US 395 / I-82 to I-182 Corridor Study

Executive Summary

U.S. Highway 395 (US 395) is one of the oldest Columbia River crossings in the Tri-City area / region, built in 1954. This corridor has been and continues to be a critical north-south route through the Tri-Cities and the region. Of the three Columbia River crossings in the Tri-Cities, it continues to have the highest daily traffic volumes. Time and growth are having an impact on the corridor's performance. This will be the first time that WSDOT has looked at this corridor as whole, since it was established, to determine its current overall performance and a vision for the future of this route through the Tri-Cities and the region. WSDOT has prepared this Corridor Planning Study (CPS) to identify current and future issues, than identify strategies to maintain or enhance mobility in this corridor while maintaining safe and efficient operations over the next 20 years.

The CPS evaluated the non-concurrent section of US 395 segment between Interstate 82 and Interstate 182 within the urban areas of Pasco and Kennewick, approximately 7.5 miles. This highway segment has two distinct sections separated by the Columbia River. To the south, it is an expressway that serves Kennewick with access via signalized intersections. To the north, US 395 is a freeway that provides access to Pasco (and the SR 240 / Columbia Drive) via interchanges.

Traffic volumes on this corridor are bucking the national trends of stagnant or declining traffic volumes. This is due to large areas of open land that are being developed in Kennewick (south end of corridor). Outside of peak periods, the highway is and is projected to continue to operate at an acceptable level of service over the next 20 years; however, the current configuration of the highway is inadequate to serve traffic volumes within peak travel times. Most of mainline US 395 congestion is occurring (and will continue to get worse) within Kennewick and the Columbia River Crossing. The City of Kennewick is unsupportive of local system improvements that could relieve pressure on mainline US 395. Pasco has a good supportive local network, so the main issue in Pasco is optimizing connections to/ from US 395. Without action, congestion will increase and history tells us that this will cause significant delays and commuter frustration, which leads to an increase in collisions.

The CPS used Moving Washington strategies and Least Cost Planning principles to identify low cost actions for near term efficiencies. It also looked into the future at strategies that could be implemented, contingent on further evaluation of strategies, to maintain or restore mobility to acceptable levels of service and travel times. The corridor action plan will continue to follow these strategies to maximize efficiency, manage demand, and strategically add capacity. To date, WSDOT has already implemented many strategies to improve efficiency within this corridor.

The strategies chosen to move forward will not change the character of US 395 as it exists today. The expressway segment will remain signalized and the freeway segment will remain a free-flow highway. All strategies chosen to move forward and recommendations accepted in the final report will be incorporated into the next update of the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments Regional & Metropolitan Transportation Plan Update, as well as the Washington State Highway System Plan.

An example of what the study found is at Yelm Street. Yelm Street is a Kennewick City collector that locals use as a cutoff route from US 395 to Kennewick Avenue (Principal Arterial). This intersection has a

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history of the left turn lane traffic backing up onto the mainline lanes. In order to operate this intersection more efficiently, it could be signed to encourage traffic to use the arterial street (less than ½ mile away) or make the intersection right-in / right-out to require people to use the arterial. To address increased turning traffic, a double left turn lane could be constructed as part of adding Capacity Strategically. All of these ideas have different levels of acceptance by the community, the last being most favorable.

Strategies chosen to move forward have different levels of financial commitment and implementation timing. Some are one-time costs, while several operational strategies are yearly costs that will require an ongoing commitment to be effective (e.g., promoting alternate modes of transportation). For the purpose of this study low cost is below 1 million dollars. A project this size is fundable out of existing State and local resources based on priority for that agency. Medium cost is defined as 1 to 5 million dollars. A project this size is fundable with local Surface Transportation Program (STP) allocations, grants (such as Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery - TIGER) or existing State funds if they qualify and depending on priority. Projects over 5 million dollars, high cost, may qualify for grants but will most likely need new revenue sources to be constructed, such as tolls or local taxing options. A new Columbia River Crossing is identified as very high, over 100 million dollars. This would need to be constructed with a new revenue source such as tolling the crossing.

Short range strategies carried forward in the study need to be (to be most effective) implemented within a couple years after acceptance of the Study Plan. This will give the strategy time to be evaluated for its effect on the corridor and possibly defer the need to implement some medium to long range strategies, if effective. The high cost / short range option should be further studied / scoped at this time to refine configuration / cost and plan a financing strategy. Not all of these strategies have full consensus with local jurisdictions and may require more coordination before implementation.

Short Range			
Strategies chosen to move forward	*Moving Washington Strategy*	*Cost Level*	*Est. Year of Need[1]*
Implement 1 of 3 Alternatives at Yelm St	Operate Efficiently	Low	2012
Minor Modifications to SR 240/US 395 Interchange	Operate Efficiently	High	2020
Establish a Commute Trip Reduction Program	Manage Demand	Low*	
Promote Flow Maps	Manage Demand	Low	
Ramp Meter On-Ramps at: Columbia Dr, Lewis St, and Court St Interchanges	Operate Efficiently	Low	2020
Study and Scope Complete Roadway from SR 240 to Kennewick Ave	Planning	Low	2013
Begin Expansion of Park and Ride Lots	Manage Demand	Medium*	
Study and Scope Construction of Additional Columbia River Crossing	Planning	Low	2020
Sign Alternate Routes to Tri-Cities Airport and Columbia Basin College	Operate Efficiently	Low*	2023

[1]Year equals date that it falls below level of service D
**requires local commitment (money and time)*

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Medium range strategies carried forward in the study would be most effective if implemented after short range strategies are found to be ineffective, about five years after acceptance of the study. Some of these strategies may be needed due to growth (i.e. new development) in the area and not solved by short range solutions. At this time (in 5 years) the medium range option should be reevaluated and lower cost strategies should be implemented first (Operate efficiently and Manage demand) if still deemed a viable option. Strategies rejected in the study should be reevaluated to see if they now can move forward as a viable option. High cost / medium range strategies should be further studied / scoped at this time to refine configuration / cost and plan a financing strategy. After implemented and evaluated, medium range strategies could offset the need for long range strategies if effective. Not all of these strategies have full consensus with local jurisdictions and may require more coordination before implementation.

Medium Range			
Strategies chosen to move forward	*Moving Washington Strategy*	*Cost Level*	*Est. Year of Need[1]*
Pedestrian Crossing Improvements at Kennewick Ave and Clearwater Ave	Operate Efficiently	Medium	
Meter Traffic through Signalized Corridor	Operate Efficiently	Low	
Construct Complete Roadway from SR 240 to Kennewick Ave	Add Capacity Strategically	High	2013
Construct Double Left-Turn Lane at 10th Ave	Operate Efficiently	Low	2019
I-182 Interchange – US 395 to 20th Ave Eastbound Weave Lane	Operate Efficiently	Medium	2023
US 395/Court Street Interchange to I-182 Interchange Northbound Weave Lane	Operate Efficiently	Medium	2023
Grade Separate Ridgeline Dr Intersection	Add Capacity Strategically	High*	
Study and Scope Complete Roadway - Kennewick Ave to 10th Ave and 10th Ave to 27th Ave	Planning	Low	2019
Incident Response Team for US 395	Operate Efficiently	Medium	
Traffic Management Center to Serve the Tri-Cities	Manage Demand	Medium*	
Variable Rate Tolling	Manage Demand	High	
Continue Expansion of Park and Ride Lots	Manage Demand	Medium*	
Expand and Promote Vanpooling	Manage Demand	High*	
Expand and Promote Transit Service	Manage Demand	High*	

[1]Year equals date that it falls below level of service D
**requires local commitment (money and time)*

Long range strategies carried forward in the study would be most effective if implemented after medium range strategies are found to be ineffective, about fifteen years after acceptance of the study. Some of these strategies may be needed due to growth (i.e. new development) in the area and not solved by medium range solutions. At this time (in 15 years) the long range option should be reevaluated to see if it is still deemed a viable strategy. Again, strategies rejected in the study should be reevaluated to see if they now can move forward as a viable option. High cost long range strategies should be further studied / scoped at this time to refine configuration / cost and plan a financing strategy. Because of the complexity of a new river crossing, it is recommended that this option continue

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to be studied / refined after the short range solutions have been implemented and evaluated. Not all of these strategies have consensus with local jurisdictions and may require more coordination before implementation.

Long Range			
Strategies chosen to move forward	*Moving Washington Strategy*	*Cost Level*	*Est. Year of Need[1]*
Construct Complete Roadway from Kennewick Ave to 10th Ave	Add Capacity Strategically	High	2019
Construct Complete Roadway from 10th Ave to 27th Ave	Add Capacity Strategically	High	2018
Construct Additional Columbia River Crossing	Add Capacity Strategically	Very High	2020
Re-Construct Lewis St/Sylvester St Interchange	Add Capacity Strategically	High	2032
Construct Complete Roadway from 27th Ave to I-82	Add Capacity Strategically	High	2029

[1]Year equals when it is estimated to falls below level of service D
**requires local commitment (money and time)*

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