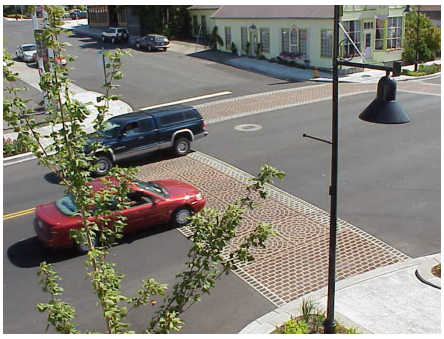
Washington State
Department of Transportation

New Initiative – Washington's Main Street Highways

WSDOT Highways and Local Programs 2011 Legislative Session Presentation



Why focus on 'Main Street' Highways?

In cities and counties across Washington, sections of state highways range from those that move people and goods through a region to those intended to provide access to local destinations. Between these two extremes, are sections of state highways that run through cities and must serve as both thoroughfares and main streets.

The "main street highways" provide local access for a community while serving regional mobility needs. These highways serve to maintain traffic flow, while supporting economic vitality and ensuring livability and safety.

Complete streets and walkability come up time and again as keys to supporting main street assets. These transportation investments help reinforce a downtown's convenience and create natural gathering spots.

What has been accomplished?

WSDOT conducted recent research in partnership with the University of Washington that determined the need to identify a subset of state highways operating as community main streets in order to help transportation agencies anticipate scope and schedule adjustments and resulting project cost adjustments.

WSDOT design standards, project development, and delivery policies are being re-evaluated for main street highways. Resources and technical assistance for community design on main street highways is needed, especially for projects in smaller communities with limited staff resources.

Where are Main Street Highways?

There are approximately 500 miles of State Highways that operate as main streets throughout Washington (see map of main street highway locations on back page).

Over 180 communities with over 3.2 million residents, about half the State's population, have main street highways running through their city limits.

Developing a program

WSDOT's research has lead to development of a technical assistance program that helps their communities create more complete, compact, and connected mixed-use districts along sections of main street highways.

WSDOT has also solicited feedback on a draft program proposal from divisions within the agency and external partners including: Association of Washington Cities, Department of Commerce, Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Transportation Choices Coalition, Feet First, Bicycle Alliance of Washington, American Planning Association, Childhood Obesity Prevention Coalition, and others.

General feedback has been that the program has tremendous potential for helping local governments comply not only with greenhouse gases and vehicle miles traveled reduction targets, but actually implement their Growth Management Act plans by linking land use and transportation at a sub-area plan level.

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Washington State Mainstreet Highways

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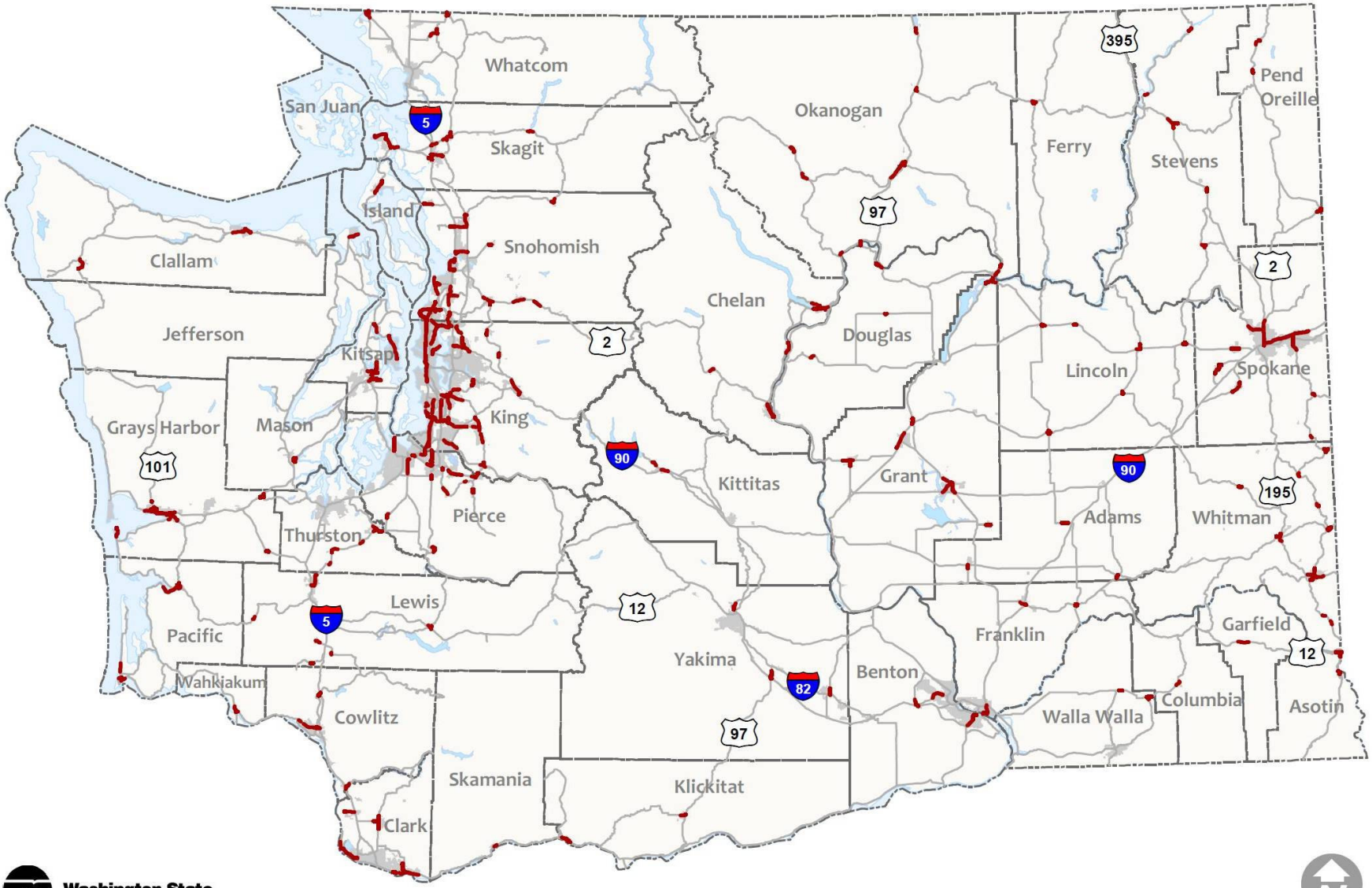
Mainstreet Highways | City Limits



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