



Washington

Overview

Rural transit agencies throughout Washington State work closely with their regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs), and both transit agencies and the RTPOs work closely with the Public Transportation Division of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). This division has a staff of 47 people who provide services, including technical assistance, grants administration, construction mitigation, and a range of guidance, including on climate change and sustainability.

Washington has several notable and innovative practices relating to rural transit planning. Transportation organizations in the State experience “cross-pollination” between their efforts since staff and officials participate on each other’s boards and committees. In addition, a State-level council was created over a decade ago to better coordinate human services transportation across State-level agencies. Similarly, training in the State is coordinated by a single agency with the goal to reduce training duplication and increase cost-effectiveness. Transportation providers and RTPOs appreciate WSDOT’s streamlined consolidated grant program. WSDOT uses performance measures in its grant program and in analysis of transit systems. WSDOT has also developed an innovative funding strategy that has resulted in an intercity bus service that provides a backbone of transportation service throughout the State. Finally, Washington is among the most progressive states with regard to integrating transportation and transit with sustainability; climate change; and livability goals, policies, and programs.

Context

Rural Transit

Public transportation in Washington State is provided through voter-approved transit agencies and community transportation providers. Community transportation providers include private non-profit, private for profit, Tribal, and local governmental organizations. Transit service is provided by multi-county-, county-, or city-based transit agencies in urban as well as rural communities. Transit coverage varies throughout the State since transit is usually funded by a referendum vote on whether an area would like to tax itself to fund transit. Many counties in the State do not have public transportation service so they rely on human service providers to provide coverage. According to one transportation provider official, “If you live in a rural area and have a car and you can drive, then you will drive.” In total, there are 31 transit agencies in the State. The State also has a very extensive intercity bus service (see first text box) and there are also a handful of rural Tribal transit systems (see second text box).

Washington's Intercity Bus Service

Over the years, WSDOT's Public Transportation Division has built up the State's intercity bus service to provide a backbone of routes that service many rural and urban communities (see Figure 1). In 2006, WSDOT received approval from the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to use private capital investment as local match funds for the new Travel Washington intercity bus routes. This local match now comes from the capital investment made by Greyhound Bus Lines. Traditionally, local matching funds were needed for each individual route and provider and were difficult for local communities to secure. The new funding structure follows the idea that intercity routes are all part of a multimodal transportation network, as described in WSDOT's [2007 Intercity Network Plan](#). As part of their contracts, the intercity transportation providers must provide timed connections to each other's routes and to Amtrak stations as well. WSDOT also funds Community Connector routes that provide connecting service in rural areas to the intercity service. According to one WSDOT official, "These better connections benefit everyone."

Figure 1 Washington State Intercity Bus Routes



Source: [WSDOT Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program website](#)

Rural Tribal Transit: the Yakama Nation

As a result of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and Tribal transit funds, the Yakama Nation is in its fourth year of providing transit service. Yakama Nation was one of the first Tribal transit systems in the country to provide transit service with start-up funds. While the Yakama Nation is not a formal member of the YVCOG, Yakama Nation staff do occasionally participate on the RTPO's Technical Advisory Committee at the staff level. Yakama Nation contracts with a private non-profit transportation service provider to run its system, which operates on Tribal transit funds through FTA. Its system connects with the non-profit's special needs service and Community Connector service that provides access to Yakima Transit, which serves the City of Yakima, and Ben-Franklin Transit, which serves the adjacent counties of Benton and Franklin.

Institutional structure

The WSDOT [Public Transportation Division](#) is under the supervision of the agency's Chief of Staff. The one exception is the Sustainable Transportation and Climate Change program. For the purposes of that program, the Division reports directly to the Secretary of Transportation. Other parallel divisions under the Chief of Staff are Highways and Local Programs, Governmental Relations, Communications, Aviation, Freight Systems, Freight Systems, and State Rail and Marine. There are six WSDOT regional offices in the State, some of which have dedicated staff who work with the transit agencies within their region.

Like many Departments of Transportation, over the past several years WSDOT has been moving from being a Highways Department toward one with a fully integrated multimodal philosophy. According to one WSDOT official, over the past "few years, public transportation has become a much more integrated part of the agency" with respect to work with highways, regions, and non-motorized transportation. As a result, public transportation is much more integrated and able to effect and be effected by other divisions in the organization.

The Director of the Public Transportation Division oversees a staff of 47. Staff includes two people who work directly on climate change issues, people who work on reporting and performance measures, and people who interface with the Strategic Planning and Programming (SPP) Division. The SPP is also involved with sustainability plans. With regard to transit planning, the Public Transportation Division assembles transit data and information and then hands them over to various entities, including the legislature, other planning divisions, and the National Transit Database. Programs under the division include:

- Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program
- Vanpool Investment Program
- Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT)
- Growth and Transportation Efficiency Center (GTEC) program
- Intercity Bus Program
- Coordinated Human Services Planning
- Contracts and Grants Administration Program
- Regional Mobility

Three of these programs work closely on rural transit: the Coordinated Human Services Planning, ACCT, and Intercity Bus Program. According to WSDOT, the Coordinated Human Service Transportation Plans work to enhance the access of people to health care, shopping, education, employment, public services, and recreation. The [ACCT](#) was created in the 1998 Washington State legislative session to coordinate affordable and accessible transportation choices for people with special needs through collaboration with State and local agencies. The [Intercity Bus Program](#) encourages the development of a complete, connected, and direct network of intercity public transportation services.

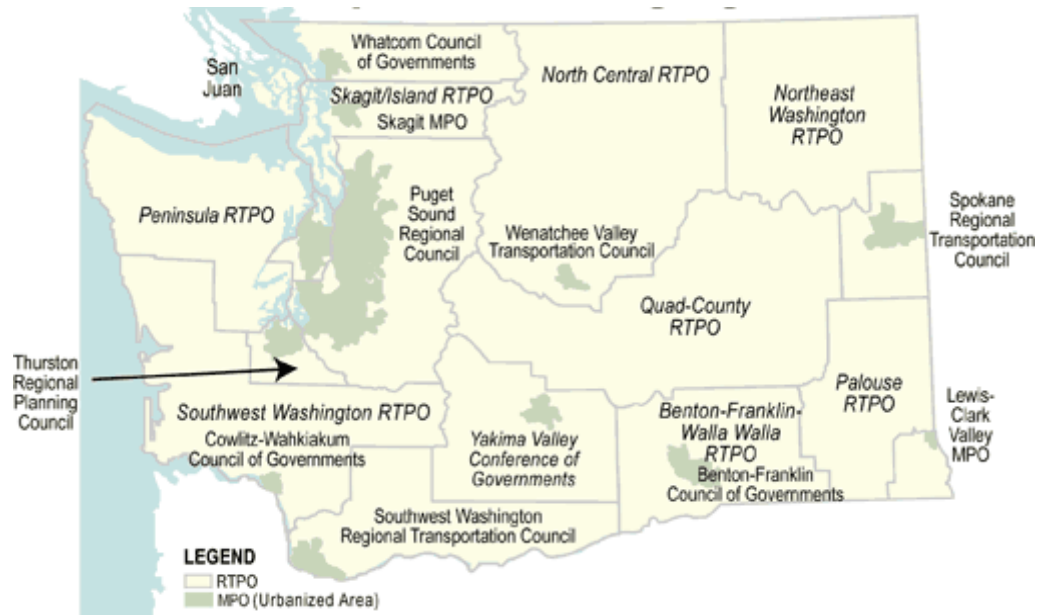
RTPOs in Washington were authorized as part of the 1990 Growth Management Act to ensure local and regional coordination of transportation plans. RTPO members include cities, counties, WSDOT, Tribes, ports, transportation service providers, and private employers. There is no mandate to form or join an RTPO; though once formed, they are guided by State legislation, and are voluntary organizations formed under an interlocal agreement by jurisdictions that choose to participate within a given area. RTPOs are county based and are no less than one county in size. There are 14 RTPOs covering 38 of the 39 counties in Washington (see Figure 2).

RTPO planning must involve cities, counties, WSDOT, transit agencies, ports, and private employers. RTPOs are required to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan and develop and maintain a six-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The RTPO is also responsible for developing the human services transportation plan (HSTP). Some of the RTPOs are part of a Council of Governments (COGs), but one RTPO is operated by WSDOT. The RTPO lead planning agencies are usually staffed by a COG, an economic development commission (EDC), or a WSDOT regional planning office. Where an MPO exists within a RTPO, the agencies share lead agency responsibilities.

There are also 11 MPOs in the State. Three RTPOs do not contain an MPO (Figure 2). RTPOs and MPOs differ in several ways although both follow similar planning guidelines. RTPOs were created by State legislation, cover both urban and rural areas, and receive State funding in support of their planning efforts. MPOs were created by Federal legislation, cover urbanized areas with populations of 50,000 or greater, and receive Federal funding in support of their planning efforts. Federal MPO planning requirements do not apply outside of the areas with populations over 50,000, but similar requirements apply to statewide transportation conducted by DOTs.

COGs are generally broader than MPOs and RTPOs. The Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG), for example, has separate programs, of which transportation through the MPO is one, and is both the MPO and RTPO. Each regional planning agency has its own board structures. While YVCOG has an executive committee of seven, its RTPO has three additional members, one of whom represents transit. This committee constitutes the YVCOG's executive transportation council. As another example, Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council selected the head of their transit service to be the board chairman.

Figure 2: Regional and Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organizations



Source: [WSDOT Regional Transportation Planning website](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/transportation_planning/)

Funding

Table 1 and Table 2 show the breakdown of Federal and State funds allocated for transit for 2009 to 2011. During this time, WSDOT allocated \$25 million for Paratransit/Special Needs, \$17 million for rural mobility, and \$7 million for vanpool from multimodal funds. The majority of transit funding comes from a local option. Communities must vote to tax themselves to cover the costs. These areas, termed public transportation benefits authority (PTBAs), allow up to six tenths of one percent of sales tax to be directed towards public transportation. While this amount was recently increased to nine tenths of one percent, only two jurisdictions have voted to raise sales taxes to this level.

WSDOT has a consolidated grant process and application for public transportation providers. This program combines State (Rural Mobility and Paratransit Special Needs) and Federal funding (FTA Sections 5310, 5311, 5316, and 5317) and allows applicants to submit one application for funding to WSDOT. WSDOT then determines how best to fund each successful application based on the project description. WSDOT uses its State funds to match with FTA funds.

“Tell us what your need is, and if it scores well in a competitive process, we will fund that need.”
 – WSDOT official.

Table 1: Federal Transit Funding for 2009-2011 Biennium (in millions)

Program	Funding
Section 5311 (Formula Grants for Other than Urbanized Areas)	\$13.5
Tribal	\$1.3
Section 5310 (Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities)	\$5.8
Section 5309 (Bus and Bus Facilities)	\$4.4
Section 5316 (Job Access and Reverse Commute) (Rural and Small Urban Only)	\$2.4
Section 5317 (New Freedom)	\$1.2
Federal Totals	\$28.6

Table 2: State Transit Funding for 2009-2011 Biennium (in millions)

Program	Funding
Rural Mobility	\$17.0
Paratransit/Special Needs	\$25.0
Vanpool Investment Program	\$7.0
Regional Mobility	\$40.0
State Totals	\$89.0

Participation of Rural Transit in Statewide Planning Process

Washington State DOT

Typically, urban transit agencies work with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs); WSDOT is a resource for both types of agencies. In rural areas, the RTPO may provide planning assistance to transportation providers; in other areas, WSDOT provides assistance to transit. WSDOT provides administrative and technical assistance, supports RTPO coordination activities, and actively participates in the regional transportation planning process.

WSDOT's Public Transportation Division offers consolidated Federal and State grant funding so a provider only has to submit one application per project through the consolidated grant process; WSDOT staff then determines for what source of funding the project is eligible. This service is particularly helpful for rural providers with limited staff time and other resources. The State sets priorities and goals through this program.

The consolidated grant program utilizes coordinated public transit-human service transportation plans to identify projects that address deficiencies in transportation service to individuals with special needs. The consolidated grant program provides funding to public transit as well as other transportation providers that include private non-profit, private for profit, Tribal government, and other local governments.

According to one regional planning official, the Public Transportation Division staff is very helpful in providing technical assistance and access to grant funding. Most of the division's assistance to the regions ties to the consolidated grant program. The division also has staff who provide assistance

regionally from the field. Field staff document and provide information on best practices from more advanced RTPOs to smaller peers. In part to improve economic development in rural areas,

Human service providers are a high priority for WSDOT. WSDOT allows human service providers to maximize Federal resources to support medical and special needs trips, in part by working closely with the Veterans Administration and Medicaid. As part of a pilot program, WSDOT allowed veterans' vouchers to be used toward intercity fare.

According to one regional planning official, the State assists by facilitating communication between RTPOs and MPOs. However, the relationship between these organizations can at times be competitive so WSDOT's facilitation role can be sensitive. According to another local representative, there are opportunities to improve coordination between the three divisions in WSDOT with which RTPOs interact (Highways and Local Programs, Strategic Planning, and Public Transportation) to support further integration of rural transportation.

The Public Transportation Division provides several opportunities for training, including its bi-annual [Public Transportation Conference](#), training on how to apply for funding grants, a guide for volunteer drivers, and a peer review program. An example of the [peer review program](#) is the request of Intercity Transit (Olympia/Lacey) for a peer review of its paratransit operation. WSDOT assembled a team of experts from other systems that performed on-site and off-site reviews of Intercity Transit's services. The peer review team produced a report containing 74 recommendations to save Intercity Transit money and improve performance.

Training courses for transit systems and specialized transportation providers are developed by the [Washington State Transportation Training Coalition](#) (WSTTC). The WSTTC was formed in 1997 with the goal of reducing training duplication and increasing cost effectiveness. In addition to offering training, the coalition develops statewide training policies and manages the coalition's resources for training. The coalition includes representatives from WSDOT, [Washington State Transit Insurance Pool](#), [Washington State Transit Association](#) (WSTA), and the [Community Transportation Association of the Northwest \(CTA-NW\)](#).

RTPOs

RTPOs are responsible for developing a Regional Transportation Plan, a Regional TIP, and the HSTP. WSDOT provides funding to RTPOs to develop and update these plans and programs. Some RTPOs in turn contract with one of the transportation providers with which they work to develop the HSTP. Also, when the Growth Management Act created RTPOs in 1990, it charged RTPOs to review local comprehensive plans to make sure they are consistent with countywide planning policies and regional transportation plans. Many RTPOs provide staff support for the development of these local plans to the counties, cities, and towns within their regions so they are able to inform those plans as they are being drafted.

RTPOs work closely with their transportation providers when developing their Regional TIP. Most transportation providers are also involved in developing the Regional Transportation Plan, but some are not. Transportation providers who apply through the State consolidated grant process must be involved through the local plan. With regard

*According to one RTPO official,
"The people who use the service don't care who owns the service; they want to be able to get where they want to go and back."*

to the HSTP and the Section 5311 rural funding program, the RTPO issues a call for projects, sets its criteria, and ranks the projects. The State has a panel that then reviews and ranks all projects submitted statewide. The RTPO's votes and the State's votes are counted equally. There is no maximum amount a transportation provider can request, but the reviewers want to ensure geographic equity across the State. For the HSTP, priority populations for projects are low income, elderly, disabled, and youths. HSTP agencies have found that it is beneficial to coordinate and leverage funding whenever possible with local agencies and partners. The intercity bus program is also similar in that the State wants to ensure that there is coverage across the State to provide residents of rural areas access to urban areas and services.

Implementing agencies for commute trip reduction are usually associated with COGs and primarily work with large employers to provide their employees with alternatives to get to work. Some regions of the State are seeing up to 40 percent of commuters leaving their region daily to travel to a nearby region for work. Regions and the State DOT are starting to work on shared funding of projects, such as park and rides, to keep pace with these trends.

Regional and local transportation providers

As mentioned above, some transportation providers are more involved in the RTPO planning process than others. One transportation provider that participated in this study works closely with their RTPO to integrate information from the HSTP into the regional TIP and even the State TIP. Many transportation providers participate on committees of RTPOs and vice versa.

According to one transportation provider, "The diverse composition of the board has been terrific." In their case, a diversified spectrum of representation from the community on their board provides a good partnership base for funding opportunities. For example, they now provide regularly-scheduled service through school districts that starts with after-school activities and then broadens to include the general public. This arrangement provides added capacity because after 5 p.m., these buses are available as needed while the other transit buses are all on their fixed routes.

Transportation providers predict that they will probably see an expansion of rural vanpool programs over coming years and WSDOT reports it plans to expand the vanpool program to provide an additional option for area residents to use to reach their jobs. While this vanpool program is open to the general public, mainly for work commute trips, it can also be for school trips as well. Providers, such as one in Mason County, are also responding to demand by providing more connections to ferry boats, which are also important for commuters in the Central Puget Sound region.

According to an official from one transportation provider, the HSTP has "Really opened up dialogues on what resources are available and what opportunities there are to work together."

ACCT

The ACCT is a council of State agencies, transportation providers, consumer advocates, and legislators that has the following goals: promote the coordination of special needs transportation, provide a forum for discussing issues and initiating change, provide oversight and direction to the State's coordination agenda, and report to the legislature and propose legislative remedies. According to the ACCT [website](#), the ACCT was created in 1998 because the State legislature found that transportation systems for persons with special needs were not operated as efficiently as possible: "A structure was needed that

could function and be relevant across organizational boundaries and facilitate coordinated special needs transportation systems through collaborative state and community processes.”

Nine voting and four non-voting members are appointed to the ACCT. The voting members include three State agency representatives and six governor-appointed members who serve two-year terms. According to the [ACCT website](#), the non-voting members are legislators who “bring in a unique perspective of the legal framework around transportation planning to the discussion. The legislators are also in a strong position to influence law making to reduce barriers to coordinated transportation.” As of 2010, the chair of the ACCT is the head of WSDOT’s Public Transportation Division and one of the other voting members is the Executive Director of YVCOG, who represents RTPOs. The other voting members include school representatives from schools, public transit, community transit, users of special needs transportation, and the Department of Social and Health Services.

WSTA and other associations

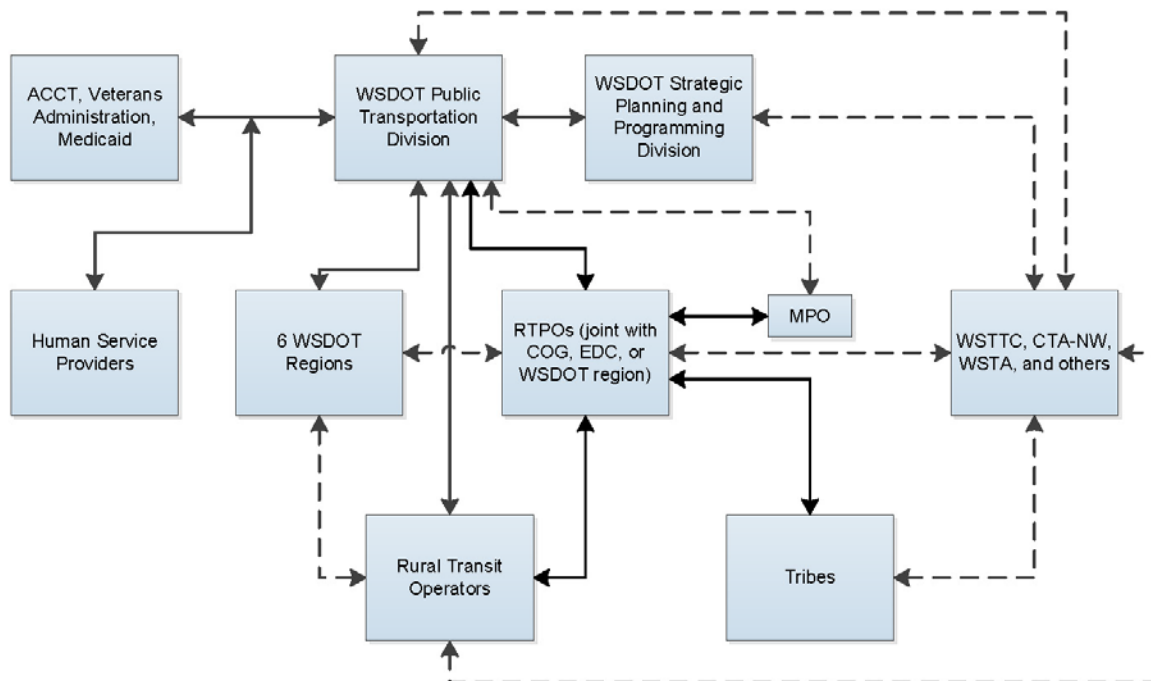
WSTA is a 501(c)(6) nonprofit corporation that represents 25 transit systems in the State. According to its [website](#), the mission of the WSTA is to shape, ignite, and inspire decisions that promote public transportation as a vital element of the communities it serves. Furthermore, its key purpose is to promote and enhance public transportation for the citizens of the State of Washington by promoting legislation beneficial to public transportation; promoting and enhancing the professional development of transit management within the State; and promoting awareness, trust, and support for public transportation. Therefore, WSTA advocates legislation beneficial to public transportation, fosters the professional growth and development of transit management, and publicizes transit's accomplishments.

There are also transportation advocacy organizations, including the [CTA-NW](#), the [Transportation Choices Coalition](#), and the [Washington State Rideshare Organization](#), that come together to accomplish regional priorities across the State. CTA-NW works closely with rural communities, in which Tribes are involved. RTPOs are also involved in advocacy organizations in other areas of the states, which are area or corridor specific.

Summary

Figure 3 shows the relationships and connections between agencies involved in rural transit and statewide planning in the State as described above.

Figure 3: Relationships between Agencies Involved in Rural Transportation Planning



Major Planning and Project Initiatives

WSDOT has a vision called [Moving Washington](#) with three main components: operating efficiently, managing demand, and adding capacity strategically. According to one WSDOT official, public transportation partners and integrates with other modes at all stages of the planning and project delivery process, primarily with managing demand.

The [Washington State Summary of Public Transportation](#) is a yearly report that summarizes the status of public transportation in Washington. The summary provides data to transportation providers, legislative transportation committees, and local and regional governments. In addition to a description of transit agencies' existing service and objectives for the future, the report also includes performance measures for operations. These performance measures, which are broken out by service (fixed route, route-deviated, demand-response, etc.) and compared to the average of the type of service (urban, small urban, or rural) include:

- Fares/Operating Cost
- Operating Cost/Passenger Trip
- Operating Cost/Revenue Vehicle Mile
- Operating Cost/Revenue Vehicle Hour

- Operating Cost/Total Vehicle Hour
- Revenue Vehicle Hours/Total Vehicle Hour
- Revenue Vehicle Hours/Full Time Equivalent
- Revenue Vehicle Miles/Revenue Vehicle Hour
- Passenger Trips/Revenue Vehicle Hour
- Passenger Trips/Revenue Vehicle Mile

The State's long range transportation plan, the [2007-2026 Washington Transportation Plan](#) (WTP), states, "Moving away from the historical practice of using gas tax revenue and attempting to build our way out of congestion, this 20-year plan warns that as we grow, we must choose strategies to manage growth and strategically invest to better move people and goods." The plan calls for transit asset preservation, which includes "funding stability for bus fleet replacement, park and ride lot preservation needs, and operating needs, including expensive demand-responsive service operations."

Observations and Challenges

Consolidated grant program

Several of the regional and local agencies contacted for this study stated that the consolidated grant program makes their job easier and expressed appreciation for such a program. WSDOT would like to help other states develop a similar consolidated grant program, but it would like to see more flexible Federal reporting requirements first. WSDOT officials stated that it is difficult to manage current funding "buckets," particularly due to the way in which they have to report how Federal funding was spent bucket by bucket. This reporting is inefficient because technical assistance expenses bridge the buckets so it is difficult to allocate fractions of time to each bucket. WSDOT supports one possible direction in the next transportation bill, which calls for some funding streams to be combined.

Limited funding

Like many transportation providers across the country, revenues for transportation providers in Washington are declining, or are not keeping pace with costs to operate, so services are being reduced. In Washington, the State gas tax cannot be used for non-highway purposes. According to those contacted for this case study, the current 0.6 percent sales tax in their regions for transit does not cover enough of the expenses, especially since the economy has been faltering even as the demand for transit has been increasing. The allowable tax rate was recently increased to 0.9 percent, but only three rural areas successfully put this sales tax measure on a ballot, and the sales tax cannot be increased further. According to a representative of one transportation provider, many rural counties do not have service because people do not believe public transportation will benefit them enough to outweigh being taxed more.

The State is trying to find more ways to improve how transit funding can be generated and used more effectively; a Joint Transportation Committee study was recently completed on this topic. Other funding sources might be carbon tax or a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) user fee, but the State is waiting to see what comes out of the [Western Climate Initiative](#). This initiative has considered a cap and trade system, but it is now waiting to respond to Federal policy. Some funding for rural transit with which agencies are pleased comes through sales tax equalization, which provides funding directly to rural transit systems.

This funding is based on sales tax expenditures even if money is spent in county areas outside of the transit agency service area.

Some rural transportation providers have applied for Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery grants. However, some of the agencies that participated in this study reported that local agencies will have to struggle to find operating funds even if the grants are funded and the public sees new vehicles and facilities. According to one study participant, this issue equates to a disconnection in the public's mind. One transportation provider noted they would like the new transportation bill to cover more costs of operations and to provide greater funding flexibility.

Sustainability and Livability

Consistent with Federal models, WSDOT is pursuing both sustainability and livability initiatives. Unlike many states, Washington is moving forward with its sustainability initiatives, but its direction is still in flux. WSDOT officials say that burdens of sustainability – such as the reduction of VMT (see Box 3) are different in rural areas than in urban areas. While what sustainability means for smaller areas is not yet fully defined, all State grant recipients must have a sustainability plan in place when applying for State funds. The 2011 legislative session may result in better defined expectations for sustainable transportation plans. Some MPOs are already required to have these plans in place or are working to develop them. RTPOs may be next to have this requirement. These plans have to align with the State goals, which will be refined in subsequent years. Some RTPOs have found the idea of sustainability more palatable to their constituents than climate change.

“In some rural parts of the state, talking about climate change will get you politely escorted to the door” – RTPO official

WSDOT is following the Federal model for livable communities: State departments of ecology, transportation, and commerce are working together like the U.S. DOT, HUD, and the Environmental Protection Agency. As part of their work, they are covering energy, transportation, and climate change with the overarching piece being the economy. According to one WSDOT official, sometimes staff and organizations involved in transportation consider themselves oriented toward either access or congestion; livability is a natural bridge between the two, which is exciting to that official. Creating livable communities is tough, however, due to land use changes that are often beyond the purview of transportation planning efforts.

Climate change

According to WSDOT, the department has supported carpooling, vanpooling, and public transportation through the funding, building, and maintenance of the freeway high-occupancy vehicle system for the past 30 years and has reduced VMT and peak congestion through its continued support of nationally-recognized Transportation Demand Management and Commute Trip Reduction programs. In rural areas, some RTPOs concentrate on the activities that achieve the same end instead of focusing on “climate change mitigation” itself. These activities include promoting carpools and vanpools and revitalizing areas within cities and towns (jobs-housing balance). With regard to more land use-based activities, COGs can play a valuable role because some provide community and land use planning services as well as transportation planning. One RTPO official said that COG staff work across these lines regularly.

Intercity bus

Other states are now following Washington's example with regard to its intercity bus program and innovative funding program. Intercity bus provides a critical link with rural transit service to provide residents with transportation options and access to key destinations, including work, health care, and education statewide. According to one WSDOT official, "They have really met an unmet need to provide service to people in rural areas." A key to the success of the State's intercity bus service is that Greyhound and the other providers talk to coordinate their routes and schedules. More and more communities now want the service to be extended to their cities and towns. While the State has limited resources for expanding the service, the more successful the routes become, the less the State has to support them since they are generating more revenue. With regard to implications for economic development, one WSDOT official remarked "a small investment has yielded large dividends." Another WSDOT official said that intercity bus and rail is a backbone that can be used for a lot of different programs, including livability.

Performance measures for rural areas

With regard to the Washington State Summary of Public Transportation, few states have such a comprehensive, performance-based report for transit. Even fewer states have reports focused on different types of transit service including rural. Performance measures in the State are becoming even more detailed. With guidance from the stakeholders and the rest of WSDOT, the Public Transportation Division has staff that is establishing a performance-based system. This system will be aligned with WSDOT's [performance-based statewide strategic implementation plan](#). The Public Transportation Division is part of a pilot project for this effort as is the State's [sustainable transportation initiative](#), which is led by the head of the Public Transportation Division of WSDOT. These groups will be testing the system to see if it will work with a specific mode (transit) and something more general (sustainable transportation). Indicators for the tool include traditional transit measures (miles, hours, and trips) as well as VMT and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions because the State has corresponding GHG and VMT legislative goals.

WSDOT is pursuing transportation-related GHG reduction targets and realizes that there is no one "silver bullet." To be successful, all "four legs of the stool" (Figure 3) will need to be pursued to reduce GHG emissions from the transportation sector: more efficient vehicles, lower carbon content fuels, more efficient transportation system, and fewer VMTs. The integration of transportation and land use decisions will also need to be accomplished.

Figure 4: Four Legs of the Stool to Reduce GHG Emissions from the Transportation Sector

Source: [FHWA and Parsons Brinkerhoff. Global Climate Change & Transportation: State of the Practice. Climate Change Workshop for MPOs and DOTs. 2008.](#)

Cross-pollination

According to a couple of the agencies consulted, there is considerable “cross-pollination” between regional and local transportation agencies and local social service organizations because officials and members sit on each other’s committees and boards. This relationship fosters in-depth understanding between agencies of each other’s issues, challenges, and solutions to those challenges. Organizations are then better able to coordinate on addressing issues, planning together for the future, and, ultimately, supporting decisions. One RTPO uses its connections with other organizations to develop and vet ideas for its long-range transportation plan. An official from this RTPO said that in this way, their public outreach is much better than just having open houses or seeking comments on the web; they are able to capture and legitimize everything as they proceed while not having to strictly gear up every four years for plan updates. As soon as Federal money becomes available, projects and programs are already vetted and ready to go in the long-range transportation plan.

Conclusions

- Transportation providers and RTPOs appreciate WSDOT’s streamlined consolidated grant program. While WSDOT will continue offering the program, WSDOT would like Federal reporting requirements to be more flexible and less segmented.
- Despite the presence and provision of a multitude of resources for transportation providers in the State (training, regional planning support, grants, etc.), transit service is not universal throughout the State because a significant portion of service is funded by local sales tax that must be voted on by the public.
- Some transportation providers have a diverse representation from the community on their board, which provides a good partnership base for funding opportunities.

- Rural vanpools and connections to ferries will likely increase in coming years due to demand from rural commuters connecting to more urban areas. Vanpools and other mechanisms to reduce commuter trips in single-occupancy vehicles are funded in part by the State, who partners with RTPOs, transit agencies, and local governments to work with larger employers to provide their employees with alternatives to get to work.
- The Public Transportation Division provides several opportunities for training, including its bi-annual Public Transportation Conference, training on how to apply for funding grants, a guide to volunteer drivers, and a peer review program. Transit training in the State is specifically coordinated by a single agency with the goal to reduce training duplication and increase cost effectiveness.
- An innovative funding strategy has resulted in an intercity bus service that provides a backbone of transportation service throughout the State by linking rural transit with key statewide destinations. This service has in turn resulted in economic development and a well-integrated system of connected routes.
- Transportation organizations benefit from being involved in different yet related planning efforts, such as long-range transportation planning, human service transportation planning, and rural transportation planning, since staff and officials participate on each other's boards and committees. These relationships occur at the local, regional, and State levels; broaden thinking about the role of transit; and build support for decisions and projects in the years between long-range transportation plans.
- A State-level council (the ACCT) was created to better coordinate special needs transportation services across agencies. One transportation provider that participated in this study works closely with their RTPO to integrate information from the HSTP into the regional TIP and even the State TIP.
- RTPOs are responsible for developing a Regional Transportation Plan, a Regional TIP, and the coordinated HSTP. RTPOs generally work closely with their transportation providers when developing their Regional TIPs and plans.
- Washington is one of the few states in the country that requires State grant applicants to have a sustainability plan to apply for funds. Livability is helping bridge organizations and activities within WSDOT, although this may be limited by its purview over transportation, not land use.
- Climate change is a priority issue for WSDOT, but does not directly translate to rural areas; instead, rural areas emphasize economic and land use activities. These activities attain related objectives to climate change objectives, which in turn have the co-benefit of also reducing GHG emissions.
- WSDOT has a report that contains performance measures for all transportation providers. WSDOT uses performance measures in its funding and analysis of transportation systems, including those in rural areas. This fosters consideration of rural transit as part of the State's multimodal systems and a transparent look at performance trends. Performance measures related to climate change and sustainability may be consolidated in the near future.