



*This document is a draft and has not been reviewed by  
the Washington State Environmental Justice Council.*

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**DRAFT** 2022 UPDATE



### *Title VI Policy Statement*

It is the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. This is also reflected in WSDOT Executive Order 1087. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non-discrimination obligations, please contact OEO's Title VI Coordinator at 360-705-7090.

### *Notificación de Título VI al Público*

Es la póliza del Departamento de Transportación del Estado de Washington de asegurar que ninguna persona sea excluida de poder participar, sea negada beneficios, o sea sujeta a discriminación bajo cualquiera programa o actividad financiada con fondos federales por causa de su raza, color, o origen nacional, como proveído por el Título VI del Acto de Derechos Civiles de 1964. Cualquier persona que crea que sus derechos bajo el Título VI han sido violados, puede levantar una queja con la Oficina de Igualdad de Oportunidades (OEO). Para información adicional con respecto a procedimientos de quejas del Título VI y/o información con respecto a nuestras obligaciones, por favor comuníquese con el Coordinador de Título VI de la Oficina de Igualdad de Oportunidades (OEO) 360-705-7090.

### *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information*

This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equal Opportunity at [wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov) or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA(4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.

### *Información del Acta de estadounidense con Discapacidad*

Este material se puede hacer disponible en un formato alternativo. Para ayuda con esto puede mandar un mensaje al equipo de Asuntos de diversidad/ADA WSDOT vía [wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov) o puede llamar al 855-362-4ADA (4232). Personas sordas o con problemas de audición pueden solicitar llamando el relé de estado de Washington al 711.

## 2022 update to the WSDOT Community Engagement Plan

The environmental justice law known as the [Healthy Environment for All \(HEAL\) Act](#), was signed into law in 2021. Chapter 70A.02 RCW provides a roadmap for integrating environmental justice into the work of state agencies. The law requires seven state agencies [to create and adopt community engagement plans](#) by July 1, 2022. For this and other parts of the HEAL Act, agencies work closely with the [Environmental Justice Council](#), which consists of members appointed by the Governor. The HEAL Act states that the Environmental Justice Council will provide guidance on community engagement plans as agencies create and update them. It also requires that each covered agency consider the guidance developed by the Council. See the [Environmental Justice Council website](#) for more details on the role of the Council.

The HEAL Act directed the Department of Health to convene the first meeting of the Council by January 1, 2022. However, the Council was not fully appointed and seated until March of 2022. Because of those delays, April 4, 2022, was the earliest practical date the Council could have convened. The HEAL Act also created an Interagency Work Group to coordinate work among the seven HEAL agencies and others that decide to follow its guidelines. The Interagency Work Group began drafting community engagement plans in January 2022 while awaiting seating of the Environmental Justice Council.

The current drafts of agency community engagement plans have not yet been reviewed by the Environmental Justice Council.

WSDOT values meaningful and transparent community engagement throughout the development of our multimodal transportation plans and projects. We adopted our current [Community Engagement Plan](#) in 2016. While implementing this plan, WSDOT continues to learn and explore ways to improve connections with the diverse communities we serve, as evidenced by recently adopted Title VI and Limited English Proficiency plans.

In addition to the requirements of the HEAL Act, WSDOT has a federal requirement under 23 CFR 450.210 to develop and follow a documented public involvement process. Responding to the HEAL Act, we reviewed our existing plan and invited more than 200 representatives of overburdened communities and vulnerable populations across Washington state to provide insight on how we can better align our current plan with the HEAL Act. The draft updated plan reflects this engagement and our commitment to be consistent with the intent and language of the HEAL Act.

Note, this draft has not yet been reviewed by the EJ Council, tribes, communities, partners agencies or others. We will continue to follow our current plan from 2016 until the plan is updated to reflect collaboration and feedback from the EJ Council, tribes, community members, partner agencies as has completed a public review and comment period.

As an agency, we are committed to a strong partnership with the Environmental Justice Council as we integrate

environmental justice into agency activities. We are mindful of our duty to the Legislature and people of Washington to adopt a community engagement plan by July 1, 2022.

In balancing these interests and obligations, our agency continues to follow our current plan and shares a draft of our updated plan. The future implementation of this draft plan is dependent on coordination with the Environmental Justice Council and will incorporate guidance from the Council, communities across Washington state, and will include Tribal Consultation.

Following adoption of the draft community engagement plan, our agency and the other agencies named in the HEAL Act will incorporate guidance from the Council. Our agency will collaborate with the other agencies implementing the HEAL Act and the EJ Council to hold Community listening and feedback sessions to co-author needed changes to the agency community engagement plans. Agencies will also conduct Tribal Consultation. Our agency will regularly partner with the Council, community, and Tribes over the coming years to update our Community Engagement plan. The Community Engagement Plan is a living document that will evolve as our agency builds a relationship with the EJ Council and Washingtonians as environmental justice is implemented across state agencies.

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La ley de justicia ambiental conocida como Ley de Medio Ambiente Saludable para Todos (HEAL), se promulgó en 2021. El Capítulo 70A.02 RCW proporciona una hoja de ruta para integrar la justicia medioambiental en el trabajo de las agencias estatales. La ley exige que siete agencias estatales [creen y adopten planes de participación comunitaria](#) antes del 1 de julio de 2022. Para esta y otras partes de la Ley HEAL, las agencias colaboran estrechamente con el [Consejo de Justicia Ambiental](#), conformado por miembros designados por el Gobernador. La Ley HEAL establece que el Consejo de Justicia Ambiental brindará orientación sobre los planes de participación de la comunidad a medida que las agencias los creen y actualicen. También requiere que cada agencia cubierta considere la orientación desarrollada por el Consejo. Consulte el [sitio web del Consejo de Justicia Medioambiental](#) para obtener más detalles sobre el rol del Consejo.

La Ley HEAL ordenó al Departamento de Salud que convocara la primera reunión del Consejo antes del 1 de enero de 2022. Sin embargo, el Consejo no fue designado y constituido en su totalidad hasta marzo de 2022. Debido a estas demoras, el 4 de abril de 2022 era la fecha práctica más temprana en la que el Consejo podría haberse reunido. La Ley HEAL también creó un Grupo de Trabajo Interagencial para coordinar el trabajo entre las siete agencias HEAL y otras que deciden seguir sus pautas. El Grupo de Trabajo Interagencial comenzó a redactar planes de participación comunitaria en enero de 2022 mientras esperaba la reunión del Consejo de Justicia Ambiental.

Los actuales borradores de los planes de participación comunitaria de las agencias aún no han sido revisados por el Consejo de Justicia Ambiental.

El Departamento de Transporte del Estado de Washington (WSDOT) valora la participación significativa y transparente de la comunidad a lo largo del desarrollo de nuestros planes y proyectos de transporte multimodal. Adoptamos nuestro [Plan de participación comunitaria](#) actual en 2016. Al mismo tiempo que implementa este plan, el WSDOT sigue aprendiendo y explorando formas de mejorar las conexiones con las diversas comunidades a las que servimos, como lo demuestran los planes recientemente adoptados del Título VI y de dominio limitado del inglés.

Además de los requisitos de la Ley HEAL, el WSDOT tiene un requisito federal en virtud del 23 CFR 450.210 para desarrollar y seguir un proceso documentado de participación pública. En respuesta a la Ley HEAL, revisamos nuestro plan actual e invitamos a más de 200 representantes de comunidades sobrecargadas y poblaciones vulnerables en todo el estado de Washington para que nos den su opinión sobre cómo podemos adaptar mejor nuestro plan actual a la Ley HEAL. El proyecto de plan actualizado refleja este compromiso y nuestra voluntad de ser coherentes con la intención y el lenguaje de la Ley HEAL.

Tenga en cuenta que este borrador aún no ha sido revisado por el Consejo de Justicia Ambiental, las tribus, las comunidades, las agencias asociadas u otros. Seguiremos nuestro plan actual desde 2016 hasta que se actualice para reflejar la colaboración y los comentarios del Consejo de Justicia Ambiental, las tribus, los miembros de la

comunidad y las agencias asociadas, ya que se ha completado un período de revisión pública y comentarios.

Como agencia, estamos comprometidos con una sólida colaboración con el Consejo de Justicia Medioambiental a medida que integramos la justicia medioambiental en las actividades de la agencia. Somos conscientes de nuestro deber ante la legislatura y el pueblo de Washington de adoptar un plan de participación comunitaria antes del 1 de julio de 2022.

Para equilibrar estos intereses y obligaciones, nuestra agencia sigue con el plan actual y comparte un borrador de nuestro plan actualizado. La implementación futura de este plan depende de la coordinación con el Consejo de Justicia Ambiental e incorporará la orientación del Consejo, las comunidades de todo el estado de Washington e incluirá las Consultas con las tribus.

Tras la aprobación del proyecto de plan de participación comunitaria, nuestro organismo y los demás organismos mencionados en la Ley HEAL incorporarán las orientaciones del Consejo. Nuestra agencia colaborará con las otras agencias que implementan la Ley HEAL y el Consejo de Justicia Ambiental para llevar a cabo sesiones de escucha y retroalimentación de la comunidad para ser coautores de los cambios necesarios en los planes de participación comunitaria de la agencia. Las agencias también llevarán a cabo Consultas con las tribus. Nuestra agencia se asociará regularmente con el Consejo, la comunidad y las tribus en los próximos años para actualizar nuestro plan de participación comunitaria. El Plan de Participación Comunitaria es un documento vivo que evolucionará a medida que nuestra agencia construya una relación con el Consejo de Justicia Ambiental y los habitantes de Washington a medida que se implemente la justicia ambiental en todas las agencias estatales.



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July 1, 2022

The Washington State Department of Transportation is proud to present an updated Community Engagement Plan, consistent with the agency's strategic plan, federal requirements for a public involvement plan, and new state-level requirements under the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) act. Access and participation of diverse communities in decision making is a high priority for Governor Inslee, myself, and all WSDOT employees. It is our intent that WSDOT employees engage with overburdened communities and vulnerable populations and incorporate input into new and existing activities and programs.

This plan includes how WSDOT will identify and prioritize overburdened communities, best practices, direction on tools to evaluate and understand the nature and needs of potentially affected people, processes supporting equity and inclusion, and methods for engaging those who face barriers to participation.

WSDOT's Community Engagement Plan guides how the agency engages with partners, stakeholders, tribes and communities for all WSDOT efforts. Strategies in this plan can be implemented immediately to increase community access to decision making, support a resilient transportation system, and improve public access to agency information.

This plan provides a broad policy framework and principles to guide engagement efforts agency-wide. It is not intended to replace other guidance, communications plans, or reference materials. It serves as a WSDOT policy document that guides development and implementation of more specific engagement plans and guidance.

WSDOT takes the development and input into this plan seriously. The engagement process for this plan included solicited input from community organizations, listening sessions, and a public review and comment period of 45 days. Emphasis was given to collecting input from vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

This plan will be revised and updated as appropriate to meet ongoing needs to strengthen partnerships and develop ongoing relationships. WSDOT is dedicated to reviewing and improving our processes, and this plan will be updated as feedback is received.

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## How to use this document

This guide describes WSDOT engagement practices, including how to engage overburdened communities and vulnerable populations. It describes how to facilitate equitable participation and support meaningful, direct involvement of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

This document is intended to provide guidance to WSDOT employees and the general public on WSDOT's community engagement program and process.

The information provided here is not intended to cover all situations and contexts in the community for the service delivery process.

The resources in this guide should be used in coordination with other department guidance such as the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Plan, Title VI Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan, Design Manual, Communications Manual, and environmental justice guidance.

### **Chapter 1: Reaching out to communities**

Chapter 1 introduces the legal and policy requirements for community engagement.

### **Chapter 2: Resident's guide**

Chapter 2 provides a resident's guide to engaging in the WSDOT practical solutions approach to decision-making.

### **Chapter 3: Engagement strategies**

Chapter 3 is intended to provide guidance for WSDOT staff including an overview of WSDOT's planning and project development process for community engagement, basic engagement strategies, and resources for community engagement activities. It also provides strategies and recommendations for collecting and using demographic data and details about tailoring outreach activities to traditionally underserved populations.

### **Chapter 4: Assessing effective engagement**

The purpose of this chapter is to guide staff in the assessment of engagement effectiveness including strategies to analyze culturally sensitive outreach. Next steps for the Community Engagement Plan are also provided.

### **Appendices**

Important diverse case studies are shared to highlight different successful methods for community engagement. Additional resources are shared, as is a simple chart of the community engagement process for the long-range statewide transportation plan and a list of targeted outreach groups.

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# INTRODUCTION

Washington state has a variety of beautiful landscapes from the Puget Sound to the Columbia River, from the Pacific Ocean to the Idaho border. WSDOT staff, as residents and employees, take pride in living and working in that beautiful environment alongside people of different cultures and life experiences.

The mission of WSDOT is to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses. WSDOT achieves this through operating and maintaining the state portions of the transportation system, identifying performance gaps, and developing strategies to address the performance gaps and aligning effectively with other transportation providers.

Each of these responsibilities require interaction and/or coordination with community and advocacy groups, chambers of commerce, downtown associations, tribes; local, state, and federal government agencies, other stakeholders, and the general public - but in different ways. For example, WSDOT must find a way to build informed consent from these stakeholders during the planning and project development process. Informed consent means agreeing on desired outcomes from a plan, program or project to ensure that the public's best interest is met. WSDOT strives to balance the unique goals of a community, while still adhering to state and federal requirements and best practices. The goal is to focus on finding options together that work to achieve multiple measures of success not just a single transportation measure such as the quality of traffic service (i.e. level of service) or speed.

Community engagement is also required by federal and state law and WSDOT policy. The practices to implement meaningful and equitable community engagement in WSDOT policy, plans, programs and projects is driven by our Community Engagement Guiding Principles. These principles are based on existing WSDOT guidance and federal and state requirements. They help carry out WSDOT's approach to project delivery. When done well, community engagement helps to ensure projects are developed within appropriate contexts, avoids costly delays, provides an opportunity for educating the public on what WSDOT does and why it's done, and builds community support and trust.

This guide identifies and expresses WSDOT's commitment to public participation in decision making in plans, programs and projects that will affect how their communities will benefit. It provides tools and strategies to optimize communications. This update to the plan enhances guidance to staff, provides a resident's guide to engaging, and discusses assessing the effectiveness of engagement efforts.

For more information on WSDOT's public involvement program, please contact:

Multimodal Planning & Data Division  
Washington State Department of Transportation  
310 Maple Park Ave SE  
Olympia, WA 98504  
360-705-7151

[www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/)

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## CHAPTER 1

# Reaching out to communities

### How to use this chapter

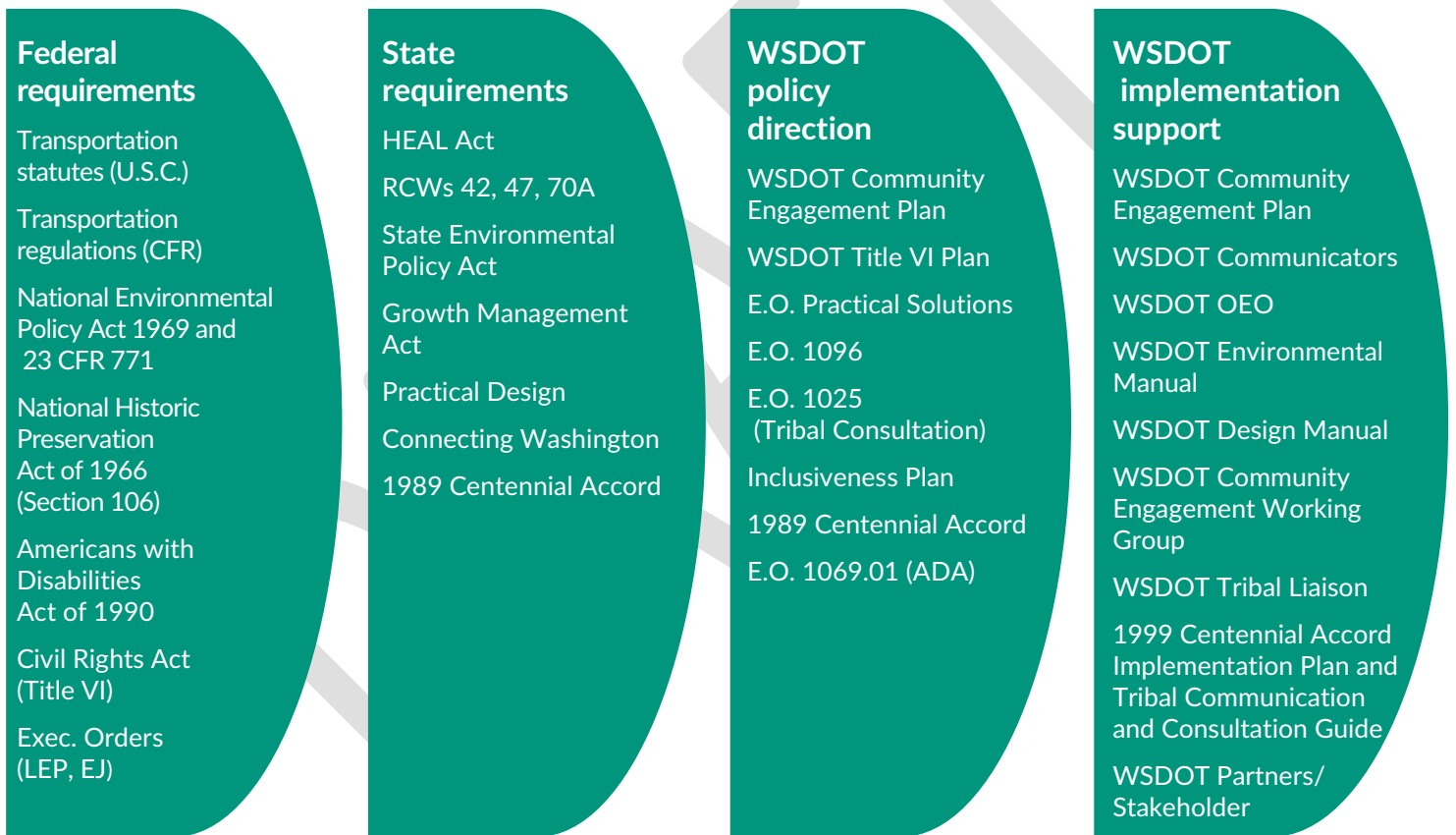
The purpose of this chapter is to provide background and context for all WSDOT staff on community engagement. It includes the following:

- Introduction to federal and state requirements for community engagement.
- Overview of WSDOT's Community Engagement Guiding Principles.
- Introduction to WSDOT's Community Engagement Policy.
- Guidance on how to implement these requirements is discussed in the ensuing chapters.

## Community engagement: It's the law

State and federal law are where the majority of the requirements for involving the community in transportation decision making can be found. However, public involvement is more than just following requirements and regulations. Engaging the public and communities at specific and key points in the transportation decision making process can result in better projects and more timely project delivery. WSDOT has also developed policies around equity and project delivery that set a high bar for community engagement. The figure below represents the elements of the starting point for development of a community engagement program. The level of effort, resources required and strategies used will vary from project to project and from plan to plan.

For a list of these citations, please see Appendix B.



## FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Federal requirements for community engagement illustrate the important role it plays in understanding, assessing and addressing effects of transportation decisions on individuals and communities.

United States Code (USC) and the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) call for public involvement (synonymous with community engagement) in numerous locations including 23 USC, 49 USC, 23 CFR and 40 CFR. Additional requirements for involving the public are found in the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the National Environmental Policy Act, Executive Order 13166; Limited English Proficiency, and Executive Order 12898; Federal Actions to Address EJ in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations; and Executive Orders on Tribal

Consultation. Specific details on federal requirements can be found in the legislation which is available online at [www.gpo.gov](http://www.gpo.gov). Links are provided in Appendix B.

The objectives identified in federal requirements as applied to this community engagement plan can be summarized as:

- Nondiscriminatory processes/activities.
- Early and continuous public involvement.
- Inclusionary practices in activities and notifications.
- Consideration of the needs of the traditionally underserved.
- Collaboration with other agencies, tribal and local governments, private sector representatives and other officials.
- Convenient and accessible meeting times and locations.
- Reasonable access to information.
- Timely notice of engagement activities, including review periods.
- Acknowledgment and consideration of public comments.



## INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT AND JOBS ACT (IIJA)

In November 2021, President Biden signed into law the current federal transportation authorization act which governs federal surface transportation. The IIJA Act extends enacted funding levels through federal fiscal year 2022 and reauthorizes surface transportation programs for fiscal years 2023 - 2026. The IIJA builds upon the previous surface transportation act, Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, which was enacted in 2015. Under the IIJA, public involvement remains a key factor in the planning process. Accordingly, WSDOT strives to enhance its efforts to:

- Provide explicit consideration and response to public comment.
- Provide timely information about public meetings.
- Provide convenient and accessible public meeting locations.
- Engage a variety of stakeholders in transportation decision making including, but not limited to; residents, public agencies, public and private transportation providers, persons with disabilities, and bicycle and pedestrian facility users.

## WASHINGTON STATE REQUIREMENTS

In 2021, The Washington State Legislature passed Substitute Bill 5141, more commonly known as the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act implementing recommendations from the statewide Environmental Justice Task Force. The HEAL Act is codified as Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 70A, which states, "The purpose of this chapter is to reduce environmental and health disparities in Washington state and improve the health of all Washington state residents."

RCW 70A.02.050, Equitable community engagement and public participation, states that, "By July 1, 2022 each covered agency must create and adopt a community engagement plan that describes how it will engage with overburdened communities."

Washington's requirements for community engagement emphasize the commitment to the public made by the Legislature, governor, and agencies in Washington. Additional state requirements can be found in:

- Revised Code of Washington (RCW).
- Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA).
- Washington Administrative Code (WAC).
- The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), including the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and Environmental Assessment (EA) Processes.
- Secretary's Executive Orders.

- WSDOT Centennial Accord Plan.

## Community engagement guiding principles

WSDOT has developed Guiding Principles for Community Engagement for all policies, plans, programs and projects.

To more clearly articulate how our vision, mission, goals and values work together and provide consistency in application toward our community engagement goals, this Community Engagement Plan describes how WSDOT will engage with communities and facilitate equitable participation.

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### WSDOT MISSION

We provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses.

### WSDOT VISION

Washington travelers have a safe, sustainable and integrated multimodal transportation system.

### WSDOT VALUES

Engagement  
Innovation  
Integrity  
Leadership  
Safety  
Sustainability

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## WSDOT'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT GUIDING PRINCIPLES (IN NO PARTICULAR ORDER)

### *Identify and prioritize overburdened communities*

Use screening tools to integrate environmental, demographic and health disparities data to evaluate and understand the nature and needs of the people impacted by significant actions. Facilitate equitable participation and support meaningful and direct involvement of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

### *Connect and engage*

Become active members of communities and go to the places they gather. Take advantage of opportunities to work with community members, volunteers and leaders and find out their priorities and perspectives. Reach out to interested parties that cannot attend meetings and receive their feedback. Seek out voices not traditionally heard, including people who are traditionally unable to participate due to age, disability, income or national origin.

### *Listen and act*

Focus on listening to what people are sharing before responding. Confirm that the intended message is understood. Receive and act on feedback.

### *Facilitate communications*

Help groups listen to each other and explore new ideas. Solicit input by encouraging everyone to speak up. Check in with the group as a whole, as well as with individual participants, to gauge their comfort levels.

### *Help each other succeed*

Share resources and information with the various WSDOT regions, divisions, and offices to achieve success. Be aware that success is defined in different terms and outcomes. Be creative in defining work teams and understand how team members define success.

### *Maximize creativity and innovation*

Seek out and use successful community engagement tools and techniques when conducting outreach. Prevent requirements from being the only focus of outreach.

### *Blend diverse inputs*

Be sensitive to other perspectives when receiving input. Understand that how WSDOT evaluates and responds

to comments from governments, stakeholders and the public is critical, especially if there are opposing viewpoints. Remember that all comments are considered, even if they are not directly incorporated.

### *Provide access to the process and foster inclusiveness*

Rely on effective one-way and two-way communication throughout the process. Strive for transparent conversations that include diverse people, opinions, ideas, and information. Remember that what works for one process or group may not be as effective for others.

### *Be a wise steward of the public's money*

Be mindful of the use of everyone's time and money while ensuring adequate time and funding for community involvement in planning and project development. Achieve effective two-way engagement without exceeding limited budgets.

### *Consider the needs of the multimodal system*

There are a variety of ways to move people and goods on Washington's transportation system. Consider all modes and offer choices and opportunities. Do not focus on just the goals of individual modes.

### *Be clear and open about the process*

Inform and involve users of the transportation system in planning, construction, maintenance and stewardship of the transportation system. Encourage input at decision points, and involve interested parties throughout the process. Continue to exhibit a high level of integrity.

### *Involve communities*

Engage governments, stakeholders, and the public early and continuously in our decision-making process to lay the groundwork for success. Discuss what success means to WSDOT and then jointly define what success means to the community.

## **WSDOT STRATEGIC PLAN**

WSDOT has included community engagement in our strategic plan since 2014. Results WSDOT, the agency's strategic plan for 2014 - 2017, included Community Engagement as a top goal for the agency. The next version of our strategic plan included Community Engagement as a strategy under the Inclusion goal, and added Engagement to our agency values. Moving forward, WSDOT will emphasize Equity, which emphasizes incorporating Community Engagement into agency decision making.

Our strategic plan lays out how WSDOT does business to get the most capacity of the entire multimodal

transportation system, leverage our limited funding and engage with communities and partners. It places more emphasis on working across all modes to enhance our operations. Our strategic plan goals ensure that we meet our mission to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses.

This Community Engagement Plan is integral to WSDOT's commitment to interact with the communities around our projects, plans, and activities. It sets agency policy for engagement, provides guidance, lets communities know what to expect, and provides sample best practices.

How WSDOT carries out community engagement is important. As stewards of public resources, we operate and maintain the state-owned portion of the public transportation network. To best serve the diverse communities affected by transportation decisions, we must engage with them and incorporate their input into our decision making process.

## WSDOT'S COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

Outreach strategies that are culturally sensitive and tailored to the affected community can help achieve full and fair participation. Not all communities have the same level of understanding regarding public processes or community consultation processes. Understand the barriers to participation in each community and work to remove them.

Public involvement efforts should be flexible. Community engagement with one group or community may not be effective for other groups and communities. For example, some individuals do not have access to the internet or subscribe to newspapers. In these situations, engagement may need to be through different means such as working with community based organizations, posting notices at community gathering places, and so on. Tailoring outreach efforts to the affected community provides the opportunity for meaningful participation.

The engagement process should be tailored to match the specific context and complexity of the project and the community's information needs.

In developing a community engagement approach, it is important to recognize that various groups and communities may have existing social networks or non-traditional methods of communicating within their groups. The traditional methods of community outreach, including public hearings, is an uncomfortable concept for some. Their lack of participation does not necessarily represent a lack of interest or concern but rather a discomfort with the form of the meeting notice, setting, or method of engagement.

To genuinely and effectively engage "local" communities, the outreach approach may be non-traditional in the sense that it requires staff or consultants to explore and utilize a variety of sources and means of communicating. In many communities there are existing social networks that can assist in identifying the most

effective means of engaging these communities.

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*“At WSDOT, inclusive engagement means reaching out to all community members, so that they can choose to have a voice in the process and know their ideas were heard and considered.”*

*Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar*

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### *Consider culturally sensitive outreach*

Washington state is a diverse place full of communities with a rich fabric of cultural diversity. WSDOT considers culturally sensitive outreach out of respect for that diversity and to help ensure we acknowledge and consider viewpoints that may not be initially apparent.

It is important to develop culturally sensitive methods of communication depending on individual community cultural norms. These methods can help address culturally sensitive issues, reduce costly project delays and assure legal compliance.

### *Environmental justice*

#### **RCW 70A.02.010 Environmental Justice definition**

“Environmental justice” means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, rules, and policies. Environmental justice includes addressing disproportionate environmental and health impacts in all laws, rules, and policies with environmental impacts by prioritizing vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, the equitable distribution of resources and benefits, and eliminating harm.

WSDOT strives to include all voices in transportation decisions and is committed to inclusive community engagement. WSDOT believes strongly in environmental justice, and as a recipient of federal funding, is subject to Presidential Executive Order 12898 - Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.

## FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

The United States Department of Transportation's environmental justice strategy is committed to ensuring a fast, safe, efficient, accessible, and convenient transportation system for communities nationwide. The following are USDOT's Guiding Environmental Justice principles:

- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority or low-income populations.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority or low-income populations.

## STATE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PRINCIPLES

The Washington State Legislature created a statewide Environmental Justice Task Force in 2020, tasked with issuing a report by October of 2020. In 2021, the Legislature passed the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act, which is codified in RCW 70A.

Chapter 70A.02.005 states, "The purpose of this chapter is to reduce environmental and health disparities in Washington state and improve the health of all Washington state residents. This chapter implements the recommendations of the environmental justice task force established in section 221(48), chapter 415, Laws of 2019 entitled "Report to the Washington state governor and legislature, Environmental Justice Task Force: Recommendations for Prioritizing EJ in Washington State Government (October 2020)."

The EJ Task Force's Environmental Justice Principles are:

### **Achieve the highest attainable environmental quality and health outcomes for all people.**

- Prioritize health of the land, humans, animals, air, water, and marine ecosystems.
- Create sustainable systems for production, consumption, processing, and distribution.
- Recognize the ecological unity and the interdependence of all species.
- Ensure the ethical, balanced, and responsible uses of land and resources in the interest of a sustainable Washington.
- Commit to actions that ensure all children have opportunities to reach their full health and life potential.

## Adopt a racial justice lens.

- Commit to identifying and disrupting racism embedded in your organization, policies, protocols, practices, and decision-making.
- Dismantle all forms of racism, including environmental racism, by meaningfully partnering with communities to eliminate environmental and health disparities for Black people, Native and Indigenous people, and people of color.
- Develop public policy based on mutual respect and justice for all peoples, free from any form of discrimination or bias.
- Recognize a special legal and natural relationship of Native Peoples to the U.S. government through treaties, agreements, compacts, and covenants affirming sovereignty and self-determination.

## Engage community meaningfully.

- Prioritize continuous engagement with communities who face environmental injustices and continue to be underinvested and underserved.
- Recognize that people and communities hold intersecting identities that have been subject to systemic oppression including but not limited to gender, ethnicity, and disability status.
- Focus engagement on building long-term, trust-based relationships with cultural humility.
- Adequately fund opportunities for meaningful community engagement by supporting and providing opportunities for civic voice and community capacity building that builds on existing community priorities, research, and expertise. Value different “ways of knowing” and share power between governments, Tribal nations and Indigenous communities in decision-making, needs assessment, planning, implementation, enforcement, and evaluation to find community-driven solutions that are sustainable and amplify community assets.

## Be transparent.

- Ensure participation and decision-making processes are equitable and accessible.
- Make information easily accessible and relevant to the public and ensure communications are culturally and linguistically grounded.
- Engage community in processes early and often (e.g. planning, funding, policy, evaluation).
- Provide clarity on how the community engagement process informs government processes.



## Be accountable

- Embed equity and the elimination of environmental and health disparities into mission, planning, goals, and measures of progress.<sup>1</sup>
- Center the community in identifying the problems, solutions, and successes.
- “Close the loop” with communities by sharing how their involvement shaped and informed decisions, and by gathering feedback on how the government can continue to improve service delivery and engagement.

WSDOT incorporates both federal and state environmental justice principles into its programs, policies, and activities. This involves working with all communities in the planning, developing and operations of transportation projects. Additional information about WSDOT’s approach to environmental justice can be found in the agency’s Environmental Manual.

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to the EJTF’s recommendations for creating measurable goals and embedding EJ into strategic plans for guidance

## CHAPTER 2

# Resident's guide

### PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

This guide provides an overview of the state's transportation activities and describes how WSDOT conducts its work. It is tailored to the user's perspective to help Washingtonians understand how to navigate the process and what they can expect from WSDOT:

- What happens at each stage of the transportation decision making process?
- How are decisions made and how can I get involved to influence those decisions?
- What are the opportunities for engagement at each stage? What types of feedback are sought?

It's important to keep in mind that one size does not fit all. While this section describes in general terms the type of work WSDOT does in the various stages of delivering transportation services, WSDOT teams tailor their approaches for different kinds of activities based on the type of work, the complexity, and the communities affected.

Demographic analysis gives us an idea of how to tailor activities to meet the needs of communities, but that's only part of the story. We need residents to let us know what's needed. For example, if written materials are needed in an alternative format or language, or if specific equipment is needed to accommodate people with disabilities at a public meeting. Chapter 3 includes strategies for staff to consider when performing demographic analysis.

## Delivering transportation services: Understanding the process

The Washington State Department of Transportation delivers transportation plans, projects and services consistent with laws, regulations, rules and expectations set by the federal and state government.

Transportation policies are set in long range plans developed by the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) and by WSDOT.

We manage operating, maintaining, and preserving existing transportation systems. We also work to identify needs, assess strategies, refine solutions and assign resources. This approach focuses on addressing performance objectives, ensures compliance with federal and state requirements, and ensures we are good stewards of public investment.

Each stage in this process has varying opportunities for the public to engage. More detail about each step is provided in the following pages, including:

our system by *What actions occur and what decisions are made at this stage in the process?*

- What tools/activities are typically used?
- What is my role at this stage?

### TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM & SERVICE DELIVERY BUSINESS PROCESS

#### *Establish policy framework*

Policy direction includes legislation, direction from the governor, federal rules and laws, and long-range plans developed by the state. The public can be involved in legislation through legislative members, the governor through the governor's office, and federal laws and rules through Congressional representatives. Transportation plans that direct transportation policy in Washington include the Washington Transportation Plan and the Washington State Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Target Zero.

#### *What actions occur and what decisions are made at this stage in the process?*

Statewide plans establish a transportation vision and goals for the state, identify the future needs for the transportation system, and outline the strategic direction necessary to achieve these goals.

#### *What tools/activities are typically used?*

- Public in-person and virtual meetings.
- Web pages.
- Online open houses.
- Folios.
- Emails.
- Press releases.

## What is my role at this stage?

- Newsletters.
- RTPO/MPO meetings.
- Workshops.
- Advisory group.
- Social media.
- Tribal consultation.

Community input at this stage is to provide input to help shape the vision, set the goals and outline a strategic direction. Roles for engagement include taking part in surveys, attending public meetings, participating in advisory groups or steering committees, or providing comments on or about draft documents.

A few examples of statewide transportation plans produced in Washington state:

- Washington Transportation Plan: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/default.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/wtp/default.htm)
- Aviation System Plan: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/aviation/)
- Ferries System Plan: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Ferries/Planning/ESHB2358.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Ferries/Planning/ESHB2358.htm)
- Highway System Plan: <http://wsdot.wa.gov/planning/HSP>
- Strategic Highway Safety Plan: Target Zero: <http://targetzero.com>
- Public Transportation Plan: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Transit/TransportationPlan](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Transit/TransportationPlan)
- Rail System Plan: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Rail/Plans.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Rail/Plans.htm)
- Freight Mobility Plan: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Freight/freightmobilityplan](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Freight/freightmobilityplan)

## Manage system assets

Managing assets refers primarily to the operations, maintenance, and preservation of transportation systems and facilities including roadways, bridges, ferries, and other facilities.

## What actions occur and what decisions are made at this stage in the process?

Engagement at these stages is designed differently than at the policy direction phase. This is because at this level of service delivery, the asset already exists and we know we need to maintain, preserve and operate it. WSDOT strives to provide information, receive feedback, and maintain an ongoing dialogue with the community it serves.

## WHAT TOOLS/ACTIVITIES ARE TYPICALLY USED?

- Governmental or quasi-governmental meetings.
- Folios/ Literature/ Newsletters.
- Television/ Radio.
- Responses to emails and phone calls.
- Press releases.
- Informal (acquaintance, friend, family, et al.).
- One-on-one conversations/Door knocking.
- Web pages & social media.
- Rest area billboards.
- Face-to-face on-site meetings.
- Portable changeable message signs.
- Mailings.
- Travel displays.
- Open houses (online or in person).
- Community meetings (identified by community leaders).
- RTP/MPO meetings.
- Providing information to and through schools.
- Service schedule changes.
- Vehicle reservations system.
- Skype.
- Tribal consultation

## EXAMPLES

- For conditions related to managing assets, you can use the WSDOT mobile app, look at cameras online, view travel time signs, follow us on Facebook or Twitter, or call 511.
- For a system performance map, visit: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/accountability/maintenance-accountability-process>.
- The Maintenance Accountability Process (MAP) is a tool which measures and communicates the outcomes of the maintenance activities. It provides the tools to link strategic planning, the budget and maintenance service delivery. Once a year, field inspections are made of randomly selected sections of highway. The results of WSDOT's work are measured, recorded and compared to the MAP criteria to determine the level of service (LOS) delivered.
- Discover more about our agency performance and progress as well as how we measure it on the WSDOT Accountability site: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/accountability>.
- Report a highway maintenance issue.
- WSDOT Highway Maintenance oversees the day-to-day needs of maintaining our state's highway system. Our job is to maintain the highway infrastructure in good working order, keep people safe, and goods moving 24-hours-a-day, 365-days-a-year.
- Online feedback form: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/contacts/send-us-your-feedback>.

## What is my role at this stage?

As noted above, activities at this stage are primarily related to the operations, maintenance and preservation of the transportation system. Engagement at this stage often consists of keeping people informed and providing input into impacts of expected activities.

## Identify needs and assess alternative strategies

At these stages, WSDOT works with local partners, stakeholders, and communities to evaluate performance of the integrated multimodal transportation system, identify additional transportation needs, and prioritize needs. Then strategies for addressing identified needs are examined.

### WHAT ACTIONS OCCUR AND WHAT DECISIONS ARE MADE AT THESE STAGES IN THE PROCESS?

As WSDOT identifies the needs of the transportation network and assesses strategies to address the needs, opportunities for engagement exist both with the state and local governments. WSDOT region planning offices are a good place to get started, or you can attend local meetings such as those held by metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs), tribal planning organizations, and local governments. WSDOT reaches out to other interested groups where appropriate or if requested. Examples of groups WSDOT may reach out to include community groups, home owner's associations, transit providers, senior groups, bicycle and pedestrian groups, environmental groups, business organizations, chambers of commerce, school districts, neighborhood organizations and others. Contact information for MPOs, RTPOs and WSDOT regions can be found at <https://wsdot.wa.gov/engineering-standards/planning-guidance/tribal-regional-planning>.

### WHAT TOOLS/ACTIVITIES ARE TYPICALLY USED?

- Stakeholder and executive committees.
- In-person, online or hybrid open houses.
- Presentations to local groups (audiences identified by community leaders).
- Surveys with social media (Facebook, Twitter, SurveyMonkey).
- Public meetings with break-out sessions.
- Web pages.
- Folios.
- Emails.
- Press releases.
- Newsletters.
- RTPOs/MPOs.
- Workshops.
- Tribal consultation.

## What is my role at this stage?

At these stages, engagement opportunities are to provide input on transportation system needs and related goals, offer suggestions, voice concerns, stay informed, and provide input into conceptual strategies.

## Refine solutions and assign resources

WHAT ACTIONS OCCUR AND WHAT DECISIONS ARE MADE AT THIS STAGE IN THE PROCESS?

As WSDOT works to refine solutions and assign resources, it's important to understand the previous steps that have taken place. At these stages, the need for a plan, project or service has already been established and alternative strategies to meet the need have been examined. Engagement may focus on design elements of the solution and getting the most “bang for the buck” from available resources.

WHAT TOOLS/ACTIVITIES ARE TYPICALLY USED?

- Focus groups.
- Web pages.
- Social media.
- Open houses (online, in person or hybrid).
- Stakeholder group meetings.
- Presentations to local groups (audiences identified by community leaders).
- Surveys.
- Folios.
- Email.
- Press releases/Newspapers.
- Mailings.
- Newsletters.
- Displays/Kiosks/Fairs.
- Existing community meetings.
- Skype.
- Tribal consultation.

Example: Community Engagement & tribal Consultation procedures for the statewide transportation improvement program.

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a four-year, fiscally constrained prioritized multimodal transportation program of projects. The projects have been identified through tribal, local, regional, and state planning and programming processes as the highest priorities for available funding to preserve and improve the state's transportation network. Federal law requires each state to have a federally approved STIP. Only those projects programmed in the STIP can be authorized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to utilize federal funds. Local agencies are required to develop and adopt six-year transportation programs. All local agencies are required to hold at least one public hearing during the development of the six-year transportation program. Local agencies work through their metropolitan planning

or regional transportation planning organizations and county lead agency as appropriate to include projects into their Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) and the STIP. Agencies submitting projects to the TIPs for project selection conduct public involvement. In addition, the Governor's Office and the state legislature seek public involvement during all phases of the biennial budget development and approval process.

Tribal nations are required by federal law to develop a Long-Range Transportation Plan and Tribal Transportation Improvement Program (TTIP). TTIPs include all tribal transportation program funded projects programmed for construction in the next 3-5 years and can include other federal, state, county, and municipal transportation projects. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), FHWA, or the tribal nation must solicit public involvement in the development of the long-range plan. The tribal nation is required to conduct public involvement for the TTIP by publishing a notice in local and/or tribal newspapers when the draft TTIP is complete. In the absence of local public newspapers, the BIA or the tribal nation may post notices under locally acceptable practices. After approval by the tribal government TTIPs are forwarded to BIA or FHWA. A copy of the FHWA approved TTIP is returned to the tribal nation and BIA. Annually FHWA compiles the approved TTIPs into one document called the Tribal Transportation Program Transportation Improvement Program (TTPTIP). TTIPs projects may be listed in the STIP separately. TTIPs are available separately on the STIP web page at: [Statewide Transportation Improvement Program \(STIP\) | WSDOT \(wa.gov\)](#)

In metropolitan areas, each metropolitan planning organization (MPO) develops a federally required Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and a Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP). The MTP is a 20-year transportation plan for state highways, county roads, city streets, and tribal roads in the MPO planning area boundary. Plans are required to be updated at least every four years in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas and at least every five years for the others. MTPs are presented publicly, and the community is provided opportunity to participate as per the MPO's public participation process. MTPs are approved by the MPO and then submitted to the Governor, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for informational purposes.

The MTIP is a four-year prioritized listing/program of transportation projects that are consistent with the MTP. Before a project is included in the MTIP, projects are presented publicly, and the community is provided opportunity to participate as per the MPO's public participation process. The MTIP includes all federally funded projects and regionally significant projects that are submitted by tribes, cities, counties, the state, and transit providers. MTIPs are approved by the MPO, and the Secretary of Transportation as delegated by the Governor and are included in the STIP without change per federal rule (23 CFR 450.216). MPOs may, but are not required to, submit monthly updates to their MTIP for inclusion in the STIP. These are known as TIP amendments.

A Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) is a state funded, voluntary association of local governments within a county or contiguous counties that includes membership from cities, counties, WSDOT, tribes, ports, transportation service providers, private employers, and others within their organizational boundary. RTPOs were authorized by Washington State's 1990 Growth Management Act to ensure local and regional coordination of transportation planning and to develop a regional transportation plan (RTP) and a six-



year transportation improvement program (RTIP) as applicable. RTPOs can cover both urban and rural areas. Based upon agreed procedures, county lead agencies, rural cities, tribes, transit providers and the state can submit federally funded and regionally significant projects directly to WSDOT for inclusion in the STIP or to the RTPOs. Before a project

is included in a RTIP, projects are presented publicly, and the community is provided opportunity to participate as per the RTPO's public participation process. WSDOT ensures the RTP and the RTIP are consistent with state law. If they are consistent, WSDOT includes the first four years of the RTIP in the STIP without change. RTPOs may, but are not required to, submit monthly updates to their RTIP projects for inclusion in the STIP.

WSDOT encourages community engagement throughout the entire STIP process. A STIP development flowchart can be found in Appendix E. STIP process information can be found on the STIP website at: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/delivering-your-project/statewide-transportation-improvement-program-stip>.

#### WHAT IS MY ROLE AT THIS STAGE?

Engagement at this stage consists of providing information to support technical review, providing input to draft plans, and staying informed. Opportunities may include participation in local groups, stakeholder, or community meetings, or attending an open house. Visiting the WSDOT web site or social media is a good way to stay informed and to provide feedback. WSDOT headquarters or region offices can help you get involved. Contact information is available at: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/contacts/offices-regions>.

### *Develop funded solutions*

#### WHAT ACTIONS OCCUR AND WHAT DECISIONS ARE MADE AT THIS STAGE IN THE PROCESS?

At this point in the service delivery process, a need has already been established, alternative strategies have been considered, a solution has been identified, and resources have been assigned. Engagement at this point often includes learning about what to expect when a project goes to construction or influencing decisions about design elements of the solution.

#### WHAT TOOLS/ACTIVITIES ARE TYPICALLY USED?

- Focus groups.
- Web pages.
- Social media.
- Online, in-person or hybrid open house.
- City council meetings
- Stakeholder group meeting.
- Presentations to local communities (audiences identified by community leaders).

#### WHAT IS MY ROLE AT THIS STAGE?

- Folio.
- Email.
- Press release.
- Newsletter.
- Mailing.
- Travel display.
- Charrettes and workshop.
- Tribal consultation.

In this phase, WSDOT engages with stakeholders and the public to provide information about what to expect when a project goes to construction and to get input on proposed design. A key to success at this stage is clarity about what phase of the service delivery process we are in. At this point, we have already looked at the alternatives, refined a solution, and assigned resources.

Engagement at this phase is often conducted through WSDOT Regions (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/contacts/offices-regions>). You can also contact WSDOT's Development Services (<https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/highway-access-requests-training/development-services>).

### *Implement solutions*

#### WHAT ACTIONS OCCUR AND WHAT DECISIONS ARE MADE AT THIS STAGE IN THE PROCESS?

When a solution is at this phase, engagement should have occurred that shaped transportation policy, identified needs, assessed alternative strategies, refined the solution, assigned resources, and developed a funded solution. Engagement at prior stages should have set this stage up for success.

As the solution has already been through all of the development steps, this stage is primarily about implementation of the strategy that emerged from the prior process and engagement. Most engagement at this stage consists of sharing information about impacts from implementing the solution.

#### WHAT TOOLS/ACTIVITIES ARE TYPICALLY USED?

- Print, radio and television stories.
- Web pages.
- Social media.
- Mailings.
- Flyers.
- Door-to-door interactions/one-on-one conversations.
- Folios.
- Newspaper inserts.

#### WHAT IS MY ROLE AT THIS STAGE?

- Kiosks.
- Fairs.
- Online, in-person or hybrid open houses.
- Local and community meetings (audiences identified by community leaders).
- RTPO/MPO meetings.
- Workshops.
- Skype.
- Tribal consultation. Ideally, engagement at this stage consists of receiving information in advance of and as work progresses. To achieve a successful construction outcome, interaction is expected and necessary. On complex and multi-season projects, consulting and collaborating are necessary to satisfy or mitigate unanticipated community needs and demands.

Project specific information can be found on the WSDOT website.

- Projects by county: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/).
- Project search: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-projects>.
- Study search: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies>.
- Local projects: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/find-local-project>.

## CHAPTER 3

# Engagement strategies

### CHAPTER HIGHLIGHTS

- Strategies for community engagement including strategies for engaging with overburdened communities and vulnerable populations while evaluating new and existing activities and programs.
- A description of how to facilitate equitable participation and support meaningful and direct involvement of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.
- Strategies to identify and prioritize overburdened communities.
- Best practices for outreach and communication to overcome barriers to engagement with overburdened communities and vulnerable populations.
- Instruction on use of special screening tools that integrate environmental, demographic, and health disparities data to evaluate and understand the nature and needs of people impacted by significant agency actions and processes to overcome barriers to participation.
- Suggested processes that facilitate and support the inclusion of members of communities affected by agency decision making including child care and reimbursement for travel and other expenses.
- Methods for outreach and communication with those who face barriers, language or otherwise, to participation.
- Information about Tribal relations and expectations.
- Multiple reference resources.

*This chapter is not intended to:*

- Include every strategy for every situation.
- Require that all strategies included be used for every engagement effort.
- Limit engagement to only the methods provided in the guide.

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*“When we conduct meaningful community engagement on the front end, we can avoid costs associated with project scope, schedule and budget changes on the back end.”*

*Secretary of Transportation Roger Millar*

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## STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGEMENT AND DECISION MAKING WITH COMMUNITIES

Specific strategies for engaging communities in a meaningful way are identified early in the process. This engagement:

- Facilitates information sharing between partners, agencies and stakeholders.
- Assures that WSDOT information is relevant, timely and credible.
- Builds trust.

Transportation efforts can vary greatly in the length of time required for planning, design and construction and in the level of consultation appropriate.

WSDOT takes steps to assure that no person shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subject to discrimination under any program or activity on the grounds of race, color, national origin, income, gender, or sexual orientation.

In general, WSDOT strategies for meaningful engagement have included, but are not limited to:

- Identifying and prioritizing overburdened communities.
- Providing opportunities for communities, partners, and external stakeholders to help shape the future of the state’s transportation vision, strategy, and infrastructure by involving them early, consistently, and continuously.
- Developing ongoing partnerships with stakeholders, local agencies, communities, organizations, tribes, and businesses to provide an integrated, comprehensive, multimodal approach to transportation decision-making.

- Providing timely information, at appropriate decision points, that is easy to understand and accessible by affected communities.
- Integrating community needs, values, and input into the decision-making process.
- Engaging with the vulnerable, overburdened and traditionally underserved while evaluating new and existing activities and programs.
- Consistently working to build trust with external stakeholders.
- Facilitating equitable participation and supporting meaningful and direct involvement of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.
- Providing for periodic review of engagement strategies and ensuring full and open access to revisions of the community engagement process.
- Explaining actions in plain talk that can be understood by the widest possible audience.
- Developing engagement plans for major projects and plans that describe engagement and consultation opportunities relative to project milestones.
- Identifying existing community groups and sharing information at pre-existing meetings.
- Ensuring that public meetings are held at convenient and accessible locations and times.
- Using visualization techniques.

### *Basic community outreach strategies*

The following are examples of typical methods WSDOT uses. This list should not be construed as the approved list of communication methodologies. Each community is unique and not all of these strategies will work in every community.

### *Public meetings/workshops*

WSDOT requests that discussions are included on meeting agendas of community-based organizations, agencies and stakeholder groups such as the Washington State Transportation Commission, MPOs, RTPOs, community cultural events, business associations, and other agencies and organizations with an interest in transportation issues.

Whenever possible, arrangements should be made to overcome barriers to participation. This includes providing child care, refreshments and reimbursement for travel and other expenses whenever possible.

Additional meetings will be established as needed to discuss specific efforts such as the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan or the STIP. These meetings are held at low-or-no cost, accessible facilities and scheduled at reasonable times to facilitate public participation.

## Visualization techniques

To the extent practicable, WSDOT employs visualization techniques, which may include:

- Maps.
- Charts.
- Graphs.
- Web content.
- Slide shows.
- Artist's renderings.
- Animation.
- Videos.

WSDOT's Visual Resource Group (VERG) are available to provide help with visualizations, video, photography, and UAV (drone) footage. More information about VERG and the services they offer is available at <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/business/visualcommunications/>.

## Online, virtual and hybrid engagement

WSDOT uses online, virtual and hybrid options to ensure the maximum amount of opportunities to engage. We have developed a system for online open houses at <http://engage.wsdot.wa.gov/>. We have a variety of platforms for conducting virtual and hybrid public meetings including Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Skype, and GoTo meeting/webinar. When conducting online, virtual and hybrid engagement, consideration should always be given to accessibility including:

- Those with vision or hearing limitation.
- Those with limited English proficiency.
- Those with limited internet connectivity or available technology.

WSDOT uses social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Blogger and others. We also engage through use of the WSDOT app.

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*WSDOT takes steps to ensure that all voices are heard, including those traditionally underserved by the transportation decision-making process. The National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) report 710, Practical Approaches for Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations in Transportation Decisionmaking serves as a guide. The report is available online at: <https://www.trb.org/Publications/Blurbs/166872.aspx>.*

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## Polls/surveys

When appropriate, polls including telephone polls, electronic surveys through the internet or email, or hard-copy printed surveys distributed at meetings or by mail are used for outreach activities. Web

based surveys may be employed, including those through the Washington Transportation Commission's "Voice of Washington State" survey and those created using the SurveyMonkey tool. These surveys allow community members to provide input at a time and location of their choosing. Surveys may be sent to established email lists such as those for local agencies, RTPOs, MPOs, tribes, engineers or project managers, and state agencies.

In addition to using these existing lists, there is a Statewide Planning Email/Text update list on WSDOT's homepage at: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/). Those who do not have internet access can call or write WSDOT at P.O. Box 47370, Olympia, WA 98504.

## Public involvement materials

To minimize expense, WSDOT will limit the use of printed materials. Where necessary, printed materials should be presented in reader-friendly format and should use visualization techniques as much as possible. WSDOT tries to provide timely information about transportation issues and

decision-making processes simply, efficiently, concisely and correctly. Examples of materials used for public involvement include:

- Fliers.
- Brochures.
- Visualizations.
- Maps.
- Drawings.
- Photographs.
- Presentations.
- Fact sheets.
- Charts and graphs.
- Newsletters.
- Websites.

## Publications

Documents are published on the WSDOT website and emails are sent to distribution lists when materials are published. Hard copies are made available upon request for those lacking internet access. Official documents are provided to and available at the WSDOT and State Libraries. You can contact the WSDOT library at [library@wsdot.wa.gov](mailto:library@wsdot.wa.gov) or 360-705-7750 or the State Library at [research@sos.wa.gov](mailto:research@sos.wa.gov) or 509-586-1492.



### *Targeted mailings, fliers and email*

Letters and/or postcards announcing engagement opportunities may be sent to targeted audiences encouraging them to participate. Fliers may be developed and delivered to community organizations announcing updates.

Translation services should be provided consistent with WSDOT guidelines available at

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/WSDOT-Internal-Procedures-Translation-Services.pdf>.

### *Working with local media*

During the community engagement process, meetings may be held at various locations throughout the state.

Local media will be notified when locations have been chosen. Local non-English speaking media will be notified if available. Some ways that WSDOT may notify local media:

- News release.
- Purchased advertising.
- Written commentary pieces.
- Display advertising.
- Public service announcements.
- Agency spokesperson on public access or cable television programming.
- Neighborhood or regional publications/newsletters.
- Non-English publications in areas with Limited English Proficiency populations.

### *Electronic access to information*

To the extent practicable, WSDOT provides materials electronically to the widest possible audience. To achieve this, materials are typically posted on the WSDOT website and sent out by email. Materials may also be sent or posted to social media sites. WSDOT has an FTP site that can be used to transfer large files.

### *Public notifications*

Public notification may be through:

- Notices on the web.
- Email.
- Newsletters.
- Announcements at public meetings.
- Advertisements.
- Local media.
- Libraries.
- Local groups.
- Services for underserved populations.
- Fliers.
- Exhibits.
- Twitter, Facebook, the WSDOT Blog or other social media platforms.

## *How will WSDOT consider and respond to public comment?*

Public comment is an integral part of WSDOT's decision-making process. WSDOT reviews, documents and considers comments. Each comment received should be acknowledged. This encourages continued involvement and confirms that each comment has been considered. Acknowledgement helps facilitate future communication and builds trust and credibility within the community. Detailed outreach plans for individual efforts should include a description of how comments are considered and what the process for responding will be.

## *Collecting and using demographic data*

Identifying the size and location of vulnerable, overburdened, low-income and minority population groups is an important first step toward assessing whether or not transportation system investments disproportionately burden or fail to meet the needs of any segment of the population.

When developing an outreach plan, a demographic analysis should be conducted paying special attention to overburdened, vulnerable, or traditionally underserved populations including minority, low-income, and non-English speaking. Once determined, demographic information should be used to shape WSDOT's outreach strategy including how the agency will engage with vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

WSDOT uses the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's EJScreen website and Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction tools to determine community demographics. Direction on determining demographics are available on WSDOT's Environmental Justice and Title VI website here: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/engineering-standards/environmental-guidance/environmental-justice-title-vi>. A step by step guide to using EJScreen can be found here: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/Env-EJ-EJScreenHowTo.pdf>.

FHWA requires verification of demographic data because the U.S. Census data is only collected every ten years. The preferred secondary data source is school demographic data from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) website. OSPI information is available at the following URL: <https://washingtonstatereportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us/>.

To understand the nature and needs of people impacted by significant agency actions, it is recommended to use the Washington State Environmental Health Disparities map to identify health disparities in your project's area.

Guidance for using the Environmental Health Disparities map can be found here:

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/engineering-standards/environmental-guidance/social-community> or here:

<https://doh.wa.gov/data-statistical-reports/washington-tracking-network-wtn/washington-environmental-health-disparities-map>. Direct access to the map is here: <https://fortress.wa.gov/doh/wtnibl/WTNIBL/>.

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*WSDOT embraces our tribal government-to-government relationships and engages with tribes consistent with our Centennial Accord Plan and Tribal Communication and Consultation Protocols.*

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## TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

WSDOT's Title VI Program's primary goal is to ensure all management, staff, contractors, local agencies, and service beneficiaries are aware of the provisions of Title VI and the responsibilities associated with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. WSDOT's Title VI policy and plan can be found on the Office of Equal Opportunity's website at: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/title-vi-limited-english-proficiency>.

### *Document language*

Proper Title VI Language for Publications, Communications, and Public Involvement can be found in our language guide: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/OEO-WSDOT-LEP-Access-Plan2.pdf>.

## LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP)

WSDOT provides language assistance to people with limited English proficiency consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Presidential Executive Order (EO) 13166 "Improving Access for Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency."

### *Who is a LEP individual?*

A limited English proficient individual, as defined by the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Transportation (Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration), is an individual who does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English.

### *What is WSDOT's process for engaging LEP individuals?*

It is WSDOT's policy to ensure that programs, activities, and services normally provided in English are accessible to LEP individuals and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin. These processes include, but are not limited to, providing resources such as bilingual staff, interpreters, and translated materials to ensure that information and services are made available in languages readily understood by WSDOT customers and those affected by its activities and services. For specific guidance on WSDOT LEP policy check WSDOT's LEP plan at: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/OEO-WSDOT-LEP-Access-Plan2.pdf>.

## Translation services

If the demographic data indicates that five percent of the population or more than 1,000 persons within a half mile of your project “speak English less than well,” you will need to provide equal access to project information in their language. This may be accomplished by posting a notice on your web page in the appropriate language(s) and printing and distributing translated project brochures, meeting invitations, and newsletters in the appropriate languages(s). You do not need to translate all of the documents for your project if you have provided a way for people to request that information.

## Resources

- WSDOT LEP web page: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/title-vi-limited-english-proficiency>
- WSDOT LEP Plan: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/OEO-WSDOT-LEP-Access-Plan2.pdf> and
- Determination of translation need and languages: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/WSDOT-Internal-Procedures-Translation-Services.pdf>
- Request for translation services: <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Title-VI-Translation%20Services3.pdf>.

## ENGAGING WITH OVERBURDENED COMMUNITIES AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

As WSDOT evaluates new and existing activities and programs, the agency facilitates equitable participation and supports meaningful and direct involvement of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities. Community engagement needs to be proactive and appropriate to the communities we interact with. Outreach is done in a way that is responsive to the needs of the people or group. Examples of appropriate outreach include:

- Meeting times, places, or formats chosen by the community.
- Materials in formats preferred by the community (web or print, braille, different language, etc.).
- Community members time and efforts are respected and appreciated; reimbursement offered to those with low income or who have lived experience to support equity (subject to available funding).
- Childcare provided or expenses reimbursed when possible (subject to available funding).

Proactive and appropriate community outreach conveys a respect for the community that will be affected by agency activities and programs. Early consultation, and integrity with local issues and concerns, indicate that the community’s voice and participation is valued and an important part of the overall project process. Essentially, it comes down to building respect and trust.

Extra effort may be needed to elicit involvement from people unaccustomed to participating in the public involvement process. They often have different needs and perspectives than those who traditionally participate in transportation decision-making, and they may have important, unspoken issues that should be heard. They not only may have greater difficulty getting to jobs, schools, recreation, and shopping than the population at large, but also they may be unaware of transportation proposals that could dramatically change their lives.

### *How do I tailor community engagement to overburdened communities and vulnerable populations?*

Many people have traditionally been overburdened and underserved by conventional outreach methods due to race, color, national origin or income. People that an agency wishes to reach may not read notices in an English language newspaper, or may have low-literacy. People may not feel safe or welcome at a meeting held in government offices. People may be unable to attend public events if they do not own a car, if they cannot afford childcare, or if they work late shifts or more than one job.

What is low literacy? What is limited English proficiency? A 2019 report by the National Center for Education Statistics determined that 21 percent of American adults have “low level English literacy,” including 4.1 percent classified as “functionally illiterate.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 20 percent of Americans speak a language other than English at home. Limited English proficiency individuals have low English literacy and may or may not be literate in their primary language. In many cases, there is a direct correlation between low literacy, limited English proficiency, low educational attainment, and low income.

Failing to account for variety in cultural expectations, language, literacy, or income and affordability can create barriers to full participation. In order to have participation that can ultimately inform decision-making, agencies must identify the area demographic(s) and develop an effective approach for outreach and communication.

### *What guidelines apply to overburdened communities and vulnerable populations?*

Transportation plans should avoid a disproportionately high and adverse impact of transportation policies or investments on traditionally underserved communities. The USDOT’s Statewide and Nonmetropolitan Transportation Planning; Metropolitan Transportation Planning; Final Rule, effective May 27, 2016, requires “a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.”

Executive Orders also direct federal agencies to conduct their programs, policies, and activities to ensure that they do not exclude persons from participation in or benefits of the programs. Since WSDOT receives federal money, it is also subject to these executive orders. Presidential Executive Order 12898, the EJ Order of 1994, requires Federal agencies to identify programs, policies, and regulations with a disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low-income populations. Presidential Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, requires Federal agencies to create a system by which limited English proficiency individuals can meaningfully access agency services.

## WHAT IS TAILORED OUTREACH?

Tailored outreach simply means selecting and adjusting community engagement techniques in order to effectively connect with the people affected by a project, whoever and wherever they are. Tailored outreach recognizes that “traditional” techniques are not always the most effective. Creating effective outreach requires knowing the constituency and taking steps to ensure that the public involvement process is accessible to everyone in the community. WSDOT must also be sensitive to the limitations experienced by some individuals due to any number of reasons.

WSDOT needs input from overburdened communities and vulnerable populations to assure equity in the agency’s decision making process. Typical meeting announcements in newspapers and on the radio, for example, may not reach underserved populations. Agencies need to understand how these populations get information. This could be via bulletins from religious centers, on grocery store or laundromat bulletin boards, or at community meeting places.

Tailored outreach has several objectives in addition to the basic goals of public involvement:

- Convey issues in ways that are meaningful to all constituents.
- Bridge cultural and economic differences that affect participation.
- Use communication techniques that enable a wide variety of people to interact.
- Develop partnerships on a one-to-one or small group basis to assure representation of all demographics.
- Increase participation by overburdened communities and vulnerable populations so they have an impact on decisions.

### *When is tailored outreach used most effectively?*

Outreach should always be tailored to ensure a connection with potentially affected interests. A key activity for WSDOT staff is to learn about the potentially affected interest(s) and identify the most effective means of outreach and communication in the earliest possible stages.

Tailoring outreach efforts to overburdened communities and vulnerable populations starts early and extends throughout the process, including fine-tuning other public involvement efforts to most effectively reach potentially affected interests, and can also be integrated with other public involvement efforts. Informing communities of events and providing status reports helps to establish a good working relationship. This approach is also very effective in diffusing potentially controversial issues by addressing concerns early.

The advantages of tailoring outreach early in both project development and long-range planning include:

- Allowing more people to understand a process, plan, or project.
- Broadening the range of approaches and project alternatives.
- Enhancing opportunities for creative solutions for transportation needs.
- Reducing the potential need to re-do an environmental analysis.
- Establishing good relationships with traditionally underserved groups.
- Getting people to help in the planning process.
- Breaking down historical barriers.
- Improving opportunities for obtaining consensus.

### *Why is it important to tailor outreach to overburdened and vulnerable groups?*

Outreach to overburdened communities and vulnerable populations helps assure that all constituents have opportunities to affect the decision-making process. It sets the tone for subsequent project activities, promoting a spirit of inclusion. Tailored outreach efforts are particularly useful because they:

- Provide fresh perspectives.
- Give first-hand information about community specific issues and concerns of which WSDOT may not have been aware.
- Flag potential controversies.
- Provide feedback on how to get these communities involved.
- Provide solutions that best meet the communities' needs.

Understanding the full range of a community's needs enables WSDOT to be more responsive and incorporate community feedback into decisions. The perspective of overburdened and vulnerable people can inform the goals and outcomes of planning and project development. Such individuals can suggest fresh approaches to transportation issues that otherwise would not be raised.

## *Considerations when tailoring outreach to overburdened and vulnerable populations*

Traditional public involvement techniques, such as formal meetings, may not be effective in engaging overburdened and vulnerable populations. A variety of public involvement techniques may be needed. In order to have active participation, it is useful to hold meetings and conduct outreach in the community itself. Practitioners can identify activity centers as meeting locations and venues for informal outreach. When disseminating information to the public, agencies must recognize the need to communicate with those who have limited English proficiency by instead communicating in their native language. Announcements in minority or ethnic news media can also heighten interest in a process.

Effective outreach approaches should be identified to overcome potential barriers. Outreach efforts should not rely exclusively on traditional communication such as written media (newspapers, email, and websites).

Presentations may need to rely on verbal communication and visual explanations and avoid the need for participants to read or write. One starting point in effective interaction is asking people how they want to be referred to (e.g., Hispanic or Latino; American Indian or Native American).

Effective outreach approaches must be matched to the characteristics of the community being contacted. WSDOT staff must initially determine the most effective communication techniques for reaching the community affected by the project. A variety of techniques may need to be employed to reach more than one overburdened or vulnerable group.

WSDOT staff may first need to learn about the constituency, both in general and, more specifically, the individuals in the local community (e.g., how many are recent immigrants). In addition, agencies should discover whether the group is literate in its own language or in English or neither. Agencies should also talk with community leaders to find out the best techniques for working with a particular group: which approaches to use, where to hold events, how to recruit people, what to avoid doing. Once contacted, the community can suggest alternative times, places, and methods.

Identify which underserved groups require special attention for a transportation plan or project because of its impact on them.

## *Strategies for tailoring outreach to overburdened and vulnerable populations*

### UNDERSTAND THE COMMUNITY

Carefully research the communities potentially affected by a plan or project to identify a diverse group of community leaders. This can be done by contacting local governments to determine the leaders in the community, through word of mouth, conducting interviews, and by being alert to advertisements/fliers for community activities. It is also important to maintain up-to-date contact lists for community-based



organizations and key individuals in the community who can be tapped for discussions. Human service coalitions, such as the United Way, colleges and universities, and national organizations, often maintain similar contact lists.

#### ACCESS INFORMATION FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS.

- Community organizations and their leaders are invaluable in building communication between agencies and overburdened or vulnerable groups. Canvassing key community leaders individually may help determine the best ways to conduct outreach within their communities. These community leaders play an important role; they often represent their communities in the process, especially when those working long hours cannot attend grass root events.
- Community groups provide access to individuals and can serve as forums for participation. Agencies sometimes focus initial attention on active community groups to prepare for later approaches to the general public. Community groups, like Civic Advisory Committees, can provide overburdened and vulnerable communities with meaningful ways to participate, as well as a sense of empowerment.
- Religious organizations are often an effective way to reach a particular local community. Most religious organizations have civic as well as religious activities and interests along with a strong geographic base. Religious organizations have broad constituencies and often have a strong ethnic or cultural focus. They are particularly good avenues for reaching people who are not active in the community in other ways.

#### CONCEPT MAPPING

Concept mapping is a technique that involves mapping the ideas of residents and using those results in strategic plans. It includes a brainstorming activity and is very inclusive in the sense that no idea or input is excluded or “edited” in the final result. Overburdened or vulnerable people can be invited to participate in civic advisory committees, task forces, and other policy bodies. Such inclusion empowers these communities and provides access to the whole participatory effort.

#### COMPENSATION

Barriers to participation should be removed to the extent legal and practicable. Removing financial barriers for those with lower financial means encourages full and open participation. Subject to financial availability, WSDOT may provide a stipend of no more than \$200 per day to individuals who are low income or have lived experience to support their participation in “class one” groups as identified in RCW 43.03.220. If no stipend is offered, consider reimbursing vulnerable populations and overburdened communities for travel and other expenses. Care should be taken with reimbursement and stipends to not endorse one company over another. IE - Visa, Mastercard, Amazon, etc.

#### CHILDCARE

Providing childcare at public meetings facilitates and supports the inclusion of affected community members. If resources are available, it is a good idea to provide childcare, reimbursement for child care, or child-friendly activities.

#### CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

One of the best ways to engage with EJ and limited-English proficient populations is to establish a CAC composed of local residents. If possible, it is a good idea to recruit individuals who are trusted and well-known in the community and who represent a wide range of stakeholder viewpoints that may be affected by a project. CAC members can serve as a good liaison between the project team and the community. They can also advise the project team on messaging and outreach approach. While they can be effective, advisory groups require a substantial amount of initial planning to determine the role of the CAC and the frequency and content of meetings. Serving on a CAC also involves a substantial commitment for stakeholders.

#### PARTNERING WITH COMMUNITY-BASED AND SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES.

Some groups and communities may have existing social networks or non-traditional methods of effectively communicating within their groups. The traditional methods of community outreach, including public meeting notices and public hearings, can be an unfamiliar concept and seem unnatural for some groups. In many communities there are existing social networks that can assist in identifying the most effective means of engaging their communities. Consult with key community leaders in the project area who can assist in identifying existing community social networks such as churches, social groups, tribal representatives, homeowners associations, or school principals, to name a few. Be sure to ask key community leaders for appropriate places to convene public meetings. Community-based and social service agencies may be willing to support the public involvement process if they feel that

it will help their constituents or clients. They may offer meeting space and staff, or they may have other effective ways of conveying information. If the project team enlists their help, it is important to remember that these organizations are typically overextended and rarely have the capacity and resources to take on new responsibilities. The project manager or communications lead may, for example, need to consider dropping by during lunch time at a local senior center or other gathering place on a more regular basis, to become a familiar face within a community before conducting outreach specific to a project.

#### SENSITIVELY-DESIGNED WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS

Some residents may be uncomfortable participating in large public meetings or speaking up in group settings. Therefore, it is important to design meetings and workshops that are sensitive to those differences and offer a variety of methods of interaction. If possible, providing food may be a good idea, especially when the food comes

from a local business or restaurant. To reach out to families, setting up a table with coloring or other child-friendly activities is an effective way to draw more people to a meeting. If the target audience is likely to have irregular work schedules or other scheduling challenges, it helps to hold multiple meetings at various times or host an all-day open house. That way, people who work night shifts can attend during the day. Always select meeting venues that are served by transit and ADA accessible. Consider language interpretation needs when designing a workshop. When working in a community where multiple languages are spoken, it may be more manageable and comfortable for participants and staff alike if sessions are specific to one language, rather than conducting simultaneous interpretation as part of a large meeting where multiple languages are spoken. It is also necessary to provide reasonable accommodation for people with disabilities, including visual, hearing, or mobility impairments.

#### IDENTIFY POPULAR COMMUNICATION METHODS

Various language groups may have a variety of preferred methods of communications. For example, Vietnamese speakers may prefer Vietnamese-language newspapers, whereas Spanish-speakers may get most of their information from Spanish-language radio and television. Once a demographic analysis has been completed, target audiences should be evaluated to determine which communications methods are most favored and appropriate. Community organizations and churches can be a good source of information to aid in understanding the preferred methods of communication in the project area.

#### COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT.

Conventional planning processes might not always capture detailed information about specific community challenges or priorities. A community assessment can empower residents to fill those gaps. In a community assessment, community members gather, analyze, and report information to produce a more complete picture of current conditions, needs, and available resources. An assessment typically focuses on a priority issue in a specific area, such as housing or transportation options in a neighborhood. Examples include walkability audits, which evaluate the safety and convenience of the walking environment, and community food assessments, which analyze the availability of healthy food

options. Community assessments provide credible data that community organizations and government staff can use to document needs, secure grants, and inform future neighborhood investments. They can also lead to helpful new relationships among residents, organizations and government partners.

#### HOLD COMMUNITY PLANNING AND VISIONING WORKSHOPS.

Defining a shared vision and goals for a site, neighborhood, city, town, or region is the first step in the planning process and the foundation for subsequent land use policy and regulatory changes and investments in the community. Community planning and visioning workshops can be sponsored by public agencies, non-

governmental organizations, and private developers. These workshops are usually managed by facilitators who lead participants through structured discussions and design exercises, and they often produce visual representations of the community's desired future, such as maps and drawings. After the workshop, the results, along with recommendations on how to achieve the vision, are shared with the broader public and decision-makers and integrated into planning processes.

Workshops can be completed in one day or include multiple meetings scheduled over several months. Multi-day collaborative planning events where stakeholders create a plan and implementation strategy are known as charrettes. The costs of a workshop or charrette vary depending on their complexity, technical needs and duration.

#### COMMUNITY MEETING TIMES

WSDOT needs to consider the times at which members of a community are available to participate in the transportation decision-making process. Agencies should discover whether work schedules interfere with evening and weekday meeting times. Many low-income people do not have private transportation and are limited to times and locations accessible by public transit. In addition, issues of child and elder care can impact an individual's schedule. In winter months, many elderly people can be reluctant to drive when it is dark outside. It is important, therefore, to consider expanding hours of operation for public meetings and other functions that might be typically held in the evening. For some informational meetings, expanding hours of operation might consist simply of staffing a desk with informational materials, perhaps even showing a short informational video or slide presentation on the project. In addition, individuals can be offered an opportunity to put their names on a mailing list for additional information or to be included in the formal review process for a particular project. A more formal public meeting can be held in addition to these open hours; however, it should be emphasized that all input taken during the open hours will be considered.

#### TRADITIONAL METHODS FOR COMMUNICATION

WSDOT also needs to recognize communication and decision-making expectations of whatever community they are communicating with. WSDOT staff members can learn about traditions and behavioral patterns by careful observation or by tactfully and privately asking group members what is going on. In some cultures, for example, it is considered improper to disagree with authority. In other cultures, discussion with the entire community precedes decisions by its leaders, and elders may have a particular role in decision-making. In some groups, speaking up is interpreted as "making trouble." Group members familiar with mainstream culture are particularly good sources of such information.

WSDOT need to make special efforts to communicate with people who use languages other than English. Translation of material and bilingual speakers are often necessary to reach the non-English speaking population.

## WHO LEADS TAILORED OUTREACH EFFORTS?

Existing staff may lead outreach activities, provided they have the appropriate skills or training. To be successful, staff needs to have an open-mind, process skills, and sensitivity to cultural differences. They also must be committed to encouraging diverse group participation, not only because it takes persistence and creative thinking to foster inclusion of people who have historically been excluded,

but also because lack of such commitment is easily perceived and undermines trust and credibility. To enhance the effectiveness of interaction, staff should come from a variety of backgrounds.

Special outreach coordinators such as WSDOT communicators or staff from our Office of Equal Opportunity can provide particularly strong leadership and demonstrate the agency's sincere commitment to responding to concerns of traditionally underserved communities. A number of agencies hire staff specifically charged with outreach to overburdened and vulnerable populations. By communicating with an intermediary, WSDOT staff better understand the community's culture, dress code, language, and beliefs, as well as their specific transportation needs and concerns.

Consultants with special expertise or skills can also enhance the process.

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES OF TAILORING OUTREACH TO THE CONSTITUENCY?

Staff time and resources may be significant. Administering an outreach program involves monitoring inquiries and responses as well as documenting and answering numerous requests for meetings or briefings. In addition, tailored outreach to specific groups may require substantial staff time and energy. For example, some people lack a tradition of participation in government and require extra staff effort to encourage their participation.

It takes time, effort, and sensitivity to develop relationships. Agencies should be aware that communities are usually complex entities; every individual in a community has their own way of viewing and responding to an issue. There may be a history of changing influence of one or more subgroups within a community. For example, a community leader identified by WSDOT may not actually represent the full range of views held by the constituency.

## NATIVE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION

*This section will be completed when guidance from the EJ Council is ready and in collaboration with tribal governments.*

## CHAPTER 4

# Assessing effective engagement

### Measuring success

Measuring the effectiveness of community outreach is a vital step in the engagement process. A key element is to think about how you will do engagement at the beginning of your plan, project or program. Have an outreach plan, carry out the plan, and then measure the success of your engagement on a case-by-case basis. It can often be helpful to obtain feedback in order to differentiate between how you think you did and how communities think you did. Asking for basic contact information and permission to follow up will allow you to build a contacts list for individuals and groups to contact for feedback.

Sample ways to obtain feedback:

- Interviews at events.
- Form distributed at public meeting.
- Follow-up phone calls with participants after an event.
- A survey sent out via email. Some sample performance measures:
- Number of engagement events held, meetings attended, or persons interacted with.
- Number of participants at transportation related meetings.

- Number/percent of customers satisfied with feedback received after offering comments.
- Percent of overall customer satisfaction.
- Percent of customers that felt their concerns were addressed.
- Percent of customers (public and partners) who feel that they are included in the decision making process.
- Percent of positive versus negative comments received.
- Number of positive news stories.
- Percent of customers who feel completed projects, plans, or programs are (or present) the right solution.

A less effective but still useful way to measure the success of your outreach may be to have an “after action” session with your team and document where you were successful and where you think you could improve.

Some sample questions to ask include:

- Did we provide enough opportunities for engagement?
- Did we inform people about the opportunities to engage?
- How did we help people understand the issues?
- What convenient opportunities for meaningful engagement did we provide?
- How was the outcome of the project, plan or program affected by the participation?
- How were our relationships with residents, local officials, businesses and other affected?
- What surprises did we encounter?
- What could we do better next time?

## MEASURING THE SUCCESS OF CULTURALLY-SENSITIVE OUTREACH

Measuring the success of your “culturally sensitive outreach” doesn’t have to be difficult, expensive, or overly time-consuming. Evaluation can be based on qualitative or quantitative measures or both. Ideally, you would use a combination of qualitative and quantitative measures to evaluate your outreach. You may have difficulty determining quantitative information about race, income, or LEP status, but you should try to capture whatever quantitative data you can. This may include:

- Number of self-identified minority and/or low-income people interacted with.
- Number of meetings held in minority and/or low-income neighborhoods.
- Number of translated documents requested, provided, distributed or responded to.
- Number of community groups contacted that specialize in services for minorities, low-income persons, or the disabled.
- Number of efforts to reach out to media targeting minority, low-income, and disabled persons.

- Number of responses to a survey.

It can be helpful to set up objectives for culturally sensitive outreach ahead of time. Some sample objectives could be:

- Increase the number of phone calls, emails, and web hits related to your project.
- Publish five stories in media targeting protected populations.
- Translate materials into languages appropriate for your targeted populations.
- Make sure that minorities, low-income persons, and the disabled are aware about meetings and that they know accommodations will be available.

Collecting qualitative data isn't always as clear-cut as quantitative, but there are some steps you can take.

- Contact community organizations directly and ask them if they felt included in the process.
- Do a survey to see if people felt their voices were heard.
- You may see support increase for your plan, project, or process.
- You may see a reduced number of complaints or inquiries.
- You may avoid an expected legal challenge or Title VI complaint.
- You may receive a favorable review or avoid an expected negative review.
- You may see the tone of media coverage change.

The bottom line for measuring success is that if you evaluate your outreach and document the results, you can continue to get better at it. You will see what works and what doesn't. You also set yourself up for positive reviews and continued acceptance and trust in your communities.

## Next steps

WSDOT values meaningful and transparent community engagement throughout the development of our multimodal transportation plans and projects. We adopted our current Community Engagement Plan in 2016. While implementing this plan, WSDOT continues to learn and explore ways to improve connections with the diverse communities we serve, as evidenced by recently adopted Title VI and Limited English Proficiency plans.

This draft update to our Community Engagement Plan lays the groundwork for WSDOT to engage with communities, including underserved communities and vulnerable populations. It provides a resident's guide to engaging and provides guidance for staff to follow while conducting engagement activities.

Responding to the HEAL Act, WSDOT reviewed our existing plan and invited more than 200 representatives of overburdened communities and vulnerable populations across Washington state to provide insight on how we can better align our current plan with the HEAL Act.



The HEAL Act requires state agencies to create and adopt a plan by July 1, 2022. For this and other parts of HEAL, agencies work closely with the Environmental Justice Council, which consists of members appointed by the Governor. HEAL states that the Environmental Justice Council will provide guidance on community engagement plans as agencies create and update them. HEAL also requires that each covered agency consider the guidance developed by the Council. See the Environmental Justice Council website for more details on the role of the Council.

HEAL directed the Department of Health to convene the first meeting of the Council by January 1, 2022.

However, the Council was not fully appointed and seated until March of 2022. Because of those delays, April 4th, 2022 was the earliest practical date the Council could have convened. HEAL also created an Interagency Work Group to coordinate work among the seven HEAL agencies and others that decide to follow its guidelines. The Interagency Work Group began drafting community engagement plans in January 2022 while awaiting seating of the Environmental Justice Council.

The current drafts of agency community engagement plans have not yet been reviewed by the Environmental Justice Council.

As an agency, we are committed to a strong partnership with the Environmental Justice Council as we integrate environmental justice into agency activities. We are mindful of our duty to the legislature and people of Washington to adopt a community engagement plan by July 1, 2022.

In balancing these interests and obligations, our agency continues to follow our current plan and shares a draft of our updated plan. The future implementation of this draft plan is dependent on coordination with the Environmental Justice Council and will incorporate guidance from the Council, communities across Washington state, and will include Tribal Consultation.

Significant updates to the Community Engagement Plan will be available for public review and comment for at least 45 days.

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX A

# *Best practices for inclusive community engagement*

The Denver Transit Agency sends out meeting notices to schools for children to take to their parents. It also provides bilingual, educational coloring books as an incentive to attract children who, in turn, involve their parents.

The following section is intended to be a resource for practitioners to share agency community engagement success stories, lessons learned, and techniques to engage successfully. It is in its earliest stages and will be further expanded in subsequent updates. By sharing these best-practices, we are able to learn from one another and further a best-in-class community engagement culture at WSDOT.

Like Results WSDOT, this Community Engagement Plan is a continuous process. There will always be room to expand and improve as we continue engaging with our customers. Future editions of this plan will include additional success stories, lessons learned, and best practices.



## The Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program

The Washington State Department of Transportation is replacing the Alaskan Way Viaduct, a seismically-vulnerable elevated highway that carries State Route 99 (SR99) along the downtown Seattle waterfront. To replace the viaduct, a giant tunneling machine, nicknamed Bertha, is digging an approximately two-mile-long tunnel beneath downtown Seattle. In April 2016, Bertha's route took her beneath the viaduct itself, calling for a temporary closure of the structure.

The viaduct carries 90,000 vehicles and 25,000 bus riders a day and is one of only two north-south highways through Seattle. WSDOT needed drivers to plan ahead and, if possible, alter the time or mode of their commutes.

WSDOT decided early that social media would be a leading component of the outreach effort. Traffic is a real-time story, and social media would give WSDOT the ability to help drivers find alternate routes, while keeping WSDOT ahead of the inevitable public frustration and speculation.

A two-week highway closure would dominate the news cycle and generate a tremendous amount of social media chatter. WSDOT sought to center the Twitter conversation around the “#99closure” hashtag, drive traffic to the program website, inform and engage the public about the closure and its necessity, and demonstrate the agency's responsiveness to questions and emerging issues. To achieve these goals, WSDOT used a handful of techniques both tried and new to keep the media and public fed on a diet of factual and actionable information.

### APPLIED ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

#### *Focus the conversation*

WSDOT and its partners used #99closure everywhere – on Twitter, in web and print materials, and in City Council briefings – to keep the conversation from splintering. When news media deviated to other hashtags, WSDOT media relations requested they switch back (and they did).

#### *Make it easy to find information*

The project's website URL is long and cumbersome, so WSDOT bought the print-friendly [www.99closure.org](http://www.99closure.org) as a redirect address, creating consistency with the hashtag.

Geographic coordination. WSDOT placed a communicator in the closure's command center 24/7, giving the social media team quick access both to tunneling and traffic information, and to technical review.

### Anticipate public interest

WSDOT expected the public's two biggest questions to be, "How do I avoid congestion?" and "How is tunneling coming?" In answer, WSDOT released a five- video series sharing tips for commuters. The communications team also created a map showing Bertha's progress under the viaduct, updating it daily and sharing it widely on social media.

### Demonstrate progress

How to show progress on a project that is mostly underground? Besides the aforementioned tunneling map, WSDOT created a video of the completed section of tunnel behind Bertha. WSDOT used a trendy technology (drones) to give the public an exclusive view of a cutting-edge engineering project (Bertha).

### Use every platform

WSDOT used three different Twitter accounts, Facebook, reddit and Periscope to monitor conversations, share updates and messages, and answer questions. It was only the second time WSDOT had used Reddit to push information and engage the public.



The closure affected traffic on a regional level, which meant the audience for WSDOT's social media outreach was broad and diverse. The #99closure campaign's primary targets were the hundreds of thousands of commuters and travelers in the Seattle metropolitan area. Within that cohort, WSDOT created different messages and resources

for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians, and the ridership of six different transit agencies employing buses, vans, light rail trains, water taxis and ferries. Additional audiences included major regional employers, downtown businesses likely to be affected by the closure, non-English speaking populations, and freight traffic.

The local news media was a separate and demanding audience entirely. The Alaskan Way Viaduct Replacement Program was already high profile, so a two-week major highway shutdown would earn a tremendous amount of media coverage. To satisfy widespread public interest and ensure the public was hearing accurate and timely information, WSDOT engaged the media through dozens of briefings, phone calls and press releases. But WSDOT knew the media would also look at social media and use public interviews to tell the story of the closure's impact on residents' lives. Here WSDOT's social media campaign would pay additional dividends. If WSDOT could cultivate an informed and patient public through effective social media, that would in turn generate more positive media coverage of the closure itself.

While WSDOT had talked about the closure at the end of 2015, the closure hit mainstream attention on April 11, 2016 when program leadership briefed Seattle City Council about the upcoming closure. WSDOT announced the closure's start date on April 15, and closed the viaduct on April 29. While it was expected to last approximately two weeks, the tunneling contractor made good progress, the viaduct remained stable, and WSDOT reopened the viaduct to traffic on May 8.

## SUCCESS METRICS

By all measures, the #99closure social media campaign was an overwhelming success.

### *Make information easy to find.*

The program website drew 613,000 page views during the closure, a 360 percent increase in traffic compared to a typical month. This was supported by 18,000 URL clicks from the program Twitter feed (@BerthaDigsSR99), a 260 percent increase. In May the @BerthaDigsSR99 account gained over 900 followers, compared to an average monthly gain of 190 during the previous twelve months.

### *Focus and harness the conversation*

The three WSDOT Twitter accounts involved combined for 2.5 million impressions and 41,000 engagements over the course of the month, including 168 @replies answering questions. WSDOT's closure-related posts on

Facebook reached 1.5 million people and generated 172,000 clicks, 32,000 reactions, 6,700 shares and 5,100 comments, all while WSDOT spent only \$340 on boosted Facebook posts.



### Demonstrate progress

The Bertha tunneling progress map was repeatedly shared on social media and used in mainstream media coverage. The drone video broke agency records, reaching over a million people, viewed 375,000 times on Facebook, and inducing over 10,000 comments and shares. The video was viewed an additional 143,000 times on YouTube, and received both local and national media attention.

WSDOT judged the closure’s success by tunneling progress, and by traffic patterns and the public’s patience with that traffic. The closure went very well, and WSDOT’s #99closure strategy was critical to that success. Local transit agencies saw record ridership during the 10-day closure; bicycle commuting spiked, and despite dire predictions of “viadoom”, highway and local road travel times did not skyrocket. This suggests that the region’s commuters heard and took seriously WSDOT’s request

to plan ahead and change their normal commutes, a request made most persuasively by the #99closure campaign.

The closure’s media coverage repeated WSDOT’s messages: plan ahead and pack your patience, and helped keep the Twitter conversation focused on the #99closure hashtag. This way, more people learned their information directly from WSDOT. The agency received substantial positive press at closure’s end for opening ahead of schedule, and communicators’ long hours were rewarded by an outpouring of gratitude on social media. Seattle Weekly’s headline on May 11, which would have been ridiculed if published prior to the closure, summarized the #99closure campaign’s value: “The Viaduct Disaster That Just Wasn’t: Searching for traffic jams, and not finding them, in a world without SR-99.”

## Eastern Region hosts 2016 online town hall

At 6 p.m. Tuesday, April 5, 2016, WSDOT's Eastern Region hosted its first online public forum to discuss safety concerns along US 195 and State Route 26 near Pullman. The interactive, town hall-style meeting provided 170 participants the opportunity to stream live and submit questions and comments in real time.

Representatives from WSDOT, Washington State University and the Washington State Patrol were on the panel. The organizer of an online petition that asked WSDOT to address the public's safety concerns also participated. WSDOT presented information on upcoming improvements to the highways and WSP addressed driver-safety issues.

Two fatalities on US 195 and SR 26 last Thanksgiving weekend led to increasing concerns regarding collisions and driver safety on these highways, the main routes to and from the WSU campus.

Those participating remotely signed in with a Google user name and password. Questions or comments were also be submitted in advance or during the meeting via email. WSDOT partnered with WSU, which provided the studio location and technical expertise, to produce the forum.

WSDOT had 44 peak concurrent viewers (approximately 170 total views: 83 percent viewed from their computer, 10 percent from mobile, 6.5 percent from tablet. 72 percent of viewers had the link directly to the stream. The average view duration was 24:48. WSDOT received 48 chat messages during the forum.

Demographics of those who tuned in: 74 percent male, 26 percent female. 25-34 age group had the highest viewing rate, with 31 percent.





The archived video on YouTube has received 567 views to date (July 25, 2016). You can watch the video at the following URL: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=15\\_WjrLEf5g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=15_WjrLEf5g)

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## JBLM Widening lanes and reconstructing interchanges: Property acquisition would lead to displacement in Tillicum



### PROJECT

I-5 – Mounts Road to Thorne Lane Interchange – Corridor Improvements

### ISSUE

Widening lanes and reconstructing interchanges at the Joint Base Lewis- McChord required property acquisition that would lead to residents' displacement in Tillicum.

### PROJECT BACKGROUND

Originally built in the 1950s, Interstate 5 is a national highway of strategic importance. It moves goods and people between two borders and links major cities. It is a critical corridor for military use. Over the past several years, traffic has increased along the entire I-5 corridor, and nowhere has that increase been more noticeable than in south Pierce County through the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) vicinity.

In 2013, a joint planning study looked at the best way to improve transportation through the JBLM vicinity. The options advanced forward from the study are now undergoing environmental review. They are as follows:

- Add one lane each direction from Steilacoom-DuPont Road to Thorne Lane.
- Rebuild interchanges using roundabouts at Thorne Lane and Berkeley Street.
- Build a new local connector road between Gravelly Lake Drive and Thorne Lane.
- Build a bicycle/pedestrian path along the I-5 corridor.

- Improvements between the Mounts Road and Steilacoom-DuPont Road interchanges are still in development.

In July 2015, the Washington State Legislature included \$495 million to fund the I-5 Mounts Road to Thorne Lane Interchange - Corridor Improvements project, as part of the Connecting Washington transportation revenue package.

## THE GOOD NEWS

The proposed changes would reduce chronic traffic congestion through the JBLM corridor. New interchanges that incorporate roundabouts instead of signals would improve traffic flow and reduce the potential for collisions.



## THE CHALLENGE

Currently the only access into the Tillicum community is via I-5. The proposed Gravelly-Thorne connector would give the neighborhoods of Tillicum and Woodbrook access to Lakewood without using I-5. The proposed shared use path for bicycles and pedestrians would give Woodbrook and Tillicum residents a multi-modal option to commute to work or school.



Olympic Region has been holding open houses in an accessible location in a reasonable timeframe regarding the project for a couple of years (June 11, 2014; May 5, 2015; September 1, 2015; and May 4 and 23, 2016) in order to inform residents of the project and property acquisition needed to complete the project. The region posted notices about the open houses in Spanish and posted fliers in apartments where people would be displaced.



Unfortunately, staff were still not able to reach everyone who would be impacted by the property acquisition.

After the September open house held at the community center (which also housed the library and a medical clinic for low-income populations), WSDOT staff wanted to make sure that all the residents who were going to be displaced heard about the project, why it was being done, what was going to happen to their home, and how they would be compensated for their displacement.

They assembled a letter and sent it out ahead of time to let residents know they were coming. For one full day, they went doorbelling to make sure they reached everyone. They returned the

following morning to follow-up if someone wasn't home. If they were still not able to reach a resident, they would leave a note and a business card to follow-up for more information.

During the doorbelling, most people said they got the letter and were receptive to talking to WSDOT. WSDOT experienced a full array of responses, from accepting to sad to angry. If they were invited in, they would accept. Sometimes, they sat on back decks and chatted with residents. Some residents were so appreciative of the time WSDOT took to reach out to them, they offered hugs. Though WSDOT was sharing a difficult message with some Tillicum residents, most people were appreciative that WSDOT took the time to reach out to them.

## Tribal consultation on Mukilteo Multimodal Project

### BACKGROUND

The Washington State Ferries Division (WSF) proposed to relocate the Mukilteo terminal to the former Air Force tank farm property in an effort to reduce congestion and safety concerns; improve operations and efficiency, improve multimodal connections and accommodate growth. The Ferries Division began working on the Mukilteo Multimodal Project in 2002 until it was shelved in 2007. The project was reinitiated in January 2010 and is scheduled to begin construction of Phase I in the of Summer 2015.

Both efforts included extensive tribal consultation. The summary below focuses on consultation on the reinitiated project.

The location of the project is very significant to tribes. For centuries, the Mukilteo vicinity was well known as a gathering place for Native Americans. The project site was the location of the signing of the Point Elliott Treaty in 1855. In January 2010, WSF and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) re-initiated consultation with all eleven tribes whose ancestors signed the Treaty of Point Elliott: Lummi, Nooksack, Upper Skagit, Swinomish, Samish, Stillaguamish, Tulalip, Sauk-Suiattle, Snoqualmie, and Suquamish Tribes. The Nooksack, Upper Skagit and Muckleshoot Tribes either declined consultation or deferred to other consulting tribes. WSF and FTA have worked closely with consulting tribes to avoid, minimize and mitigate for effects on cultural resources, habitat, and treaty fishing activities.

Project documents were distributed for tribal review and comment and engaged in frequent technical and policy level discussions on project elements and report findings. Key milestones included:

- Project scoping.
- Purpose and need.
- Range of alternatives.
- Discipline reports for cultural and environmental resources.
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement.
- Biological assessment.
- Project design elements.
- Memorandum of Agreement under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.
- Government-to-Government agreements with three tribes related to treaty fishing activities.
- Final Environmental Impact Statement.
- Joint Aquatic Resources Permit Application.

Tribal canoe journey landing at Mukilteo 2007



The project team met with tribes 36 times in a variety of ways including:

- Individual meetings between the Secretary of Transportation and / or Director of Ferries and tribal chairs and councils.
- Individual meetings with technical staff from each consulting tribe. Meetings were held at the tribal offices.
- Inter-tribal meetings with tribal leadership and technical staff.

**EARLY AND ONGOING CONSULTATION**

- The project team consulted with tribes at key project milestones throughout project development.



### *Resolving concerns and thinking outside the box*

It was important to the tribes, WSF and FTA that the terminal designs reflect the historical and ongoing cultural significance of the site. The project team invited each consulting tribe to participate on a design committee. We engaged an architectural firm to work with tribes and identify opportunities to incorporate culturally appropriate elements into our terminal design.

WSF worked with tribes and other agencies to identify ways to minimize overwater coverage and effects to habitat and treaty fishing activities.

### *Ongoing relationships*

Our consultation with the tribes did not stop when we received our environmental permits for the project.

- WSF is working with the four tribes that have treaty fishing rights in the project area to develop Operations Protocols. The purpose of these protocols is to coordinate with tribal fishers on WSF vessel and construction activities.
- Design Team is continuing to meet.
- WSF and tribal cultural resource monitors will be on site during project construction.

It took a significant amount of trust on the part of the tribes to work with WSF and FTA on the development of a project located on such a significant and sensitive location. Throughout project development we were mindful that our relationships with tribes go far beyond this individual project. The successful implementation of this project will help foster good relationships as we work together on future projects.

## Community engagement: I-5 Chamber Way

### ISSUE

On July 22, 2016 a semi-truck hauling an oversized load struck the southbound span of the I-5 Chamber Way overpass in Chehalis, damaging the structure beyond repair. WSDOT engineers deemed that a portion of the overpass must be removed due to the safety risk that could be created if another oversized load were to hit the bridge.



The road serves as a vital link to area businesses by connecting a vibrant commercial area with the city center. A long-term closure of the overpass would have a severe adverse effect on the local economy.



In less than two weeks, WSDOT reopened the road using a temporary span, known as an Acrow Bridge, similar to the one used following the I-5 Skagit River Bridge collapse in 2013.

### BACKGROUND

Originally built in 1958, the overpass has a clearance of 14 feet 11 inches and has been struck nine times in the last 10 years by oversized loads. Each one of these incidents resulted in varying degrees of damage that range from a minor scrape of concrete to significant structural issues. The overpass is scheduled to be replaced as part of the Connecting Washington transportation package that was passed by the Legislature in 2015. However, due to the complex funding structure, the preliminary engineering cannot begin until 2019.



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

WSDOT staff members live and work in the communities they serve, and Lewis County is no different. Agency personnel strive to demonstrate respect and empathy to those whose lives are impacted as if they were a member of their own family. To do this, WSDOT adopted three strategies for community engagement:

- Be proactive.
- Be authentic.
- Build trust.

WSDOT's desire is to be the first and best source of information related to the Chamber Way overpass emergency response. To accomplish this, the agency used several methods to connect with key leaders in the Legislature, local government and the business community. Regional engineering staff, as well as government relations and communications staff sent regular progress updates to legislators and staff. The agency also met in person with legislators and congressional staff to discuss the details of the challenges and potential next steps. WSDOT updated the Chehalis city council during their scheduled meeting, and also during a special session that was called in the days following the response to discuss the agency's short-term and long-term solutions for Chamber Way

### *Connect with businesses*

From the on-set of the emergency closure of the Chamber Way overpass, local businesses were very concerned about the effects to their bottom line.

WSDOT met with the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce to establish a line of communication with the business community. The agency also organized a meeting with chamber members to provide updates and outline challenges that were ahead. The feedback from the in-person meeting was overwhelmingly positive. One attendee wrote the agency an email afterwards with the subject line "thank you," adding that, "it certainly is good to have some answers."

### *Talk to transit*

The twin cities of Centralia and Chehalis are serviced by Twin Transit. With one of their key routes traveling along Chamber Way across I-5, their service was also impacted. WSDOT coordinated the reopening of Chamber Way with Twin Transit to notify riders and transit operators. Additionally, due to the confined space on the temporary span, pedestrians are prohibited until walkway connections are designed and completed. In a collaborative effort to provide access to all users, Twin Transit agreed to install a temporary stop near the bridge to pick up and carry riders free of charge.

## Drive the conversation with social media

During the initial emergency response to the incident, WSDOT communications used Periscope and Facebook Live to brief the public and members of the media, and answer questions in real time.

Residents in Lewis County receive their information from local radio stations and a newspaper that publishes three times a week. For more immediate information, a significant amount of people in the area discuss emerging issues on the “Lewis County Sirens” Facebook group that reaches roughly a third of all county residents.

In addition to WSDOT’s posts to the agency Facebook page, regional communications staff posted updates to Lewis County Sirens directly and answered questions in a timely manner. As a result, built credibility with community members, and residents appreciated WSDOT’s efforts to keep them connected.



### Leverage traditional media

News coverage also reflected that businesses felt confident with agency direction. In an interview with KING-TV, Ralph Hubbert, the owner of a local tire shop was impressed by the agency's efforts saying, "I'm overwhelmed with what they have done in a short amount of time."



### NEXT STEPS

WSDOT is continuing to develop next steps for the Chamber Way overpass. The goodwill and relationships that have been created through this emergency situation will undoubtedly serve the agency well as it continues discussions with the community on a permanent bridge repair and ultimately, a longer-term proposal for this low clearance structure.

## APPENDIX B

# *Resources*

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## WSDOT – Office of Equal Opportunity

- **Equal opportunity in contracting:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/equal-opportunity-contracting>
- **Title VI/Limited English Proficiency (LEP):**  
<https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/title-vi-limited-english-proficiency>
- **WSDOT LEP Plan:**  
<https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/OEO-WSDOT-LEP-Access-Plan2.pdf>
- **WSDOT Title VI Plan:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-11/WSDOT-2022-TVI-Implementation-Plan1.pdf>
- **Determination of translation need and languages:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/WSDOT-Internal-Procedures-Translation-Services.pdf>
- **Environmental Justice & Title VI: Environmental Justice:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/engineering-standards/environmental-guidance/environmental-justice-title-vi>

## WSDOT Tribal Liaison

- **Tribal contacts:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/contacts/tribal-contacts>
- **Tribal & regional planning:**  
<https://wsdot.wa.gov/engineering-standards/planning-guidance/tribal-regional-planning>
- **Centennial Accord Plan:**  
<https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/WSDOTCentennialAccordPlan5mb.pdf>
- **Model Tribal Consultation Process:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/TribalManual.pdf>
- **Tribal Consultation Best Practices:**  
[https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/202110/Tribal\\_Consultation\\_Best\\_Practices\\_Guide\\_for\\_MPOs\\_R.pdf](https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/202110/Tribal_Consultation_Best_Practices_Guide_for_MPOs_R.pdf)

## Communications at WSDOT

- **WSDOT Style Guide and Communications Manual:**  
<https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/current-employees/wsdot-style-guide-and-communications-manual>
- **Communications contacts:** <https://wsdot.wa.gov/about/contacts/media-contacts>

## WSDOT publications services index

Guidance for community engagement is included in many manuals for design, development services, environmental and local agency guidelines: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/Publications/Manuals/index.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Publications/Manuals/index.htm)

## WSDOT visual engineering resource group (VERG)

Visualizations, video, photography & UAV: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/business/visualcommunications/default.htm](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/business/visualcommunications/default.htm)

## Metropolitan planning organization (MPO)/ Regional transportation planning organization (RTPO)/ WSDOT Directory

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/WSDOT-Directory-MPO-RTPO.pdf>

## NCHRP Practical approaches for involving traditionally Underserved populations in transportation decision-making

[onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_rpt\\_710.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_710.pdf)

## Federal requirements

- **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990:** [https://www.ada.gov/ada\\_intro.htm](https://www.ada.gov/ada_intro.htm)
- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:** <https://www.justice.gov/crt/fcs/TitleVI-Overview>
- **Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations:** <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-executive-order-12898-federal-actions-address-environmental-justice>
- **Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency:** <https://www.lep.gov/13166/eo13166.html>
- **U.S.C. Title 23, Highways:** <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2015-title23/pdf/USCODE-2015-title23.pdf>

## 23 CFR, FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA):

- **23 CFR 450:** <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-E/part-450>
- **23 CFR 771:** <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-H/part-771>
- **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** <https://www.epa.gov/nepa>

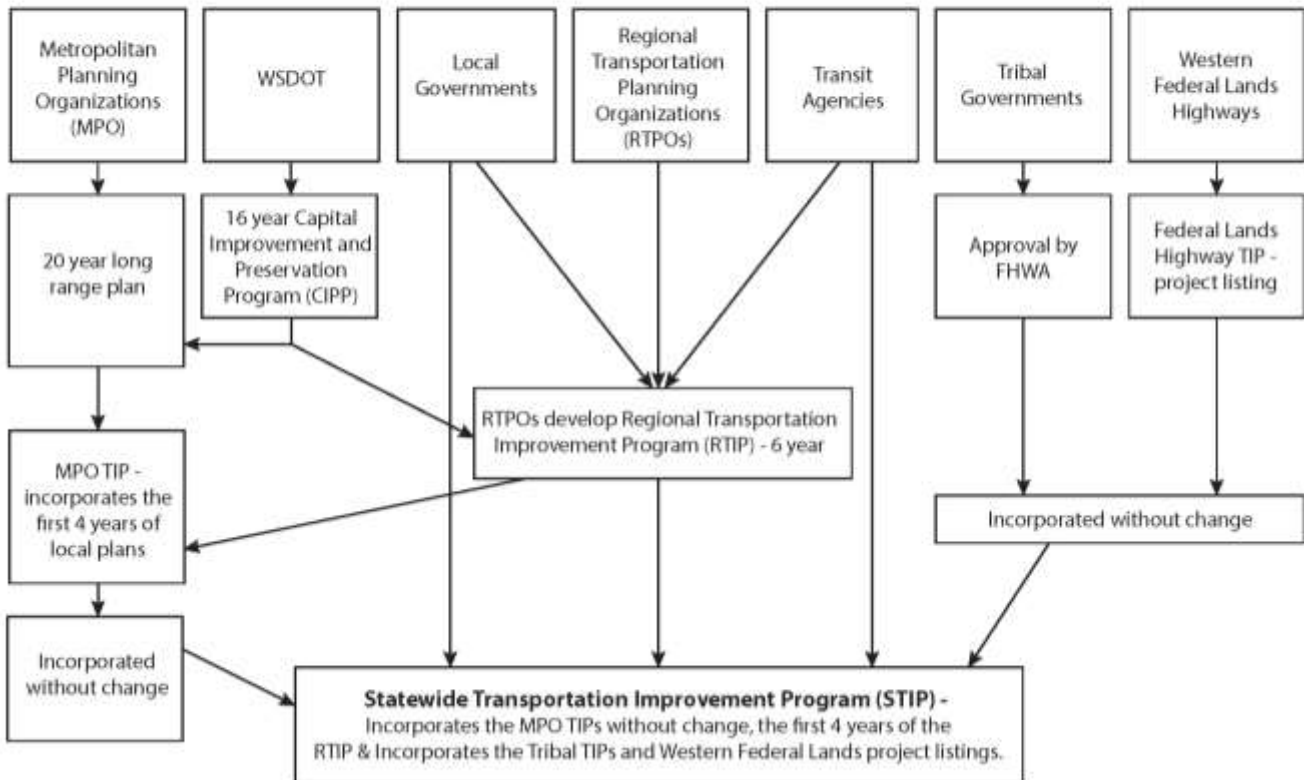
# APPENDIX C

## STIP development chart



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Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) Development



<https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/delivering-your-project/statewide-transportation-improvement-program-stip>