Washington State Department of Transportation

SR 532 Existing Conditions Analysis
Frequently asked questions

Background

State Route (SR) 532 is the primary east/west corridor to Interstate 5 for the Camano Island community, city of Stanwood and parts of Snohomish County. Over the last several years (pre-COVID) this area has experienced increased levels of vehicular and truck traffic during peak travel periods leading to increased congestion and crashes on the corridor.

SR 532 Eastbound from Camano Island to the City of Stanwood

To address these concerns, the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) NW Region in partnership with the Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO), City of Stanwood, Island County, Snohomish County, Island Transit and Community Transit participated in an existing conditions assessment of SR 532 to determine if the corridor is meeting regional transportation performance expectations.

A technical report was prepared and released for a 30-day public review and comment period beginning on September 28 and ending on October 26. Numerous questions were raised along with an interest to participate in the improvement of the transportation network conditions on the highway mainline and at several local public use intersections that intersect with the SR 532 highway corridor.

Frequently asked questions

- Where is the study area?
  The SR 532 study is located between Terry's Corner (junction of Camano Dr/Sunset Blvd intersection) on Camano Island and the I-5 Interchange. The corridor is about 10 miles long and serves as the primary east-west access to the City of Stanwood, Camano Island, and parts of Snohomish County from I-5.

- What is the purpose of the technical analysis on SR 532?
  - The technical analysis evaluates the existing conditions on SR 532 and involved a limited work scope to determine if the corridor is meeting regional performance expectations.
  - The existing conditions analysis process is part of WSDOT's methodology to identify immediate problems or needs on a state highway in order to strategically use limited state resources.

- What is involved in the SR 532 existing conditions analysis?
  The study investigated several factors including traffic operations and safety, travel characteristics, active transportation (pedestrian, bicycles and rolling), transit, and travel time reliability to determine

how well the corridor is operating in 2022. Pre-COVID traffic, safety and origin and destination data were also used to identify travel characteristics in 2019.

- How will the SR 532 Existing Conditions Analyst be used?
  - The technical report provides information on where SR 532 is operating well and where problems may exist now and in the future.
  - The technical report provides information to help inform local, regional and state transportation actions. Upcoming opportunities include coordinated transportation and land use planning policies and strategies during the update of local GMA comprehensive land use and transportation plans.
  - The report analysis identifies existing traffic and safety baseline data to address future land use permit actions near the state highway and associated local public use intersections, helping to inform potential development improvement actions.

- Did the COVID-19 epidemic affect traffic conditions and, if so, how did the study analysis account for the change?
  - The traffic operations analysis used pre-COVID and post-COVID 24-hour traffic volume data from the permanent traffic counter on I-5 to account for changes in traffic patterns.
  - Post COVID data was collected in the spring of 2022 between April and June over a 24-hour period at 25 public intersections on SR 532.
  - According to WSDOT traffic engineers the traffic volumes were within 3 to 5 percent of observed 2019 volumes, suggesting that traffic volumes in the area had largely stabilized and returned to near pre-COVID conditions by mid-year 2022.

- What steps were taken to engage the public?

  Stakeholder and community engagement are essential components of transportation planning in Washington State and the region. The study included a communication and stakeholder engagement plan to involve and inform the community about transportation issues in the study area. Outreach and engagement included:
  - involving agency stakeholders that had facilities and services in the study area,
  - an online public survey to identify general travel characteristics and transportation concerns on the state highway and supporting local public use intersections, and
  - study presentations to elected officials and public service requests for community input on the technical report.
  - a 30-day public comment period was provided on the technical report analysis beginning on September 28 and ending on October 26.

- What measures have local transit agencies taken to improve service for Camano Island and Stanwood?

  Island Transit and Community Transit have recently completed updates to their bus schedules and have expanded service in the corridor to facilitate more service options around Camano Island and to Smokey Point, Everett and Seattle. Both transit agencies are also considering upgrades to local park and ride facilities at Terry's Corner and in Stanwood.

- **Should a new ferry service be considered on Camano Island to help relieve traffic congestion?**
  The Port of Coupeville and South Whidbey Port District have been examining the feasibility of ferry service between Camano Island and Whidbey Island over the last several years. There have been several hurdles including finding a suitable location on Camano Island and funding, but their work continues.

- **What measures are being considered to address the large number of pedestrians at 72nd Ave NW?**
  This intersection has the highest level of pedestrian activity on SR 532. Activity is primarily from public schools and residential areas north of the intersection with destinations to retail, commercial and office uses south of the intersection. WSDOT and the City of Stanwood continually monitor this intersection to address traffic operations to ensure that the latest techniques are used to safeguard the public.

- **Did the study consider issues related to sea-level rise or other climate impacts?**
  - The analysis conducted on the corridor only looked at the traffic operations, safety, and travel time characteristics to determine if the corridor was meeting performance expectations for transportation. However, climate and associated impacts are required to be analyzed during the identification of transportation improvement actions or alternatives using best available science. Additional information can be found at the following link: Washington State DOT (WSDOT) Guidance for Project-Level Climate Change Evaluation | Adaptation Clearinghouse
  - Island Transit and Community Transit are moving forward to change their fleets to electric buses to address carbon and associated impacts to the environment.

- **What measures is the City of Stanwood taking to address growth and development in their downtown core and residential areas?**
  Growth and development are forecast to increase over the next twenty years on Camano Island, City of Stanwood and other parts of the study area. To address increases in population growth WSDOT and local jurisdictions will continue to monitor safety and traffic operation needs at local public use intersections and on the SR 532 corridor. Additionally, WSDOT is recommending collaboration and partnerships with WSDOT on proposed transportation improvement needs concurrent with development permit actions and during GMA comprehensive land use and transportation plan updates to facilitate access, mobility and safety improvement on the transportation network.

- **What measures are being taken to improve access and mobility through the City of Stanwood?**
  WSDOT and Stanwood have been working together over the last several years to find solutions to address safety and traffic operations through the City on SR532. Proposals included a new road corridor on the west side of Stanwood to provide better options for travelers heading north of the city and to remove points of congestion at 102nd, 103rd and 104th Street. The proposal also included roundabouts at two locations on the corridor to facilitate better through movement on the corridor and improve safety and access to businesses.

  Additionally, new strategies have been adopted by the Legislature statewide to increase transportation options for all users of the transportation system including adding bicycle lanes, pedestrian facilities, and transit improvements.

- What measures has WSDOT taken to improve the pavement condition on SR 532?
  Pavement condition and maintenance is monitored by WSDOT, and future projects have been identified on SR 532, however funding from the legislature is not currently available for these projects.

- Did the study provide improvement recommendations to SR 532?
  WSDOT traffic and safety engineers did not identify any immediate actions that needed to be taken on the SR 532 corridor to address safety or mobility but did note that future land use permit actions along the corridor would generate additional transportation and safety impacts if not addressed concurrent with development.

- How will the state and local jurisdictions address increased impacts from land use and transportation growth along the SR 532 corridor?

  To address future land use and transportation impacts WSDOT is recommending that the state and local jurisdictions collaboratively work on the review of proposed development permit actions and during the 2024 GMA Comprehensive Plan and Transportation Element update to identify strategies and implementation measures to:
  - encourage more compact land use development to scale up economic development in their jurisdiction;
  - encourage alternative modes of transportation by improving facilities and connectivity to transit and active transportation facilities;
  - consider strategic intersection improvements like roundabouts to local public use intersections that are experiencing increased delay and level of service impacts on SR 532 especially from left turn movements;
  - enhance the existing local transportation network by improving connections between dead-end or unimproved local street and road corridor segments; and
  - facilitate access and mobility to key destinations by creating parallel and connected local street and road connections to SR 532.

- Is there adequate capacity on the state highway to accommodate growth in the region or is additional transportation capacity needed?
  - Adding additional lanes or HOV lanes to the state highway corridor are some of many alternatives that could be considered if traffic congestion and safety performance measures are exceeded. However, the traffic and safety analysis did not reveal any capacity needs on the SR 532 at this time.
  - The average travel time between Terry's Corner and I-5 was about 16 minutes in the AM and 17 minutes in the PM. Travel time increased during the AM and PM peak periods to an additional ten minutes.
  - Most congestion was occurring at some of the local public use intersections experiencing increased residential, commercial, or industrial growth along the highway corridor.
  - WSDOT traffic engineers noted that additional land use development/growth on local roads and street could degrade the function of local public use intersections and the SR 532 corridor if measures were not taken to address transportation impacts from new land use development.