

Section 4: Transportation Priorities & Policies

Skagit 2040 guides regional transportation investments over the next 25 years. It represents the efforts of government agencies serving the Skagit region to coordinate the planning of diverse transportation systems to support the region's anticipated growth and meet its priorities and goals. The Plan was developed through a cooperative process that involved the Skagit Council of Governments, as the MPO and RTP, the Washington State Department of Transportation Northwest Region, the public, and ongoing transportation planning efforts of Skagit County and neighboring counties, including cities, ports, transit agencies and other service providers in the region.

A wide range of regional transportation projects and strategies are identified in Skagit 2040. These projects and strategies create a comprehensive, integrated, multimodal transportation system to serve the region for the next 25 years. The total costs of these projects and strategies will outstrip the likely available future funding that would be used to implement them. Because not all projects and strategies can be funded over the next 25 years, the region established

priorities for its transportation improvements. The priorities were used in the technical evaluation to establish a framework for the Plan. The framework essentially identifies the core transportation needs which other regional improvements will tie into. The framework was defined to help guide the development of a fiscally-constrained Skagit 2040.



Roundabout in Anacortes

Regional Priorities

Through the planning process for Skagit 2040, priorities were developed that focused on a systems approach to moving people, freight, and goods.

The priorities set for the regional transportation system are consistent with those established in the Washington Transportation Plan. The priorities for the Skagit region, in no particular order of priority, are economic vitality, preservation, safety, mobility, environment and stewardship.

Economic Vitality: *To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous regional economy.*

The movement of freight and goods and supporting economic sectors that rely on the transportation system is a priority for the region.

Freight movement plays an important role in the regional economy by transporting various raw materials and finished products to and from the region via rail, air, truck and ship. The efficient movement of freight is, therefore, important for the regional transportation system. These elements are also necessary for providing access to business and good jobs in the region. Of equal importance is the improvement of multimodal transportation networks for serving retail, service and tourism in the region's diverse communities.

Preservation: *To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in regional transportation systems and services.*

The region understands the importance of preserving the existing rail, bridge, pavement, transit, river, ferry and airport facilities and considers each a critical economic asset. However, revenues to local governments that are directed toward transportation maintenance

Section 4: Transportation Priorities & Policies

are inadequate. Governments at all levels find it difficult to transfer general revenues to maintenance when those funds are needed elsewhere. Consequently, long-term maintenance, such as pavement management, is being deferred.

Safety: To *provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.*

The safety and security of all individuals who use the regional transportation network are of high importance in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the regional transportation system. Improvements made to the network that aim to reduce fatalities and injuries also improve collision rates and traffic congestion. While efforts to improve safety should be taken across all modes of transportation, there is greater emphasis on improving roadway safety for auto drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians given the greater rates of fatalities in these modes.

Mobility: To *improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout the region, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility.*

Improving regional connections to facilitate the movement of people and goods in an effort to contribute to a strong economy and a better quality of life for the public is crucial for continued growth. Attaining greater mobility involves balancing a multimodal network that integrates all modes and is able to contribute to an efficient network of services meeting varied user needs. Included in this is an emphasis on maximizing the operational aspects of existing facilities.

Environment: To *enhance regional quality of life through transportation*

investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.

Improving the environmental quality of our neighborhoods and communities will lead to a sustainable transportation system and economic vitality. This includes finding ways to reduce environmental impacts that could potentially result from a transportation project, as well as promoting environmentally-efficient modes of transportation such as transit, vanpooling, car-sharing, bicycling and walking.

Six Regional Priorities

Economic Vitality

Preservation

Safety

Mobility

Environment

Stewardship

Stewardship: To *continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the regional transportation system.*

The integration of land use and transportation policies to protect and preserve essential public transportation facilities, while working to better manage the transportation system will provide for optimum efficiency and effective movement of people and goods.

While these are the six regional priorities, Skagit 2040 also considers project costs and timing in the prioritization of regional transportation projects. These factors may greatly influence the priority of a project for the region.

The region will strive to ensure that the recommended transportation projects provide the best value for the least cost, consistent with least-cost planning practices. The least-cost planning methodology utilized by the region includes an accounting of direct costs and benefits for each project evaluated in Skagit 2040. Evaluation is both qualitative and quantitative. Each project is evaluated based on the six regional priorities of the Plan and improvements in travel demand outputs in 2040. Estimated project costs are provided by project sponsors.

Section 4: Transportation Priorities & Policies

Potential environmental impacts are noted in the Plan. Finally, least-cost planning is used to support the decision of what projects are included in the fiscally constrained list – including all the funded and planned projects which the region expects will be able to be funded from 2016–2040 – and which projects are instead on the illustrative list of projects which would be included in the fiscally constrained list if additional resources beyond those identified in the financial plan become available.

Regional Policies

The priorities framework for Skagit 2040 provides the general guidance to help direct available funding for regional transportation improvements. Policies were defined to help guide the region in implementing the Plan and focus on the six regional priorities, as well as coordination and implementation of projects and programs. The priorities and policies lead to overall improvement strategies, which are summarized in this section.

Policies

The existing goals and policies were reviewed and checked for consistency with the input collected from the public outreach effort and the Skagit Council of Governments' member agencies during the plan development process. As the project progressed and technical analyses was completed, these policies and goals were revised and consolidated to eliminate redundancy, address inconsistencies with technical findings and reflect the regional nature and purpose of the document. The policies should continue to be reviewed regularly to ensure that they are reflecting the most current vision and direction of the Skagit region. These policies, goals and

strategies will guide and direct the regional transportation planning process for the next 25 years.

1. Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional transportation system through a cooperative effort with SCOG member agencies, the public and private sectors, and State and Federal agencies;

Goals and strategies for Policy 1 include:

Key Corridors

In addition to the baseline improvements and efficiency strategies, Skagit 2040 identifies the need for improvements to existing corridors to address future transportation demands of the region.

1.1 Select and build the most efficient mix of modes and facilities based on the need to balance accessibility and demand;

1.2 Ensure that modes are interconnected in a manner that best serves the users by identifying missing links and connections and proposing projects that will provide needed linkages;

1.3 Consider strategies that recognize the future densification of urban areas as they grow and mature, while transitioning and connecting seamlessly with rural areas;

1.4 Support Skagit Transit and other transit agencies serving the Skagit region in acquiring funding from outside sources to help implement strategies identified in the Plan;

1.5 Provide a level of service (LOS) across modes that meet the needs of the user while recognizing the uniqueness of the level of service standards for each mode;

1.6 Provide for the safety and security of the users on all modes by participating in state and Federal programs to increase safety and security, and placing an emphasis on projects that incorporate safety and security;

Section 4: Transportation Priorities & Policies

1.7 Provide accessibility to the regional transportation system through user-friendly connections by ensuring that intermodal facilities are not designed and constructed in isolation. In particular, ensure that the urban area has interconnected opportunities for safe and convenient non-motorized modes;

1.8 Ensure transportation concurrency requirements are met in areas designated under GMA;

1.9 Provide accessibility to the transportation system through timely information by maintaining a regional ITS architecture that includes traveler information as a major component;

1.10 Provide access to the regional transportation system in a manner that balances user convenience with safety and preservation of capacity. This includes developing and implementing access management plans where access issues are, or are likely to become, impediments to the safe and efficient operation of roadways for all vehicles and non-motorized users, within the context of a growing region; and

1.11 Coordinate road construction projects with Skagit Transit to ensure current and future public transportation infrastructure is considered in their design and construction.

2. Provide a Plan that identifies significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, regional, inter-regional, State, Federal, and public needs and requirements while recognizing the inter-relationships within the contiguous urban area and areas immediately adjacent to it;

Goals and strategies for Policy 2:

2.1 Ensure the Plan is up-to-date;

2.2 Develop a regional growth strategy that incorporates and expresses the growth management plans of the individual jurisdictions. Consider the growth strategy when identifying and funding projects and programs; and

2.3 Establish a Plan amendment process that will accommodate changes in local, regional, state, federal, private sector, and public needs between Plan updates.

3. Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing regional transportation system by encouraging and prioritizing timely maintenance of the system;

Goals and strategies for Policy 3:

3.1 Monitor the condition of existing transportation facilities by working with SCOG's member agencies to identify critical facilities, develop metrics, and establish a data collection program;

3.2 Time replacement and rehabilitation of facilities to minimize investment by working with SCOG's member agencies to develop a regional pavement management system. Encourage agencies to evaluate the timing of replacement and rehabilitation needs when proposing



Roadway Maintenance

Section 4: Transportation Priorities & Policies

capacity improvement projects for the Regional Transportation Improvement Program; and

3.3 Ensure that the operation, appearance, and functionality of infrastructure meets users' needs by promoting these elements in project selection processes.

4. Facilitate cooperation, coordination and information exchange among SCOG's member agencies.

Goals and strategies for Policy 4:

4.1 Provide a regional forum for interested parties to discuss and coordinate their transportation projects, programs and plans with each other. Consider strategies that recognize the future densification of urban areas as they grow and mature;

4.2 Identify sources of funding for transportation planning, programs, and projects that will implement the Plan and assist in acquiring those funds as needed.

5. Maintain and Implement a public participation plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the region's interested parties in the planning process.

Goals and strategies for Policy 5:

5.1 Develop a public involvement plan prior to anticipated major Plan updates and implement throughout the planning process to ensure that all interested parties have the opportunity for meaningful involvement;



Boneshaker Bicycle Festival in La Conner

5.2 Ensure a two-way communication process in the public participation process by presenting information in a number and variety of media and incorporating an appropriate number and variety of feedback methods;

5.3 Time public participation interfaces to provide public input into decisions before they are made and provide decision makers with an accurate assessment of public input;

5.4 Make the public participation process meaningful by considering public comments when making decisions; and

5.5 Maintain an on-going public participation process.

6. Consistent with Skagit County Countywide Planning Policies, encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

Background: As noted in Section 3 of this document, Skagit County jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act are required to develop a set of Countywide Planning Policies. The policies are intended to help the jurisdictions within the county coordinate their GMA planning efforts. These policies provide an umbrella for all other planning in the county. The Countywide Planning Policies for transportation are:

6.1 Multi-purpose transportation routes and facilities shall be designed to accommodate present and future traffic volumes;

6.2 Primary arterial access points shall be designed to ensure maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions;

6.3 The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social,

Section 4: Transportation Priorities & Policies

economic and environmental impacts and costs;

6.4 The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan shall be designed to; facilitate the flow of people, goods and services so as to strengthen the local and regional economy; conform with the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan; be based upon an inventory of the existing Skagit County transportation network and needs; and encourage the conservation of energy;

6.5 Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan;

6.6 The development of a recreational transportation network shall be encouraged and coordinated between state and local governments and private enterprises;

6.7 The Senior Citizen and Handicapped transportation system shall be provided with an adequate budget to provide for those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves;

6.8 Level of Service standards and safety standards shall be established that coordinate and link with the urban growth and urban areas to optimize land use and traffic compatibility over the long term. New development shall mitigate transportation impacts concurrently with the development and occupancy of the project;

6.9 An all-weather arterial road system shall be coordinated with industrial and commercial areas;

6.10 Cost effectiveness shall be a consideration in transportation expenditure decisions and balanced for both safety and service improvements;

6.11 An integrated regional transportation system shall be designed to minimize air pollution by promoting the use of alternative transportation modes, reducing vehicular traffic, maintaining acceptable traffic flow, and siting of facilities; and

6.12 All new and expanded transportation facilities shall be sited, constructed, and maintained to minimize noise levels.

Consistency between the Countywide Planning Policies and Skagit 2040 is an important aspect of the Plan.



Train Monument In Sedro-Woolley