



## Introduction

### Global Competitiveness

Significant structural forces are reshaping worldwide political and economic relationships. Washington State is a part of those changes and is impacted by the changes. In 2006, the price of gasoline reached unprecedented levels of more than \$3 per gallon because of changes in supply and demand on an international scale. Global competitiveness is being redefined as the economic trends in China and India shift. Transportation is inextricably tied to the economic future of the United States as the consumer appetite for global goods and services continues to grow.



### 20-Year Transportation Vision

Washington's transportation system should serve our citizens' safety and mobility, the state's economic productivity, our communities' livability, and our ecosystem's viability.

These changes continue to impact Washington State in many ways. Washington has two of the largest international trade ports in the United States. The large volume of containers transported through these ports is projected to triple, at a minimum, over the next 20 years. Globalization, competitive industry trends, and new technologies are increasing freight volumes twice as fast as Washington's overall population and traffic growth. Competition for road and rail capacity are undermining our transportation efficiency and affecting our economic viability.

The main line (Class I) railroads, the BNSF Railway and the Union Pacific, have experienced huge increases in revenues and profits and have been investing in their systems. Nationwide, railroads are investing more in their infrastructure than ever before. In 2006, they will invest a record \$8.2 billion nationwide. The increased demand for rail service is being driven by transpacific trade, demand for coal, truck driver shortages, fuel prices, highway congestion, and agricultural trade growth.

The railroads' new business model has increased rail rates for the smaller shipper and created efficiencies for certain high volume long-haulers. Not all rail shippers are benefiting from the new model. Capacity constraints and pricing strategies have created problems for many small-volume domestic shippers and affect short line performance as well.

Rail service and pricing issues, capacity-constrained and higher-cost trucking, environmental issues, and limited state resources have forced the state to examine its role with respect to railroad operations. The Transportation Commission has implemented a rail study as the instrument for that review.

### **How Well is Washington Coping?**

Washington State has unique physical characteristics. Protecting its environment is an economic and ecological necessity. The state is a very desirable tourist destination due to its wide diversity of landscapes, recreation opportunities, culture, and habitats that support more than 650 native fish and wildlife species. As the population increases and society's footprint expands, added pressure is placed on natural systems that, in many cases, are already heavily stressed.

The population of Washington State is projected to grow from 6 million to 8 million people in the next 20 years. Most of that growth will be concentrated in the Central Puget Sound area. Uncoordinated and unplanned growth poses a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the quality of life in Washington.

In the last two sessions, the legislature significantly increased the state's resources for addressing transportation needs. Yet nearly \$67 billion (in 2005 dollars) is needed over the next 20 years to meet the foreseeable challenge. Currently the state has approximately \$29 billion in funding available, while nearly \$38 billion in needed investments remain unfunded.

It seems certain that the motor vehicle will always be an important means of transportation. However, to meet the new challenges, the state, counties, cities, tribes, and metropolitan planning organizations must foster a shift away from the traditional heavy reliance on automobile transportation. We cannot build our way out of congestion with more highways. The state needs alternatives. Improved transit systems, including fuel-efficient rapid rail, are a necessity.

The ferry system needs to be recognized as a vital part of the state's transit system. Biking and walking should be regarded as more than recreational pastimes. Bike trails and walking paths need to be designed for safe commuter use. Transportation must be viewed as, and function as, an integrated network with all modes acting as complementary

parts of the whole. Integration of the system must include connections between modes that make the use of all alternatives desirable, enjoyable, and dependable. It is clear that growth in highway capacity in this state cannot catch up to the growth in travel. Furthermore, the various modes of transportation, both public and private, must be interconnected in a system that efficiently optimizes mobility based on existing and forecasted land use patterns and decisions on residential and commercial locations.

Transportation and growth issues are inextricably linked. Indeed, one might argue that expanded travel by automobile created the need for growth management policies nationwide. Enacted in 1990, Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA) is recognized as one of the most ambitious statewide growth management laws in the country. Rather than centralize planning and decision-making at the state level, the GMA built on Washington's strong traditions of local government control and regional diversity.

The results have been disappointing in many respects. GMA's regulations have not been accompanied by enough dedicated resources to implement its principles, which has led to mixed success of the program and difficulty keeping pace with the regulations at the local level. Local officials in Washington State now rank their transportation systems as their number one infrastructure challenge. The transportation sector of government throughout the state must continue to work with the elements of government and the private sector responsible for implementing growth management strategies. Neither endeavor can achieve success independent of the other.

### **Measuring Progress**

Getting the highest possible performance from existing transportation investments through operational strategies, from basic maintenance and operations activities to the application of sophisticated technologies, can make the system safer and more efficient for users.

The state, counties, and cities and other transportation providing agencies are measuring many aspects of transportation progress from injury rates to percentage of lane miles in good condition. The Department of Transportation uses the Gray Notebook to monitor and track key performance measures. Among the successes identified, 91% of the projects funded through recent gas tax and fee increases are being completed early or

on-time and 94% of those projects have been completed under or on budget. Governor Gregoire continues the process begun by Governor Locke to identify Priorities of Government for budget development and has built on that process to engage in GMAP (Government Management Accountability and Performance) reviews with the Governor and her agency directors. The Governor and the Washington State Department of Transportation are scrutinizing all project delivery and programs to ensure that the revenues are being well-spent on the intended projects and priorities.

As demonstrated in the above paragraph, statewide transportation performance is not uniformly measured across modes or jurisdictions. State, federal, tribal, and local entities each collect data about system conditions and performance in a manner that meets their needs. A coordinated and comprehensive transportation performance reporting process will help to improve accountability to the public, which has never been more important.

▶ **The plan recommends that Washington State adopt the following guidelines for future investment action.**

**The guidelines are listed in priority order:**

**Preservation—Preserve and extend prior investments in existing transportation facilities and the services they provide to people and commerce.**

**Safety—Target construction projects, enforcement and education to save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property.**

**Economic Vitality—Improve freight movement and support economic sectors that rely on the transportation system, such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing.**

**Mobility—Facilitate movement of people and goods to contribute to a strong economy and a better quality of life for citizens.**

**Environmental Quality and Health—Bring benefits to the environment and our citizens' health by improving the existing transportation infrastructure.**

### **Key Findings**

These key findings, based on data review and analysis, were confirmed during the public outreach process.

### **Mobility**

The mobility of people and goods is fundamental to the functioning of society. Investment must shift from moving vehicles to moving people and products. To provide acceptable mobility in a society that is increasing in population and tied closely to the global economy, transportation systems require constant, and repeated attention to operations, maintenance, and investment.

### **Priorities**

The amount of additional investment, on top of existing resources, required to meet the state's projected needs is nearly \$38 billion in the next 20 years. Because that entire amount is unlikely to be available at one time, priorities must be established. First, the existing system cannot be allowed to deteriorate. Accordingly, preservation continues to be the first order of business. Second, we should build on the strong safety record we have achieved. Finally, improvements also are needed to enhance the state's economic vitality, its general mobility, the health of its citizens, and the environment in which they live, work, and play.

### **Innovative Solutions**

There are limits to how much revenue can be raised through the gas tax. Innovative technological, operational, and planning solutions can lower costs, target revenue generation, and impact strategic planning for the future. Implementing the latest technologies has potential to yield benefits for the application of user fees, availability of optional transportation modes, and realizing efficiencies in operating the existing transportation system. Innovation should also facilitate readily available alternative transportation, including bicycles and walking, which conserve energy and contribute to personal health.

▶ "The Washington Transportation Plan establishes the strategic direction for future transportation investments, shaped by input from people across the state who use or share the responsibility for delivering the statewide system."

**Washington Transportation Commission**