes (see section 4 for regional goals and policies). Expanding capacity and upgrading key roadways (where necessary, after accounting for long-term impacts such as potential induced demand), or improving their efficiency through operational strategies, will help accommodate additional vehicular travel. Equally important is a robust multimodal approach, such as, enhancing public transit services, expanding bicycle and pedestrian networks, and other measures to reduce reliance on single-occupancy vehicles. By proactively investing in a balanced transportation system, the Skagit region can support its 2050 growth while preserving regional mobility and access for both residents and commerce through the plan horizon.

Regional Travel Patterns and Emerging Challenges

In 2021, SCOG surveyed Skagit County households to gather travel behavior data for regional transportation planning. Over 600 households and 1,300 residents participated in the "Skagit Travel Survey," using smartphones, computers, and a call center. The survey collected weekday travel diaries and demographic details. The following summary outlines key travel patterns and emerging challenges for the local transportation network. It is important to note that during 2021, travel patterns may still have been affected by the COVID -19 pandemic. However, this is the latest travel survey available as of the time this RTP was prepared.

Household Characteristics and Trip Rates

Skagit County households are generally small and automobile-oriented, with most households having access to one or more vehicles. Household composition plays a major role in shaping daily travel demand. Households with multiple workers and/or children generate significantly higher trip volumes than non-working or single-person households. These patterns indicate that employment, school, and household-serving activities are the primary drivers of regional travel demand. Note that a "trip" is defined as one movement from an origin to destination, for example from home to work. In this example the return to home would be counted as a separate trip. The following section provides an overview of household characteristics and trip rates based on data collected from the survey:

- Most households consist of one or two people and have at least one vehicle available for use, with many having two or more cars.
- Households averaged roughly 1.3 workers per household and about 0.4 students (school-aged children) per household, indicating that a significant portion of homes include working adults and some have children in school.
- On average, Skagit area residents made about 3.8 trips per person per day. Adults ages 35–64 made the most trips (4.7 trips/day), while those under 18 made the fewest (2.1 trips/day).
- By mode, respondents made about 3.32 trips/day by car and 0.39 trips/day walking. All other modes were below 0.1 trips/day.
- Trip rates by income were broadly similar, with some lower and mid-income groups recording slightly higher trip rates than other income groups.

Trip Purpose and Distance

Most travel in the Skagit region involves short, routine local trips, mainly for shopping and errands. These rely on the area's street and arterial networks. Longer inter-city and inter-county trips are less frequent but place disproportionate demand on regional corridors like I-5 and key state routes. The following summarizes trip purpose and distance based on data collected from the survey:

- Other than returning home from other trips, shopping, social or recreational travel, going out for meals, accompanying others (e.g., taking a child to day care), and other non-work errands comprise 50 percent of daily trip making (or a combined total of 1.91 trips per person per day). Of these non-work purposes, shopping was the largest share at 21% of the typical daily trip total (about 0.8 trips per person per day).
- Journeys to an outside of home workplace account for a smaller share of travel (about 0.33 trips per person per day, or roughly 9 percent of all trips). Work-related trips (e.g., going from the usual workplace to a client or customer location) add another 8 percent of the daily total (0.29 trips per person per day). The cumulative work-related daily trip share of 17% highlights the importance of non-work travel in shaping system demand.
- Travel to school constitutes about 3% of typical daily trip-making (when schools are in session) or about 0.11 trips per person per day.
- Most trips are short, with a median distance of approximately 2.8 miles, reinforcing the localized nature of travel.
- Median work trips are also relatively short (about 3.2 miles), while school-related trips are shorter still (approximately 1.5–1.6 miles).

Travel Mode

Travel in the Skagit region is dominated by private vehicles, and the survey indicates that transit use remains limited for most residents, even as some residents report that service improvements

could increase usage. The following summarizes travel modes based on data collected from the survey:

- Automobiles dominate travel: about 87% of all weighted trips were made by car.
- Average vehicle occupancy is approximately 1.6 persons per vehicle trip, reflecting shared household travel, school trips, and some informal carpooling.
- Walking is the next most common mode (about 0.39 trips/day), while all other modes, including bicycling and transit, occur at much lower rates.
- For transit, most adult respondents reported never using transit, with a smaller share using transit less than monthly or monthly or more (patterns vary somewhat by income and age).
- Among respondents who indicated that changes could influence them to use fixed-route transit more often, the top factors were more frequent service, bus stops closer to home, and faster transit travel times.

Commute Patterns

Commute patterns show local connectivity remains essential, even as work habits shift. While mode choice stayed consistent, telework saw a marked rise in 2021, with many employees working from home several days a week. The effects of employment type on the option to telework appear likely to remain consistent into the future. In 2022, telework-eligible sectors (financial, insurance, real estate, services, and government) employed about 23% of total Skagit County workers and this is projected to be about 22% in 2050.[3] As those numbers imply, sectors typically requiring workers to be present at a location outside the home (such as resources, manufacturing, education, health, etc.) make up just over three quarters of regional employment both now and in the projected future. While some sectors, notably manufacturing, are likely to decline in terms of their share of the total, other sectors such as health will increase their share and maintain a roughly 77% share of the employment total. Taken together, the current and future employment shares by sector suggest that the propensity to telework will remain roughly the same as today in proportional terms, absent major shifts in telework and other technologies.

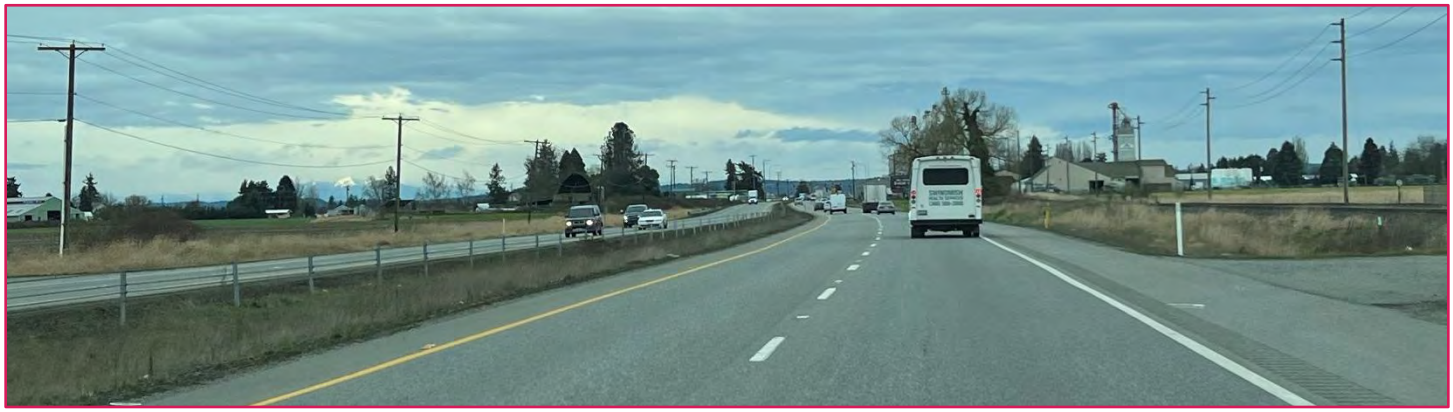
The following summarizes commute patterns based on data collected from the survey:

- Most employed residents live and work within Skagit County, resulting in generally short commute distances and strong reliance on local transportation facilities.

[3] Community Attributes, Inc., 2024.

- Among those who travel to a workplace, the distribution of commute modes changed very little between pre-2020 and fall 2021.
- Inter-county commuting occurs primarily toward the Bellingham area, with more dispersed commute travel toward the broader Puget Sound region to the south.
- Telework increased substantially. The share of workers teleworking four or more days per week rose from 22 percent (pre-2020) to 37 percent (fall 2021), while those teleworking 1 day per week decreased from 16 percent to 5 percent.

The survey findings collectively indicate a range of challenges and opportunities for the regional transportation system. Ongoing dependence on automobiles continues to strain roadway capacity, reliability, and maintenance requirements, especially along key arterials and regional corridors. The prevalence of short-distance trips highlights potential for increased walking, bicycling, and transit usage, provided that safe, connected, and convenient infrastructure is available. The rise in home deliveries emphasizes growth in last-mile freight activities on local streets, supplementing traditional freight transport on highways and arterials. Regional facilities, including I-5, state highways, ferry routes, and tourism corridors, are required to manage an array of functions, from local travel and inter-county commuting to freight movement and seasonal visitor flows. These overlapping demands emphasize the significance of a multimodal, resilient transportation network that optimizes roadway efficiency while expanding travel choices and implementing effective operational strategies.



3: Public Engagement and Collaboration

Engagement for the RTP was coordinated with other regional planning efforts, including the RSAP and the TRIP. The public engagement process was compliant with SCOG, federal and state guidance for engagement related to the RTP development, and followed SCOG's RTP Public Involvement Plan, which was prepared and implemented specifically for the RTP planning process. The Public Involvement Plan guided the identification of Interested Parties and outreach activities during the planning process and is included in Appendix E.

Interested Parties

Consistent with federal law 23 CFR § 450.316, an interested party is considered to be an individual or group potentially affected by Move Skagit, including those who may not be aware they are affected. For Move Skagit, interested parties were identified based on input from SCOG's Transportation Policy Board, advisory committees and past planning processes (see Table 2).

Table 2. Interested Parties

Interested Parties	
Individuals	Representatives of users of public transportation
Affected public agencies	Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
Representatives of public transportation employees	Representatives of persons with disabilities
Public ports	Providers of freight transportation services
Freight shippers	Other interested parties
Private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators)	

Public Engagement and Regional Collaboration Strategies

This section outlines public engagement strategies and activities conducted throughout the Move Skagit 2050 planning process for the RTP. Community engagement plays a vital role in the development of a regional transportation plan by ensuring that the voices, concerns, and

perspectives of residents and interested parties are actively integrated into the planning process. Through a combination of public meetings, focus groups, online platforms, and direct outreach, engagement efforts gather diverse insights from those who use the transportation systems firsthand.

Outreach and Public Information Activities

Outreach for Move Skagit 2050 was conducted through virtual and in-person engagement activities. SCOG sought to provide equal access to outreach materials in Spanish for the RTP update, with many materials and, virtual public input tools provided in Spanish. Spanish interpretation services were available upon request. Key components of outreach established in the Public Involvement Plan for Move Skagit included:

- Three-plan process branding, Move Skagit and project-specific website;
- Remote and in-person consultation meetings;
- Remote notification strategies;
- Remote meetings of governing and advisory bodies;
- In-person tabling activities; and
- Public comment period on the draft plan.

Tabling Engagement Event, Mount Vernon Senior Day in the Park

Public Engagement Materials

A Move Skagit website was created to act as a virtual landing platform and "information booth" for the Plan. This website was made fully available in 16 languages, and included:

- Context for the RTP update;
- Project fact sheets (in English and Spanish);
- Links to other relevant documents;
- Project timeline;
- Contact information and comment opportunities;
- Virtual public engagement tools, including an interactive comment map; and
- Newsletter disseminating regular e-notifications.

Additionally, other supporting materials were developed to communicate elements of the Plan to the public. These included physical maps of the regional transportation system, physical project fact sheets in English and Spanish, and a physical prioritization activity table mat that allowed the public to rank transportation priorities for investment.

Public Engagement

Coordinating community engagement for Move Skagit — including feedback for the RTP, RSAP, and the TRIP was centered on the development of an online public website and augmented with focus groups and tabling at community fairs and festivals. For a full list of public engagement and regional coordination activities and outcomes, see Appendix F.

Tabling Engagement Event in Concrete

Online Public Website and Interactive Map

The online website was used to advertise the Move Skagit email mailing list for project updates, connect with SCOG planning staff, and provide comments on the Social Pinpoint interactive web map, which was published from June 5, 2025, to October 3, 2025. The web map received a total of 204 discrete comments. Of the comments, 122 comments related to potential improvements

for walking, biking and rolling, 10 comments related to traffic congestion, three comments related to accessibility, 65 comments related to safety concerns, and four comments related to natural hazards. Additionally, the website was used to gather feedback on the draft plan prior to final approval.

Community Tabling Events:

Fairs and festivals serve as established gatherings that bring people together in celebration, learning and exchange. These public community events are two-way information sharing opportunities for SCOG and can be catalysts for community engagement. Move Skagit, representing all three plans, was present at the following community events:

- Cascade Days, Concrete, August 15, 2025;
- Mount Vernon Block Party, Mount Vernon, August 16, 2025;
- Senior Day in the Park, Burlington, August 21, 2025;
- La Conner Swinomish Library, La Conner, August 28, 2025;
- Burlington Library, Burlington, September 9, 2025;
- Upper Skagit Library, Concrete, September 11, 2025;
- Anacortes Senior Activity Center, September 10, 2025;
- Anacortes Library, Anacortes, September 16, 2025; and
- Mount Vernon Senior Center, Mount Vernon, September 18, 2025.

Transportation Policy Board

The Transportation Policy Board is the governing body within SCOG that directs the transportation work program. The Transportation Policy Board approves the RTP, RSAP, and TRIP and will oversee updates and revisions in the future. The Transportation Policy Board voting members consist of appointed elected officials from member governments, as well as WSDOT. RTP elements were discussed with regional partners at regularly scheduled meetings as noted below:

- December 18, 2024 – Approval of Public Involvement Plan;
- May 21, 2025 – Review of Priorities, Policies, and Performance Measures; and
- January 21, 2026 –Draft Regional Transportation Plan Released for Public Comment.,

Technical Advisory Committee

SCOG also hosts a TAC consisting of engineers, planners and other representatives from SCOG member jurisdictions in Skagit County. These planners and engineers provide technical input to inform SCOG Transportation Policy Board decisions. Technical aspects of the Move Skagit Planning efforts were discussed at the following meeting:

- December 5, 2024 – Recommendation on Public Involvement Plan
- August 7, 2025 – Overview and updates of the RTP, RSAP, and TRIP planning efforts
- April 3, 2025 – MMLOS Discussion
- September 4, 2025 – RTP Update

Non-Motorized Advisory Committee

SCOG also facilitates a NMAC as a subcommittee to the TAC to support development of an integrated transportation system with a focus on non-motorized components within the Skagit region. NMAC was engaged by the project team and Move Skagit was discussed at the following meeting:

- August 26, 2025 – Overview, discussion, and feedback on the RTP, RSAP, and TRIP planning efforts.

Non-Profits and Private Service Providers

The Non-Profits and Private Service Provider discussion group consisted of public and private transportation providers to get feedback on the Move Skagit planning effort. The discussion group occurred on July 31, 2025.

WSDOT

SCOG has a recurring monthly meeting with WSDOT staff to discuss transportation collaboration. On August 6, 2025 the Move Skagit team visited the recurring meeting to discuss and collect feedback on the Move Skagit planning effort.

Law Enforcement and Emergency First Responders

The law enforcement and emergency response discussion group comprised of law enforcement officers and emergency first responders from jurisdictions located within Skagit County and Washington State Patrol. Move Skagit convened the law enforcement and emergency first responders to discuss plan elements on July 11, 2025.

Skagit Transit Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) at Skagit Transit serves as an essential volunteer advisory body to the Board of Directors and Administration, providing a rider-centric perspective on services, programs, and planning. Move Skagit visited the Skagit Transit CAC to discuss plan elements on September 9, 2025.

Summary of Public Comments

The draft RTP was released for public comment on January 23, 2026. SCOG received 120 comments from the community and partner agencies. A comment and response tracker is included in Appendix G.

4: Transportation Policy Framework

The RTP guides investments in the regional transportation system over the next 25 years. The Plan represents the efforts of governments serving the Skagit region to coordinate the planning of diverse transportation system elements to support the region's anticipated growth and meet regional priorities and goals. As noted in Section 3, the Plan was developed through a collaborative process that involved the public, WSDOT and other state agencies, federally recognized Indian tribal governments, Skagit County, cities and towns, ports, transit agencies, private non-profits and a variety of other interested parties.

A wide range of regional transportation projects and strategies are identified in the RTP. These projects and strategies create a comprehensive, integrated, multimodal transportation system to serve the region over the next 25 years. The total costs of these projects and strategies will outstrip the likely available future funding necessary to implement them. Therefore, SCOG has developed a framework to identify the core transportation needs which other regional improvements will tie into and help guide the preparation of the fiscally constrained Plan. See Section 8 for more information on fiscal constraints, including forecast revenues and expenditures during the timeframe of the RTP.

Aligning Regional Goals with Washington Transportation Plan

The planning process for the RTP included developing regional priorities and goals that focus on a regional approach to moving people, freight and goods. The priorities and goals were cross-referenced with input received through public engagement opportunities to ensure alignment with SCOG member agencies and community members. Appendix F includes a summary of public outreach and input received.

State law (RCW 47.04.280) establishes six transportation policy goals that guide long-range planning in Washington. WTP Vision 2050, the statewide transportation plan adopted by the Washington State Transportation Commission, organizes these policy goals into three priority areas: Maintain Critical Transportation Assets (Preservation and Stewardship), Develop Safe and Connected Communities (Safety and Mobility), and Establish Resilient and Reliable Systems (Economic Vitality and Environment). *Skagit 2050* adopts these six transportation policy goals as the foundation of the regional transportation planning framework and adds two regionally defined goals that reflect Skagit-specific priorities for community engagement and transportation system resilience. Table 3 summarizes how the *Skagit 2050* Regional Transportation Plan goals align with the state policy goals and WTP Vision 2050 priority areas. While the WTP does not include a specific goal related to transportation resilience, it is imbedded within the WTP stewardship goal.

Table 3. Aligning Regional Goals to Washington Transportation Plan

Regional Goal Alignment with the Washington Transportation Plan		
Washington Transportation Plan 2050 Goals	Priorities	SCOG Regional Transportation Plan Goals
To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services, including the state ferry system.	 Preservation	To maintain, preserve and extend the life and utility of prior investments in regional transportation systems and services.
To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.	 Safety	To provide for and improve the safety of those using the regional transportation system.
To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, resilience, and efficiency of the transportation system.	 Stewardship	To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the regional transportation system.
To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility.	 Mobility	To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout the Skagit region, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility.
To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy	 Economic Vitality	To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support and enhance the movement of people and goods, to ensure a prosperous regional economy.
To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.	 Environment	To enhance regional quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities and protect the environment.
N/A	 Community Engagement and Regional Coordination	Foster inclusive community engagement and strengthen regional coordination to ensure transportation decisions reflect shared priorities, promote collaboration among jurisdictions, and build public trust through transparent and equitable processes.
N/A	 Transportation Resilience	Foster a reliable, and adaptable transportation system that maintains essential mobility and access during disruptions and supports long-term sustainability and recovery.

Skagit 2050 Regional Transportation Plan Goals and Policies

Goal 1. Preservation: To maintain, preserve and extend the life and utility of prior investments in regional transportation systems and services.

The Skagit region recognizes the critical importance of preserving existing infrastructure, including rail lines, bridges, pavements, transit facilities, ferries, and airports; as each represents a significant economic asset. However, revenues for maintenance are often inadequate, as governments at all levels face competing demands for limited funds. Consequently, asset managers must defer optimal maintenance activities (such as pavement management), leading to rising future costs and a declining quality of the transportation network over time.

Policies:

1.1. Protect the integrity of the investment in the regional transportation system by encouraging and prioritizing timely maintenance of the system.

1.2 Monitor the condition of transportation facilities by working with SCOG member jurisdictions to identify critical facilities, develop metrics, and establish a data collection program.

1.3 Encourage agencies to evaluate the timing of replacement and rehabilitation needs when proposing capacity improvement projects for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures will be used to track performance toward achieving **Skagit 2050 RTP Goal 1: Preservation.**

- Percent of Interstate pavements in Good condition.
- Percent of Interstate pavements in Poor condition.
- Percent of non-Interstate National Highway System (NHS) pavements in Good condition.
- Percent of non-Interstate NHS pavements in Poor condition.

Performance information is included in Appendix B.

Goal 2. Safety: To provide for and improve the safety of those using the regional transportation system.

The safety and security of all users of the regional system is of paramount importance in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of facilities. Improvements aimed at reducing roadway fatalities and serious injuries can also help ease congestion. While safety efforts should span all modes, there is a greater emphasis on improving roadway safety for drivers, bicyclists, and pedestrians given the higher rates of severe injuries in these modes.

Policies:

2.1 Prioritize harm reduction projects and strategies to reduce the quantity of serious injuries and fatalities in Skagit County, particularly in places that experience a higher proportion of serious injuries and fatalities.

2.2 Prioritize funding for transportation investments that advance safety outcomes by promoting the incorporation of proven safety countermeasures and align with the state's Target Zero goal through a Safe System approach.

2.3 Provide for the safety and security of users on all modes by participating in Washington state and federal programs to increase safety and security, and place an emphasis on projects that incorporate safety and security.

2.4 Support the use of automated enforcement strategies by local agencies within Skagit County as a tool to enhance roadway safety and reduce traffic-related deaths and serious injuries.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures will be used to track performance toward achieving **Skagit 2050 RTP Goal 2: Safety**.

- Number of Fatalities
- Rate of Fatalities per 100 million Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)
- Number of Serious Injuries
- Rate of Serious Injuries per 100 million VMT
- Number of Non-motorized Fatalities and Non-motorized Serious Injuries
- Transit
  - Fatalities and fatality rate
  - Injuries and injury rate
  - Safety event and rate

Performance information is included in Appendix B.

Goal 3. Stewardship: To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the regional transportation system.

As a regional priority, Stewardship captures the need for wise management of transportation resources and infrastructure. One way to practice stewardship is to ensure that the benefits and burdens of transportation projects are equitably distributed and do not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations. Likewise, seamlessly integrating land use and transportation policies helps advance stewardship by recognizing that decisions in one arena directly affect the other. Overall, this goal underscores the importance of getting the best value for public investments and coordinating actions across jurisdictions. This includes using shared data and performance measures to guide investments, strengthening cross-jurisdiction and public-private partnerships, and ensuring that transportation investments advance statewide goals for safety, preservation, equity, and resilience.

Policies:

3.1 Work with the public, federal government, state and local governments, tribal governments, private sector, and other interested parties to implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional transportation system.

3.2 Prioritize the most efficient mix of modes and facilities based on the need to balance accessibility and demand.

3.3 Support the future densification of urban areas through continued coordination with partner agencies to develop a transportation network that serves the unique conditions of urban and rural areas.

3.4 Support Skagit Transit and other transit agencies serving the Skagit region in acquiring funding from outside sources to help implement strategies identified in the Plan.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures will be used to track performance toward achieving **Skagit 2050 RTP Goal 3: Stewardship.**

- Transit Asset Management (TAM) Equipment: Percentage of non-revenue vehicles met or exceeded Useful Life Benchmark
- TAM Rolling Stock: Percentage of revenue vehicles met or exceeded Useful Life Benchmark
- TAM Infrastructure: Percentage of track segments with performance restrictions
- TAM Facilities: Percentage of assets with condition rating below 3.0 on FTA TERM Scale
- Transit System Reliability calculated as the mean distance between major mechanical failures.

Performance information is included in Appendix B.

3.5 Develop multimodal level-of-service (MMLOS) standards across modes that meet the needs of the user while recognizing the uniqueness of each mode.

3.6 Conform to transportation concurrency requirements consistent with the Growth Management Act.

3.7 Provide accessibility to the transportation system through timely information by maintaining a regional Intelligent Transportation Systems architecture that includes travel information as a major component.

3.8 Provide access to the regional transportation system in a manner that balances user convenience with safety and preservation of capacity. This includes developing and implementing access management plans where access issues are, or are likely to become, impediments to the safe and efficient operation of roadways for all vehicles and non-motorized users, within the context of a growing region.

3.9 Coordinate road construction projects with Skagit Transit to ensure current and future public transportation infrastructure is considered in design and construction.

3.10 Cost effectiveness shall be a consideration in transportation expenditure decisions and balanced for both safety and service improvements.

3.11 Work with WSDOT and other partner agencies to develop and track performance measures that will enable future RTP updates to include new metrics that relate to the quality and effectiveness of the regional transportation system, such as:

- *Percent Non-Single Occupancy Vehicle (Non-Single-Occupancy Vehicle) Travel for Journey-to-Work trips;*
- *Population-weighted percent of jobs accessible within a 30-minute travel time;*
- *Population-weighted percent of jobs within a 1/4 mile of housing;*
- *Change in median income in Skagit County;*
- *Electric vehicle adoption rate;*
- *Percentage of population within a ¼ mile of transit or bike facilities;*
- *VMT per capita; and*
- *Change in transit ridership for journey-to-work trips.*

Goal 4. Mobility: To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout the Skagit region, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility.

Enhancing regional connectivity for the movement of people and goods contributes to a strong economy and a high quality of life. Attaining greater mobility involves developing a balanced multimodal network that integrates all travel modes into an efficient system meeting varied transportation needs. This emphasis on mobility also includes maximizing the operational efficiency of existing transportation facilities (e.g., through traffic management and system optimization).

Policies:

4.1 Provide accessibility to the regional transportation system through user-friendly connections and by developing intermodal facilities that are designed and constructed to function altogether. In particular, ensure that urban areas have interconnected opportunities for safe and convenient non-motorized modes.

4.2 Consistent with Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies, encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

4.3 Promote seamless integration of all transportation modes by systematically identifying gaps and missing connections, and prioritizing projects that establish essential linkages to optimize user experience and accessibility.

4.4 Multimodal transportation routes and facilities shall be designed to accommodate present and future traffic volumes.

4.5 Primary arterial access points shall be designed to provide maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures will be used to track performance toward achieving **Skagit 2050 RTP Goal 4: Mobility.**

- Percent of Person Miles of Travel on the Interstate System that is Reliable (Level of Travel Time Reliability).
- Percent of Person Miles of Travel on the Non-Interstate National Highway System (NHS) that is Reliable (Level of Travel Time Reliability).
- Change in Regional Roadways LOS.

Performance information is included in Appendix B.

4.6 Provisions in Comprehensive Plans for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies and land use map of the locally adopted comprehensive plan.

4.7 The development of a recreational transportation network shall be encouraged and coordinated between state and local governments and private enterprises.

4.8 Transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities shall be provided by public transportation operators to accommodate those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves.

4.9 MMLOS standards and safety standards shall be established that coordinate and link with the urban growth and urban areas to coordinate land use and transportation over the long term. New development shall mitigate MMLOS deficiencies concurrently with the development and occupancy of the project. Acceptable mitigation may include active transportation facility improvements, increased or enhanced public transportation service, ride-sharing programs, demand management, or transportation systems management strategies funded by the development.

4.10 An all-weather arterial road system shall be coordinated with the needs of industrial and commercial areas.

4.11 Develop a regional network of active transportation facilities that connect major regional cities with a multi-use path system.

4.12 Work with regional partners to identify miles of multiuse paths and develop regional performance targets for miles of multiuse paths.

4.13 Increase the percentage of trips made using transit by prioritizing transit service hours and capital investments for routes serving urban corridors with high levels of ridership potential where dense concentrations of housing, employment, or services exist or are planned.

Goal 5. Economic Vitality: To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support and enhance the movement of people and goods, to ensure a prosperous regional economy.

The movement of freight and goods is vital to the economic sectors that rely on the transportation system and is a high priority for the Skagit region. Efficient freight movement via rail, air, truck and ship plays an essential role in the regional economy by transporting raw materials and finished products. Ensuring the efficient flow of freight provides access to businesses and well-paying jobs. Equally important is improving multimodal transportation networks to serve retail, services, and tourism across the region's diverse communities.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures will be used to track performance toward achieving **Skagit 2050 RTP Goal 5: Economic Vitality.**

- Truck Travel Time Reliability.

Performance information is included in Appendix B.

Policies:

5.1 The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social, economic and environmental impacts and costs.

5.2 Transportation elements of local Comprehensive Plans shall be designed to facilitate the flow of people, goods and services so as to strengthen the local and regional economy; conform with the Land Use Element; be based upon an inventory of the existing Skagit County transportation network and needs; and encourage the conservation of energy and reduction of VMT and GHG with the goal of meeting or exceeding Washington state targets.

5.3 Support WSDOT and other agencies in the advancement of projects that provide truck parking and address the regional truck parking need as identified in the WSDOT truck parking study.

Goal 6. Environment: To enhance regional quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities and protect the environment.

Improving the environmental quality of our neighborhoods and communities can be achieved through transportation investments that prioritize a sustainable transportation system and economic vitality. Positive environmental outcomes for neighborhoods and communities include finding ways to reduce environmental impacts that could potentially result from a transportation project, as well as promoting environmentally efficient modes of transportation including transit, vanpooling, car-sharing, bicycling and walking consistent with statewide VMT and GHG reduction targets. In addition to reducing impacts, restoring environmental health can also be achieved through transportation projects that correct deficiencies caused by past practices, such as removing barriers to fish passage under roadways.

Policies:

6.1 An integrated regional transportation system shall be designed to minimize air pollution, including a reduction of vehicle related greenhouse gas emissions and reduction of vehicle miles traveled by promoting the use of alternative transportation modes, reducing vehicular traffic, maintaining acceptable MMLOS, and siting of facilities.

6.2 All new and expanded transportation facilities shall be sited, constructed, and maintained to minimize noise levels and shall not have the effect of increasing per capita VMT or greenhouse gas emissions.

6.3 Support transportation projects and programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled per capita, consistent with state greenhouse gas reduction and climate policy goals.

6.4 Encourage the use of green infrastructure and low-impact development practices in transportation projects to improve stormwater management, protect water quality, and support habitat connectivity, including improvements to fish passage.

6.5 Consistent with Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies, encourage an efficient multimodal transportation system that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and per capita VMT.

6.6 The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall be consistent with VMT and GHG reduction targets and shall minimize adverse social, economic and environmental impacts and costs, especially those impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

6.7 VMT reduction targets will meet or exceed Washington state VMT reduction targets and be consistent with Washington state law.

6.8 GHG reduction targets will be consistent with Washington state reduction targets as part of the State adopted Transportation Carbon Reduction Strategy per RCW 70A2.45.020.

Goal 7. Community Engagement and Regional Coordination: Foster inclusive community engagement and strengthen regional coordination to ensure transportation decisions reflect shared priorities, promote collaboration among jurisdictions, and build public trust through transparent and equitable processes.

Community engagement and regional coordination is essential for creating a transportation system that reflects shared priorities and fosters trust. This involves actively involving residents, businesses, and stakeholders in decision-making processes through transparent and inclusive outreach. It also means strengthening collaboration among jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations to align investments and policies for maximum regional benefit. By ensuring that diverse voices are heard, transportation projects can better serve community needs, reduce conflicts, and create solutions that are broadly supported. Coordinated planning not only improves efficiency but also enhances the sense of ownership and accountability across the region.

Performance Measures

The following performance measures will be used to track performance toward achieving **Skagit 2050 RTP Goal 7: Community Engagement and Regional Coordination.**

- Change in number of participants including number of attendees at meetings, workshops, tabling events, or online sessions.

Performance information is included in Appendix B.

Policies:

7.1: Facilitate cooperation, coordination and information exchange among SCOG member jurisdictions.

7.2 Provide a regional forum for interested parties to discuss and coordinate their transportation projects, programs and plans with each other. Consider strategies that recognize the future densification of urban areas as they grow and mature.

7.3 Identify sources of funding for transportation planning, programs and projects that will implement the Plan, and assist in acquiring needed funds.

7.4 Maintain and implement a participation plan to engage early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the region's interested parties in the planning process.

7.5 Develop a public involvement plan prior to anticipated major Plan updates and implement it throughout the planning process to serve interested parties, and ensure there is opportunity for meaningful involvement.

7.6 Promote two-way communication processes in the Plan's public participation efforts by presenting information in a variety of media, while incorporating an appropriate number and variety of feedback methods.

7.7 Time public participation interfaces to provide input into decisions before they are made and provide decision-makers with an accurate assessment of public input.

Goal 8. Transportation Resilience: Foster a reliable and resilient transportation system that maintains essential mobility and access during disruptions and supports long-term sustainability and recovery.

The Skagit region recognizes the growing need to strengthen transportation resilience in the face of natural hazards and climate-related risks. Resilience planning ensures that essential routes remain operational during emergencies and that recovery efforts are efficient and equitable. Through the Transportation Resilience Improvement Plan (TRIP), SCOG and its member agencies are identifying and prioritizing projects that reduce damage from natural hazards, protect critical infrastructure, and enhance network reliability. Integrating TRIP recommendations into the RTP provides a framework for systematic risk reduction, coordinated action across jurisdictions, and continuous adaptation to emerging natural hazards. By advancing resilience strategies like resilient design standards, safeguarding evacuation routes, and improving connectivity for vulnerable communities, the region can minimize service disruptions, support emergency response, and maintain access for people and goods. These efforts help ensure that transportation investments promote safety, reliability, and sustainability over the long term

Policies:

8.1: Integration of Natural Hazard Data: Incorporate comprehensive natural hazard data (including flooding, landslides, seismic, liquefaction, severe storms, and levee breaches) into project prioritization and planning processes, to enable data-driven decision-making.

8.2: Resilient Design Standards: Provide member jurisdictions guidance to integrate resilience considerations into roadway and bridge design standards, capital planning, and maintenance programs, where feasible.

8.3: Project Development Support: Facilitate the inclusion of resilience elements in transportation projects, providing technical assistance and a framework for evaluating resilience benefits.

8.4: Cooperative Planning: Foster interagency collaboration to address network connectivity, shared hazard exposures, and operational interdependencies, ensuring that resilience strategies are coordinated and comprehensive.

8.5: Resilience Performance Measures: Develop and adopt resilience performance measures into the RTP, identifying the appropriate data resources needed for future reporting. Examples of resilience performance measures could include, but would not be limited to:

- *Monitor and report reductions in service disruptions attributable to climate-related hazards*
- *Track improvements in emergency response and evacuation times*
- *Document the completion and effectiveness of prioritized resilience projects*
- *Regularly update vulnerability assessments and hazard data to reflect new information*

5: Regional Transportation System

The regional transportation system consists of state highways and ferry services, county roads, city streets, non-motorized transportation facilities, transit facilities, airports, marine ports and railroads. This section of the RTP summarizes the existing regional transportation system. The proposed transportation improvements and regionally significant transportation projects and programs are included in Section 7. More information on the performance of the regional transportation system is located in Appendix B and Appendix H.

Highways

Washington state highways form the core of the regional transportation system and most city and county arterials provide some level of connection to the state highway system. State highways connect the region with other parts of Washington and facilitate travel between counties. Therefore, keeping these routes operating efficiently and safely is critical. WSDOT and local agencies have identified a wide range of improvements to these highways to address preservation, safety, congestion, operations and other transportation-system needs. The highway system in the Skagit region includes Interstate 5, the only interstate highway serving the region, and multiple state highways – State Route 20, State Route 9, State Route 530, State Route 534, State Route 536, State Route 538, State Route 11 (Chuckanut Drive). Additional descriptions of these highways and operational data are included in Appendix H.

Other Regional Roadways

In addition to Interstate 5 and state routes, there are many other roadways that serve regional transportation needs in the Skagit region. The needs of the individual roadway depends on the context and often vary substantially in rural and urban areas. For example, conflicts on rural roadways, where there are often higher vehicular speeds and sometimes bicyclists and farm equipment, are different than conflicts on urban roadways where speeds tend to be lower than rural areas, yet congestion higher with greater levels of pedestrian use. These regional roadways supplement the state and national roadway system, reduce the reliance on travel along Interstate 5 and state routes, and provide for an integrated regional roadway system for moving people and goods.

Ferry System

Ferries play a key role in the regional transportation system by connecting residents, workers, goods, and recreationists to various communities within the Skagit region and elsewhere in western Washington. Guemes Island has no bridge connection to the mainland; therefore residents rely on county ferry service for transportation off the island. The state ferry system functions similar to a marine highway and high-capacity transit system, supporting the Skagit region's land use and transportation objectives by connecting to transit systems and reducing vehicle miles traveled on regional roadways. Washington State Ferries, a division of WSDOT, operates two routes within the Skagit region. These routes provide service to a mixture of automobiles and walk-on passengers. The Anacortes – San Juan Islands route provides service year-round from Anacortes to four of the San Juan Islands. The Anacortes – Sidney B.C. route provides seasonal service during the spring, summer and autumn, though this service has been suspended since 2020 due to a lack of available vessels.

The Washington State Ferries 2040 Long Range Plan, completed in 2019, indicates vehicle and passenger trips on the ferry routes are forecast to increase by approximately 37 percent by 2040. The RTP includes regionally significant ferry projects to address the forecasted increase and maintain and improve level of service. Projects are based on the most recent WSF progress report completed in 2023.

Skagit County operates one ferry route to Guemes Island. The M/V Guemes was built in 1979 and has a capacity of 21 vehicles and 99 passengers. The primary users of the ferry system are the permanent and part-time residents of Guemes Island who rely on the ferry as their link to the mainland. The vessel carried 124,544 vehicles and 332,562 passengers in 2025, down from 183,130 vehicles and 381,559 passengers in 2015. Vehicles and passengers are counted going to and coming from Guemes Island, so each ride on the ferry counts as one trip.

Transit System

Public transportation is a critical component to achieving the Skagit region's long-range growth management, economic, environmental and transportation goals. RTP policies support strategies for expanding transit to meet future travel demands throughout the Skagit region and provide transportation options to reach destinations within and outside the region. Skagit Transit operates 19 fixed routes in the Skagit region including local routes and intercounty commuter routes to Whatcom and Snohomish counties. Vanpools and paratransit services are also offered by Skagit Transit. The success of the public transportation system is dependent on integrating key elements that comprise the RTP. Integration of the transit system with the ferry system, intercity rail and bus services, street improvements, bicycle facilities and pedestrian facilities is critical to an effective multimodal transportation system. Transit ridership fell sharply in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While it remains significantly under pre-pandemic levels, ridership did increase between 2021 and 2024 (last year available).

Figure 2. Skagit Transit Annual Growth Rate Transit Ridership
Source: Skagit County

Whatcom Transportation Authority and Island Transit also provide transit services in the Skagit region, providing an integrated system of intercounty connector transit services linking Skagit, Whatcom, Island and Snohomish counties. These express services primarily offer stops at transit stations and park-and-ride lots in these four counties, and do not offer complimentary paratransit services along these express routes. The Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe provides a tribal transit service to all members of the public from Concrete to Darrington, in Snohomish County.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Systems

Pedestrian and bicycle facilities play a vital role in the Skagit region's transportation system. The RTP supports the development of a transportation system that provides more travel choices, preserving and restoring environmental quality and open space, and increasing safety for those walking, biking or rolling. A well-connected transportation system encourages active transportation modes, such as walking and cycling. Active transportation modes minimize environmental impacts and greenhouse gas emissions. The RTP identifies a regional non-motorized transportation system that includes trails, regional roadways, and other bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Greater accessibility to safe pedestrian and bicycle facilities also provides improved mobility for those who cannot drive, choose not to drive, or do not have access to a vehicle, including ~~to~~ the young, elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income persons.

Passenger Rail System

WSDOT operates Amtrak Cascades service over the BNSF Railway's north-south main line through Washington state. The alignment roughly parallels Interstate 5 and runs through Skagit County, connecting the region to Seattle, British Columbia and destinations beyond. The Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor, a federally designated high speed rail corridor, has received federal and state funding to support higher rail speeds in the corridor. This 466-mile high speed corridor runs from Eugene, Oregon to Vancouver, British Columbia in Canada. Amtrak provides long-distance service to Seattle and destinations beyond, as well as regional service to Oregon and British Columbia in the high-speed corridor. Incremental improvements are planned to eventually support 110 mile-per-hour service with greater frequencies. Amtrak Cascades service from

Eugene to Vancouver is Amtrak's ninth busiest route. Amtrak Cascades ridership has grown steadily over the last 25 years, from 180,000 in 1994 to just under one million in 2025.

Freight Rail System

Freight rail is also growing as a mode of choice for moving manufactured and bulk commodities. There are currently ten major rail corridors in Washington state. One of these corridors is the Everett–Vancouver, British Columbia mainline, which is owned and maintained by BNSF. Additional branch lines are also owned and maintained by BNSF and are located in the Skagit region near Anacortes and Sedro-Wooley. The importance of improvements to the mainline corridor and branch lines is critical to continued efforts to diversify the economy of the Skagit region. Where these railroad corridors intersect is important for switching and storage activities resulting in impacts on adjacent communities that are affected by at-grade crossings. Freight rail traffic along this corridor includes intermodal, forest and agricultural products, refuse, chemicals and finished automobiles.

Regional Air Transportation System

The regional air transportation system in the Skagit region complements the rail, motorized, and non-motorized transportation systems in the movement of goods and people. The primary purpose of the regional air transportation system is to provide access to a broad national and international aviation network. The Skagit region includes four airports: Anacortes Airport, Skagit Regional Airport, Mears Field, and Skyline Seaplane Base. The Anacortes Airport and the Skagit Regional Airport are included in the National Plan of Integrated Airport Systems, which makes them eligible for Federal Aviation Administration improvement grants. Additional descriptions of the airport facilities are included below.

Anacortes Airport

Anacortes Airport is located in Skagit County within the Anacortes city limits. The airport is operated by the Port of Anacortes and is classified as a Community Airport, per the Washington Airport Classification system. Community airports primary activities include general aviation for personal transportation and business or recreational purposes, as well as pilot training. The Anacortes Airport is served by San Juan Airlines, which provides service to five locations in the San Juan Islands using single-engine aircraft. The latest available data from 2025 indicate that Anacortes Airport experienced over 11,000 takeoffs and landings. Anacortes Airport has one runway, Runway 18-36, which is 3,015 feet long and 60 feet wide, has an asphalt surface, and is equipped with pilot controlled medium intensity runway lights.

Skagit Regional Airport

Skagit Regional Airport is located three miles west of Burlington. The airport is operated by the Port of Skagit and is classified as a Regional Airport. Regional airports primary activities include corporate general aviation and travel business. Aeronautical Services, FedEx, Methow Aviation, San Juan Airlines and Ameriflite provide cargo service to the Airport. The airport has two runways. Runway 11-29 is 5,477 feet long, 100 feet wide, has an asphalt surface, and is equipped with pilot controlled medium-intensity runway lights. Runway 11-29 is equipped with runway end indicator lights (REIL) and precision approach path indicators (PAPI). This runway has non-precision, non-directional beacon and global positioning systems approaches. Runway 11-29 is equipped with REIL and PAPI, and has a non-precision, global positioning systems approach. Runway 4-22 is 3,000 feet long, 60 feet wide, has an asphalt surface, and has PAPI.

Mears Field

Mears Field is located in Skagit County adjacent to State Route 20, at the Town of Concrete's southern boundary. The airport is operated by the Town of Concrete and is classified as a Community Airport. Runway 7-25 is the airport's only runway. This runway is 2,580 feet long, 60 feet wide, and has an asphalt surface. Both runway ends have visual approaches. In addition to the runway, the airport has a 40-foot by 40-foot helipad designated as "H1." The 2017 Washington Aviation Systems Plan, the most recent version of the plan, projects that the demand for aircraft storage at Mears Field will exceed its capacity by 2034.

Skyline Seaplane Base

Skyline Seaplane Base is located in Skagit County just south of the Skyline Marina in the City of Anacortes. The seaplane base is operated by the United States Military and is classified as a General Use Airport. General use airports primary activities include general aviation for personal transportation and recreation, including backcountry access. The Northwest-Southeast Waterway, the Seaplane Base's only waterway, is 5,000 feet long and 2,500 feet wide. Approaches to this waterway are visual.

Marine Ports

Skagit County's marine facilities play a key role in the regional transportation system by connecting residents, workers, goods, and recreationalists to communities within the Skagit region and elsewhere in western Washington. The Skagit region includes three marine ports: the Port of Skagit, the Port of Anacortes, and the Port of Swinomish. These ports serve commercial and industrial purposes such as fishing, marine businesses, ship building, and seaborne trade. Additional descriptions of each port and their marine facilities are included below.

Port of Skagit

The primary marine facility in the Skagit region is the Port of Skagit, which operates the La Conner Marina on the Swinomish Channel. The La Conner Marina has two separate moorage basins that together cover approximately 24 acres. The marina includes 366 covered moorage slips, 131 open moorage slips, and 2,400 lineal feet of dock space for overnight moorage. The La Conner Marina serves commercial purposes such as fishing, marine businesses, and an industrial park supporting manufacturing and related industries.

Port of Anacortes

The Port of Anacortes is a deep-water port with major ship building and repair facilities located along the Guemes Channel in the City of Anacortes, and is significant for seaborne trade among Washington ports. The Port operates three marine facilities including the Cap Sante Boat Haven Area, Guemes Channel Properties, and the Port's Ship Harbor. The Cap Sante Boat Haven Area supports commercial fishing as well as a marina with approximately 950 moorage slips and includes over 100 acres of in-water and upland property. The Guemes Channel Properties feature a marine terminal with three centrally located piers, which services break bulk cargo, high and heavy projects, and moorage services. The Port's Ship Harbor includes a ferry terminal on land that is leased to WSDOT for ferry service.

Port of Swinomish

The Swinomish Port Authority is one of very few tribal ports in the U.S. and was established in 2020 by the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community. The Port of Swinomish is located along the Swinomish Channel and supports commercial fishing and a small marina with moorage slips.

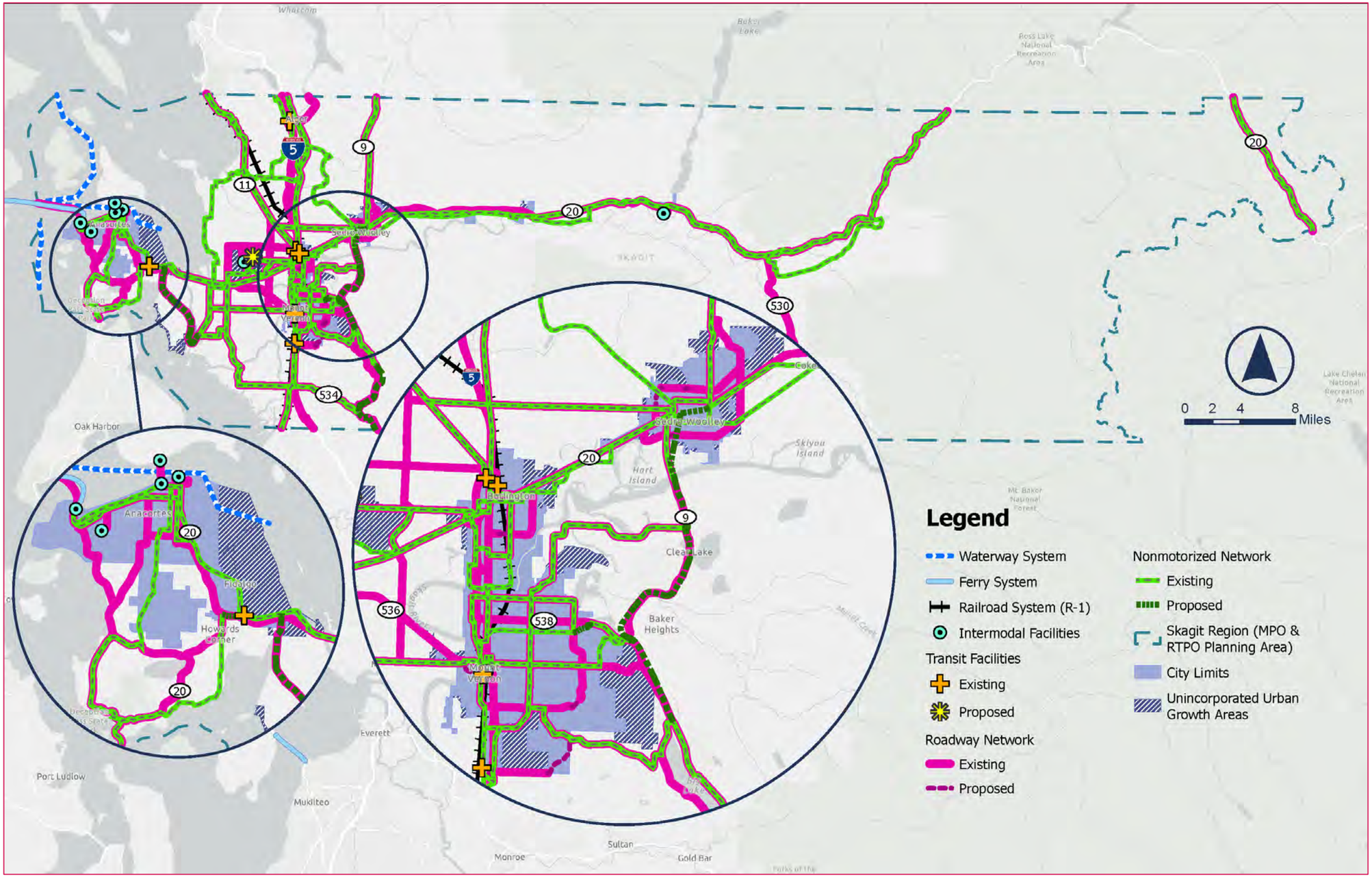


Figure 3. Regional Transportation System

Regional Multi-Modal Level of Service (MMLOS) Standards

As part of a regional transportation plan, level-of-service (LOS) standards must be established in accordance with RCW 47.80.030. LOS standards are generally a set of transportation performance metrics that provide a measure of the operation of a transportation system. SCOG has historically applied vehicular LOS standards, which apply grades A-F for roads and intersections, along with standards for the state ferry system. In response to House Bill 1181, codified in RCW 36.70A.365, jurisdictions are now required to adopt MMLOS standards that consider non-vehicular travel modes. WSDOT is currently developing MMLOS standards for state facilities and SCOG member jurisdictions are developing MMLOS standards that apply to their local systems. As part of the RTP, SCOG is beginning to develop regional MMLOS standards to supplement traditional vehicle- and ferry-based metrics. The framework below considers how corridors function for transit, walking, bicycling, and goods movement alongside roadway operations and is used to discuss tradeoffs, support complete-streets design, and keep expectations consistent across jurisdictions. Local governments retain their own LOS and concurrency standards under the GMA framework; the regional MMLOS provides a common reference so that local standards can be coordinated across boundaries and modes. The GMA (RCW 36.70A.070) requires jurisdictions to adopt LOS standards for transportation facilities and to fund improvements concurrent with development.

Vehicular LOS

Vehicular LOS continues to use the established Highway Capacity Manual methodology and A–F grading for roadway segments and intersections. In practice, this means projects must maintain or improve auto LOS at the adopted thresholds. Washington state law ties development approvals to maintaining these standards.

Local governments may adjust their transportation LOS standards for their local transportation system, which can have a direct impact on concurrency determinations. Consistent with Washington state law, LOS standards for the state highway and ferry systems are set by WSDOT for all Highways of Statewide Significance (RCW 47.06.140), and by the RTP for all other state routes (RCW 47.80.030). WSDOT establishes LOS standards for Highways of Statewide Significance in consultation with local governments, consistent with RCW 47.06.140. Concurrency requirements do not apply to the state highway and ferry system in the Skagit region. See Appendix I for maps displaying established LOS standards for all state highway and ferry routes.

Bicycle and Pedestrian LOS

Local practice varies by context. In Skagit County's rural areas, shoulders on county and state highways serve as the primary bike/ped facilities. The Skagit County comprehensive plan uses a shoulder-width standard – a paved shoulder of at least four feet wide (with a minimal buffer) is treated as the baseline bike route. FHWA guidance notes that "a 4-foot paved shoulder is considered the minimum standard for a designated bicycle facility" in rural areas. These shoulders are counted as "complete" bike/ped facilities in the county's inventory.

By contrast, the City of Anacortes (urban context) is developing a network-completeness LOS. Under its draft policy, each arterial/collector segment is graded (Green/Orange/Red) based on the presence of sidewalks and bikeways on one or both sides. A "Green" LOS means an arterial has active-transportation facilities on both sides (or fully meets the city's street standards); "Orange" means facilities on only one side; and "Red" means no facilities on that segment. This system measures how complete the sidewalk/bikeway network is, rather than using a quantitative width.

To bridge these approaches, the RTP recommends a hybrid approach: apply a network-completeness standard in urbanized settings and a shoulder-based standard in rural areas. Urban/suburban jurisdictions measure LOS by facility completeness, while rural/jurisdictional highways rely on shoulder-width criteria. In either case, roads meeting the standard (network-complete or ≥4-ft shoulder) are deemed LOS-compliant for bicycling and walking. Shoulders in rural areas are thus treated as functional active-transportation facilities, consistent with FHWA practice.

Transit LOS

Two approaches are recommended for Transit LOS. A short-term approach is recommended to address Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance of bus stops within the public right-of-way. Prioritizing completion of ADA upgrades at all bus stops within the public right-of-way improves safety and accessibility to transit. A long-term approach is recommended to track the percentage of residents and/or jobs within 0.5 miles of fixed-route service. This metric emphasizes providing transit access to as many people as possible.

Ferry LOS

LOS standards for the two Anacortes state ferry routes serving the Skagit region are established by WSDOT and SCOG. The standards must balance the interjurisdictional movement of people and goods with the needs of local commuters using state facilities. The following reflects the LOS standards for the two state ferry routes serving the Skagit region:

- Anacortes – San Juan Islands (established jointly by WSDOT-SCOG)
  - Tier 1: 25% in January; 30% in May; 35% in August
  - Tier 2: 65% in January; 75% in May; 85% in August
- Anacortes – Sidney B.C. (established by WSDOT, as the route is identified as a Highway of Statewide Significance)
  - Tier 1: 50% in May; 50% in August
  - Tier 2: 100% in May; 100% in August

The congestion levels for Tier 1 and Tier 2 are based on a notable percentage of total vehicle capacity over the entire month. Once a route reaches the Tier 1 Level of Service standard, WSF explores adaptive management strategies to address congestion. If a route reaches the Tier 2 Level of Service standard, WSF looks to capital investments to increase capacity. The LOS methodology and standards are consistent with the WSF 2040 Long Range Plan.

6: Environmental Constraints

Environmental Considerations

A programmatic review of potential environmental constraints was conducted for the RTP. The review primarily considered the potential impacts from transportation construction projects, in addition to a cursory review of non-construction projects. Federal law requires these planning efforts to protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and align transportation projects with anticipated growth and economic development. Washington's State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), alongside federal and local regulations, guides this analysis. Assessing environmental constraints helps inform the SCOG Transportation Policy Board and stakeholders about possible limitations as projects advance and helps to identify and address issues that may be encountered through the development process early, allowing for better project selection and prioritization. The environmental constraints assessment is not intended to identify specific environmental impacts of road projects, nor is the RTP to be used in determining environmental mitigation. Analysis of specific direct and indirect impacts and potential mitigations will also occur as individual transportation projects are further defined, permitted, and funded.

The environmental analysis for the RTP used a GIS-based approach to assess various regional environmental factors. Available GIS data was gathered to evaluate possible effects on areas such as geologic hazards, air quality, water resources and wetlands, floodplains, plant and animal habitats, land use and housing, shoreline activities, noise, aesthetics including light and glare, environmental justice, recreation, and historic or cultural sites. The analysis focused on projects that will significantly add to the footprint of roadways by expanding the capacity of the regional transportation system. Figure 4 shows the location of all funded, planned, and illustrative transportation projects in relationship to possible environmental constraints. In this context, possible constraints are considered as: A resource or constrained area is definitely located in the project(s) area or immediate vicinity, and will likely require further review. Identification of a constraint does not mean that the project(s) will definitely result in impacts, or that impacts will be of a significant degree; instead, it indicates that the potential for impacts will need to be evaluated further at the project level.

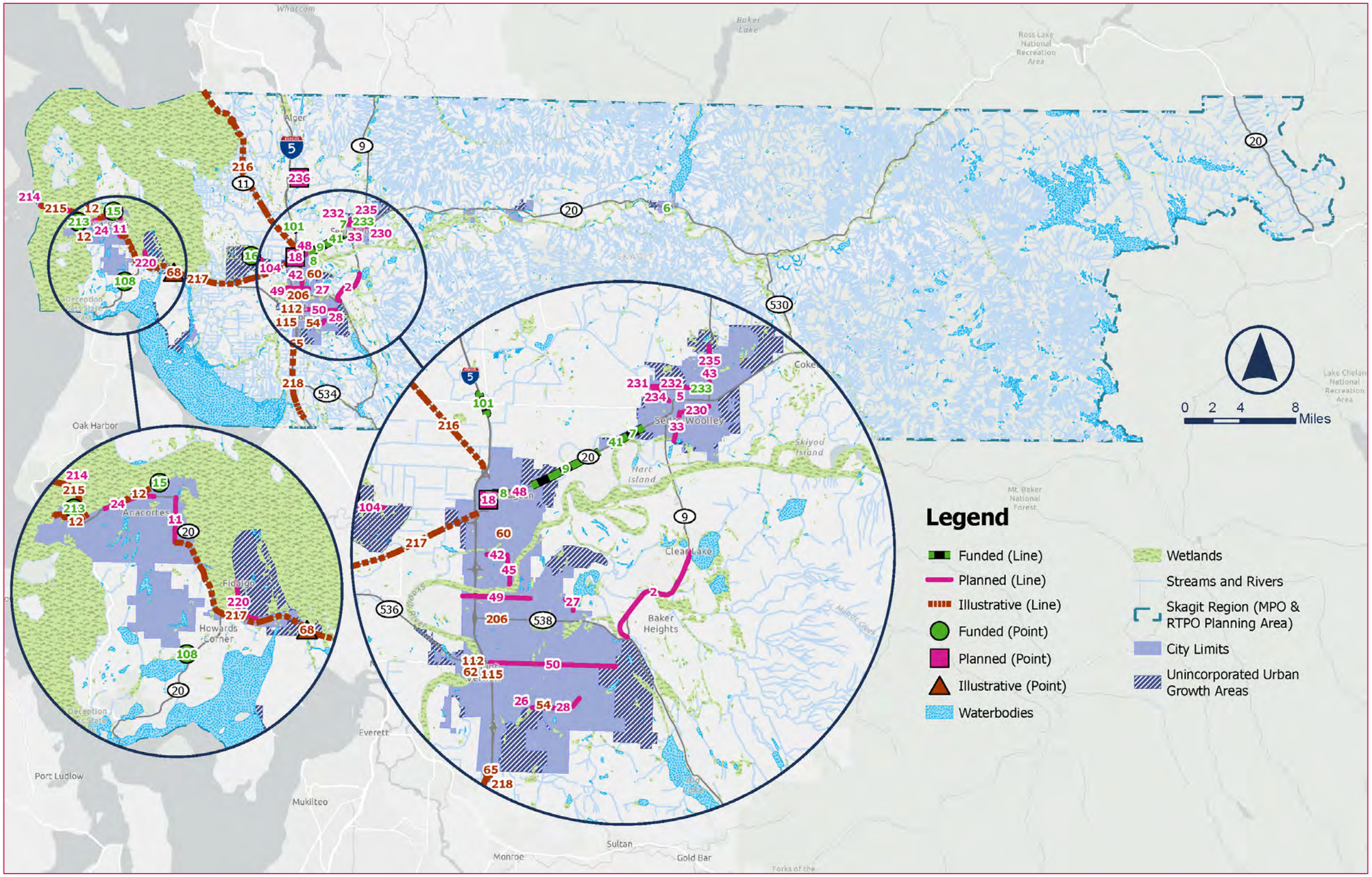


Figure 4. Potential Environmental Constraints for Regionally Significant Transportation Projects

Potential Environmental Constraints

In general, road widening projects located near rivers, Puget Sound or bays and inlets, may affect shoreline jurisdiction area, shorelines, archaeological resources, floodplains, habitats, aesthetics, wetlands, water quality, geologic hazards, and adjacent parks. Increased noise associated with these projects may also affect nearby habitats and parks. Projects that increase capacity have the most potential for impacts, as they typically require additional impervious surfaces and can impact land use across a wider area. Projects located in urban areas are expected to have lower impacts than projects in rural areas, due to existing levels of urbanization, impervious surface area, and habitat disturbance. Environmental review is conducted for all projects in the RTP through relevant federal and Washington state requirements. The SEPA Checklist (Appendix J) includes a detailed analysis of the environmental considerations.

Environmental Impacts of Operations, Preservation, and Maintenance Projects

The RTP also includes various programmatic projects that do not expand the regional transportation system, such as general operations, maintenance, and preservation activities, including minor roadway reconstruction, signage updates, sidewalk completion, lighting, minor rail-crossing and safety improvements (e.g., guardrails), and curb and gutter installation. Many of these projects are categorically excluded from environmental review, while others cannot be specifically defined at the planning stage before engineering begins. Projects associated with implementing operational and maintenance strategies are not anticipated to result in increased impervious surface area and would have the potential for minimal environmental impacts. Certain projects, such as intersection operational improvements and fish passage projects, can improve environmental conditions.

Climate Change

In Washington state, transportation accounts for nearly half of the total GHGs, including emissions from cars, trucks, planes and ships. Emission reduction strategies can help create more efficient driving conditions, reduce the amount of driving and introduce more fuel-efficient vehicles. Washington state has set a VMT reduction target of 95% by 2050. The Skagit region recognizes that reducing GHGs from transportation sources is a necessity. The RTP includes policies to support GHG reduction and VMT per capita and identifies trail and transit projects that can help improve transportation options and reduce VMT.

Action strategies to address climate change, per capita VMT and GHG reduction, at a regional level are as follows:

- Ensure transportation improvements and funding decisions are consistent with VMT and GHG reduction goals;
- Use GHG/VMT as criteria for funding and pursue new revenue sources to support transportation choices;
- Pursue new revenue sources to support transportation choices, particularly transit operations;
- Expand and enhance transit, rideshare and commuter choice;
- Provide incentives for vanpool and carpool programs;
- Develop more park-and-ride and park-and-pool lots;
- Develop actions to address congestion issues on the transit network (e.g. vehicle capacity, bus lanes, signal priority);
- Address ineffective intermodal connections;
- Pursue additional ~~non-VMT~~ actions to reduce GHG emissions from the transportation sector, including increasing the use of rail for both the movement of passengers and freight;
- Pursue opportunities for reduction in GHG emissions through improvements in traffic operations and roadway design that reduce vehicle delay, idling, and starting and stopping at intersections; and
- Provide resiliency in any existing or new transportation infrastructure that would be vulnerable to sea level rise.

7: Transportation Improvements & Programs

Regionally Significant Transportation Projects

The Skagit region experiences a wide range of traffic operations, safety and maintenance challenges. These challenges are largely a result of commuter traffic, access to and from regional highways, freight movement, access to regional shopping areas, and travel to and from essential public facilities such as schools, hospitals, airports and marine terminals. The transportation improvements and programs presented in the section below are intended to address these transportation challenges and support an integrated multimodal transportation system.

Project Categories

All proposed regionally significant transportation projects are grouped into categories in Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 – funded, planned, or illustrative.

Funded projects have secured full or partial funding and are expected to be constructed during the Plan timeframe (2026-2050). All funded projects are roadway, non-motorized, transit, or ferry projects.

Planned projects have not yet secured funding, but are expected to be completed during the Plan timeframe (2026-2050). Planned projects are regionally significant roadway, non-motorized, and ferry projects, as well as planning and corridor studies. These projects are prioritized against the regional priorities and goals identified in Section 4 when eligible funding becomes available. Section 8, Funding Strategy, incorporates cost estimates for planned projects.

Illustrative projects are not expected to be funded during the Plan timeframe (2026-2050) due to forecasted revenue estimates. However, they could be funded if additional funding becomes available. The illustrative projects are still priorities for the Skagit region but typically are higher cost and/or longer-term projects that may be reliant on federal or Washington state grant funding, or other sources outside those identified in the financial strategy in Section 8.

Table 4. Funded Regionally Significant Transportation Projects

ID	Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Type	Cost[1]	Time Frame[2]	Expected completion year
6	Concrete	School Secondary Access	Construction of a second access road to school and airport to include traffic lanes, shoulder, traffic curb and gutter, planter strip, and bicycle/pedestrian path as well as possible storm drainage, sewer and water facilities and fire hydrant improvements.	Roadway	$$	Short	2030
7	Sedro-Woolley	SR 20/Cascade Trail West Extension, Phase 2A	Construct a shared use path along the north side of SR20 from Holtcamp Road to Hodgin Street.	Non-Motorized	$	Short	2028
8	Burlington	SR 20 Nonmotorized & Safety Improvements	Road widening including stormwater improvements, utility relocation, lighting, sidewalks, bicycle wayfinding, and bike lanes.	Roadway & Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2028
9	WSDOT	SR 20/Burlington to Sedro-Woolley - Corridor Improvements	SR 20 has been identified as a Crash Analysis Corridor. This project will install a series of compact roundabouts at Gardner Road, District Line Road, and Collins Road. Dual faced mountable curb will be installed between the roundabouts to restrict left-turn movements. The result will be fewer crashes with lower severity for motorists.	Roadway	$$	Short	2027
15	Skagit County	Guemes Island Electric Ferry, Shore-Side Facilities, and Terminal Modifications Project	Guemes Island Electric Ferry – Replace the diesel-powered Guemes Island Ferry with a new electric-powered ferry. Funded with state funds from Move Ahead Washington and the County Road Administration Board.	Ferry	$$$	Short	2028
16	Skagit Transit	Skagit Transit's Maintenance Operations and Administration Facility: Phases 2 & 3	This project will renovate Skagit Transit's Maintenance, Operations, and Administration (MOA) Facility. The improvements include the complete buildout of transit staff offices, conference rooms, breakrooms, inventory and file storage, light and heavy-duty vehicle maintenance bays, workshops for vehicle body repair, and a parts warehouse. Site improvements include new landscaping, fencing, parking layout, and zero emissions charging infrastructure.	Transit	$$	Short	2027
41	Sedro-Woolley	SR 20/Cascade Trail West Extension Phase 2B	Construct a shared use path along the north side of SR20 from Hospital Drive to Holtcamp Road.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2030
101	Skagit County	Cook Road / I-5 Interchange Vicinity Improvements	Improvements include adding a travel lane to the Interstate-5 / Cook Road Interchange (Exit 232) and signalizing the on/off ramps to reduce collisions and alleviate congestion.	Roadway	$$	Short	2029
108	Samish Indian Nation	SR 20 - Campbell Lake Road - Intersection Improvements	The 3-legged roundabout will improve regional mobility and safety, accommodate projected growth in the area, and improve resilience of local and regional transportation networks.	Roadway	$$	Short	2027
213	WSDOT – Washington State Ferries	Anacortes Terminal Replacement	New terminal building and terminal electrification.	Ferry	$$$	Long	2036
233	Sedro-Woolley	John Liner Road Arterial Improvements	Reconstruct John Liner Road including drainage, curbs, sidewalk, shared use path, HMA, pavement markings and illumination.	Roadway	$$	Short	2031

Note: [1]**Cost:** $ = up to $1 million; $$ = $1 - $10 million; $$$ = $10 - $100 million; $$$$ = over $100 million. [2]**Time Frame:** Short Range = 2026 – 2035; Long Range = 2036 – 2050

Table 5. Planned Regionally Significant Transportation Projects

ID	Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Type	Cost[1]	Time Frame[2]	Expected completion year
2	Skagit County	Centennial Trail (Stage 1)	Design and construct a pedestrian & bicycles trail from Coltrin Road to the County Park at Front Street.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2027
5	Sedro-Woolley	Jones/John Liner RR Undercrossing and Roadway Extension Phase 2.	Construct new BNSF RR undercrossing from East Jones Road to John Liner Road, including drainage, curbs, sidewalks, shared use path, HMA, pavement markings and illumination.	Roadway	$$	Short	2030
11	Anacortes	Commercial Avenue Safety Improvements	Pave South Commercial Avenue as well as add bike lanes, re-stripe, and construct new ADA ramps.	Roadway	$$	Short	2027
18	Burlington	Intersection Improvement and Gateway	Construct a roundabout.	Roadway	$$	Short	2034
24	Anacortes	Oakes Avenue (State Route 20 Spur) Active Transportation Safety Improvements	Construction of a two-way paved multi-use pathway.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2027
26	Mount Vernon	Blackburn Road Pedestrian-Bicyclist Improvements	Construct sidewalks and bike lanes.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2034
27	Mount Vernon	Martin Road Complete Streets Improvements	Replace existing 5-foot asphalt path with 10- foot shared-use path meeting WSDOT shared use pathway guidelines on south and west side of street.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2034
28	Mount Vernon	Blackburn Road Extension	New Complete Street.	Roadway	$$$	Long	2045
33	Sedro-Woolley	Centennial Trail South	Construct trail improvements from Ferry Street to the south city limits.	Non-Motorized	$$	Long	2045
42	Burlington	Reconstruct Pease Road to Urban Standards and Construct Multiuse Path	Reconstruct road to urban standards, add multiuse path.	Roadway	$$	Short	2034
43	Sedro-Woolley	SR 9/Centennial Trail Nonmotorized Improvements	Extend existing sidewalk and bicycle lane on the east side of SR 9 to the north city limits.	Non-Motorized	$$	Long	2045
45	Burlington	New Multiuse Path - Whitmarsh Rd	New multiuse path.	Non-Motorized	$	Short	2034
48	Burlington	Extend Multiuse Path – State Route 20	Extend multiuse path along SR 20.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2034
49	Mount Vernon	Stewart/Hoag Road Bicyclist Improvements	Re-channelize vehicle lanes and mark for bike lanes.	Roadway	$	Short	2029
50	Mount Vernon	Division Street Corridor Study	Comprehensive corridor study to develop a plan to improve Division Street for all modes of travel.	Study	$	Short	2034
104	Skagit County	Peterson Road (Urban)	Widen Peterson Road from the Bayview Housing Development to Higgins Airport Way (Port of Skagit) to meet urban standards. Project will include, but is not limited to, adding or improve sidewalks/walkways and bicycle wayfinding.	Roadway	$$	Short	2028
205	Mount Vernon	Division Street Bridge Replacement Study	Includes planning study as well as feasibility of replacing WSDOT's existing bridge.	Study	$	Long	2036
214	WSDOT – Washington State Ferries	Vessel Replacements 2026–2035	Replace existing vessel with 144-car electric-hybrid Olympic class vessel.	Ferry	$$$	Short	2034
220	Anacortes	March's Point Road - Trestle - Park-N-Ride Trail	Construct bike lanes along both sides of West March's Point Road and South March's Point Road connecting the Tommy Thompson Trail to the South March's Point Park & Ride.	Roadway	$$	Short	2027

ID	Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Type	Cost[1]	Time Frame[2]	Expected completion year
230	Sedro-Woolley	Cascade Trail East Extension	New shared-use path extending the Cascade Trail eastward from Sedro-Woolley.	Non-Motorized	$	Short	2030
231	Sedro-Woolley	Jones Road Improvements Phase 1-3	Widening/upgrade of Jones Road to arterial standards as part of Jones/John Liner corridor.	Roadway	$$	Short	2031
232	Sedro-Woolley	F & S Grade Road Improvements Phase 1-2	Reconstruct F&S Grade Road. Includes new shared-use path.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2030
234	Sedro-Woolley	Trail Road Improvements Phase 1	Construct new arterial and shared-use path.	Roadway	$$	Short	2031
235	Sedro-Woolley	SR 9 Nonmotorized Improvements	Bike lane and sidewalk improvements on west side of SR 9.	Non-Motorized	$$	Long	2045
236	Skagit County	Old Highway 99 North / Bow Hill Road Intersection Improvements	Make intersection improvements on Old Hwy 99 with Bow Hill Road / Prairie Road.	Roadway	$$	Short	2030

Note: [1]**Cost:** $ = up to $1 million; $$ = $1 - $10 million; $$$ = $10 - $100 million; $$$$ = over $100 million. [2]**Time Frame:** Short Range = 2026 – 2035; Long Range = 2036 – 2050

Table 6. Illustrative Regionally Significant Transportation Projects

ID	Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Type	Cost[1]	Time Frame[2]	Expected completion year
12	Anacortes	Guemes Channel Trail Phase II, III, & VI	Complete Guemes Channel Trail from Washington Park to Tommy Thompson Trailhead at 10th Street and Q Avenue.	Non-Motorized	$$	Short	2031
54	Mount Vernon	30th Street Extension	New roadway extension linking 27th Street with Blackburn Road, will also reconfigure intersection of Blackburn Road and Little Mountain Road.	Roadway	$$	Long	2045
60	Burlington	Construct Grade Separated Rail Crossing and Street Extension	Construct grade separated RR crossing and street extension.	Roadway	$$$	Long	2045
62	Mount Vernon	Skagit River Pedestrian Bridge	New non-motorized bridge over Skagit River.	Non-Motorized	$$$	Long	2045
65	Mount Vernon	Hickox Road/I-5 Interchange Completion	Complete the north side of the interchange to provide full access.	Roadway	$$$	Long	2045
68	Swinomish Indian Tribal Community	SR 20 Safe Access Improvements	Project to improve safety and access on SR 20 at Casino Drive and at Long John Drive. The project includes bringing acceleration and deceleration lanes along SR 20 up to current WSDOT standards, providing multimodal facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists adjacent to SR 20, and upgrading the ramp terminal intersections to roundabout control.	Roadway	$$$	Long	2040
112	Mount Vernon	Division Street/State Route 536 Bridge	Replace and/or upgrade the existing, undersized State bridge over the Skagit River on Division Street/State Route 536.	Roadway	$$$	Long	2045

ID	Agency	Project Name	Project Description	Type	Cost[1]	Time Frame[2]	Expected completion year
115	Mount Vernon	Kincaid Street Complete Streets Improvements	Design and implement multiple, multi-modal improvements of Kincaid Street, particularly at intersections, to bring the street up to current Complete Streets standards.	Roadway	$$$	Short	2029
206	Mount Vernon	College Way Railroad Grade Separation	Grade separate crossing over or under BNSF rail line.	Roadway	$$	Long	2045
215	WSDOT – Washington State Ferries	Vessel Replacements 2036–2050	Replace four vessels with three 144-car electric-hybrid Olympic class vessels and one 114-car electric-hybrid interisland vessel.	Ferry	$$$	Long	2048
216	WSDOT/SCOG	Chuckanut Drive Corridor Resilience Study	Conduct a corridor-level resilience planning study along the identified vulnerable segment of Chuckanut Drive (including 6 bridges in this segment) to assess hazard exposure, quantify the risk, and develop planning-level adaptation strategies.	Study	$	Short	2027
217	WSDOT/SCOG	State Route 20 (Burlington to Anacortes Segment) Resilience Study	Conduct a corridor-level resilience planning study along the identified vulnerable segments along State Route 20. For those segments, screen planning level resilience strategies to inform future investment decisions.	Study	$	Short	2028
218	WSDOT/SCOG	I5 and Pioneer Highway Resilience Study	Conduct a corridor-level resilience planning study for the vulnerable segments along I-5 and the parallel Pioneer Highway Corridor to assess transportation network redundancy under hazard scenarios and screen planning-level resilience strategies to support system reliability and emergency response.	Study	$	Short	2028
219	SCOG	Skagit County Evacuation and Transportation Network Redundancy Study	Conduct a countywide, system-level resilience study to evaluate evacuation route performance and transportation network redundancy under hazard scenarios, identifying critical links and failure points, and informing planning-level resilience investment priorities.	Study	$	Short	2029

Note: [1]**Cost:** $ = up to $1 million; $$ = $1 - $10 million; $$$ = $10 - $100 million; $$$$ = over $100 million. [2]**Time Frame:** Short Range = 2026 – 2035; Long Range = 2036 – 2050

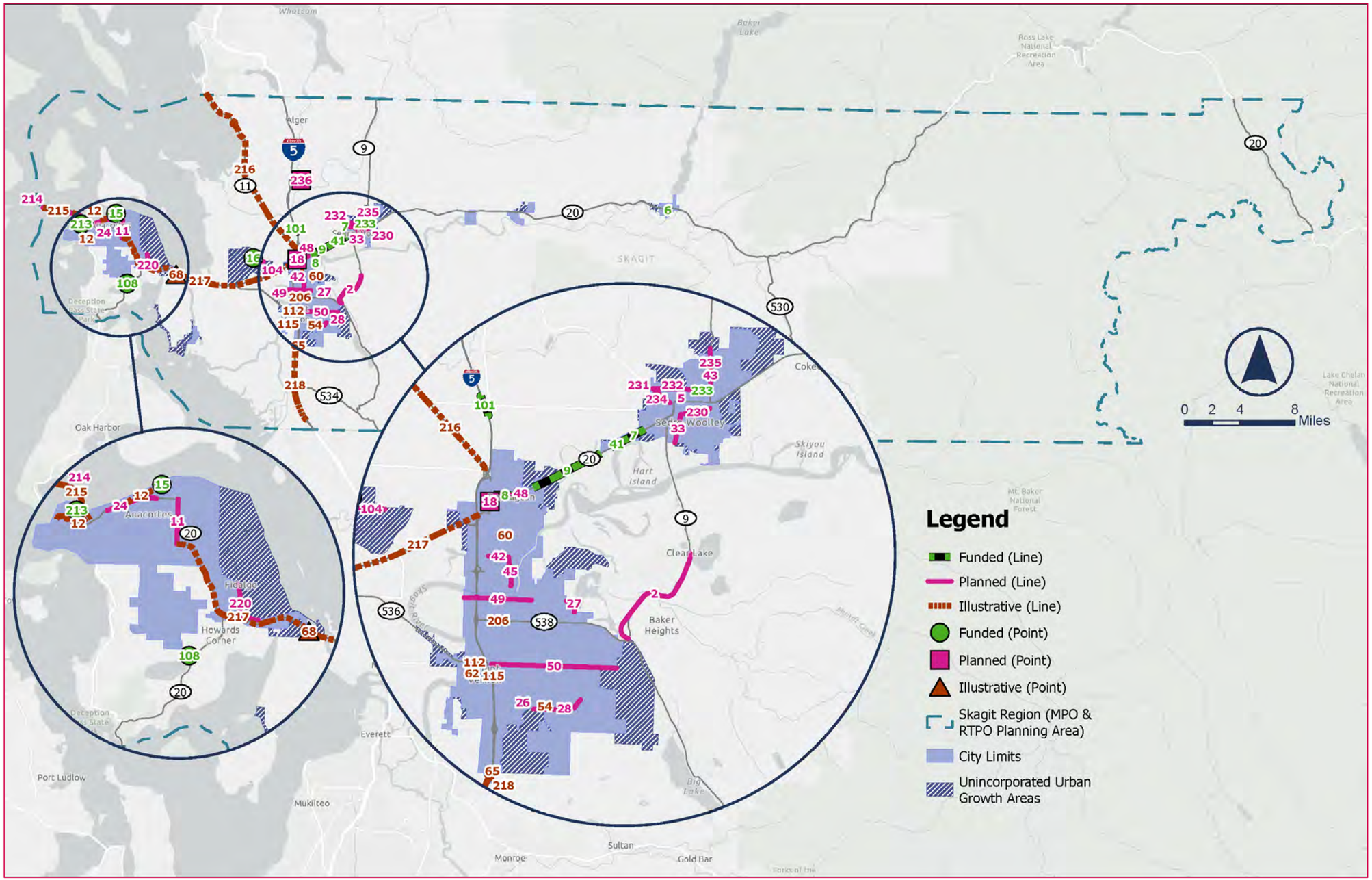


Figure 5. Regionally Significant Transportation Projects

Travel Demand Forecast Scenarios

SCOG commissioned an update to the regional travel demand model to help evaluate the impacts of the RTP proposed projects on the regional transportation system. The evaluation of future roadway improvements was based on 2050 socio-economic and land-use forecasts, the 2050 road network that the plan would produce, and the resulting interaction of demand and supply across the Skagit region. The regional travel demand model is an all-day model with morning, afternoon, afternoon peak hour, and "all other" time periods. It estimated vehicle travel and does not account for non-motorized or transit modes. The model estimates LOS determinations for selected regionally significant roadways using engineering methods borrowed from the Florida Department of Transportation. The FDOT method takes in the travel model's estimated bi-directional volumes in the afternoon peak hour ("PM peak") then cross-references that volume to LOS standards developed using observed data and Highway Capacity Manual guidance. It produces an average LOS letter grade for the continuous road facility across the chosen facility segments. The Florida LOS standards are specific to the facility type (e.g., freeway, arterial) and the number of lanes. This method smooths out segment-level variations to provide as realistic as possible measure of service levels.

The LOS findings (included in Appendix H) paint a picture of road system mobility performance but should be interpreted with the knowledge that travel demand models do not perfectly represent human travel tendencies and choices. Models provide a tool for estimating and comparing likely outcomes, not an exact prediction of future traffic conditions. Some areas in the 2050 scenarios may have higher congestion problems than will actually be experienced. Likewise, congestion in other areas may be underrepresented. However, the travel demand model is an effective tool for assessing the potential transportation impacts of growth. Further analysis and professional judgement were used to ensure traffic volumes predicted by the model are reasonable.

Forecast Scenarios

The RTP performed three travel demand model forecasts to help evaluate the potential impacts of the identified regionally significant projects:

- 2022 Base Year – estimated the existing conditions of the regional transportation network given observed 2022 population and employment and the roadway network in service in that year. As described in separate travel model documentation, the modeling team updated and validated the SCOG travel model system using traffic count data available for the region. The 2022 Base Year provides a useful reference point for the 2050 scenarios.
- 2050 Baseline Scenario – forecasted 2050 roadway performance likely to occur with projected 2050 population and employment but with *only* transportation projects that would definitely be completed by 2050 since they now have committed funding. This represents a "no build" scenario in the sense that it shows how the system is likely to

perform in the future *absent* the planned and illustrative investments the RTP proposes. The 2050 Baseline also serves as a neutral reference point against which to compare the 2050 Planned and 2050 Illustrative scenarios.

- **2050 Planned Scenario** – forecasts 2050 roadway performance in the case where all future projects in the financially constrained plan are present. These include all funded (Baseline) projects plus all planned projects but exclude illustrative investments. This represents a "build" scenario including projects that the RTP should be able to afford.
- **2050 Illustrative Scenario**—forecasts 2050 roadway performance in the case where all contemplated investments in the RTP are present, including funded (Baseline), planned, and illustrative projects. This constitutes a "speculative build" scenario showing what system performance could be if all projects the region desires to complete were actually built, even if the RTP acknowledges that it cannot foresee a way to fund its illustrative investments.

Note that many RTP investments deliver maintenance, preservation, or other outcomes to which the model is not sensitive (such as active transportation trails); therefore, the forecasts only include investments to which the travel demand model is sensitive.

Forecast Findings

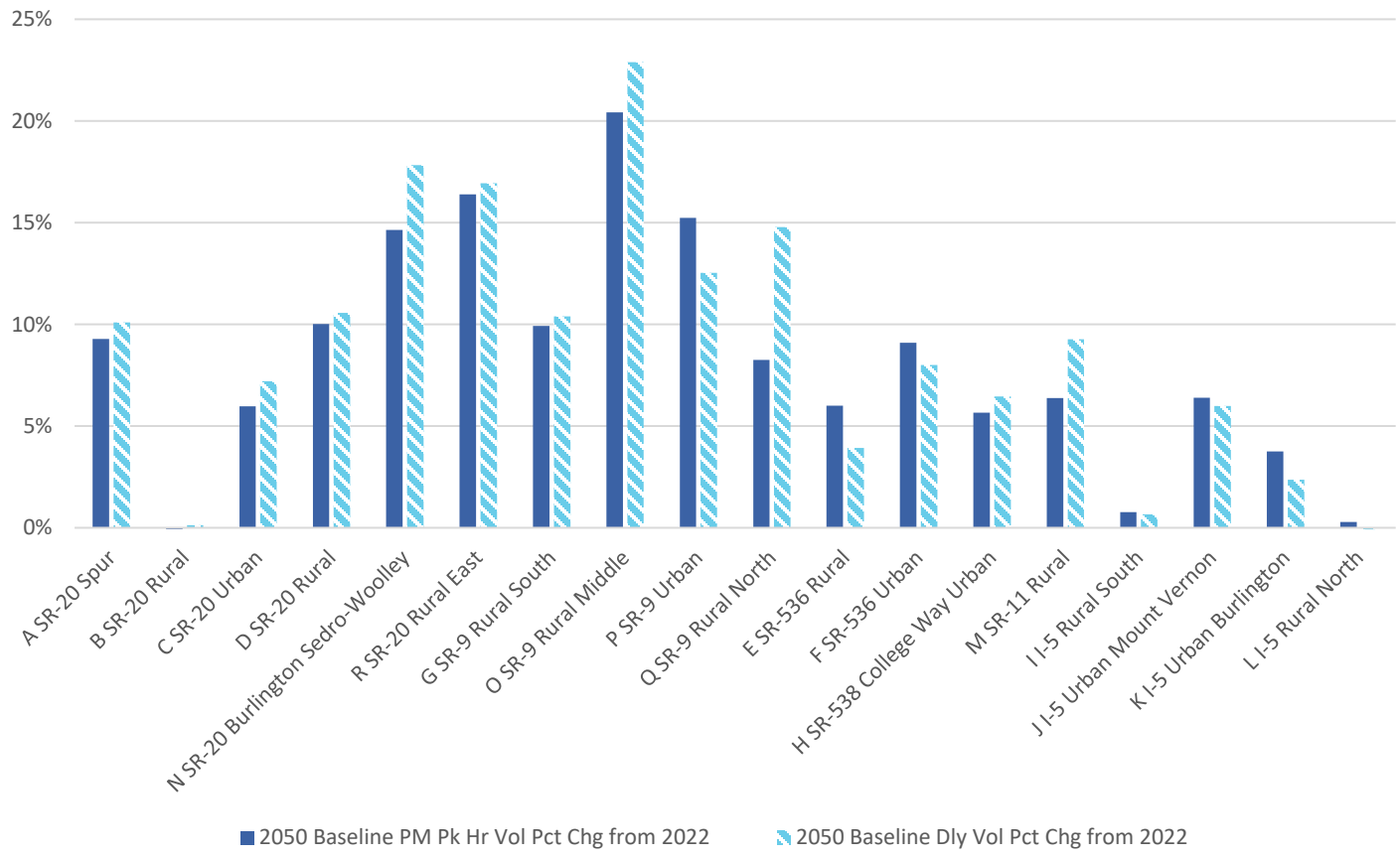
The RTP examines the regional roadway system's performance through the lens of eighteen mobility corridors that describe portions of six key regional roads, as shown in Table 7 below. Maps showing base year and 2050 findings for these corridors, with additional performance details, appear in Appendix H.

Table 7. RTP Mobility Corridors

Roadway	Corridor
SR-20	A SR-20 Spur B SR-20 Rural C SR-20 Urban D SR-20 Rural N SR-20 Burlington Sedro-Woolley R SR-20 Rural East
SR-9	G SR-9 Rural South O SR-9 Rural Middle P SR-9 Urban Q SR-9 Rural North
SR-536	E SR-536 Rural F SR-536 Urban
SR-538	H SR-538 College Way Urban
SR-11	M SR-11 Rural
I-5	I I-5 Rural South J I-5 Urban Mount Vernon K I-5 Urban Burlington L I-5 Rural North

The 2050 Baseline forecast average daily volumes and average afternoon peak hour volumes by corridor illustrate the growth in travel demand that the region faces given its projected growth in population and employment, accounting for the projected location of future added people and jobs. The graph below illustrates the percentage change in vehicle volumes by corridor.

Figure 6: 2050 Average Daily and Average PM Peak Hour Volumes by Corridor



Source: SCOG 2050 Travel Demand Model, RSG

As the graph shows, the region will likely see significant traffic volume increases (on the order of 15% to 23%) on SR-9 (especially in its rural segment in the center of Skagit County) and SR-20 through Burlington, Sedro-Woolley, and east to the mountains. The SR-20 Spur, SR 536 in its urban context, SR-11 in its rural setting, and I-5 through the Mount Vernon area will see notable traffic increases ranging from over 6% to 10%. The more rural segments of SR-20, SR 538, and I-5 are anticipated to see much lower increases in volumes (6% or less).

Under Washington law, SCOG and its member jurisdictions must monitor the LOS of roads (and other modes, as discussed in Chapter 5). The forecast roadway LOS for the SCOG mobility corridors appear in Table 8 below. The LOS estimates illustrate two key general findings: (a) other than the urban section of SR-20 through Burlington and Sedro-Wooley, the investments in the RTP in conjunction with projected growth generally maintain existing road performance; and (b) the investments across the different RTP scenarios by funded status do not greatly alter the average LOS picture. The forecasted LOS decline from D to F in the urban segment of SR-20 from 2022 to 2050 is noteworthy.

Table 8: Forecast 2022 and 2050 Afternoon Peak Hour LOS by Mobility Corridor and Scenario

Roadway	Corridor	2022	2050 Baseline	2050 Planned	2050 Illustrative
SR-20	A SR-20 Spur	C	C	C	C
	B SR-20 Rural	D	D	D	D
	C SR-20 Urban	C	C	C	C
	D SR-20 Rural	C	C	C	C
	N SR-20 Burlington Sedro-Woolley	D	F	F	F
	R SR-20 Rural East	C	C	C	C
SR-9	G SR-9 Rural South	C	C	C	C
	O SR-9 Rural Middle	C	C	C	C
	P SR-9 Urban	D	D	D	D
	Q SR-9 Rural North	C	C	C	C
SR-536	E SR-536 Rural	C	C	C	C
	F SR-536 Urban	C	D	D	D
SR-538	H SR-538 College Way Urban	D	D	D	D
SR-11	M SR-11 Rural	C	C	C	C
I-5	I I-5 Rural South	B	B	B	B
	J I-5 Urban Mount Vernon	B	B	B	B
	K I-5 Urban Burlington	B	B	B	B
	L I-5 Rural North	B	B	B	B

Source: SCOG 2050 Travel Demand Model, RSG

Programmatic Transportation Improvements

Regionally significant projects are not the only transportation improvements considered in the RTP. Though not uniquely identified in the Plan, programmatic projects are integral to continued function of the regional transportation system. These programmatic projects address safety, traffic operations, maintenance and preservation, and environmental protection/restoration. Unlike regionally significant projects, programmatic projects are not individually listed because they are automatically considered to be consistent with the goals of the Skagit region.

Efficiency Strategies

Improvements to corridors that address existing and forecast safety and operational issues are high priorities in the Plan. Also included are projects that reconstruct existing arterials to current standards to better handle forecast traffic volumes and improve non-motorized facilities. These improvements focus on effectively reducing safety and operational issues along existing arterials, but do not necessarily add additional capacity. They also support a range of travel modes, as automobiles, trucks, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists use these key regional intersections and roadway links. Transportation system management including signal timing upgrades, Intelligent Transportation Systems, and access management strategies, will also be incorporated in the existing corridors. While not listed individually in the tables above, these programmatic

improvements are accounted for in the Plan's financial strategy to the extent local and state project sponsors were able to estimate their future needs in these categories. These efficiency strategies are important since neither the Plan's investment assumptions nor its financial strategy have the data to fully account for an acknowledged unfunded maintenance backlog for all categories—local roads, state roads, state ferries, and transit. For this reason, the RTP prioritizes maintenance and preservation. Capital expansion proposals will need careful discussion with sponsors and stakeholders.

Maintenance and Preservation

A key priority of the RTP is to encourage effective maintenance and preservation of prior transportation investments. Any needed maintenance activities, particularly those on the regional transportation system, are consistent with Plan priorities. The cost of maintaining and preserving the regional transportation system is directly related to its size and the level of service expectations established for each community. Due to the high cost of maintaining and preserving the regional transportation system, difficult decisions may have to be made regarding the tradeoffs of investing in maintenance and preservation or expanding capacity. While the RTP prioritizes maintenance and preservation, by choice, by state policy, and by federal policy it must also serve other purposes, such as congestion relief. This will require careful attention to decisions about including capacity expansion projects in the RTP. For example, SCOG and its stakeholders will need to balance, choosing to fund a capacity expansion project that would reduce congestion against the deferred maintenance those dollars could have funded on other transportation facilities. Further deferred maintenance could lower the level of service of the regional transportation system as a whole.

Funding eligibility requirements add further complications to such decisions. SCOG will engage in dialogue with sponsor agencies and the public about the proper balance of transportation funding allocations for each jurisdiction in cases where decisions to advance capital projects need to be made.

Transit and Transportation Demand Management

The RTP includes transit projects to increase transit mode share and capacity to meet the future need and travel demand throughout the Skagit region. The following are additional transit and transportation demand management strategies to reduce peak period travel demand consistent with RTP goals and policies:

- Improve transportation services for people with special needs, including those dependent on transit;
- Attract riders to transit services that may otherwise choose an automobile for travel;

- Expand park-and-ride facilities to connect transit services to drivers and passengers of automobiles and provide connections to different transit routes and services offered by various transit agencies;
- Expand fixed-route service coverage in the public transportation benefit area, and express services connecting to neighboring regions;
- Extend transit service hours;
- Target transit service to larger employers; and
- Enhance transit service to regional destinations.

8: Financial Plan

System-Level Estimates of Costs and Revenue Sources

Realizing the goals and priorities of this plan requires funding; this chapter lays out the financial plan for providing it. It discusses the funding needed by the plan's programs and capital projects, describes available or "current law" revenues, and suggests added funding that will need to be acquired to realize the plan's investments taken in total.[4] The programmatic and capital investments taken together constitute the sum total of activity needed to maintain, operate, and improve the region's transportation system through 2050.

Time Periods

The financial analysis is summarized into two time periods to illustrate the likely funding program based on current assumptions:

- 2026–2035: this period covers the short covers local six-year transportation improvement plans. Both funding levels and project lists are considered to be more committed during this time period due to project development timeliness; and
- 2036–2050: this period covers the outer years of the Plan. Projecting revenues and costs more than 10 years is less reliable because rules, regulations, economic conditions and local priorities change. As the region cyclically updates the RTP, the data for these years will be refined.

It is useful to bear in mind that funding the RTP identifies programming through the region's short-range transportation improvement program (TIP). The plan is connected to the TIP by the federal requirement that TIP programming must be "consistent" with the RTP. In general this has two facets: programming must be consistent with the RTP's goals and priorities, and it should be accounted for in the RTP's financial plan. The regional TIP is cyclically incorporated into the Washington statewide transportation improvement program (STIP).

Since the TIP time frame is five years (similar to a local capital improvement program or CIP), the plan must be able to "pay its way" for five or more TIP cycles across 25 years. This can be

[4] Under federal law, the RTP must include a financial plan that should make reasonable financing assumptions about existing *and* new funds expected to be available over the 2026-2050 timeframe of Skagit 2050 (Title 23 USC 134). In other words, the plan may identify how *additional* revenues could be generated to fund the investments in the RTP.

challenging given the current funding environment and the fact that federal requirements specify that the plan may only promise to fund what can be afforded given the sum of current law and new revenues that "can reasonably be expected to be available." This "financial constraint" test may leave desired investments without demonstrably sufficient funding. For this reason, the RTP characterizes its investments into three general bins, only the first two of which are in the "constrained" part of the plan:

1. "Funded" investments are those that already secured funding. They may have *fully* committed funding to complete the project or partially committed funding to complete the project, as long as the partial funding is more than 50% of the investment's total estimated cost;

2. "Planned" investments have less than 50% of their funding secured or even zero, but the plan's anticipated total revenues are sufficient to fund them; and

3. "Illustrative" investments are efforts that support 2050's goals and priorities but cannot reasonably be expected be funded (although they may program study funds in the TIP as long as they are otherwise consistent with the RTP).

Federal regulations regarding fiscal constraint mean that only the constrained portion of the RTP is recognized by USDOT as the official, funded "plan."

As with the investments necessary to realize the plan described above, the task of sustaining current law revenues and augmenting them with new funds is shared across multiple agencies: WSDOT's investments in facilities and programs that it operates ("the state"), Skagit County ("the county"), Skagit Transit ("transit"), and the cities and towns within the region ("cities and towns"). Note that the WSDOT investments and revenues cover both state roadway and ferry systems that lie within Skagit County.

The RTP's financial plan examines the funding required for its desired investments in light of historical trends for revenues and expenditures, current laws and regulations creating and controlling transportation funding, and what new amounts of revenue could reasonably be expected to be added by federal, state, county, and local lawmakers. The financial tables below are in 2025 constant dollars to allow easy comparison of costs and funding. The federally-required year-of-expenditure accounting plus additional detail about the financial analysis appear in Appendix K.

System-Level Revenue Sources, Current

The financial plan begins with an estimate of future revenues that will be available under current law. When compared to the sum total of constrained investments in the RTP, total costs minus total current-law revenues establish the amount of new revenue needed.

Estimated 2026-2050 current law revenues available for the RTP appear in Table 9, by category, for the two time periods of the Plan. As shown, the region has available about $3.6 billion in total current-law transportation revenue.

Table 9. Total Estimated Current-law Revenues (constant 2025 dollars)

Program Area	2026-2035	2036-2050	Totals
Transit	**$273,347,800**	**$365,204,200**	**$638,552,000**
WSDOT	**$601,398,000**	**$1,378,900,300**	**$1,980,298,300**
County	**$296,162,700**	**$390,504,900**	**$686,667,600**
City/Town	**$117,218,700**	**$164,595,800**	**$281,814,500**
Totals	**$1,288,127,200**	**$2,299,205,200**	**$3,587,332,400**

System-Level Costs

As mentioned, the plan's transportation investments (described in Chapter 7 of the plan) fall into two general bins: constrained and illustrative. Estimated fiscally constrained costs in the RTP appear in Table 10. These costs or "needs" total slightly over $4.72 billion.

Table 10. Total Estimated Constrained Costs (constant 2025 dollars)

Program Area	2026-2035	2036-2050	Totals
Transit	**$262,102,000**	**$425,780,200**	**$687,882,200**
WSDOT	**$1,019,850,600**	**$1,271,139,700**	**$2,290,990,300**
County	**$480,225,000**	**$578,544,900**	**$1,058,769,900**
City/Town	**$315,277,200**	**$369,078,400**	**$684,355,600**
Totals	**$2,077,454,800**	**$2,644,543,200**	**$4,721,998,000**

System-Level Revenue Sources, Future

To fund the constrained RTP, new revenue requirements by category and total appear as shortfalls (negative numbers) in Table 11. Revenue of $1.13 billion total will need to be developed to account for the difference between the estimates for current-law revenues and constrained costs. The following section discusses potential strategies for how this could be done.

Table 11. Current-Law Revenue Shortfall RTP Constrained Plan Will Need to Fill (constant 2025 dollars)

Program Area	2026-2035	2036-2050	Totals
Transit	**$11,245,800**	**-$60,576,000**	**-$49,330,200**

WSDOT	**-$418,452,600**	**$107,760,600**	**-$310,692,000**
County	**-$184,062,300**	**-$188,040,000**	**-$372,102,300**
City/Town	**-$198,058,500**	**-$204,482,600**	**-$402,541,100**
Totals	**-$789,327,600**	**-$345,338,000**	**-$1,134,665,600**

System-Level Revenue Needs

Note that the estimates for revenues (see Appendix K for more detail) come with uncertainty given gaps in data received from sponsor agencies during RTP planning, so these estimates should be thought of as having leeway. That said, it is reasonable to expect that the added revenues by category in the table above can be realized. Examining these by category:

- Transit revenues need to increase by 7% ($49.3 million) over the life of the constrained plan. This is do-able for two reasons: first, in Skagit County transit is largely funded (two thirds in 2023) by a local option sales tax, the upper limit of which has not yet been reached. Second, the state contributes to Skagit Transit (over 10% of total revenue in 2023). Increasing both these sources, especially the local option, could bridge the gap.
- WSDOT (state) revenues expended on transportation would need to increase by at least $310.7 million over the life of the constrained plan. Local Skagit agencies and WSDOT will need to engage in two activities to fully fund the WSDOT needs identified in the RTP: first, the state will need to commit current-law and new funding to Skagit's needs. This is a matter of legislative and executive choice. Second, the state will need to create added transportation revenues beyond current law. The first step is achievable by concerted effort of WSDOT, SCOG, and local agency staff; the second is achievable by the state legislature. For example, the recent Washington transportation laws increased transportation revenues by 27% in the 2025 biennium; another such move within the next 15 years plus a federal response of a similar scale could make up the necessary funds.
- County revenues would have to increase by about 35% ($372.1 million) over the life of the plan. As with transit, the County has not yet tapped the limits of its local options, making that the first step they could take in generating new revenues. The County should also work to receive allocations from state transportation funding increases both by pursuing any applicable grant opportunities and by advocating for a greater local share of state-generated revenues.
- The local (city and town) constrained needs are the most challenging, needing to increase by almost 60% or $402.5 million. However, there are hints that there was local revenue underreporting in the data gathering for the RTP so this number may be high. While making up a 60% increase over the life of the plan seems daunting, that figure may be less onerous than reported. As with the County, the cities and towns have local options they should tap

to increase their own revenues, and they should collaborate with the County and SCOG to advocate for an increased local share of state-generated revenues.

The following new revenue strategy provides more detail on potential sources for closing the gap between current law and the constrained RTP by category. Tapping into these revenue sources requires action by lawmakers in specific jurisdictions, and some require voter approval.

New Revenue Strategy

Goal One of the RTP is to preserve and maintain the existing transportation system. Indeed, 84% to almost 90% of state, county, and transit investments respectively are so dedicated, with close to 60% of city investments also focused on maintenance, operations, and preservation. These figures do not include a growing unfunded backlog of local maintenance and preservation needs, nor do they cover all the preservation needs for state highway and ferry assets. In addition, near-term revenue (through 2028) is still needed to address federal requirements related to correcting fish-passage barriers. Ultimately, as Table 11 shows, even having excluded the unfunded maintenance, all categories will need *new* revenue sources to realize the RTP investments.

The funding tools available to system operating agencies vary by category, as follows.

City and County Additional Funding Options

City Options

- Local Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax (applicable to counties): Established in 1998, the Local Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax allows Washington state counties to levy a local fuel tax, in addition to the state tax, upon approval from the county's legislative body and a majority of voters. This tax may be levied up to a rate equal to 10.0% of the state fuel tax rate and may be used for several transportation purposes, including: (1) maintenance, preservation and expansion of existing roads and streets; (2) new transportation construction and reconstruction; (3) implementation and improvement of public transportation and high-capacity transit programs; (4) planning, design and acquisition of right of way for transportation purposes; and (5) other transportation improvements.

- Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) (applicable to counties and cities): Cities and counties are allowed to levy two portions of REET each at 0.25% of the full sale price of real estate. For those jurisdictions only levying the first 0.25%, the option remains to levy the second 0.25%. Because this funding may be used for different types of capital, and is not restricted to transportation capital only, it is up to the discretion of each jurisdiction as to how they chose to spend these funds. These funds are limited to capital expenditures only, and may not be used for maintenance and operations costs.

- Transportation Benefit Districts (TBDs) (applicable to counties and cities): Chapter 36.73 RCW authorizes cities (see also RCW 35.21.225) and counties to form TBDs, which are quasi-municipal corporations and independent taxing districts that can raise revenue for specific transportation projects. Five TBDs have been established in Skagit County in the cities of Anacortes, Burlington, La Conner, Mount Vernon and Sedro - Woolley. TBDs may tap a variety of revenue sources (some of which require voter approval or at least voter approval beyond a certain limit). TBDs may tap a variety of revenue sources (some of which require voter approval or at least voter approval beyond a certain limit). These include up to a 0.3% sales and use tax, added vehicle licensing fees, impact fees on commercial and industrial development, road tolls, and issuing general obligation bonds. No existing TBDs within Skagit County have tapped their maximum permitted revenues.
- Using General Funds, which tap local property taxes and local-option sales taxes separately from any TBD taxes.
- Advocating that the state increase the local allocation from current-law revenue (Move Ahead Washington) or at least indexing the local allocation to inflation. As shown by the financial analysis in Appendix K, state disbursements to local agencies are projected to be flat in real terms over the RTP's life while disbursements to state needs grow in real terms. It should be reasonable to ask the state legislature to at least index the local allocations to inflation.
- Impact fees are funds cities can collect from private development efforts to recoup the cost of providing public infrastructure, including transportation facilities like roads. Impact fee funding contributions are limited by law in that their use "...must provide a balance between impact fees and other sources of public funds and cannot rely solely on impact fees." They also can only be imposed "... for system improvements that will reasonably benefit the new development."[5]

County Options

As Skagit County's 2025-2045 Comprehensive Plan[6] observes, the County has the following levers to use to secure additional future transportation revenues:

[5] Washington Administrative Code WAC 365-196-850. https://app.leg.wa.gov/wac/default.aspx?cite=365-196-850
[6] Skagit County. *Skagit County Comprehensive Plan 2025-2045.* 2025. https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/comp_toc.htm

- Property taxes;
- Other local receipts (e.g., ferry fares for the Guemes ferry);
- State fuel tax distributions;
- Other State funds, including grants;
- Federal funds, including grants;
- The County's plan also notes that it occasionally appropriates General Funds to supplement the transportation budget; and
- Joining Skagit County in asking the state legislature to increase the city disbursements of state-generated funds, or at least indexing those to inflation.

The County has a public transportation benefit area to help fund Skagit Transit; see the transit sections further below for details.

Tapping County Additional Funding

The county will need to make up an estimated gap of about $372.1 million over the plan's 25 year horizon. As noted above, this number is a function of state data that may contain underreporting issues. That said, it is likely that if those issues exist, that they occur on both the revenue and cost sides of the ledger. The County's own 2045 Comprehensive Plan notes a large shortfall also.[7]

The County plan notes that the county could consider altering the cost side of its ledger by decreasing ~~its~~ total planned investments or by devising capital project phasing plans that enable more competitive advantage when seeking federal or state competitive grants. On the grant front, the County could choose to pass a complete streets ordinance to broaden its projects' grant eligibility.

To increase revenues directly, the County has several options:

- Increasing property taxes;
- Creating a transportation benefit district for general transportation needs;
- Borrowing via a voter approved bond or tax package;
- Raising transportation impact fees for new development;
- Increasing operating revenue by adjusting fares on the Guemes Ferry to lower or eliminate the need to subsidize that service;
- Seeking funding partnerships with other agencies;

[7] Skagit County. *Skagit County Comprehensive Plan 2025-2045*. 2025. https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/comp_toc.htm

- Facilitating local improvement districts; and
- Increasing the size and frequency of General Fund contributions to the transportation budget

While realizing one or more of these options would require the County to invest political capital, taken together they have significant revenue capacity.

Tapping City and Town Additional Funding

Collectively, Skagit cities and towns face as much as a $402.5 million shortfall although, as noted above, this number may be high.

Cities and towns with TBDs could increase those revenues while the City of Burlington could create a TBD. Cities and towns could also increase general fund contributions to transportation funding. Cities would also share in any increase to the Washington state gas tax, similar to the County (see the WSDOT section below).

As with the County, optimizing capital projects for grant eligibility could provide access to more funds. The forthcoming adoption of the SCOG Safety Action Plan and Transportation Resiliency Improvement Plan should both identify new grant opportunities for safety and resiliency investments and aid in making such investments within Skagit eligible for such grants. Furthermore, Move Ahead Washington (the 2022 state transportation funding bill) created a grant program that regions, counties, cities, and towns can tap for Commute Trip Reduction/Travel Demand Management (CTR/TDM) investments.[8]

As with all agencies, cities and towns could lower the cost side of their ledgers by further deferring some maintenance and preservation expenditures and delaying capital projects.

Washington State Department of Transportation Additional Funding Options

The revenue analysis in this financial plan for state funding is based on less data than would normally be available due to staffing turnover at WSDOT, so the "state" revenue estimate is subject to uncertainty.

[8] WSDOT. *Move Ahead Washington public transportation grant programs*. https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/move-ahead-washington-public-transportation-grant-programs

That said, it is clear that Move Ahead Washington, the state's 2022 transportation funding bill, greatly increased transportation funding for a sixteen-year period. There are several notable features of that law:[9]

- It increased the motor fuel tax (MFT, or "gas tax") to 55.4 cents on the gallon in 2026 and indexed that to inflation for the sixteen-year duration of the law;
- It increased numerous other transportation revenues including licensing and registration fees, the diesel fuel tax (although that was not indexed to inflation), and transportation allocations from other revenue sources;
- It created (via the parallel Climate Commitment Act) the potential for additional future funding via the creation of a cap-and-trade limit on GHGs and auctions of emissions permits. Note that such funds would only be applicable to investments that reduce emissions; and
- It created a series of new grant programs, many of which are for transit services (see the transit section below).

This plus traditional sources leaves the state with several clear opportunities to increase its revenues in general and for use in the Skagit region in the future:

- The Washington State Legislature can increase the gas tax;
- The state can increase fees and fares, for example the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET), vehicle registration fees, and ferry fares (the current Washington Ferries Long Range Plan assumes that fares will track in real terms to inflation, but the option exists to increase them in real terms[10]);
- WSDOT and the legislature can extend road tolling, especially in conjunction with major capital projects (e.g., bridge replacements, road widening, and so on); and
- Devising and implementing a replacement for the gas tax, the buying power of which decreases over time as vehicles become more fuel efficient. Oregon, Washington's neighbor to the south, is piloting a VMT-based charge called OReGo that could serve as a template.

[9] Washington Department of Ecology. *Climate Commitment Act.* https://ecology.wa.gov/air-climate/climate-commitment-act
[10] Washington Department of Transportation. *Washington State Ferries Long Range Plan.* 2019. https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/washington-state-ferries/about-us/washington-state-ferries-planning/washington-state-ferries-long-range-plan

Tapping Washington State Department of Transportation Additional Funding Options

To realize its Skagit investments in the RTP, WSDOT road and ferries taken together would need almost $311 million of added revenue by 2050.

Given that the Washington legislature has raised gas taxes and other revenue sources in the Move Ahead Washington law, it is reasonable to expect that it would do so—and use the other options described above—again by 2050.

On the roadway side and consistently with RTP Goal 1—Maintain and Preserve the Existing System--WSDOT will likely continue to prioritize expenditures to maintain state roads in reasonable shape.

On the ferry side, this RTP includes several boat replacements for runs originating at Anacortes plus the Anacortes Ferry Terminal building replacement. While the Ferry Long Range plan proposes to make these investments in its the "medium" time frame[11], it also acknowledges that the legislature will need to take new action to enable that timing. These ferry investments are thus noted as "illustrative" at this time in the RTP.

Transit Additional Funding Options

Public transit will need to find over $49 million to fund its planned operations, maintenance, and capital expenditures over the life of the RTP. About 8% of Skagit Transit's estimated revenues come from federal sources, which are unlikely to increase in the near- and mid-terms. Transit's main options for creating new revenue are thus:

- Increasing sales tax revenue that funds the majority (about 74%) of Skagit Transit's estimated revenues; and
- Increasing the state contribution to transit investments.

As mentioned above, Move Ahead Washington and the Climate Commitment Act resulted in several new grant programs for which transit is the only eligible application:

- Special Needs Grant Program for Transit (https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/paratransit-special-needs-and-rural-mobility-grants);

[11] Ibid.

- Transit Support Grant Program (https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/transit-support-grant); and
- Green Transportation Capital Grant Program (https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/grants/public-transportation-grants/public-transportation-grant-programs-and-awards/green-transportation-capital).

Skagit Transit's current long range transit plan divides its proposed service and capital investments into short-, medium-, and long-term time frames. It acknowledges that the agency will need to secure added funding to realize the medium- and long-term proposals.[12]

The short-term actions in the transit plan seek to optimize the transit system by "…restructuring the network to simplify routes, increase directness, reduce transfers, and minimize service duplication." This would provide a solid foundation for increasing service frequencies and adding Sunday service on some existing routes in the mid-term followed by further frequency increases in the long-term. Again, this added service is not funded by current law transit revenues.

Tapping Additional Transit Funding Options

Skagit transit overall should have the capacity to add new revenues to cover the estimated shortfall. In the first place, it can increase its sales tax if the Skagit Board of Directors and voters approve. In the second place, given Washington's new focus on lowering harmful air pollutants with tangible new grant opportunities for transit as described above, a mindful approach to grant applications can bear fruit. It is also likely that over a twenty-five year horizon the federal funding picture for transit will improve at some point.

Tapping Additional Funding Options Summary

Taken altogether, it is reasonable to expect that state and local agencies can take enough of the actions outlined above to cover the estimated shortfall from current law revenue. The state legislature has historically acted at approximately 10-year intervals; cities and towns have acted by adopting Transportation Benefit Districts; new grant programs have come online in the last decade at both the state and federal level (examples of the latter include the Safe Streets for All Program); and transit is the beneficiary of the new state grant programs listed above. This is not to underestimate the political lift necessary to achieve success—the region will benefit from careful coordination across all agencies to create the political environment to raise new revenues and to

[12] Skagit Transit. *Skagit Transit Long Range Transit Plan*. 2025. skagitit.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/PlanningandOutreach/EYIdUmS8i3NKho2wIt1dBYIBQ7LxiJ6oLJCHcSOwgcUr-A?e=xePqFk

collectively optimize the pursuit of competitive grants. SCOG is a natural venue for cooperation in these regards.

Illustrative Investments in the RTP

As noted previously, the RTP acknowledges that there are investments in programs and capital projects that would well serve the plan's goals and priorities but for which no funding has been reasonably identified. These "illustrative" investments fall into several general categories. Over time, as all SCOG's member agencies generate new revenues and complete the investments described in the constrained portion of the RTP, these projects will hopefully progress.

Ferry Capital Replacement Projects

The Anacortes Ferry Terminal building replacement and ferry boat replacements on Anacortes runs are large ferry system preservation projects for which funding has not yet been committed. The Ferry Long Range plan proposes to make these investments in a "medium" time frame but the state legislature or WSDOT will need to explicitly allocate funding for these important investments before they can be considered to have "planned" status.

Transit Operations

Skagit Transit plans to make many mid- and long-term service enhancements for which funding remains to be identified.

Unfunded Infrastructure Maintenance and Preservation

All agencies from WSDOT to the cities have backlogs of deferred maintenance and preservation needs. Although difficult to quantify given available data, this challenge is real and it is growing over time.

MOVE SKAGIT

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN