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Secretary of Transportation

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Date

Advancing Practical Solutions

I. Introduction

A. Purpose and Definition

This Secretary's Executive Order directs employees to implement strategies to advance Practical Solutions, an approach that prioritizes innovative, timely, and cost-effective decisions with our stakeholders and partners. It considers each situation and encourages incremental, flexible, and sustainable investment decisions by focusing on identified performance needs and engaging stakeholders at the right time.

Practical Solutions is applicable to everything the agency does, including the way we administer, manage, plan, program, design, construct, operate, and maintain all of our services and programs. It is not just about projects and project delivery; it is an approach the agency applies in everything we do and is a way of thinking and acting based on our agency values.

Practical Solutions is one of three agency strategic plan goals; it supports the other two goals of Inclusion and Workforce Development, and they support Practical Solutions.

B. Supersession

This Secretary's Executive Order supersedes and replaces the prior version titled *Moving Washington Forward: Practical Solutions*, dated August 20, 2014. All references to the superseded E 1090.00 now reference E 1090.01.

C. What Has Changed

The intent of the policy has expanded; it is rewritten with the following changes:

- The policy now applies to everything the agency does, instead of just project delivery.
- In Subsection I.A, it thoroughly revises the language and adds the definition of Practical Solutions.
- In Subsection I.D, it revises the background information and indicates how WSDOT's approach has evolved.
- It adds Subsection I.E, Practical Solutions in Practice.
- In Section II, it updates, reorders, and rephrases the information to carry out this Executive Order.
- In Section III, it updates and expands the contact information.
- In Section IV, it updates existing references, adds a new reference, and deletes outdated references.

- In Section V, it adds language about leadership review and replaces references to the Assistant Secretary of Engineering and Regional Operations with references to the Assistant Secretary of Multimodal Development and Delivery.

D. Background

The people and businesses of the state of Washington depend on a robust, reliable, and resilient transportation system, stewarded by an innovative and progressive transportation agency. The systems built over the last half a century have fueled decades of strong economic growth, but those systems are in crucial need of repair, maintenance, and, in some cases, improvement. Forecasts show the state growing by more than three million people by 2060, which will place even more pressure on the already overburdened multimodal transportation system and the agency responsible for delivering that statewide system.

Past agency efforts have focused on building system expansion to address increasing congestion in urban areas. This approach to transportation system investment is typically no longer affordable or sustainable. We must rethink our approach so that we can address the most crucial transportation system and agency needs within existing resources while adapting to emerging technological and societal changes.

Practical Solutions evolved from “Least Cost Planning” and “Practical Design” to a performance-based approach to transportation and organizational decision making. This data-driven approach uses tools, data analytics, performance measures, and stakeholder input to (1) seek lower-cost approaches and efficiencies in expanding and operating the multimodal transportation system to reduce travel demand and the need for building costly new infrastructure, (2) identify, evaluate, analyze, and manage risk to WSDOT’s strategic objectives, and (3) identify and implement agency efficiencies. Our goal is to identify and solve needs and problems as quickly and cost-effectively as possible.

We find Practical Solutions when stakeholders work together to identify sustainable, innovative, and performance-based system and agency investment approaches that:

- Preserve the environment.
- Promote transportation system performance and efficiency.
- Seek fiscally efficient solutions.
- Improve and protect public health.
- Conserve energy.
- Reduce greenhouse gases.
- Manage risk.

E. Practical Solutions in Practice

We demonstrate Practical Solutions through how we administer, manage, plan, program, design, construct, operate, and maintain all of our agency services and programs. Examples include:

Administer: Rather than continuing to collect four signatures on a form, a team investigated rules and suggested that only two signatures be required; the department agreed that using two signatures maintains the necessary checks and balances. This saves time and lessens work interruptions.

Manage: Rather than pay increasing rent on inefficient space it had leased for 15 years, WSDOT remodeled a facility it acquired through interchange construction. This resulted in a more efficient layout, cost avoidance of \$9,000 to \$12,000 per month, and payback to taxpayers in approximately three to four years.

Plan: Community stakeholders helped identify strategies to address mobility and active transportation needs as part of a widening and improvement project. WSDOT and a city agreed to conduct a corridor study to identify effective investment options, resulting in near-, mid-, and long-term strategies. The next step will advance partial implementation of the near-term strategy using the remaining study funding to improve flow through the interchange.

Program: WSDOT programmed two separate safety and paving projects, in two different biennia, for the same area. A Practical Solution advanced and bundled the safety project with the paving project. The result is at least \$900,000 in savings and reduced traffic impacts to travelers.

Design: Narrow width and lack of a median created a bridge safety issue. Rather than waiting for a large capital project to build another bridge, the Practical Solution modified the bridge, adding four feet of width to the outside edges of the existing structure. This made room for the addition of a median barrier, as well as a protected pedestrian and bicycle path, resolving the safety issue and providing multimodal access.

Construct: An original plan called for directional boring to replace five failed culverts beneath the freeway. The Practical Solution was a “slip-line” retrofit, which reduced cost and construction travel disruption. The cost of the project was reduced by half.

Operate: A southbound interstate transitioned from two to three lanes just north of a state route interchange. The heavy merge caused congestion and crashes on both highways. A typical solution would have been to spend \$2 million to widen the state route to make space for vehicles backing up. The Practical Solution restriped the interstate to remove the third lane between ramp terminals, allowing the state route southbound on-ramp to enter its own lane, avoiding congestion and thereby improving safety and operations.

Maintain: Maintenance employees report that icicles forming within tunnels are often too high to reach or are dangerous to remove when crews have to stand under them for access. An example of a Practical Solution is an icicle removal tool invented by maintenance employees that provides a better view of the work and access to a higher location, leading to the more efficient and safe removal of icicles.

II. Secretary’s Executive Order

Practical Solutions Core Principles delineate our approach as one that:

- Starts with a clear purpose and need;
- Considers agency risks, resource constraints, and life cycle operating and maintenance costs;
- Engages internal and external stakeholders and develops partnerships;
- Considers overall system performance;
- Considers incremental, phased solutions; and
- Applies innovation and creativity.

To advance Practical Solutions, employees are directed to use appropriate performance metrics, stakeholder input, and agency risk management practices to help identify investments that address a given problem in the most efficient manner possible, regardless of the mode, activity, or agency/organization with jurisdiction. Through increased focus on investment purpose and need, and other core principles, employees are directed to confirm that investment components address, but do not exceed, the specific needs and problems identified.

These employees are directed as follows:

- **Assistant Secretaries/Chief Engineer** – Establish the expectation that direct reports are aware of, champion, and implement Practical Solutions approaches within their respective areas of responsibility and implement policies and processes that encourage all employees to improve efficiencies.
- **Regional Administrators and Program Administrators** – Review existing, ongoing, and new projects and work in all phases of development to identify opportunities and apply data-driven Practical Solutions approaches.
- **Division Directors** – Review and implement existing policies, manuals, training, and other guidance to support data-driven Practical Solutions approaches.
- **Headquarters and Regional Human Resources** – Integrate the Practical Solutions approach and philosophy into training, including the employee orientation program.

III. Contact for More Information

For questions or concerns about this Secretary’s Executive Order, contact the [Assistant Secretary of Multimodal Development and Delivery](#) or visit the [Practical Solutions intranet](#) page, [Internet](#) site, [SharePoint](#) site, or [Training](#) page. Find information about Practical Solutions performance on the [Strategic Plan Dashboard](#).

IV. References

- [Governor’s Executive Order 13-04 Results Washington](#)
- [WSDOT Lean](#) intranet page
- Results Washington [Lean](#) webpage
- [Target Zero](#) webpage
- WSDOT [Strategic Plan](#) brochure
- WSDOT [Highway Safety](#) intranet page

V. Review and Update Requirements

When changes are necessary to update this document, inform the [Assistant Secretary of Multimodal Development and Delivery](#). The Assistant Secretary reviews this document periodically and proposes updates for leadership review and approval by the Secretary of Transportation.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equal Opportunity at wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA (4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.