

WSDOT's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a collaborative planning process with agency partners to identify performance gaps and select high-level strategies to address them on the 304 corridors statewide. This Corridor Sketch Summary acts as an executive summary for one corridor. Please review the User Guide for Corridor Sketch Summaries prior to using information on this corridor:

SR 706: SR 7 Jct to Mt Rainier National Park Entrance

This 14-mile long east-west corridor is located in Pierce County, just southwest of Mt Rainier National Park. The corridor is known as National Park Highway for a majority of its length. The route runs between the State Route 7 junction in the community of Elbe and the Longmire Gate of Mt Rainier National Park. The corridor passes through the community of Ashford. The route is predominantly rural in character. The corridor passes through rolling terrain. Land use on the corridor is primarily forestland with pockets of residential use. The corridor's mountainous terrain prevents a lot of residential and commercial land use. In addition to crossing and paralleling several creeks, is Alder Lake, west of Elbe and the Nisqually River, which parallels the entire route. A portion of the corridor also parallels the Tacoma Rail Mountain Division, which the Mt Rainier Scenic Railroad travels along, and crosses the tracks at two locations just immediately to the east of Elbe.



Current Function

SR 706 is a picturesque state highway and one of the busiest two-lane highways outside the metropolitan areas of Everett, Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia. This corridor functions as a commuter and recreational route. The corridor is open year-round and serves as a recreational link to Mt Rainier. In addition to Mt Rainier, the corridor provides access to other recreational attractions that include Gifford Pinchot National Forest, horse trails, hiking trails, hunting, fishing, resorts, cabins, campgrounds, and businesses associated with tourism such as restaurants and lodges. The corridor also provides connections to the communities of Elbe, Park Junction, and Ashford, as well as communities and recreation beyond Elbe. This corridor sees significant bicycle use during the summer season. Once a year in the summer, the corridor is used for the Ramrod Cycle Event. Pedestrian use is permitted along the corridor shoulders.

Future Function

Based on the projected population, land use, and economic trends, the future function of this corridor is expected to remain the same.

Highlights and Performance

SR 706 is a two-lane, undivided highway with few turn lanes throughout. The annual average daily traffic on this corridor is highest just east of Elbe and lowest near the park entrance.

What's working well?

- The entire corridor performs above WSDOT's congestion threshold.
- Over 99% of surveyed pavements on the corridor are in fair or better condition.
- There are fish passage culverts present on the corridor.

What needs to change?

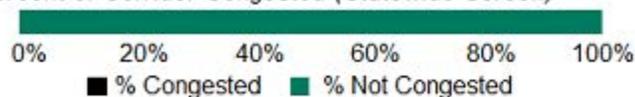
- The corridor has a moderate rating for climate vulnerability impacts due to potential flooding of the Nisqually River.
- Fish passage barriers are present on the corridor, five of which are partially blocked and two fully blocked.
- Lack of parking in Mt Rainier National Park may lead to the use of park shuttles.

WSDOT monitors the state system in ongoing efforts to track asset performance. For this corridor, WSDOT finds:

High	Low	
2,380	1,360	Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT)
5.6%	4.3%	Bus/Truck Percent
27.28		Number of Lane Miles
0		# of Signalized/Stop Controlled Intersections
\$5,824,000		Corridor Investments (2005-2016)

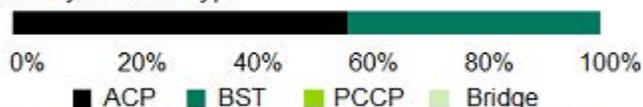
Mobility

Percent of Corridor Congested (Statewide Screen)

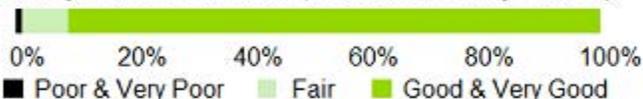


Preservation

Roadway Surface Type



Roadway Surface Condition (Percent of Surveyed Area)



Corridor Bridge Preservation Needs



1) 2015 data unless otherwise noted. 2) For more information see the User Guide for Corridor Sketch Summaries at <http://bit.ly/WSDOTcorridorsketch>

Environment

	Protect	Restore/ Enhance/ Assess
Fish Barriers	57.9% Passable	42.1% to Do
Noise Walls	0% Built	0% Proposed
Chronic Environmental Deficiencies	0% Resolved	0% Unresolved
Wildlife Connectivity	0 Structures in Place	11 High Priority Miles
Stormwater Treatment	0 BMPs	Retrofit Prioritization in progress
100.0	% of Corridor with high potential for increased Climate Impacts	
1	Wetland Mitigation Locations	
None	Historical Bridges	

What we heard from our partners

WSDOT collected feedback from agency partners. Key themes included:

- The Upper Nisqually Community Plan, dated 1999, identified the area near the Mt Rainier park entrance may be rezoned to tourist commercial, resulting in commercial growth in Ashford, Elbe, and Mt Rainier.
- Partners reference the Nisqually Rural Transit Feasibility Study, Draft Final Report, dated November 2007, which built upon a Mount Rainier National Park Final General Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement, dated August 2000 which identified three alternatives.

Strategies

WSDOT identified the following strategies and associated actions to keep the corridor working well and address performance gaps. Regional partners collaborated on high-level mobility strategies. The identified strategies are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor an established list of priorities. Further evaluation is needed before any strategy can be recommended as a solution to address performance. Project funding decisions will take place at the programming phase, and are subject to statewide prioritization. For more strategy information, visit the Corridor Sketch Summary User Guide.

Policy Goals / Strategies Description and Near-Term Actions

Economic Vitality

Under Development	<i>WSDOT will continue to work with partners in developing strategies to address economic vitality.</i>
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Environment

Protect and Maintain	<i>Protect and maintain existing assets that provide environmental function (these include WSDOT's mitigation sites, storm water systems, fish passable culverts).</i>
Enhance or Restore	<i>Enhance or restore natural areas and environmental functions associated with the multimodal transportation system.</i>
Fish Barrier Retrofit	<i>WSDOT has prioritized the removal of state-owned culverts that block habitat for salmon and steelhead. See interactive map of uncorrected fish barriers at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/FishPassage/default.htm.</i>

Mobility

Assessment	<i>A mobility performance strategy has not been identified by WSDOT.</i>
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Preservation

Maintenance	<i>Based on expenditure history, it is expected that the top three activities will continue to be maintenance on snow and ice control, pavement repair, and rest areas.</i>
Pavement	<i>WSDOT has identified one Pavement action in the next six years encompassing 100% of the corridor.</i>

Stewardship

Planning	<i>Under Practical Solutions, the Corridor Sketch Initiative identifies corridor performance, and assesses alternative strategies to improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.</i>
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For more information

To find out more information about this corridor or how to get involved, please contact:

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Washington State Department of Transportation's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a set of planning activities that engage our partners to define the context and performance information for all of the state's 304 highway corridors. The Corridor Sketch complements and supports regional planning processes in Washington. It is not intended to duplicate, substitute or compete with other planning efforts; nor is it intended to generate lists of projects.

Under 23 U.S. Code § 148 and 23 U.S. Code § 409, safety data, reports, surveys, schedules, lists compiled or collected for the purpose of identifying, evaluating, or planning the safety enhancement of potential crash sites, hazardous roadway conditions, or railway-highway crossings are not subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in a Federal or State court proceeding or considered for other purposes in any action for damages arising from any occurrence at a location mentioned or addressed in such reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data.

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