

A Near-Term Action Agenda for I-5



There's a lot riding on I-5

We all have a shared stake in keeping I-5 working. All transportation systems—highway, transit, local roadways, freight and national defense—rely on I-5 to succeed. Addressing I-5's challenges will require all jurisdictions and transportation agencies to work together on the tough issues facing I-5 and identify innovative mobility strategies.

I-5 is part of a larger transportation system that goes beyond highway mileposts. The system also includes local roadways, transit systems, freight access and all transportation modes that feed into and impact demand on I-5. The systems and strategies must be aligned, starting with a new kind of partnership among all transportation partners—public and private, all transportation modes, and all jurisdictions.

An Agenda for Near-Term Action

We are ultimately determined to engage in the long-term strategic planning that will be necessary to transform the I-5 travel-shed into a 21st century corridor. This effort is likely to have significant scope and scale, with jurisdictions working in partnership to develop mutually shared solutions that can be engineered, phased and funded over time to benefit all users.

But in the meantime, there are shorter-term solutions that can improve the performance of the corridor for everyone. To this end, WSDOT has launched an initiative to enhance near-term performance in the I-5 corridor. One element of this initiative is to work with transportation partners in an iterative process to develop a list of multimodal near-term actions. Near-term actions are defined as those that can be implemented within a zero-to-four year timeframe, and that can demonstrably improve I-5 performance. In this process, we have targeted two important segments of I-5— south (Thurston, Pierce) and north (King, Snohomish).

Potential Near-Term Actions

- Physical improvements to I-5 to decrease weaving and support congestion management
- Ramp improvements to create better transit access and improve traffic flow
- Transit and HOV improvements to increase the person-carrying capacity of our system, including ways to increase park & ride capacity and improve transit speed and reliability
- Transportation demand strategies to either decrease peak demand or encourage alternative work environments
- Intelligent Transportation System solutions to help people make smarter travel decisions for travel and freight shipping

How the Action Agenda was Developed

ROUND 1

WSDOT convenes professionals from local government, transit agencies, planning councils, transportation non-profits and its own divisions to brainstorm and model creative solutions for improving transportation.

ROUND 2

Ideas from the workshops are analyzed by a multidisciplinary and multi-agency staff team for refinement into one-page project concept papers with more detailed project descriptions.

North Segment Action Agenda

Strategy	Description	Performance Outcomes
Closing the Gap to Transit	Improve first- and last-mile access to six transit stations that serve as transportation hubs, defined as locations that provide frequent, all-day transit service; connect transit services; serve high-capacity transit like bus rapid transit, rail, ferries; etc. Focus on making the most of existing and imminent transit capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase transit (fixed route, vanpool) ridership by 600 trips per day • Reduce 600 single occupancy vehicles (SOV) trips per day
Incentivize Transit for Shift Workers	Target ORCA LIFT-eligible workers, particularly in the hospitality and service industries. Employers would agree to participate in pre-tax programs. Workers whose start or end time is outside peak periods would be provided personalized trip planning for transit or vanpool to serve their peak commute and a subsidized one-way ride outside peak periods through Transportation Network Companies such as Uber or Lyft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase participation of small employers in commute benefits programs, with a total participation increase of 5-10 employers • Increase LIFT participation by 60 enrollees (LIFT data at participating employers) • Monitor TNC rides and costs, correlating change in transit use • Monitor trip-planning services, with a goal of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 trips/day • 15,660 trips/year (based \$12.95 average TNC ride in Seattle)
Parking Management at Overcrowded Park and Rides in Snohomish County	Increase the use of carpools, vanpools, transit, walking and bicycling to get to overcrowded park and rides. Develop agreement with DOL to provide vehicle registration information to aid in parking enforcement. This project will emphasize park and rides that offer frequent transit service that operates on I-5 between Snohomish County and the U-District and downtown Seattle.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce daily peak period SOV round trips by 75 • Increase transit ridership by 75 trips • Reduce daily peak period vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 2,800
Enhance Freeway HOV Lane Performance	Establish access control along select segments of the mainline HOV system, update/revise HOV violation fine structure, implement pilot project for automated HOV enforcement along a section of I-5.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve speed and reliability within freeway HOV lanes, individual or combined (particularly important for transit bus trips)
Ramp Metering	Revise ramp metering operations at spot locations, such as adding metered shoulder lanes, metering HOV bypasses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce violation rates and metering for traffic entering I-5 • Reduce risk of collisions at merge locations • Reduce freeway congestion • Improve freeway travel time and reliability for intercity transit • Increase metering storage capacity on ramps • Reduce backup onto connecting city streets
I-5 Southbound HOV Lane - Variable Occupancy Requirement	Modify lane use of southbound I-5 HOV lane between the Mercer St. on-ramp and Corson Ave. vicinity to allow for "open to all" operation under certain conditions and hours of the day.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce southbound I-5 mainline congestion through downtown Seattle (between Mercer St. and Corson Ave.) during midday weekday off-peak periods

We are here

ROUND 3

Agency partners review project concepts for feasibility and measurable performance outcomes to create project lists for the south and north segments.

ROUND 4

Local agencies review project list refinements and agree to project lead designations and program delivery process. Approved project lists will then be shared more broadly to garner additional support and identify funding opportunities.

South Segment Action Agenda

Strategy	Description	Performance Outcomes
Upgrade signals and implement transit signal priority, Martin Way and Capitol Boulevard (Smart Corridors)	Optimize, and where appropriate, synchronize the upgraded signals, both for general traffic flows and transit, including implementation of transit signal priority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce transit travel time by 5-15% • Increase transit ridership by 2-6% • Increase daily peak period ridership increased by 40 • Reduce daily peak period VMT by 600 miles
Expand I-5 Dynameq transportation model to develop refined I-5 strategies	Expand the existing I-5 Dynameq model to include a greater length of I-5 and parallel arterials. Stakeholders will identify or refine strategies, and use the model to analyze additional solutions not analyzed in the initial Near-Term study.	N/A - Modeling only
Expand use of telework, compressed work weeks and flexible work hours at the Capitol Campus	Expand outreach and education efforts to target top and mid-level managers, taming the fears and implementing robust formal programs that provide clear guidance to employees that the agency intends to make these programs work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase telework from 18% to 24% among eligible employees • Increase use of flextime from 59% to 62% among eligible employees • Increase use of compressed work week from 44% to 45% among eligible employees • Reduce daily peak SOV trips by 100 • Reduce daily VMT by 3,000
Expand vanpool use through peer-to-peer marketing and new markets	Use peer-to-peer marketing, along with an intensive direct-to-commuters marketing campaign, to build vanpool ridership. This includes working with local employers and business groups to develop and deliver a locally-tailored marketing program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase vanpool opportunities by 50 • Increase vanpool riders by 350 • Reduce VMT annually by 5 million • Reduce daily peak SOV trips by 300
Install ramp meters in Olympia (e.g. Martin Way, Pacific Ave., Sleater-Kinney)	Integrate ramp meters into the computer-operated system that is managed in WSDOT's Traffic Management Centers. Traffic data will be fed continuously to the ramp meters, which will be used to automatically alter their cycles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase vehicles per hour (VPH) throughput by 200-500 • Reduce collisions by 30% • Increase mainline speed by 5-10 mph
Assess feasibility of peak shoulder running on I-5	Conduct a feasibility study for where peak shoulder running could be implemented on I-5 in both directions to improve mobility and increase freeway capacity.	N/A - Modeling only



Next steps

The I-5 Near Term Action Agenda represents an important step toward addressing the long-standing transportation challenges and opportunities of I-5 in that:

1. It begins an I-5 partnership that shares a common commitment by WSDOT, MPO's, local jurisdictions, transit agencies and JBLM to achieve measurable performance outcomes.
2. It embraces multimodal strategies that emphasize person-carrying capacity over standard measures of vehicle throughput.

In addition to achieving near-term performance improvements, many items in the action agenda provide an opportunity to test new service concepts that may ultimately become a new way of doing transportation business on I-5, making the best possible use of public resources to move the people and goods that drive the economy of Washington state.

For more Information

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