

Transportation

Snapshot of Trends & Issues

NATIONAL TRENDS

- **Traffic Management for Economic Development** –Many cities across the U.S. have converted one-way street pairs into two-way streets. The idea is to slow people down so that they can see storefronts and experience the downtown atmosphere rather than “flushing” cars through the system.
- **Streets are for People /Streets as Places** - Streets are no longer viewed as solely the realm of vehicles, with the ultimate goal of maximizing capacity and minimizing delay. Street rights-of-way are currently being viewed as under-utilized public real estate that has been devoted to private uses, such as parking.
- **Transit & Technology** – Fixed-route transit is making a comeback in many communities. While the economics of transit are challenging, the addition of technologies such as on-board WIFI and route planning capabilities via Google Transit help attract riders who want to make the most productive use of their commuting time.
- **Transportation & Land Use Integration** –The traditional segregation of land uses that characterize 20th century urban and suburban development in large part created today’s dependency on the automobile. Local governments have moved from the Euclidean zoning framework towards a more mixed-use approach that puts living, shopping, working and recreation in closer proximity
- **Complete Streets** programs emphasize the incorporation of multi-modal streets that are safe and accommodating for pedestrians, bicyclists and pedestrians. Transportation System Management (TSM) involves supply-side strategies, such as HOV lanes, real-time traffic information for motorists, and meter signalization at freeway on-ramps. Transportation Demand Management is a refinement of TSM strategies that are demand-side projects which aim to decrease automobile demand by shifting demand to other times of the day or by increasing vehicle occupancy.
- **Intelligent transportation technologies** will continue to grow as they facilitate traffic management, improve safety, and reduce congestion.
- **Autonomous (self-driving) vehicles** are almost to market, and will expand mobility for children, elderly and disabled persons, making it easier to choose travel by car given the ease, convenience, and potential for increased productivity during commuting times or long trips.
- **Reduced vehicular trips** could result from popularity of the “sharing economy”, continued popularity of “big box” stores, and using online shopping to meet daily needs.
- **Generational gaps in transportation choices** are being noticed. Only 71% of Millennials like driving (the lowest of any generation), while 83% of them like walking. This 12-point gap is wider than any other generation. The gap for Baby Boomers is 2 points. Millennials use transit much more than other generations (40% took transit in the last month compared to 28% for Gen X, 19% for Baby Boomers, and 8% for Silent Generation).

LOCAL TRENDS

- Ocean Beach Highway (SR 4) and Oregon Way (Lewis & Clark Bridge/SR 433) have experienced the most traffic growth over the past three years.

- There has been significant growth in the number of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) along some portions of the local National Highway System, particularly along the Lewis & Clark Bridge/Oregon Way, and to a lesser extent the I-5 corridor. There has been a small decline in VMT along Ocean Beach Highway and Tennant Way, mirroring national trends in the past year or two, though it is expected to begin rising.
- The number of accidents on Industrial Way (SR 432), Oregon Way (Lewis & Clark Bridge/SR 433) and Ocean Beach Highway (SR 4) combined totals 3,162, which is greater than the number on the I-5 corridor within Cowlitz County. Ocean Beach Highway (SR 4) alone represents 73% of the accident locations on the NHS system within Longview. It is also the most frequent location for bicycle and pedestrian accidents of any corridor in the local NHS, with 41% of the fatalities and 44% of the injuries on the network.
- There is one functionally obsolete bridge on the National Highway System in Longview at Tennant Way and 3rd Avenue. This is one of five (5) such bridges in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). Three of them are situated on Interstate 5, while the fifth one is the Cowlitz Way Bridge.
- In 2014, there were 4,261 workers who lived and worked in Longview. There were 10,308 who lived in Longview but worked outside the city. In addition, there were 11,727 workers commuting into Longview. This means that **Longview is a “net importer” of job**—though by a small margin—meaning that more people commute into the area than commute out.

NATIONAL ISSUES

- **A shift to revenue alternatives such as VMT (vehicle-miles traveled) taxes or increases in other local taxes** is needed, due to increased fuel economy, growing use of electric vehicles and reductions in the average number of vehicle miles traveled in a given year.
- **“Fix it first” will** be preferred over new construction or expansion, given the maturity of the national surface transportation network and the constrained financial environment for infrastructure.
- A shift is needed to place **more emphasis on accessibility for people and land uses over the idea of moving more vehicles faster**; using transportation to benefit the needs of people, rather than moving traffic; seeing streets as part of the human environment, accommodating all forms of travel, rather than a sole focus on the vehicle; planning for transportation infrastructure to fulfill a city vision rather than following a formula; evaluating projects on a variety of impacts and criteria, rather than a single economic criterion; emphasizing reliability over travel time; and integration of people with the street, rather than segregation among users of the street.
- Incorporation of **sustainability principles** is consistent with a shift from mobility-oriented planning to accessibility-based transportation planning:
 - ✓ Reducing consumption of non-renewable energy and material resources
 - ✓ Reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, especially carbon dioxide
 - ✓ Satisfying aspirations for an improved standard of living (or quality of life)
 - ✓ Promoting public participation
 - ✓ Promoting inter- and intra-generational equity
 - ✓ Satisfying basic needs
 - ✓ Safeguarding long-term ecological sustainability

LOCAL ISSUES

Neighborhood Connectivity and Circulation –The concept of “complete streets” is a way to maximize the grid system while providing an array of amenities that will accommodate transportation options and active living. Protecting the city’s grid framework will require a conscious effort to avoid transportation improvements that simply flush vehicles through the system faster, in favor of those which provide many ways to reach a destination, perhaps at a slower pace that may also strengthen downtown and commercial districts while maintaining acceptable levels of service. Similar issues (choices) face Longview during this plan update—will the city maintain the grid system or simply extended new corridors to serve future residential and commercial growth? This is particularly critical in the vicinity of Ohio Street neighborhood, around the Village at Mt. Solo, the 44th Avenue area, and the Alabama/Beech commercial area. Another issue involves identifying potential alternative routes, such as Olive Way, for congested arterials, such as Ocean Beach Highway.

Transportation Choices & Alternatives –There is a need to provide opportunities for increased pedestrian activity, accommodate bicyclists, and improve transit services and access for transit users. While Transit-Oriented Development (TOD), a popular tool in recent years, has focused around light rail transit, it is possible to achieve TOD development around traditional transit with a rich menu of amenities and connections at densities generally accepted in smaller cities. This would need to focus on intersections or “nodes” of key regional corridors.

Corridor Improvements – There is a need to develop improvements throughout the City to manage traffic while ensuring pedestrian/cycling ease and safety along major corridors that will experience increased travel and accompanying reductions in speed. As major corridors throughout the city experience more congestion, intersection improvements could result in “wide nodes” with multiple lanes. A focus on “nodes” (intersections), rather than focusing on corridors holistically, could result in creating more barriers to using alternative transportation modes when they are needed the most in order to reduce congestion. Increased public awareness and acceptance is needed around the reality that congestion is often present at the most desirable and popular places, and reduced travel times are to be expected. Crash data show that Ocean Beach Highway has a disproportionate share of accidents, injuries and fatalities. There is a need to manage access points along key arterials in order to improve mobility, reduce accidents and provide safer access to businesses and residences. Thoughtful planning approaches and appropriate mitigation measures are needed in order to encourage safe, convenient alternative travel modes, such as walking or cycling.

Freight & Goods Mobility – Longview’s industrial heritage and economic base requires adequate accessibility to industrial and commercial land uses. Economic vitality also requires measures to maintain and improve mobility of goods and freight across a multi-modal system that includes truck, rail and marine transport to market. Longview’s industrial heritage has resulted in a fairly significant number of at-grade rail crossings within a localized area, leading to congestion that will deteriorate further as vehicular and freight rail movement increase to serve new or growing industry and the traveling public. Continued vitality and opportunity along SR 432 (Industrial Way) and SR 433 (Oregon Way / Lewis & Clark Bridge,) are critical, given planned development of Barlow Point by the Port of Longview and future investments in the Mint Farm Industrial Park.

Funding – Local governments across Washington State have struggled to maintain local roads and highways since the passage of voter-approved Initiative 695 in November of 1999, which eliminated the state Motor Vehicle Excise Tax (MVET). Forty-seven percent (47%) of the license-tab money had gone to state

transportation, 29 percent to local transit, and 24 percent to cities and counties. Fifteen years later, many cuts in programs funded from the 24% of revenue coming to cities and counties and the 29% going to transit programs and the ferry system have never been restored. Some localities have been able to raise fees, or have cut services, or both. As the nation slowly emerges from recession, infrastructure needs that have gone unmet for many years remain, as they rely on funding from the National Highway Trust Fund. This program has typically funded 80% of the cost of maintaining and improving roads and bridges on the National Highway System but there is a backlog of improvements. The fund operates on a federal fuel tax that has been increased only twice since 1983, and is not pegged to inflation, which has eroded the purchasing power of the dollars collected.

Regional Coordination – There is a need to recognize Longview’s role in the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) which develops policy and funding priorities for project development within the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The MPO is one of very few bi-state transportation planning organizations. By participating as a regional and bi-state partner—as an entity with a federally recognized transit system—it may be possible to increase access and leverage for capital improvements.