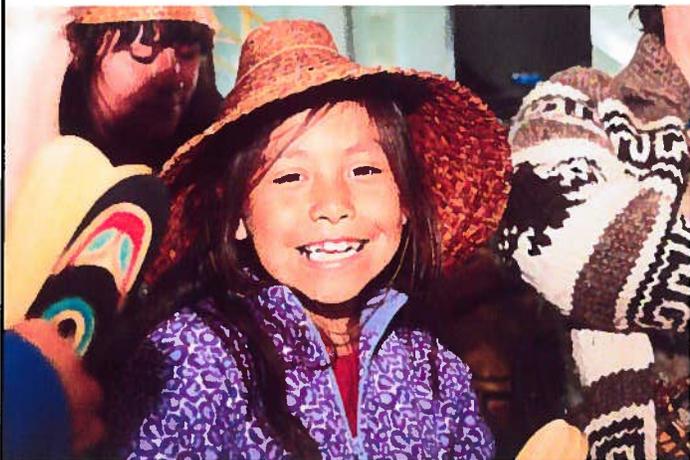


Reaching Out to Our Communities

“Inclusion”

Megan White, P.E., Director Environmental Services
American Council of Engineering Companies/WSDOT Meeting
June 14, 2016

Emphasizing the Importance of Inclusion



WSDOT is:

- Making sure there are fair and equal opportunities to participate in WSDOT employment, contracts, and decision making and that every voice is heard
- Building the agency's cultural competence

Inclusion at WSDOT includes:

- Diversity plan (how to increase the agency's work force diversity)
- Cultural advisory forum – to advise on all inclusion work
- Cultural awareness training –Updating the agency's community engagement instructions
- Environmental Justice process improvements

WSDOT is committed to working with all communities in the planning and development of transportation projects. Feedback from the community is carried forward into the design process and could affect project scope, focus and intent.

Outreach needs to be tailored to meet community makeup, including translating project materials and accommodating sight or hearing impaired individuals.

Building Cultural Competence

- Raising awareness of assumptions about human behaviors, values, biases, preconceived notions, etc.
- Attempting to understand the world view of culturally diverse populations (e.g., values, perspectives, communication styles, etc.)
- Cultural competence is active – ongoing – aspirational

WSDOT has initiated Cultural Competence training to help staff enhance their understanding of to work with a people from different backgrounds and improve the methods for including them in transportation decision making.

Inclusion Focus Areas



South Park bridge replacement, 2011

- **Practical Solutions**

- understanding communities needs is the foundation of our project decisions

- **Principles of Community Engagement**

- strengthen partnerships to increase credibility, drive priorities and inform decision making

- **Emphasis on Environmental Justice**

- identify & address the effects of agency actions to achieve equitable benefits & burdens

Guidance for Practical Solutions was released last November with the update of the Design Manual.

Community Engagement

- **Guidance** – updated community engagement guidance coming in December 2016 – will guide how the agency engages partners, stakeholders, tribes, and communities for all WSDOT efforts ‘stem to stern’
- **Planning** – practical solutions starts in planning – working with communities to understand needs and explore solutions
- **Project Development** – more interaction between community members and project development team

Community Engagement Guidance: intended for use in earliest planning through project and service delivery and maintenance/operations. Our Planning office is developing this guidance and will be looking for review of draft materials later this summer. One tenant is ensuring easy accessibility to us our meetings (e.g., transit) or meeting directly with residents where they live.

WSDOT 's Practical Solutions approach places a new emphasis on planning. Evaluating the transportation need and looking at different ways to address that need, including non-capital solutions, is an important element of this approach.

Community engagement during that process is essential to project development. Project teams will need to get directly involved with the community and focus outreach to get what we need at each stage of the project.

We've done A LOT of good involvement work in the past. In many cases, the new emphasis on Community Engagement and Environmental Justice is a subtle shift in the way WSDOT works.

Environmental Justice Principles



Avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects

Ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities

Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations

Environmental Justice is the basis for good community engagement. The requirements involve considering the needs of people that are often under-served.

An unintended consequence of building the transportation system in low-cost areas in the 50s and 60s was splitting communities and affecting minority and low income areas more than others.

This slide gives an overview of the key outcomes expected in applying Environmental Justice requirements.

Although WSDOT has worked with USDOT to address Environmental Justice for over 20 years. We are expanding our efforts to be even more inclusive to ensure that WSDOT plans and projects reflect the needs and priorities of the communities it serves.

Our website contains all the legal references if your staff need to see those along with detailed instructions about how to carry out this work in compliance with those requirements – these instructions are in the agency’s Environmental Manual which is an online resource.

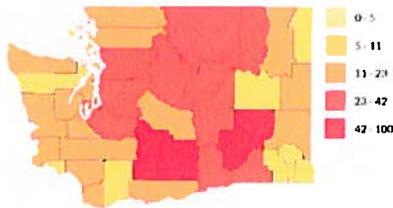
Washington is a Diverse State

27% Minority (Hispanic, Asian, Black, American Indian, Pacific Islander, or Alaskan Native)

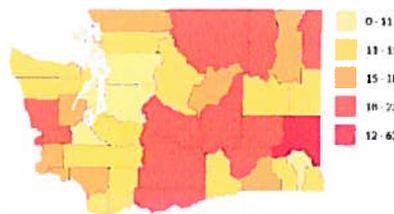
19% Low Income (Annual income less than \$22,500)

4% Speak English Less Than Well

Percent Minority



Percent Below Poverty Level



Percent Speak English Less Than Well



These maps make the point that -- Almost every project will include EJ populations.

Washington State is 27% minority.

- 11% Hispanic 7% Asian 5% Two or more races 4% Black 2% American Indian
- There isn't a threshold for minority percentage – if any individuals are in the vicinity, we need to consider the impact.

19% of the population earns an annual income below the poverty line.

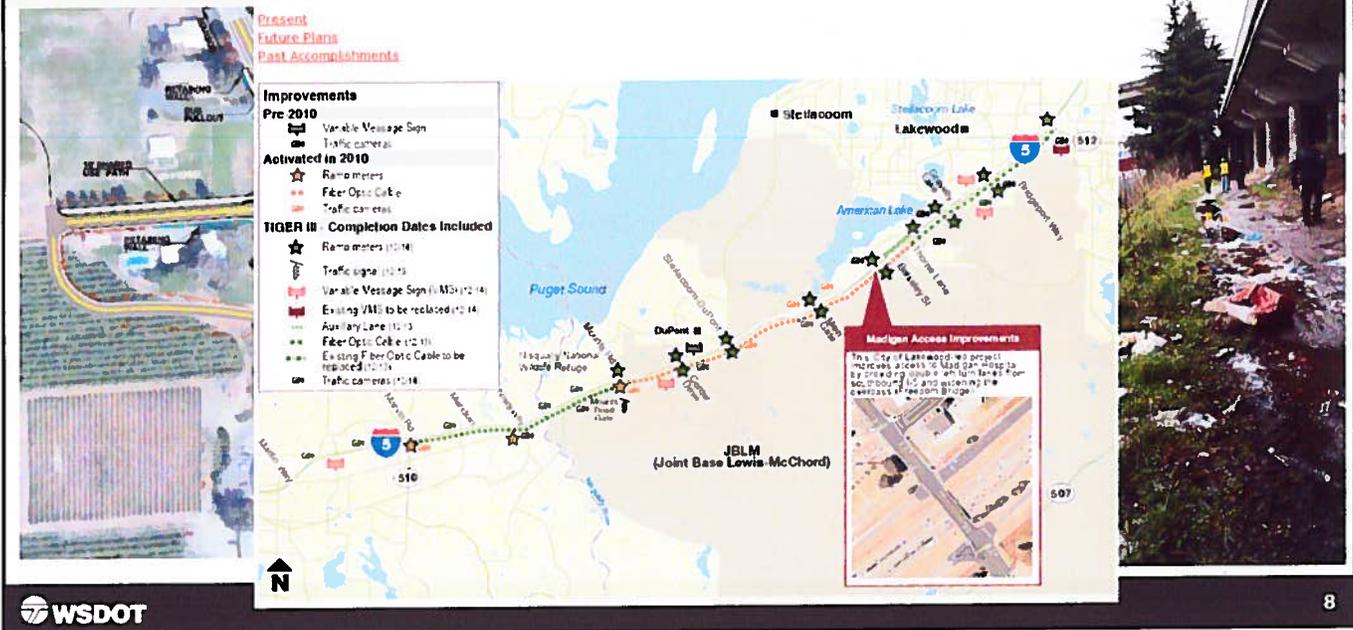
- Low-income populations are found in all counties; East and West -- urban and rural.
- Again, there isn't a threshold for low-income percentage.

4% of the population – over 250,000 people – identify themselves as speaking English less than well.

- Spanish (8%) is the most common language
- The other most common languages spoken in Washington are in order of importance: Chinese, Vietnamese, Tagalog, Russian, Korean and German.
- If you have 5% of the population or 1000 individuals in the project area, WSDOT's Title VI plan requires staff to provide translation service upon request.

Range of WSDOT Projects

I-5 - JBLM Area Improvements - Project Map



Our projects range from small to large:

1. Very small projects that occur totally within the existing ROW and have very low potential to affect EJ populations. No EJ analysis is required for these projects.
2. Securing the I-5 ROW in areas where a significant homeless population (low-income) resides in the project area is an EJ issue. WSDOT has procedures in place for communicating with this transient EJ population, including outreach in other languages and helping people get assistance.
3. No-See-Um Road (SR 150) interchange, located between the cities of Chelan and Manson – analysis showed that we did not have a Limited English Speaking population living in the project area. However, Because the highway connected two nearby Hispanic communities, our Region translated all project materials into Spanish to ensure community needs were considered.
4. I-5 JBLM is a large, high profile project with significant minority, low-income and Limited English Speaking populations.

I'll talk more about JBLM over the next few slides

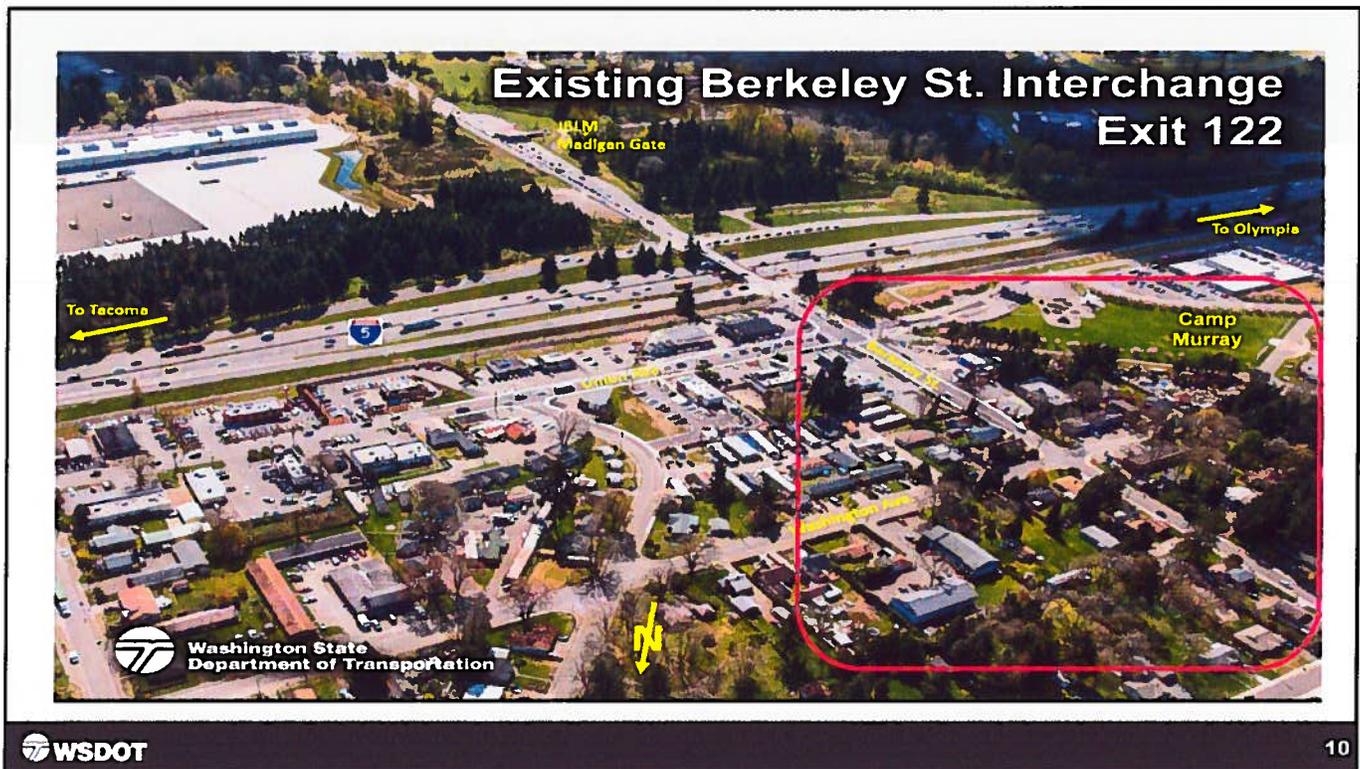


Here's an example of Inclusion & Environmental Justice at the Project level. Meaningful participation means opportunities for two-way conversations.

The project improves the Interstate through Joint Base Lewis McChord by replacing the existing intersection to allow for more lanes. This requires that the bridge be widened. There was no way to avoid impacts to adjacent neighborhoods.

We started with the good, solid "traditional" outreach: two neighborhood open houses held at locations served by transit. Open houses were held at times when working people could attend. Open house flyers were translated into Spanish.

We took that a step further this spring by conducting additional door to door outreach.



The red box shows where we decided we needed to do more outreach by conducting a door to door survey.

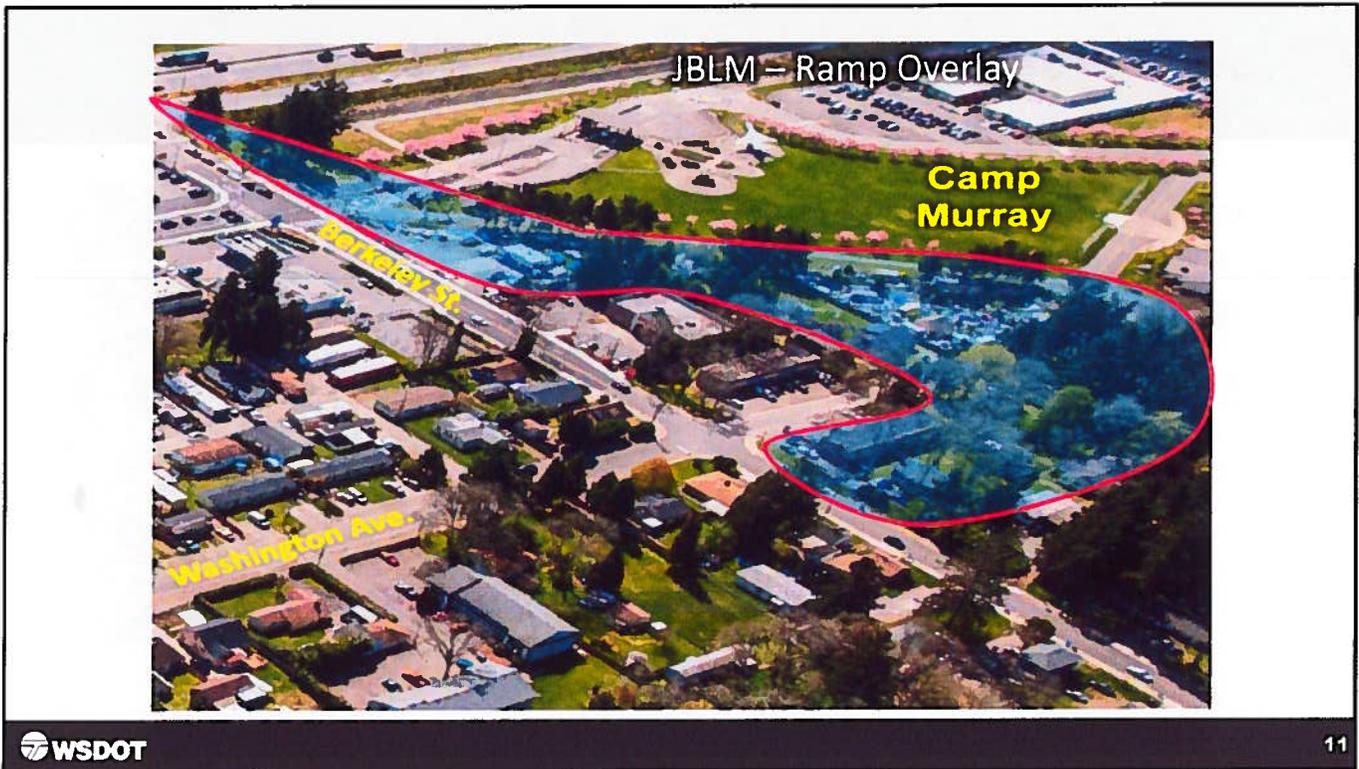
Question we asked ourselves: “Have we talked to the individuals most directly impacted?” The project team had talked to property owners, and some tenants. But most of the tenants had not been reached.

We wanted to know:

- Have you heard about the project (if so, how?)
- What’s the best way for us to keep you informed? (newspaper articles, public meeting, website, or personalized direct mail/email, other?)
- We want to hear your ideas or concerns, what works best for you? (what’s the two-way communication path – give them a name and number to call –

What do you think of the proposal?

- How does this action affect your quality of life? (better, worse, indifferent?)
- Do you have ideas for how we can reduce the negative impacts?



Here's another shot so you can see the ramp overlay on the current landscape --

Staff visited 40 houses/apartments in the afternoon and evening over 2 days to catch everyone.

- Of those we spoke with, several verbalized that they really appreciated us coming to their door, and that it showed we cared.
- Several had heard rumors, or various versions of what was happening so were happy to have a direct contact to check with. The next most common response was mild interest, but not high concern or opinion at the time. Some folks said the current traffic situation severely affects their lives.
- Most of the tenants seemed pleasantly surprised that there would be assistance for them if they had to relocate. Most of the apartment residents did not seem to love their home. However, there are some connections between households, either relatives living next door or a few blocks away, long-term friendships, or one person doing yardwork for the houses on the street. Many have such low rent payments here it is hard to imagine another situation being workable long-term.

Consultant Support

- WSDOT hires consultants to assist with outreach and analysis on larger projects
- Examples –
 - Tolling
 - Washington State Ferries
 - I-405



Consultants are helping us do this form of outreach and involvement – understanding community needs and getting iterative involvement.

Examples include evaluating tolling impacts on EJ populations. Outreach methods included:

- Telephone surveys in multiple languages
- Two rounds of focus groups in low-income neighborhoods

Washington State Ferries has done targeted community outreach in connection with their terminal projects.

- At the Mukilteo Ferry terminal, multi-lingual professional-outreach staff talked to people fishing from nearby piers to understand how the project would affect their ability to access the waterfront.
- At the Seattle Colman docks the project team held a “virtual” open house, that had a pull down menu to translate the slides into a choice of 47 languages.

The I-405 project interviewed 40 social service providers and community-based agencies to understand how the project would impact EJ populations.

Environmental Justice Guidance

<http://wsdot.wa.gov/Environment/EJ/>

- Articulates WSDOT policy
- Identifies improvements WSDOT is making
- Describes best practices
- Provides contact information



Washington State
Department of Transportation

June 2016

Reaching out to our Communities: Environmental Justice at the Washington State Department of Transportation



The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) strives to include all voices in transportation decisions. The agency is committed to inclusive community engagement to ensure fairness for all community members. As part of this commitment, WSDOT is strengthening its dedication to

environmental justice as it improves and maintains the state's transportation system.

What are the principles of environmental justice?

The United States Department of Transportation's environmental justice strategy directs WSDOT to adopt the following fundamental principles of environmental justice:

Environmental Justice at WSDOT in 2016

- ✓ Establishing a cultural advisory forum to provide input on WSDOT's community inclusion efforts
- ✓ Providing training so WSDOT is sensitive to cultures of all the communities we serve
- ✓ Updating community engagement

WSDOT's EJ guidance is summarized in this folio. It is located on our WSDOT Environmental Justice web page along with our guidance, step-by-step procedures and tools for analyzing potential project impacts to EJ communities.

Contact Information

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