



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:

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

WSDOT incorporates these environmental justice principles into its programs, policies, and activities. This involves working with all communities in the planning and developing of transportation projects.

What is WSDOT doing to address the principles of environmental justice?

For more than 20 years, WSDOT has been working with the United States Department of Transportation to address environmental justice. Recently, WSDOT updated its guidance on how to conduct a thorough analysis of potential impacts.

WSDOT is continuing to improve and expand its work so that it is even more inclusive. Environmental justice at WSDOT is integral to all of WSDOT's work from planning through maintenance. The goal is to ensure WSDOT's plans and projects reflect the needs and priorities of the communities it serves.

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 approaches for transportation planning and projects
- ✓ Using tools that provide information on minority and/or low income community membership
- ✓ Applying best practices that engage minority and low income populations in project-level decision-making and environmental impact assessment

WSDOT is ensuring its staff and partner agencies are educated in environmental justice by providing training and procedures in its Environmental Manual and websites. WSDOT's environmental justice process includes:

1. Defining the project and conducting demographic analysis
2. Developing a communications plan including specific environmental justice communication strategies for continuous and meaningful involvement
3. Identifying potential impacts, mitigation, and benefits
4. Documenting methodology, findings, and public involvement
5. Developing and providing training to WSDOT employees to ensure they meet the goals of [Title VI of the Civil Right Act](#), [Results WSDOT](#), [Secretary's Executive Order 1096](#), [FHWA's Title VI compliance review program](#), and [Governor's Executive Order 14-04](#).



What examples does WSDOT have that demonstrate its implementation of environmental justice?

WSDOT is building on its efforts to address environmental justice in its programs and projects. Some of WSDOT's successes include:

- The SR 520 project is one of 10 case studies by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) of best practices in considering environmental justice
- The No See-um Road project in Chelan County implemented a Public Involvement Plan to ensure appropriate communication with affected non-English speaking populations
- The Joint Base Lewis McChord project in Pierce County has neighborhood meetings and direct discussions with tenants and property owners about possible impacts and solutions in the project area
- WSDOT and FHWA worked together to establish user-friendly guidance for smaller projects to use in considering potential impacts to minority and low-income people
- WSDOT created easy access to tools to evaluate community demographics for use in designing effective involvement strategies
- WSDOT created its [environmental justice website](#) to provide information (guidance, tools, reports, and process analysis) to its federal, state, tribal, and local partners as well as others who want to learn more about environmental justice
- For projects that may include tolling, WSDOT carefully considers potential effects of tolling on low-income and minority travelers and residents in the study area

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What is WSDOT asking its Communities?

Help us identify benefits and burdens associated with our plans and projects.

Engage with us so that your voices are heard:

- **Follow us on Twitter**
- **Contact us by email and/or phone**
- **Come to our open houses to share your ideas**
- **Voice your transportation needs**

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

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