



As a partner in regional transportation planning,

WSDOT supports Skagit County’s efforts to guide development of multi-modal links between and through Skagit County communities. Close coordination will be required as open space connection concepts that involve state highways are more fully developed. In order to help define WSDOT’s role in implementation of the *Skagit Countywide UGA Open Space Concept Plan*, the following summary provides general information about WSDOT; describes statewide strategies to improve partnerships and support bicycling and walking as an integrated part of Washington’s transportation network; and describes WSDOT’s role in ongoing planning for non-motorized transportation in Skagit County.

### Who We Are and What We Do

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is the steward of a large and robust transportation system, and is responsible for ensuring that people and goods move safely and efficiently. In addition to building, maintaining, and operating the state highway system, WSDOT is responsible for the state ferry system, and works in partnership with others to maintain and improve local roads, railroads, airports, and multi-modal alternatives to driving.

### WSDOT at a Glance:

- 18,389 state highway lane-miles
- 3,600 bridges, including the four longest floating bridges in the United States
- 42 safety rest areas
- 23 ferry vessels active in the largest vehicle-ferry system in the world
- 20 ferry terminals
- 24 million ferry passengers annually
- \$15 billion capital improvement program
- 7,200 full-time employees

Source: [www.wsdot.wa.gov/about/](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/about/)

WSDOT works towards achieving five goals: safety, preservation, mobility, environmental quality, and system stewardship. These goals are consistent with the statewide transportation policy goals established by the Legislature. The mission of the Washington State Department of Transportation is to keep people and business moving by operating and improving the state’s transportation systems vital to our taxpayers and communities.

In pursuit of this mission, the Department is responsible for developing strategies to improve bicycle and walkway connections; increase state, regional, and local coordination; and reduce congestion. (RCW 47.06.100) We support all modes of transportation to give people transportation choices.

## Washington State Bicycle Facilities and Walkway Plan

Plan Web site: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/bike/PDF/BikePedPlan.pdf>

The state law (RCW 47.06.100) calls for the Washington State *Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan* to provide an assessment of statewide bicycle and pedestrian transportation needs and include strategies for: improving connections, increasing coordination, and reducing traffic congestion. The plan also satisfies the federal requirement for a long-range bicycle transportation and pedestrian walkways plan.

### Established goals:

This plan established important goals for reducing bicycle and pedestrian injuries and fatalities by five percent per year, while doubling biking and walking over the next 20 years.

Achieving these goals will require Regional Transportation Planning Organizations and local agencies, in particular, to prioritize improving conditions for bicycling and walking. The goals and associated performance measures are as follows:

**Preservation:** Ensure no net loss in pedestrian and bicycle safety, and mobility.

**Safety:** Target safety investments toward known risk factors for pedestrians and bicyclists.

**Mobility:** Increase bicycling and pedestrian transportation choices.

**Environment:** Walking and bicycling will be part of Washington State's strategy to improve public health and address climate change.

**Stewardship:** Improve the quality of the transportation system by improving transportation access for all types of pedestrians and bicyclists, to the greatest extent possible.

### Plan Summary:

- Biking and walking are increasing in Washington, particularly in cities where housing infill is occurring. Bicycle commuting has increased 75 percent in the past ten years. Biking and walking currently account for about six percent of statewide commute trips. In the Puget Sound Region, bicycling and walking account for nine percent of all trips. In several urban core areas across Washington, bicycling and walking account for 15 percent of all trips.
- Doubling current levels of bicycling and walking is achievable. In Washington State, more than half of all trips are less than three miles, yet 80 percent of these trips are made by car. Commuting to work accounts for about 20 percent of all vehicle miles traveled, so 80 percent of all the vehicle miles we drive are for other purposes. Bicycling and walking account for 5-7% of non-commute trips currently and many more of these trips could be accomplished by biking and walking as gas prices rise.
- The State's safety record must continue to improve. In the ten year period between 1997 and 2006, 103 cyclists and 706 pedestrians died on Washington's roads. Walkers and cyclists are killed at a disproportionate rate. Bicyclists and pedestrians account for six percent of all trips statewide and are involved in 13 percent of all fatal traffic collisions.

- The highest priority investments are connections within cities and urbanizing areas, particularly where housing and employment mix. Based on analysis of the data and information available, the greatest opportunity for improving bicycle and pedestrian safety and mobility is improving crossings, connections, and trail systems within cities and urbanizing areas. Higher speed, higher volume arterials within cities often act as barriers to bicycling and walking.
- Public support is strong for building safe places to walk and ride bikes. The statewide survey conducted by WSDOT showed that 86 percent of Washington residents have biked or walked for transportation over the past year. Seventy percent of Washington residents surveyed support an increase in spending to create more safe places to bike and walk if current transportation funds are used; over 50 percent of citizens supported a tax increase.
- Washington has limited resources to improve the built environment for biking and walking, for enforcement of biking and walking laws, and for providing public education. Bicycle and pedestrian engineering improvements are approximately two percent of the transportation budget.
- WSDOT identified more than \$1.6 billion in unfunded bicycle and pedestrian improvements statewide. A review of adopted six and ten year local plans and state highways found \$1.6 billion in conceptual solutions to make that transportation system safer and better for bicycling and walking. Of this \$1.6 billion, approximately 20 percent has been grouped by WSDOT into the categories of Gap

Projects, School Related Projects, and No Net Loss in Safety Projects on state highways.

- Washington needs more and better intra-county bicycle and pedestrian connections and links to schools, transit, and ferries. The most frequent comment received during plan development was the recognition of the need for more and better intra-county connections and links to schools, transit, and ferries. This underscores the important role Regional Transportation Planning Organizations play in bicycle and pedestrian transportation.
- Washington needs more commitment and better coordination to improve conditions for bicycling and walking. In order to continue to improve conditions for bicycling and walking and help reverse the rising rate of obesity in Washington State, local governments, transit providers, regional and state agencies will have to take coordinated implementation steps.

#### **Next Steps:**

WSDOT's *Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan* lists more than \$1.6 billion in unfunded bicycle and pedestrian improvements identified by local communities. Continued coordination with local and regional agencies, transit providers, and developers is needed to secure funding and implement identified improvements. It is important that local comprehensive plans identify bicycle and pedestrian facility needs so they can be addressed when capital programs are developed and included in the cost estimate of these programs.

## **Regional coordination**

There are over 190 miles of state highways in Skagit County that provide important regional connections. The volume and speed of vehicles on these routes sometimes limit safe bicycle and pedestrian access when designated facilities do not exist. It is important to establish appropriately designed crossings and create corridors that safely connect these communities. Many times these routes can be accommodated along state facilities; but sometimes a safer, more cost effective connection could be located on other separated trails, paths and roadways. Multi-modal corridors identified as either needing to adjoin or cross state highways, require that safety standards can be met prior to approval. Several items in the state bicycle and pedestrian transportation plan are focused on these issues.

Community planning undertaken through the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG), and the Active Community Task Force (ACT) has focused on a region-wide approach that will facilitate governmental coordination. The cities, Skagit County, WSDOT and Skagit Transit worked together to ensure that strategic corridors are aligned and are included in long range planning. The result of these discussions was the identification of a network of practical corridors that, if fully developed,

would increase multi-modal mobility between cities and establish inter-county connections to Whatcom, Snohomish, Island, and San Juan counties. This process identified areas that were needed to safely complete these corridors. These “gaps” in the system will be the priority for future development. They still need to be fully scoped and included in regional plans so they can be eligible for future public private partnerships.

Regional partners understand that funding is too limited to address all roadways, so the group is focused on routes that provide the greatest connectivity. These improvements would have the greatest impact on future bicycle and pedestrian use, but even these do not have dedicated funding. Partnerships must be established and coalitions must be developed to secure the public and private investments needed for these plans. Skagit County’s Open Space planning is one step towards providing the predictability and guidance necessary to develop appropriate countywide connections. It is expected that this work will be further refined, routes established, scopes of work developed that meet safety and community standards, and that this work will be included in the long-range planning for participating jurisdictions.



Skagit State Routes	
State Route	Miles in Skagit County
Interstate 5	24.97
SR 9	29.15
SR 11	14.11
SR 20	86.53
SR 20 Spur	7.78
SR 530	14.96
SR 534	5.08
SR 536	5.38
SR 538	3.67
Anacortes Terminal	Marine highway connection
<b>Total</b>	<b>191.63</b>

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