



Biennial Progress Report

Plan overview

As required by Second Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 5997 passed in 2015, the Washington State Department of Transportation issued the Construction Program Business Plan (the Plan) in October 2017 to guide how the agency will continue to improve delivery of transportation projects in a changing construction landscape.

WSDOT convened an advisory group in January 2017 and collaborated over six meetings to develop the Plan. The committee's charge was to define key elements of WSDOT's strong owner strategy related to recruitment, training, retention and competitive compensation; outline sustainable staffing levels and report on how WSDOT is addressing the Joint Transportation Committee's (JTC) 2016 study on the agency's implementation of design-build project delivery. Since 2017, the advisory group has continued to meet with WSDOT staff to advise on Plan implementation.

Plan goals

The advisory group proposed the following goals for WSDOT's future construction program and strategies to adopt them:

Goal 1: *Strong owner and stewardship*

WSDOT continues to be a good steward of the state transportation infrastructure by strengthening the agency's role as a strong owner.

Goal 2: *Sustainable staffing levels*

WSDOT will ensure the agency has the right balance of staff and consultants it needs to deliver a successful and efficient capital improvement and preservation program by addressing staffing needs in a productive, sustainable and predictable way.

Goal 3: *Project delivery*

WSDOT will enact and accomplish the majority of recommendations of the Joint Transportation Committee's design-build study.



As required in RCW 47.01.495 (4), WSDOT will issue progress reports every two years until September 30, 2030.

Message from advisory group

Over the last two years, we continued our partnership with WSDOT as it implements the Construction Program Business Plan. As representatives for industry and labor groups, we believe it is in all of our interest for WSDOT to remain a strong, capable steward of the transportation system.

We worked collaboratively to navigate the historic COVID-19 pandemic and continued our work to maintain a strong a capable workforce. We now face both ongoing and new challenges as WSDOT prepares to ramp up quickly to deliver the Move Ahead Washington transportation revenue package.

The strategies we outlined to achieve our goals have helped us achieve the following successes:

- WSDOT remains committed to providing flexibility, with 30 to 40 percent of staff teleworking successfully and increasing opportunities for hybrid work environments.
- WSDOT’s Human Resources team is using proactive strategies to recruit engineering talent in an incredibly competitive job market. Staff have opportunities to attend trainings, seek advancement, and mentorship as WSDOT continues to prioritize workforce development.
- WSDOT maintains strong partnerships with private industry leaders and labor groups. Together we have navigated many unforeseen and longstanding challenges to implement the Construction Program Business Plan.
- WSDOT completed the majority of recommendations from the Joint Transportation Commission Design-Build study and is moving ahead with additional innovative and efficient program delivery methods, including progressive design-build.

As we look toward the future, we acknowledge serious challenges and opportunities:

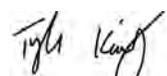
- WSDOT’s engineering compensation continues to fall further behind escalating market rates and the agency is facing competing demand for talent. According to the Office of Financial Management 2022 salary survey, WSDOT Civil Engineers are paid 26% below market rates. We expect this discrepancy will widen and may impact program delivery if vacancies are unfilled. Proactively addressing this pay disparity is critical to maintaining a strong and capable workforce. WSDOT is required to evaluate data from employee turnover, preventing the agency from taking proactive actions to better align salaries with market conditions. We recommend further evaluating this important issue.
- Employee engagement remains challenging, following the pandemic. Fewer staff participated in the statewide employee engagement survey and employee satisfaction decreased to 68%.
- This loss of employees is compounded by loss of institutional knowledge as seasoned engineers retire or leave the agency at an alarming rate, making it even more difficult for WSDOT to sustain stable and capable workforce levels.
- At the same time, WSDOT is struggling to recruit and develop less experienced staff to fill vacancies quickly enough to deliver the growing construction program. As engineering salaries escalate and workers face the uncontestable allure of tech sector jobs, recruiting new engineers and technical employees is increasingly challenging and highly competitive across the nation.
- As WSDOT faces these challenges, the agency must also prioritize recruitment and retention, through engaging and developing employees to maintain consistent staffing levels and build the skills necessary to deliver successful transportation projects.

We appreciate our partnership and conversations with WSDOT. As we work together to deliver the plan, we affirm our support for stable revenue to sustain consistent staffing levels and provide predictable work for industry partners.

Sincerely,



Van Collins



Tyler Kimberley



Sarah Lorenzini

Advisory group



Van Collins
American Council of
Engineering Companies (ACEC)
of Washington



Tyler Kimberley
Associated General Contractors
(AGC) of Washington



Sarah Lorenzini
PROTEC17



Kevin Dayton
Assistant Secretary, Regions/
Chief Engineer

Progress on implementation of the 2017 plan

The tables below show WSDOT's progress on the Plan recommendations, with additional detail for select strategies later in this report.

Goal 1: Strong owner and stewardship

Strategies	Actions
Maintain the importance of the strong owner approach from staff, industry, and the Legislature and continue to take opportunities to communicate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide ongoing high-level updates to executive leadership team. ● Develop a staffing management plan with regional administrators.
Provide a strong, capable and high-quality engineering workforce by developing and managing a workforce development plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establish workforce development as one of three goals for WSDOT's strategic plan. ● Maintaining a Workforce Development Toolkit. ● Conducting and reporting ongoing evaluation of recruitment, training, retention and salary levels.
Maintain the trust of the taxpayers, traveling public and Legislature by continuing to sustain partnerships with industry to plan and deliver the capital improvement and preservation program, and communicate with the Legislature and public.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Conducted 96 meetings with construction industry stakeholders. ● Worked with industry partners to create a better plan for claims notice to make the process easier to follow. ● Held 58 meetings with ACEC.

Advisory group comments:

WSDOT continues to implement strategies listed above to recruit, retain and develop state workforce. We are encouraged by WSDOT's efforts to provide mentorship, advancement opportunities and training programs for staff.

We acknowledge ongoing challenges in the recent wake of the COVID-19 pandemic to increase employee engagement and are concerned about the increasing salary gap for WSDOT's engineering workforce. We understand WSDOT's difficulty recruiting and retaining staff in this competitive job market and support WSDOT Human Resource's proactive recruitment efforts, including advertising and exploring strategies like statewide recruitment and hiring processes. We appreciate WSDOT's efforts to focus on employee engagement by developing staff and training managers to adapt to the needs of their employees as they navigate remote, hybrid and in-person work environments.

As WSDOT faces these serious challenges, we advise the agency to build upon this work and prioritize closing the salary gap and developing their engineering workforce to successfully deliver the program.

Goal 2: Sustainable staffing levels

Strategies	Actions
Develop a staffing forecast through 2023 that avoids significant increases or reductions in staffing levels, communicate projections with staff, and update every biennium.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update FTE and expenditure actuals through June 2023. Maintain a 10-year staffing forecast.
Provide information about what WSDOT needs to respond to a competitive job market and sustain required staffing levels for program and project delivery.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing coordination between WSDOT Human Resources and Stakeholder Advisory Committee with PROTEC17. Sharing updates through biennial progress report.
Identify and proactively communicate opportunities for the consultant workforce to support program delivery by offering WSDOT flexible staffing and expertise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct industry outreach as outlined in Goal 1. Continued engaging industry partners in joint training sessions on topics such as fish passage, partnering and conflict resolution, joint asphalt pavement, civil rights and design-build.

Advisory group comments:

WSDOT continues to make progress developing projections for workforce planning and managing consultants, as well as offering training in partnership with industry. Over the last several years, we have weathered significant changes in revenue and continue to seek stable staffing levels for the success of this program.

We appreciate WSDOT's ongoing coordination between HR and the Stakeholder Advisory Committee. WSDOT continues to prioritize the agency's inclusion goals through initiatives like outreach at diverse recruitment events; diversity, equity and inclusion training for all staff; and promoting equitable hiring practices. We recognize that WSDOT continues to face challenges recruiting and retaining staff and urge the agency to prioritize employee engagement, close the salary gap, and further develop hiring processes aimed at increasing the rate of positions filled.

Goal 3: Project delivery

Strategies	Action
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand on JTC Study to explore additional project delivery methods. Focus on items WSDOT and industry leaders identified as important to future success of the Design-Build Program. 	Share updates on additional project delivery methods and items important to future success

Advisory group comments:

We support WSDOT's shift to exploring additional project delivery methods, including progressive design-build. We appreciate WSDOT's efforts to partner with industry leaders to identify priorities for the future success of the design-build program.

We look forward to adapting strategies and actions to achieve Goal 3.

2017 PLAN STATUS UPDATE

Goal 1: Strong owner and stewardship

Contractors, consultants and taxpayers expect WSDOT to provide quality staff who are capable and knowledgeable about building, preserving and operating the state’s multimodal transportation system. The focus of the Plan included developing a strong owner strategy as it relates to recruitment, staff development, retention and compensation for engineering group positions. In addition, WSDOT is reinforcing its role as a strong owner by engaging and partnering with industry leaders.

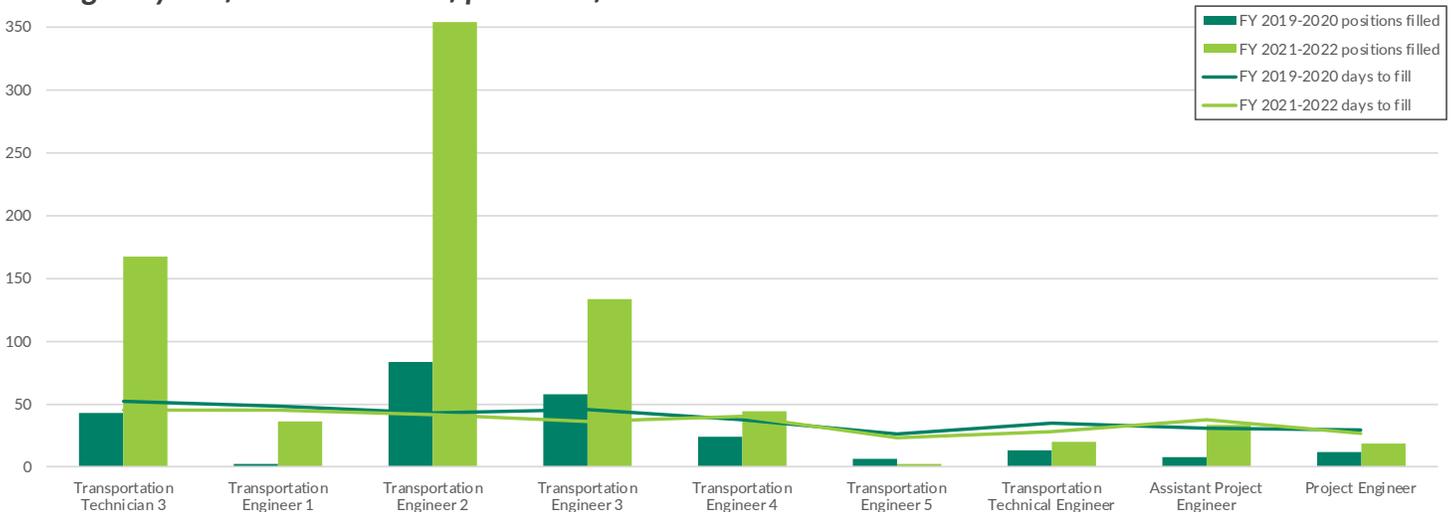
How is WSDOT doing?

Recruitment

WSDOT’s office of Human Resources continues to focus on recruiting and retaining qualified staff. The HR team is taking proactive steps to advertise open positions, attend career fairs, and streamline recruitment efforts to fill open positions quickly with diverse and high-performing candidates. On average, WSDOT’s recruiting timeline was approximately 47 days between fiscal years 2021 and 2022, compared to an industry average of 60 days. WSDOT made 1,414 new hire appointments in fiscal years 2021 and 2022.

In August 2022, WSDOT launched a centralized recruitment effort to fill multiple TE2 positions throughout the six regions across the state. The WSDOT recruitment team filled over 180 positions in six months using this new process and plans to boost marketing efforts to support this new process over the next six months.

Average days to fill and number of positions filled



Make your mark on the future of transportation.
Explore & Apply

WSDOT
Your future begins today!

Transport to a better career, today!
It's time to pursue a rewarding career in public service. WSDOT offers a wide range of opportunities in a variety of fields. Competitive wages, excellent benefits and more.

There are many benefits to working for WSDOT, including

- Modern Work Environments
- Flexible Schedules
- Tuition Assistance
- Professional Development
- Healthcare and Retirement Options
- Rewarding Careers in Public Service!

Washington State Department of Transportation | 1500 Pacific Park St. Olympia, WA, United States. Washington State Department of Transportation is an Equal Opportunity Employer. Minorities and women are encouraged to apply. For more information, visit www.wsdot.wa.gov and contact your local recruitment office.

WSDOT attended 37 engineering career fairs at colleges and universities around the Pacific Northwest region, Arizona, Michigan, Montana, and Texas to recruit new staff. WSDOT hired 115 TE interns in 2021 and 2022. The agency is prioritizing inclusive outreach to hire diverse candidates.

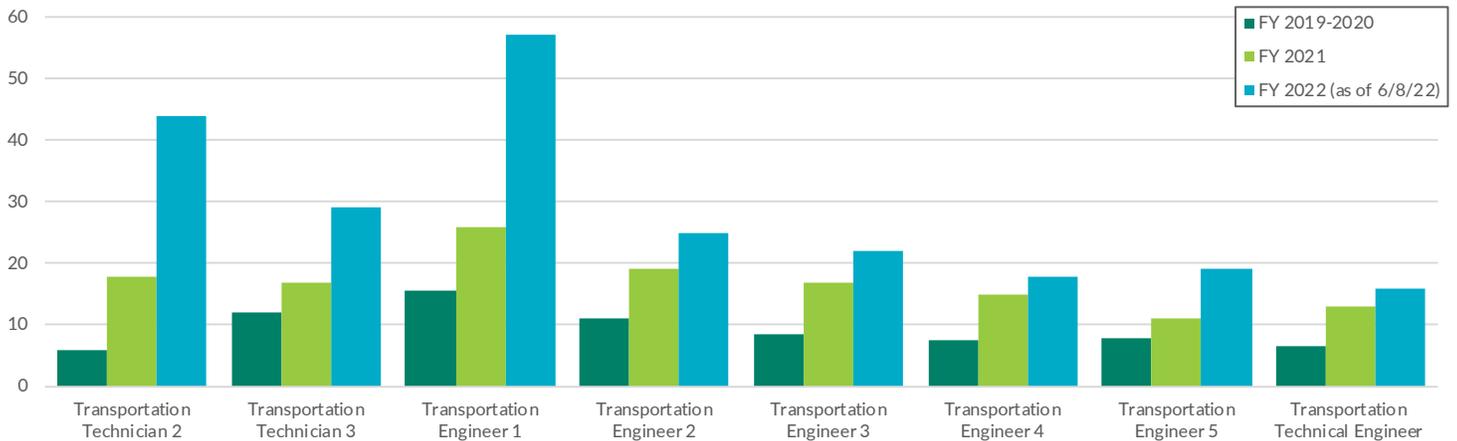
WSDOT conducted a mass media advertising campaign to recruit talented job applicants. The campaign included geo-targeted emails in Seattle and Spokane, a 13-week advertisement campaign with iHeart Media Group, and a 3-week television advertising campaign, featuring a 30-second ad on King5, NBC and Peacock television during winter Olympics coverage.

Training and staff development

WSDOT continues to prioritize training staff across all levels of the organization, with an emphasis on trainings for entry-level positions. Trainings are focused on supporting hybrid work environments and cultural initiatives that support diversity, equity and inclusion efforts:

- 21 employees attended AASHTO’s Management Institute in August and 35 attending in November
- Behavioral Health all staff series hosted by Dept. of Health’s Dr. Kira Mauseth (over 1,800 attendees)
- R.E.S.T. & Resiliency training program created with 209 enrolled
- “How to Have Tough Conversations” series hosted 275 attendees

Average number of training classes by position



WSDOT also provides materials testing training courses to certify engineers. As WSDOT continues to experience turnover among senior level engineers, these training programs are critical to building a knowledgeable and experienced workforce.

Focus on anti-racism policy and training

WSDOT’s anti-racism and diversity, equity and inclusion planning policy:

- Commits WSDOT to actively combatting racism.
- Strengthens anti-racist, diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts to ensure our state’s multimodal transportation system serves *all* Washingtonians.

A Culture of Engagement: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Workplace

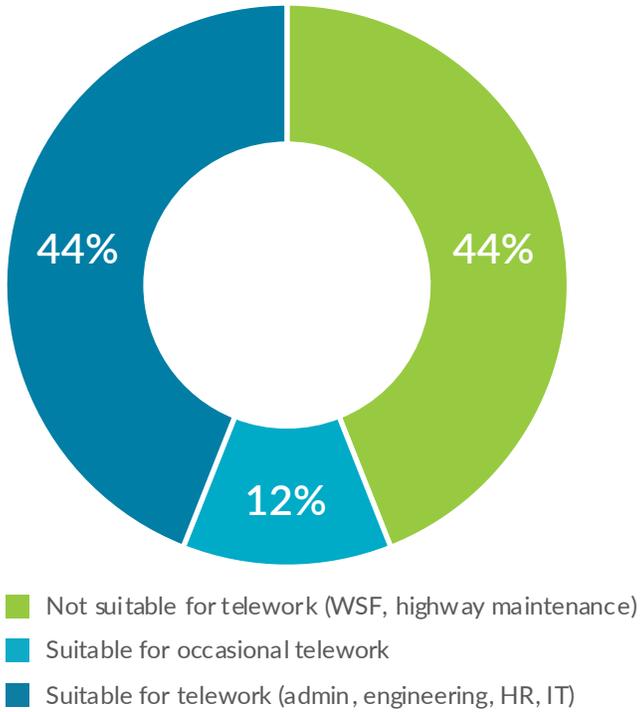
The Department of Enterprise Services is finalizing statewide DEI training and including a Culture of Belonging training module. A few WSDOT employees are participating in a DEI training pilot program this fall, receiving training in the following areas:

- Self-awareness: Learners explain how their own group identities and values have shaped their perceptions and behaviors.
- Belonging in the workplace: Learners interact with others in the workplace in ways that contribute to a culture of belonging.
- Bias and power: Learners recognize and respond to power inequities related to bias, prejudice, and racism in the workplace.
- Addressing equity and inclusion barriers: Learners identify and take steps to address barriers to equity and inclusion in the workplace and in the communities we serve.

Employee engagement

WSDOT continues to support telework and hybrid work environments and considers flexible work environments key for employee retention. Over the last year, 30 to 40 percent of WSDOT employees teleworked successfully.

WSDOT employees suitable for telework



Teleworking

- Enhances employees' productivity, satisfaction and collaboration.
- Improves recruitment and retention.
- Supports a modern work environment.
- Expands job opportunities to more areas of the state.
- Reduces pollutants, congestion and energy use.



Mentorship programs

WSDOT continues to see value in developing and investing in our workforce through mentorship programs. Over the last two years, WSDOT's mentorship program has expanded within Northwest, Multimodal Planning and Data, Olympic and Southwest regions. We will continue to seek opportunities to develop mentorship programs across the agency.

Mentorship program goals:

- Provide opportunities for mentees to see beyond current position and offer sounding board for career advice.
- Provide mentees professional and personal growth opportunities that align with their goals.
- Offer mentors from multi-disciplines.
- Foster relationships and provide different perspectives outside mentee's work group.
- Provide mentorship at all staff levels.
- Grow mentees into future mentors.

Retention

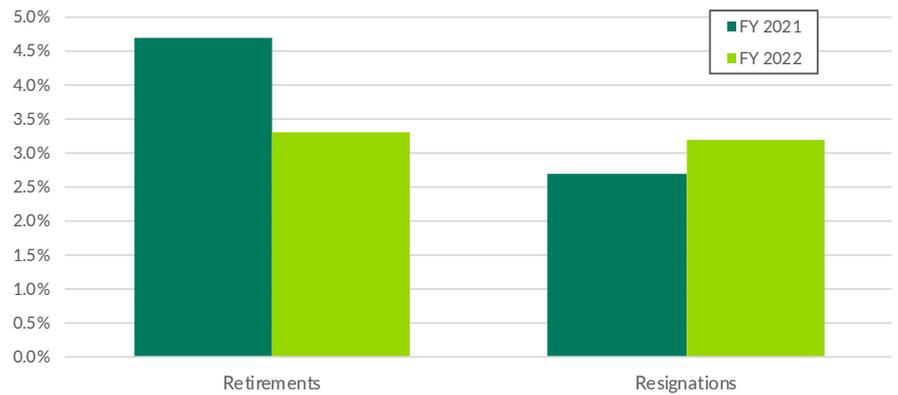
Engineering turnover rates declined slightly in retirements between the 2021 and 2022 fiscal years. During the same timeframe, WSDOT experienced a slight increase in resignations. Moving forward, WSDOT will continue to focus on retaining staff by emphasizing employee engagement, including providing flexible work environments, training programs and working to provide more competitive salaries.

Statewide employee engagement survey data shows:

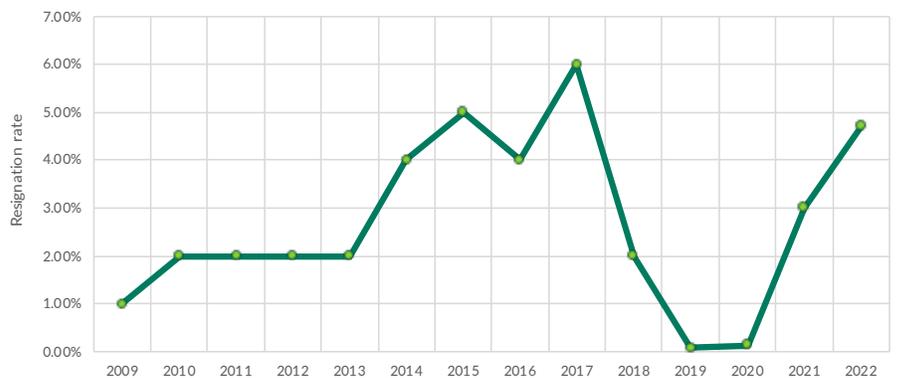
- Overall employee fulfillment down by 5% to 68% over the last two years
- 78% of WSDOT employees are satisfied with flexibility
- 77% are satisfied with mobility of their jobs
- 88% of employees said their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect
- 85% know what is expected of them at work

Based on the results of the employee engagement survey, WSDOT sees opportunity to focus on increasing employee engagement around helping staff navigate change; continually improving; measuring success; and recognizing staff for a job well done.

Rate of retirement and resignations for Transportation Engineers, Transportation Technicians, and Transportation Technical Engineers



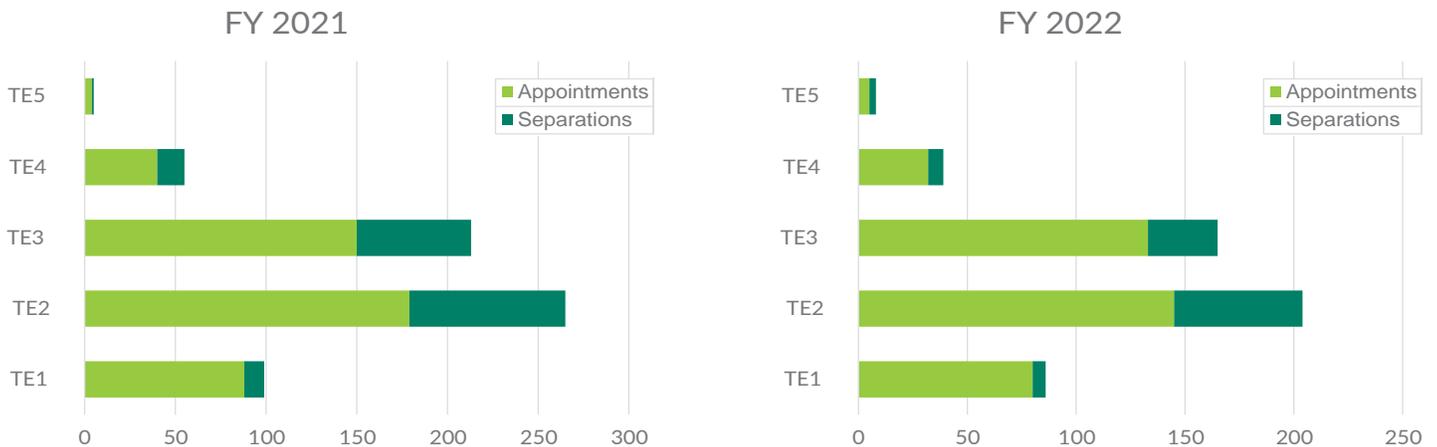
Resignation rate for engineering group employees with six to 10 years of service by fiscal year



78% of WSDOT employees are satisfied with the flexibility of their jobs.

88% of WSDOT employees say their supervisor treats them with dignity and respect.

Appointments to separations



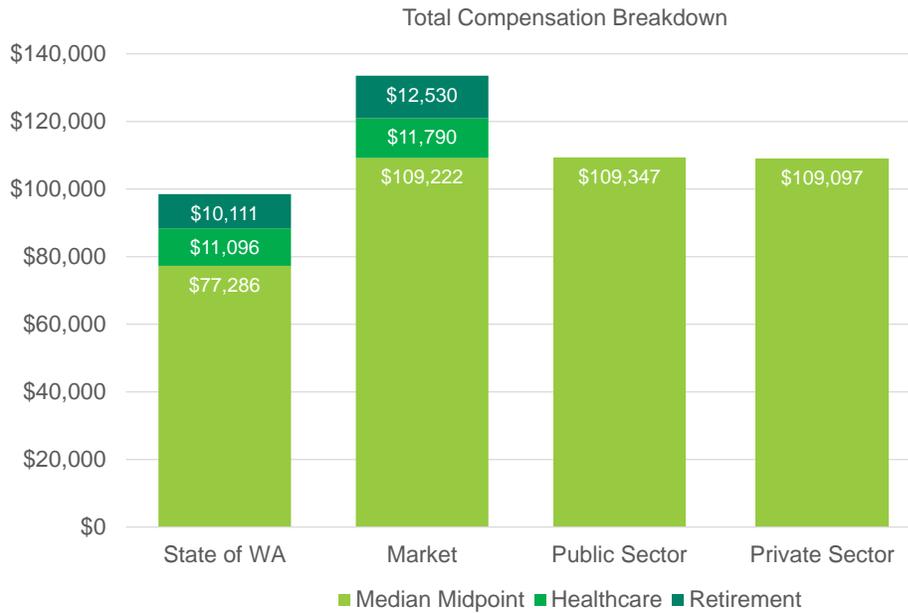
For Transportation Engineer (TE) 1 positions, WSDOT made 88 appointments and only 11 separations in fiscal year 2021. This trend indicates staffing levels are increasing.

Competitive compensation

According to the 2022 Washington State Employee Compensation Survey of 53 in-state employers, WSDOT continues to offer below-market rates for engineering job classes.

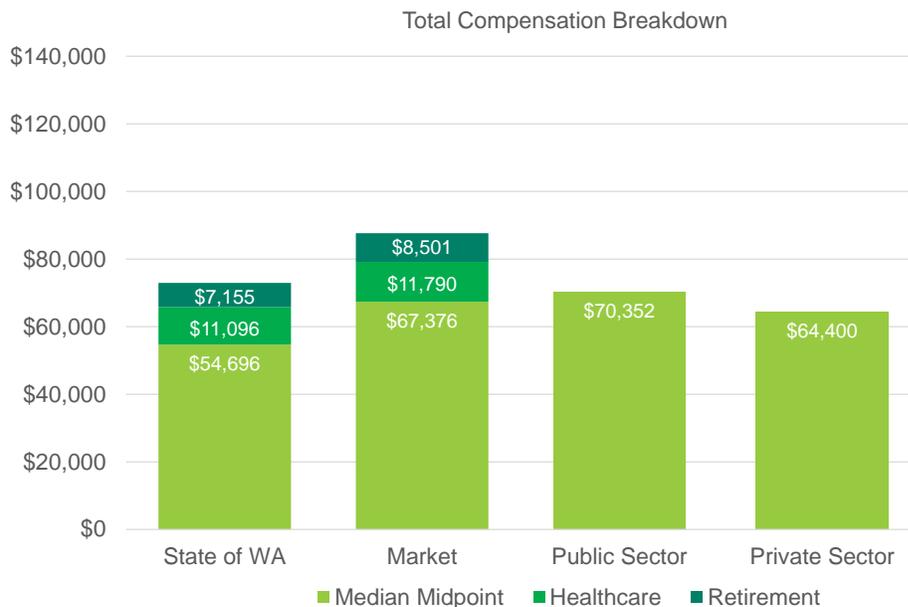
Job series	Percent behind market 2016	Percent behind market 2018	Percent behind market 2020	Percent behind market 2022
Transportation Technical Engineer	38.5	44.8	18.1	26.2
Transportation Engineer 1	38.5	44.7	18.1	26.2
Transportation Technician 1	29.6	24.5	14.8	16.8
Transportation Planning Technician 1	26.3	18.5	15.7	15.0

Salary survey data Civil Engineer 3



Washington's total compensation in the market
-26.2%
 Lead Lag

Salary survey data Engineering Tech 3



Washington's total compensation in the market
-16.8%
 Lead Lag

PE license incentive
 Since 2020, 50 WSDOT employees have their professional engineering license. 36% of those with PE licenses have advanced to higher level positions.

Industry outreach

From July 2020 to July 2022, WSDOT conducted the following outreach with industry professionals.

- 96 meetings with Washington Asphalt Paving Association (WAPA), AGC, and Protec-17 including negotiations, check-ins with executive leadership, annual meetings, WAPA/WSDOT Work Zone Safety Committee meetings, and AGC/WSDOT Roadway, Structures, and Administration subcommittees.
- At least 58 meetings with ACEC, including an annual meeting, meetings with the Executive Liaison Committee, and Business Administration, Project Delivery, Structures and Geotechnical, and Design-Build Subcommittees.

WSDOT's outreach to AGC, WAPA, and the Washington Aggregates & Concrete Association (WACA) has resulted in the following key outcomes:

WSDOT/AGC Administrative Subcommittee

- Reviewed criteria for using the Disputes Review Board (DRB) application and responsibilities of WSDOT and Design-Builder to implement the DRB.
- Collaborated on proposed changes to allow flexibility in using steel escalation specification.
- Discussed the challenges of workforce availability and its effect on project schedule and cost.

WSDOT/AGC Structures Subcommittee

- Continued performing constructability reviews for selected projects.
- Discussed specification issues such as precast structure procurement and developing a specification for lightweight fill.

WSDOT/AGC Roadway Subcommittee

- Continued discussion of having WSDOT provide electronic data to help determine construction material quantities for bid preparation.
- Continued developing criteria such as level of accuracy and piloting requirements for drone surveys.
- Proposed changes to the lump sum earthwork specification to apply to a broader range of earthwork situations.

WSDOT/AGC Partnering Subcommittee (formed in 2021)

- Developed training goals, content, and metrics to measure effectiveness of the partnering process.
- Developed criteria for Partnership Awards to recognize excellence in this aspect contracting.

WAPA

- Developed methods to increase pavement life through modifying material specifications, increased testing measures and incentive/disincentive contract language.

WACA

- Discussed methods to improve concrete quality including review of aggregate approval process and modifying gravel specifications.

Additionally, ACEC outreach resulted in the following outcomes:

Business Administration Subcommittee:

- Continued guiding industry and answering questions about federal Paycheck Protection Program.
- Informed business community on changing policies and priorities (remote work, fish passage program delivery, equity, etc.).

Design-Build Subcommittee:

- Developed contract language to be more flexible in professional liability insurance requirements.
- Collaborated on delivery of the Design-Build Training Summit.
- Revised Organizational Conflicts of Interest Manual.

Geotechnical & Structures Subcommittee:

- Developed fish passage structures and standard plans for buried structures.
- Worked on policy for designing bridges to have a 100-year service life.
- Reviewed options for digital bridge modelling (including 3D possibilities).

Project Delivery Subcommittee

- Reviewed and provided feedback for Design Manual updates.
- Provided recommendations on how to improve WSDOT's construction cost estimates.
- Reviewed project documentation requirements.
- Discussed pandemic and post-pandemic business models.

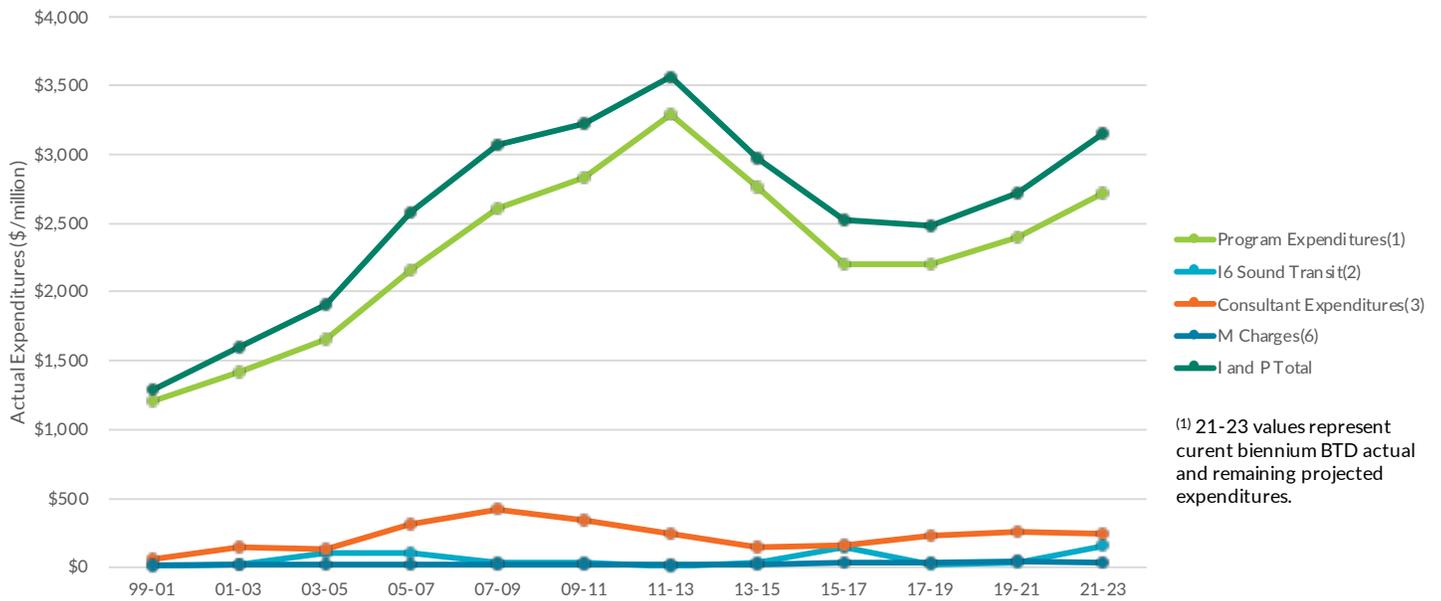
Goal 2: Sustainable staffing levels

WSDOT’s Construction Program Business Plan identified a Workforce Projection model to help forecast staffing levels and consultant needs. WSDOT staff and industry professionals need reliable projections for agency staffing levels and contracted work.

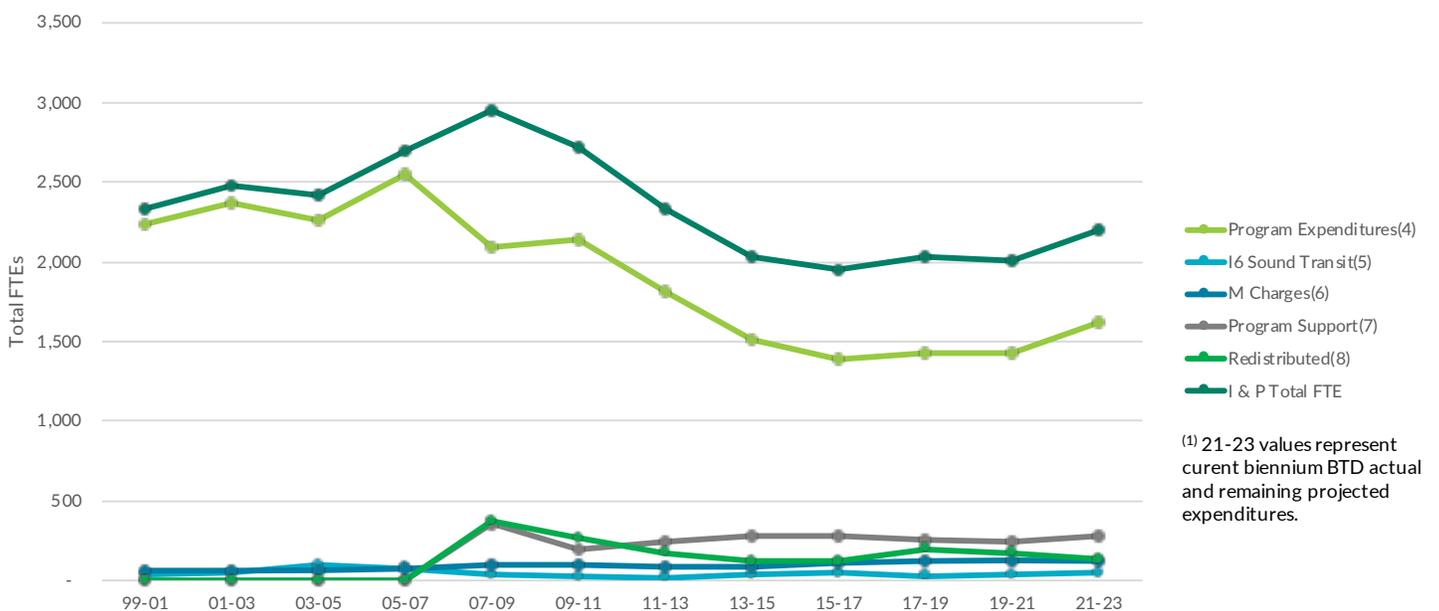
How is WSDOT doing?

WSDOT staff have updated historical FTEs and expenditures to show actual levels through the current biennium. WSDOT also updated the workforce projections to align with the current Legislative approved budget. As outlined under Goal 1, WSDOT shares these projections regularly with the Construction Program Business Plan Advisory group and agency leaders.

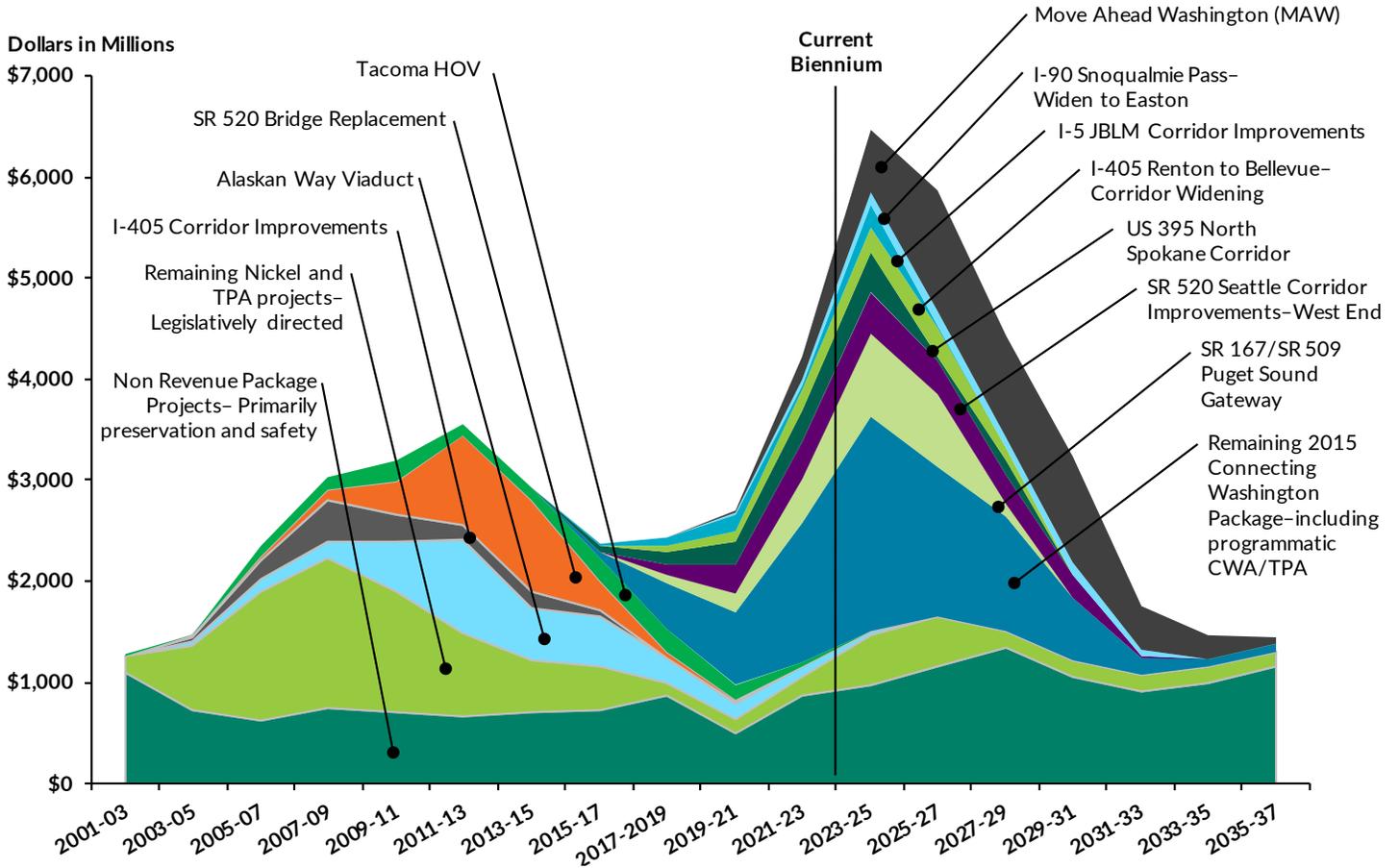
Historic expenditures



Historic FTEs

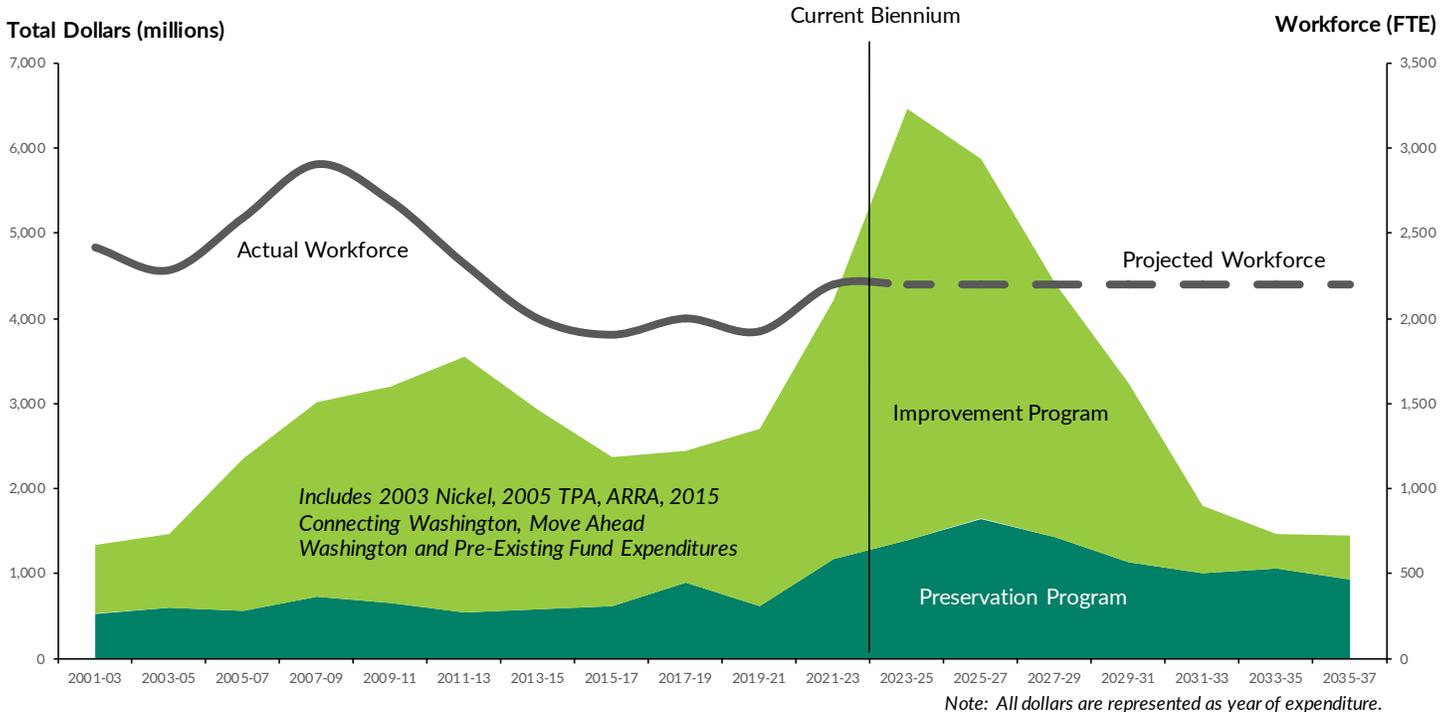


WSDOT Highway Construction Program with revenue packages (2023-2025 budget submittal)



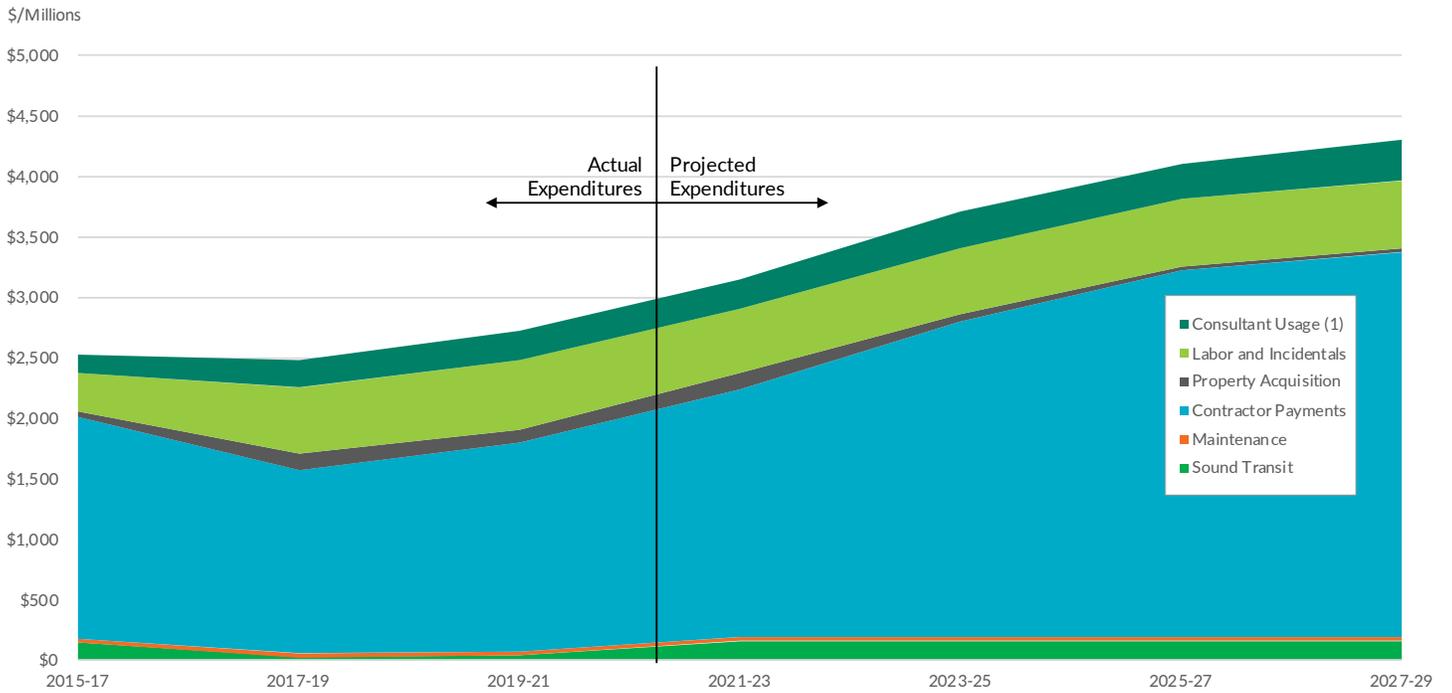
The graph below indicates how total WSDOT FTEs align with historic and future program expenditures.

Historic and future program expenditures and FTEs



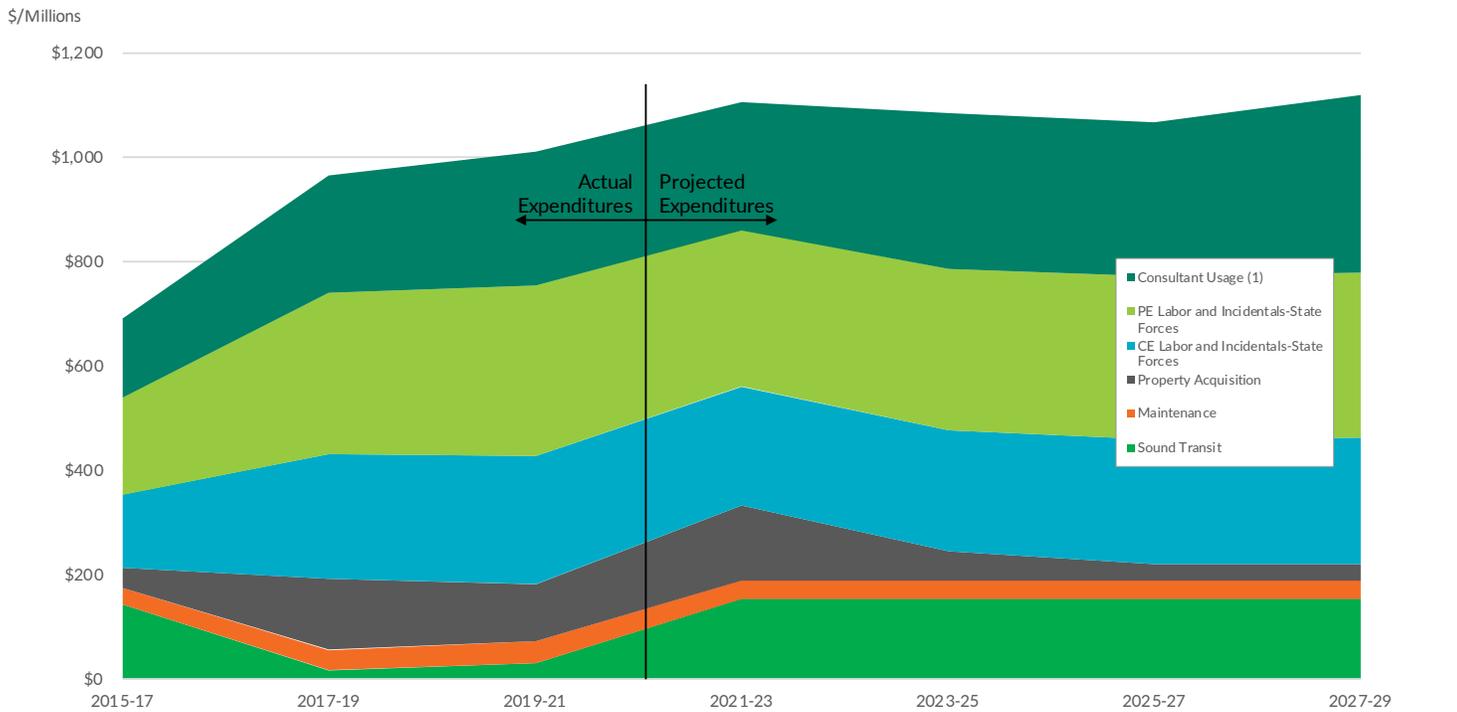
FTE workforce targets

Expenditure type estimate - 2,200 FTE workforce target

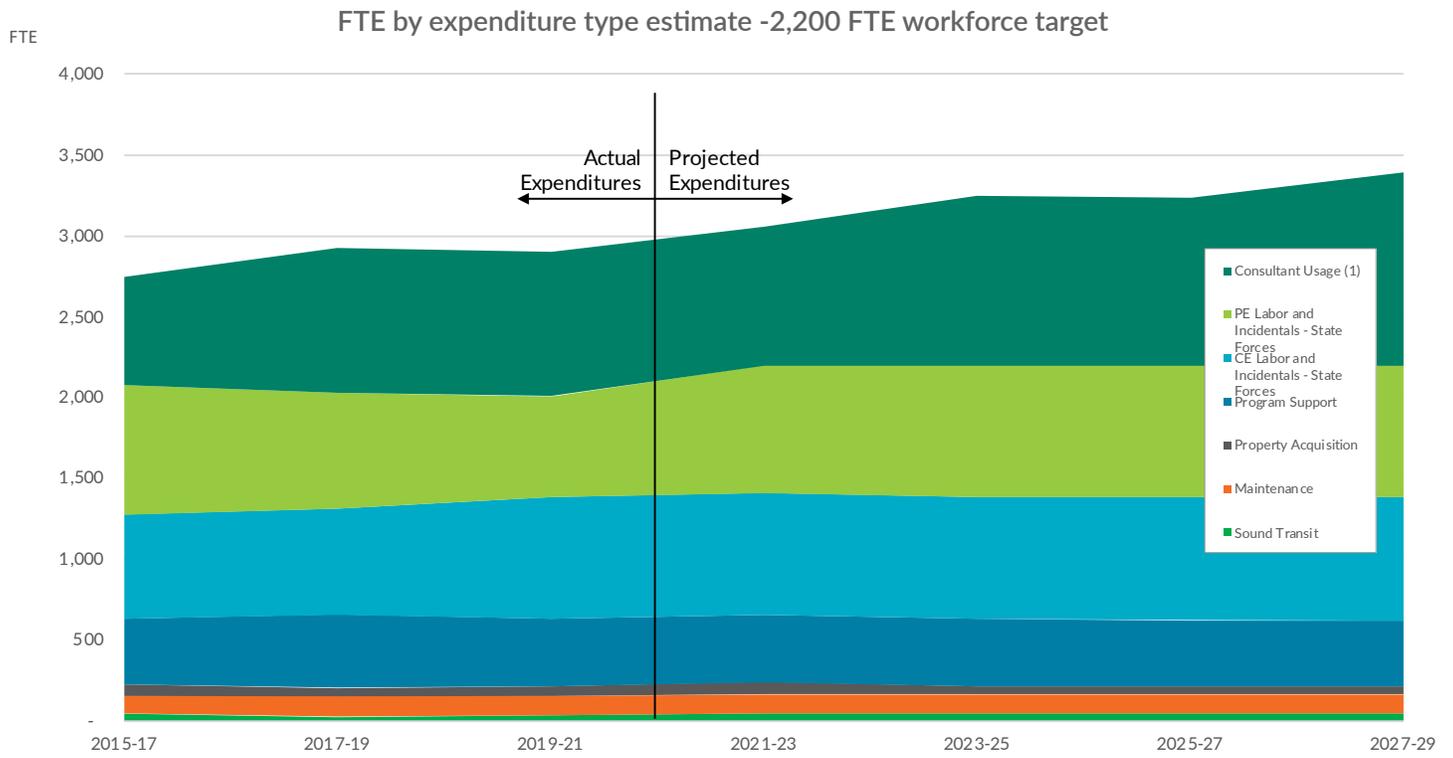


¹ Consultant usage does not include consultant support on design-build projects.

Expenditure type estimate - 2,200 FTE workforce target



¹ Consultant usage does not include consultant support on design-build projects.



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Trainings

From August 2020 to April 2022, WSDOT offered one training in partnership with industry:

- October 2020 Design-Build Training Summit



Goal 3: Project delivery

WSDOT completed Goal 3: enacting and accomplishing the majority of recommendations of the Joint Transportation Committee's design-build study. The agency continues to embrace innovative project delivery methods, including design-build and progressive design-build to maximize efficiencies in cost and schedule as our state invests billions of dollars into critical infrastructure improvements. Currently, WSDOT is delivering two progressive design-build projects, 25 design-build projects, one General Contractor/Construction Manager projects, and approximately 150 design-bid-build projects.

How is WSDOT doing?

In 2021 WSDOT began shifting from implementing the JTC Design-Build Study to exploring additional project delivery methods. The following table summarizes WSDOT's current focus areas and status updates.

Strategy	Strategy status
Electronic proposal submittals	Complete Q3 2021
Minority Women Business Enterprise / Small Veteran Business Enterprise requirements	Pilot complete Q4 2021, implemented statewide Q2 2022
Recycled concrete aggregates use	Complete Q2 2021
WSDOT/design-builder evaluation	Work in progress (Final Draft)
Bundling projects (preservation, design-build, design-bid-build) into larger contracts	Work in progress
CPARB 3 yr. progressive design-build certification	Not started
RCW 47.20.780 change for progressive-design build	Work in progress (Draft)
Organizational conflict of interest policy	Work in progress, September 2022



New Berkeley Street and I-5 interchange in Lakewood, June 2021

Next steps

WSDOT will continue meeting with the Stakeholder Advisory Committee to identify how they will guide WSDOT in updating the Construction Program Business Plan leading up to the next biennial report to the Legislature. The committee will meet about quarterly and advise WSDOT on actions to increase employee engagement, and retain, recruit and train workforce and consultants to ramp up to deliver the increasing construction program. WSDOT will provide the next biennial progress report to the Legislature on September 30, 2024.

For more information contact

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