

Safety Rest Area Strategic Plan

The WSDOT Safety Rest Area Program’s mission is to provide the traveling public with a safe, sustainable option for rest during road trips. To continue to meet the mission over time, WSDOT is undertaking a strategic planning effort to determine if the services and assets still meet the needs of all users, and to determine what changes are needed in the future. The strategic plan will act as a roadmap to support operations today, will establish achievable short-range goals, and will provide a long-range vision for the future.

The Safety Rest Area Strategic Plan was last updated 14 years ago, in 2008. Since the last update, rest area users’ needs have evolved because of changing technology, social, health, environmental, and economic issues, including environmental justice and social equity.

The Safety Rest Area Strategic Plan will:

- Identify short-and long-term recommendations to support critical Safety Rest Area concerns such as safety, rest area condition, funding, truck parking, operations and traveler needs.
- Evaluate existing Safety Rest Area Program including assets, purpose, and funding identifying core focus areas and considering any changes to operations to ensure the sustainability of the overall program. Given limited funding, it is critical that available funds are strategically invested to support trade-off decisions.
- Document analysis, decisions and proposed investment needed to continue to provide the traveling public with a safe, sustainable option for rest during road trips.

WSDOT Safety Rest Areas by the numbers

- 24 million users annually
- 47 locations statewide*

- 16 RV dump stations
- 532 commercial truck parking spaces**

* 3 locations are seasonal. *The busiest rest areas undergo short temporary closures throughout the year to accommodate maintenance that cannot be completed when open to the public. Closures are rotated to minimize impacts to travelers.*

**Most spaces are shared truck/RV based on the Safety Rest Area

Aging facilities, increased needs

WSDOT’s rest area facilities are aging and in need of significant repair and improvements. These sites also include heavily utilized and expensive to maintain critical infrastructures such as plumbing, potable water, sewage systems, and pavement.

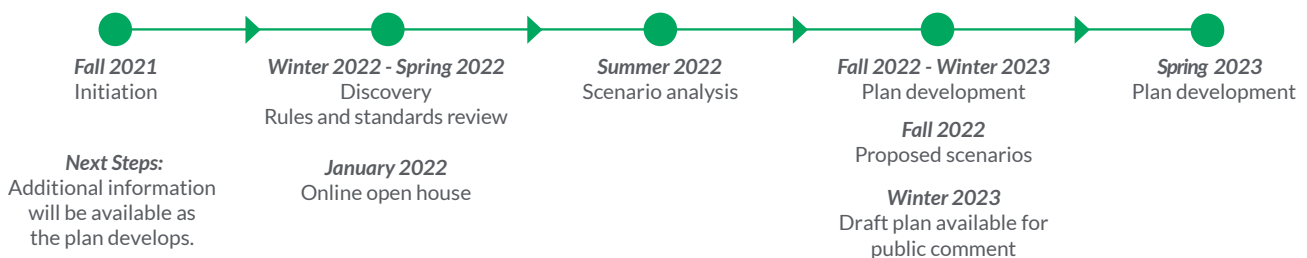
- More than 50 percent of Safety Rest Areas rated as “poor condition” in 2021 due to years of insufficient funding to keep them in good repair.
- More than half of rest area buildings will be 50 years or older by 2031.
- As facilities get closer to the 50-year mark, there is an urgent need for either considerable rehabilitation investment or closure of lesser-used facilities.

Stakeholders

Safety rest areas provide services and amenities to multiple users with various needs. The strategic plan is taking a customer-focused approach to get the right balance of input and make the best decisions for the future of the program.

Key stakeholder groups will be engaged, including motorists, commercial truck drivers, RV users, volunteers, internal groups, transportation planning partners, social organizations involved in rest area issues, the Washington State Patrol and other safety partners. Engagement tools include an online open house, meetings, surveys, and other outreach methods.

WSDOT Safety Rest Area Strategic Plan Timeline



Strategic Planning Freight Considerations

Just as it is a challenge nationally, Washington lacks adequate safe, reliably available commercial truck parking, especially on major corridors. Safety Rest Areas are one component of the larger truck parking issue and truck parking needs will be addressed during the planning process.

Public rest areas alone cannot meet all truck parking needs in the state, but the strategic planning process, followed by targeted investments, could provide additional capacity to address the freight community's growing needs.

Trucking community outreach

The strategic plan will include the trucking community throughout the process.

- Commercial truck drivers will be included in a survey in early 2022 which will help identify their needs and impacts to truck drivers and all safety rest area users and ensure the strategic plan recommendations reflect the needs of all stakeholders. In addition, trucking industry feedback will be sought on the draft plan in the Winter of 2023.
- The Safety Rest Area Strategic planning team will assess the recommendations of the 2021 Joint Transportation Commission Truck Parking Action Plan, the 2021 Washington State Truck Parking Workshop, and the WSDOT 2016 Truck Parking Study to determine how this feedback can be incorporated into the Strategic plan.
- WSDOT also will evaluate other states' rest area programs and how they support truck parking.

Challenges to address

Several challenges will affect how WSDOT and partners can respond to some calls for both short- and long-term truck parking rest area changes.

- Law enforcement faces challenges enforcing parking time limits and illegal parking and addressing drug use, vandalism, graffiti and other illegal activities.
- Both near-term and long-term changes to existing safety rest area sites require engineering, feasibility assessment, cost estimates and funding. In some areas mentioned in studies and recommendations, even small changes could

be costly due to existing features such as modifying steep slopes and retaining walls to accommodate large trucks (e.g. the SeaTac Rest Area) or major modifications to underground utilities, stormwater runoff features, and wastewater lagoon system (e.g. the Indian John Rest Area).

- Simple re-stripping solutions have been implemented where possible. Creating new parking spaces requires identifying and engineering the best location options. Even the simplest expansion options will require some earthwork and additional pavement. This will require funding and permitting.
- Designating some existing sites as "truck parking only" may require removal of heavily used RV dump stations at a time when state RV registrations are growing. These dump stations were required to be placed by state law, RCW 47.38.050.

A comprehensive system-level analysis is needed to inform and support all Safety Rest Area investment decisions. WSDOT will continue evaluating challenges and opportunities throughout the strategic plan process to find the best solutions for all involved.

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