

Chapter 2 - Related Studies and Planning Efforts

Prior to this study, WSDOT and local governments conducted several planning studies of issues along the corridor and completed plans outlining policy for land use and transportation within the study area. The study team reviewed the following related planning work:

- Local comprehensive plans and studies from cities, counties, and Thurston Regional Planning Council;
- WSDOT statewide plans;
- Relevant WSDOT planning studies, corridor sketches, or project development documents.

Where possible, WSDOT and study partners built on this previous work. The study team used that data and analysis as a base to help develop solutions and strategies.

Study team and partners considered local plans when developing strategies

WSDOT staff reviewed the relevant sections of transportation and comprehensive plans from the following local agencies:

- City of DuPont
- City of Olympia
- Pierce County
- City of Lacey
- City of Tumwater
- Thurston County
- City of Lakewood
- Nisqually Indian Tribe
- Thurston Regional Planning Council

While all of these governments have differing projects and priorities, there were several common themes among their policy goals.¹ All held safety as a high priority, including for bicyclists, pedestrians, and transit users. Many also emphasized the importance of I-5 to the regional transportation system. In addition, they all shared in the following goals and values:

- Improving alternative travel modes (particularly transit, rail, and carpooling) and managing demand;
- Achieving land-use patterns that support an efficient transportation system;

¹ City of DuPont Comprehensive Plan: Chapter 9 – Transportation; https://www.dupontwa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1455/Final_Full_09nov15?bidid=#page=120

City of Lacey Comprehensive Plan: Community Vision – Transportation & Land Use; https://www.ci.lacey.wa.us/Portals/0/docs/community_development/planning_documents/2016_iii_community_vision.pdf#page=32

City of Lakewood Comprehensive Plan: 6.0 – Transportation; <https://cityoflakewood.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/1019-LAKEWOOD-COMPREHENSIVE-PLAN.pdf#page=151>

The study team worked to incorporate local strategies and plans into the I-5 study

Municipalities along the study area in Thurston County have adopted “Strategy Corridors”. These are roadways on the local network where local jurisdictions have committed to not widen the roadway beyond five lanes and pursue other strategies instead such as transit or improving network connectivity. WSDOT used policies like this as goalposts when developing strategies to ensure this study supports local plans.



- Maintaining the ability of freight traffic to travel within and through the region;
- Improving local network connectivity;
- Reducing barriers to accessing transportation services.

Within Thurston County, the local agencies shared transportation investment strategies and priorities as a result of TRPC’s coordinating regional planning. For example, all the cities and the county adopted “Strategy Corridors” as discussed above.

Legislative policy goals & WSDOT statewide plans provide a policy framework for planning on I-5

The Washington State Legislature codified six transportation policy goals in RCW 47.04.280. The goals are not prioritized and include Economic Vitality, Preservation, Safety, Mobility, Environment, and Stewardship.² The law states, in part, that “public investments in transportation should support achievement of these policy goals.” WSDOT has several statewide plans that layout how WSDOT will achieve

² Revised Code of Washington (RCW) Title 47, Chapter 47, Section 47.04.280 Transportation System Policy Goals; <https://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=47.04.280>

these goals, influencing how WSDOT approaches planning and the types of solutions considered. These plans fall into two main categories. First are the high-level policy plans, like the Washington Transportation Plan³ completed by WSDOT and the Washington State Transportation Commission. Second are the “Modal” plans, which cover policy specific to individual modes of transportation like aviation or areas of transportation policy like freight mobility.

The Washington State Transportation Plan Phase Two document is WSDOT’s over-arching policy plan that sets a long-term vision for the state transportation system as well as strategies for achieving that vision. The most recent version of the Washington Transportation Plan established four focus areas⁴ for WSDOT:

- Maintain and preserve assets
- Manage growth and traffic congestion
- Enhance multimodal connections and choices
- Align funding structure with multimodal vision

WSDOT staff used these focus areas where possible as a guide for the study. For example, WSDOT incorporated the estimated cost of maintenance over the life of new facilities into the overall comparison of benefit to cost to align with the “maintain and preserve assets” focus area. This cost information was used in discussing recommendations for the modeled scenarios, detailed in Chapter Eight of this report, with study stakeholders. Similar policy and strategy guidance came from other agency plans including the Highway System Plan, Freight System Plan, and other modal plans..

Previous corridor plans and studies provided strategies to build from

WSDOT has completed studies previously within the study area that provided data and ideas for strategies to improve system performance. WSDOT and its partners considered the strategies and data from these studies when developing solutions to test. For example, working with local partners WSDOT completed the I-5 Near-Term Solutions Study for this same stretch of I-5 a year before this study began. The Near-Term Solutions Study recommended part-time shoulder use and demand management as strategies for improving performance in the next five years. These strategies were incorporated into the study’s traffic modeling to determine their long-term system performance contribution. WSDOT reviewed the following studies relevant to the corridor:

- **I-5/US101 Interchange Study (2013)** – This study developed solutions to be modeled later for addressing operational issues at the US 101 interchange.
- **I-5 Near term Solutions Study⁵ (2018)** – This study developed solutions to be modeled later for addressing operational issues at the US 101 interchange.
- **HOV Feasibility Study I-5: JBLM to 38th Street⁶ (2017)** – This study investigated possible approaches to extending HOV lanes from 38th Street in Tacoma to/through the JBLM area.
- **Corridor Sketch Initiative⁷ (2016-2017)** – WSDOT worked with local partners to develop high-level, baseline studies for highways around the state. A summary was developed for each corridor that documents strategies and solutions to address performance issues and manage system assets.
- **Martin Way & Marvin Road Interchange Justification Report (IJR)⁸ (2015)** – The City of Lacey in association with WSDOT and FHWA prepared an IJR, looking into alternatives for improving operations at the I-5 interchanges with Martin Way (Exit 109) and Marvin Road (Exit 111).
- **West Olympia Access Study⁹ (2016)** – The City of Olympia and WSDOT jointly evaluated transportation needs on Olympia’s west side. The City completed an IJR to investigate alternative solutions for US 101 near I-5.

³ Washington State Transportation Plan; <https://washtransplan.com/>

⁴ Washington State Transportation Plan Goal Areas; <https://washtransplan.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/WTPPhase2-2017-web-PlanAndAppendicies-1.pdf#page=13>

⁵ I-5 Near-Term Action Agenda Folio; https://www.trpc.org/DocumentCenter/View/5867/WSDOT_NearTermImprovements_030118

⁶ HOV Feasibility Study I-5: JBLM to S 38th Street Summary Report; https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/publications/fulltext/LegReports/15-17/15_JBLM_HOV_LaneFeasibilityStudy_SummaryReport.pdf

⁷ Corridor Sketch Initiative website; <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/corridor-sketch-initiative>

⁸ IJR for I-5/Martin Way Interchange and I-5/Marvin Road Interchange; https://www.ci.lacey.wa.us/Portals/0/docs/Public_Works/signed-ijr-martin-way-and-marvin-rd.pdf

⁹ West Olympia Access Study website; <http://olympiawa.gov/city-services/transportation-services/plans-studies-and-data/west-olympia-access-study.aspx>