BOLD ADVOCACY BALANCED WITH SMART IMPLEMENTATION

APA Washington Conference
Tacoma, WA October 9, 2025

transpogroup
WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

American Planning Association
Washington Chapter

Get involved with APA WA

- Collaborating on common interests with professionals from various inter-related disciplines →

Allied Professions

If you're interested in…

Land use	Community Engagement
Transportation	Economic Development
Engineering	Parks & Recreation
Architecture	Natural Environment
Public Health	Housing Affordability
Demography	*And more!*
Education	

NOTE: This session qualifies for AICP certification maintenance (CM) credit for sustainability

transpogroup

INTRODUCTION

American Planning Association
Transportation Planning Division

Creating Great Communities for All

Get involved with APA TPD (National)

Transportation Planning Division Multi-Part Webinar Series

Now through January 2026

- Transportation Safety (08/01/25)
- Collaborative Stakeholder and Community Engagement (09/22/25)
- Transit and Active Transportation (11/20/25)
- Community and Economic Opportunity (01/29/26)

Register for these AICP CM sessions at: APA Transportation Planning Division

NOTE: All of these webinars are ***FREE*** and qualify for AICP certification maintenance (CM) credits

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

Over the past several years ….. many of us have been involved in

- **Design guidance** and **best practices** for active transportation facilities
- Development of local, regional, state **active transportation plans**
- **Emphasis on** Complete Streets, Vulnerable Road Users, ADA, safety plans, separation of active modes from vehicles, and facilities for all ages and abilities

….. ***and*** …..

There has been a **lack of discussion** on unpopular, but critical topics of context, project feasibility, local funding availability, and implementation realities

HOW DID WE GET HERE?

The Goal is to Ask:

- How can we, as transportation professionals, discuss and promote best practices …..

and

- Better explain implementation constraints, contextual realities, and financial limitations?

- *This is a professional and ethical responsibility*

transpogroup

SESSION OUTLINE

1. Speaker Introductions
2. Implementation Ready Plans - Chris
3. Local Practices and Challenges – Michelle
4. Implementation Considerations - Brett
5. Questions & Discussion

TODAY'S PRESENTERS

- **Chris Comeau**, FAICP-CTP, Transpo Group
  - APA WA Allied Professions Host/Moderator
  - Implementation-Ready Plans

- **Michelle Swanson**, AICP, City of Olympia
  - Olympia: Planning to Implement Meaningful Change

- **Brett Schock**, PE, AICP, RSP2i, ENV SP, Transpo Group
  - Implementation: A Plan is Only As Good As What Can Be Built

IMPLEMENTATION-READY PLANS

Creating Financially Feasible Plans to Maximize Success

transpogroup
WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

IMPLEMENTATION-READY PLANS

What does Implementation-Ready Really Mean?

- **Intent to Realization**
  From goals and policies to project identification, funding, and construction
- **Action Oriented**
  Short-term, Mid-term, Long-term, and Feasibility Studies
- **Funding Focused**
  Proactive identification of attainable funding sources and/or partnerships
- **Strategically Timed**
  Timed for grant funding availability and competitive best fit
- **Opportunistic**
  Nimble, flexible, adaptable, scalable project scope

BEST PRACTICES

IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES

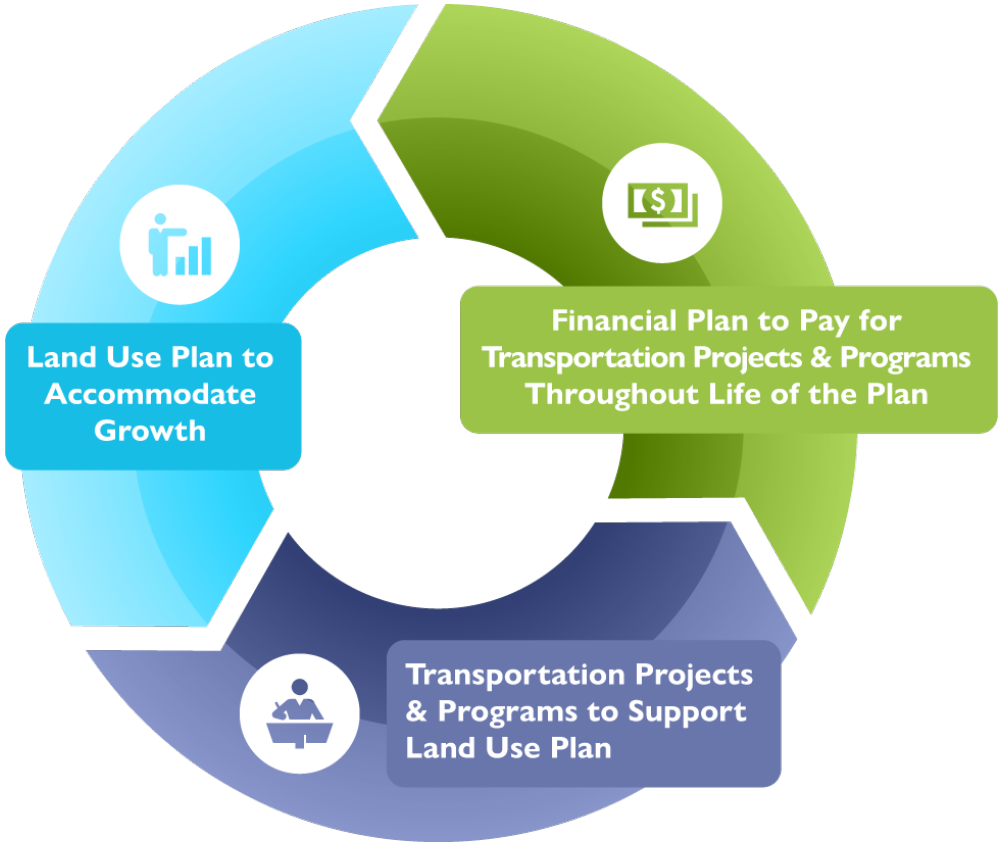
Per GMA, a Transportation Element must:

- **Implement** land use element
- Provide **adequate** multimodal system

  …. ***and***

- Be financially **feasible** for local agency

- *All within the next 20 years*



transpogroup

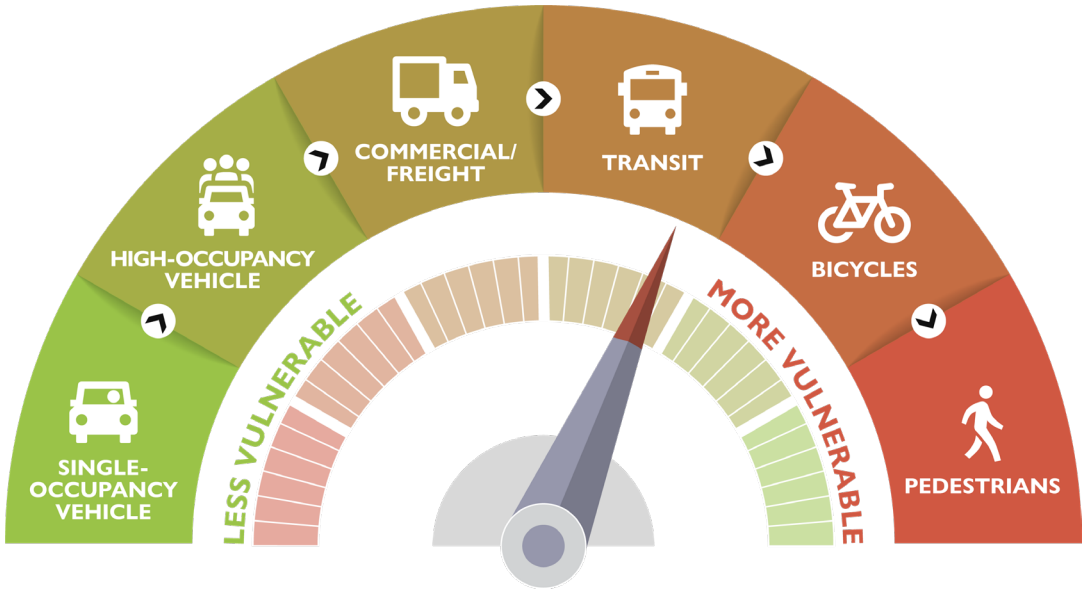
GMA Transportation and Climate Elements

Recent legislative amendments for local Comprehensive Plans are intended to:

- **Reduce** fatal and injury crashes *(Vision Zero/Target Zero)*
- **Protect** vulnerable road users *(Target Zero/Safe Systems Approach)*
- **Invest** in ADA and under-served areas *(GMA/All grant agencies)*
- **Promote** Active Transportation *(WSDOT ATP/Complete Streets)*
- **Establish** Multimodal Level of Service Standards *(WSDOT ATP)*
- **Reduce** Vehicle Miles Traveled *(Transportation-Climate Elements)*
- **Reduce** Greenhouse Gas Emissions *(Climate Element)*
- **Reduce** Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) *(Safe System Approach/WSDOT ATP)*

IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES

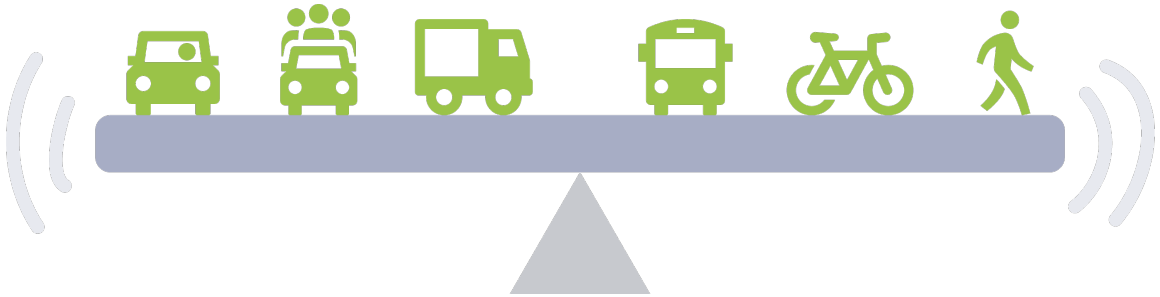
Complete Streets: Who are we Planning For?



- Complete Streets principals emerged 2001
- WA = leader with legislation, grant program
- CS means different things in different geographic contexts (Urban/Rural/etc.)
- CS rarely means facilities for every user group on every street, even in urban areas

A focus on vulnerable road users can help to prioritize mobility needs

Complete Streets: Who are we Planning For?



BALANCE

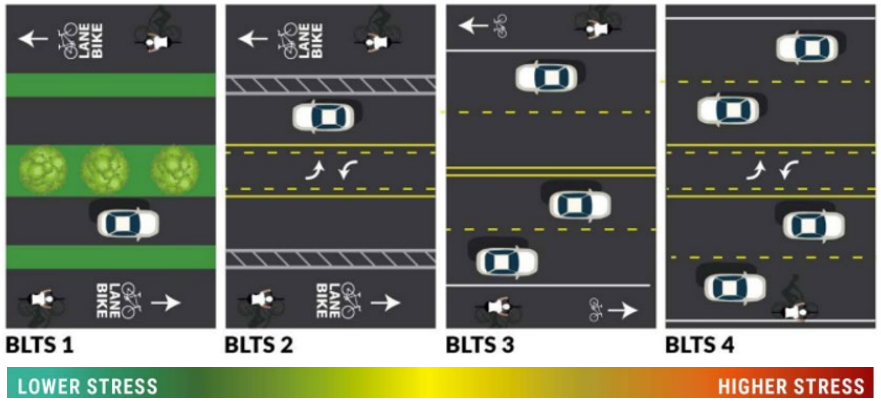
*ALL mobility needs, modes, land use contexts, and funding capacities must be carefully considered, **balanced**, and implemented for the multimodal transportation system to provide space and safety for everyone, **where feasible**.*

IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES

What is Bicycle Level of Traffic Stress (LTS)?

Bicycle LTS = Measure of User Comfort

- Based on age, physical health, and confidence
- Subjective to individual user experience
- Wide spectrum of user skill levels



Bicycle LTS = Measure of Facility Comfort

- Based on facility and user proximity to moving traffic, speed, volume, land use context
- Can lead to increased walking, biking, and rolling
- Subject to physical space (ROW) available and agency financial constraints

transpogroup

IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES

Safe System Approach

- Commitment to Vision Zero
- Community involvement
- Historic crash data analysis
- Emphasis on vulnerable road users
- Proactive risk assessment
- Countermeasure identification
- Systemic improvement identification
- Prioritization of improvements
- Tracking progress made

← Safer Land Use
WSDOT Innovation

Washington State Safe System Approach
(Source: Washington's 2024 Strategic Highway Safety Plan)

transpogroup

IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES

WSDOT State Highway Plans and RCWs

- RCW 47.04.035 Complete Streets
  - All WSDOT-led state highway projects costing more than $1,000,000 in population centers must include facilities for users of all ages and abilities per Complete Street principals

Auto-Oriented Planning

- WSDOT Active Transportation Plan 2020 & Beyond
  - Goal: Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) Type 2 facilities or better on State highways in ***"Population Centers"*** on WSDOT map

Multimodal Planning

These are best practices and the right things to promote

… ***and***…

It will take many generations to implement these measures

where they are physically and financially feasible

transpogroup

CHALLENGES

CHALLENGES

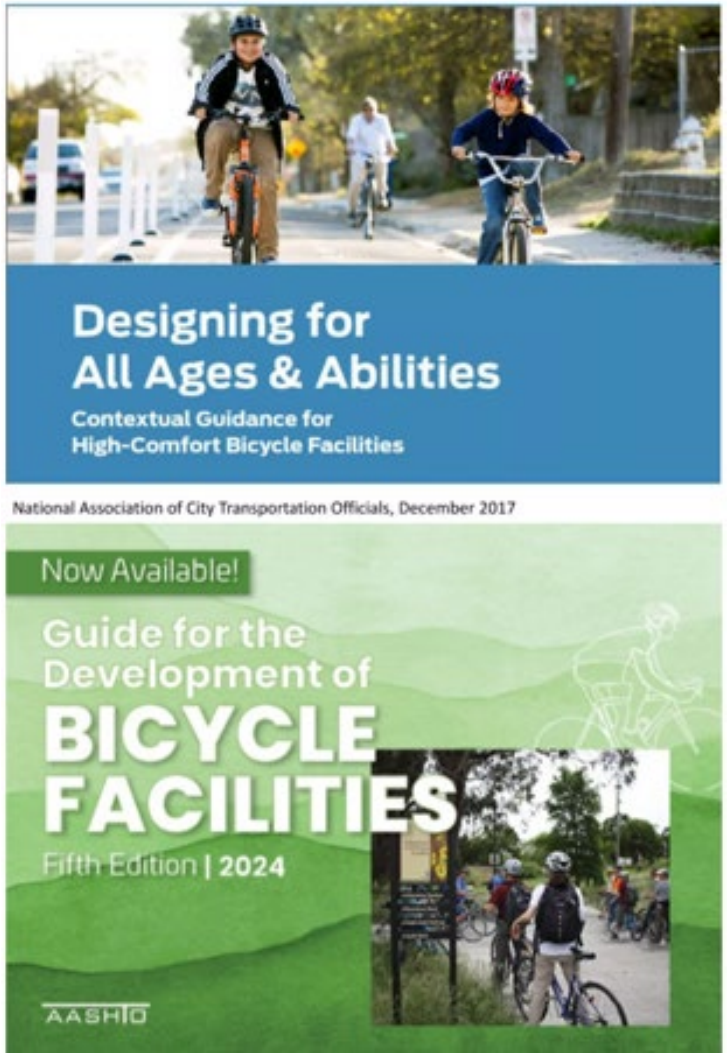
Gaps Between Theory, Intent, and Reality

- **Ideal world** = Everything for everyone always
- **Real world** = Messy, complicated, trade-offs
- **Policy intent** cannot always be implemented
- **Cost/Funding** = Dictates scope of projects
- **Incremental progress** takes time (many years)

"Don't let your dreams be constrained by the bounds of reality."
- Quote from an anonymous Planning professor

Complex real-world problems require critical thinking and an honest assessment of resources available toward a solution

Implementation is never an "All or Nothing" proposition



EXAMPLE: ADVOCACY GROUP INTENTIONS

Proposed Future Bicycle Network

- Calls for significant road widening (**Red** & **Green**)
- *Including both sides of Lake Whatcom Watershed*
- Calls for bike facility types more suitable in urban areas (**Blue**)
- Calls for new off-street multiuse trails (**Brown**) parallel to existing roads and State highways
- ***The intent is understood***

… and …

- ***Most is not physically or financially feasible***

CHALLENGES

Plans Do Not Equal Projects

Plans

Goals, policies, intent, priorities, etc.

Critical Factors

For project scope and implementation (land use context, impacts/mitigation, financial, timing, etc.)

Projects

Funding secured, construction programmed

transpogroup

EXAMPLE: WSDOT - CS & LTS INTENTIONS

SR 9 LTS Feasibility Skagit County →

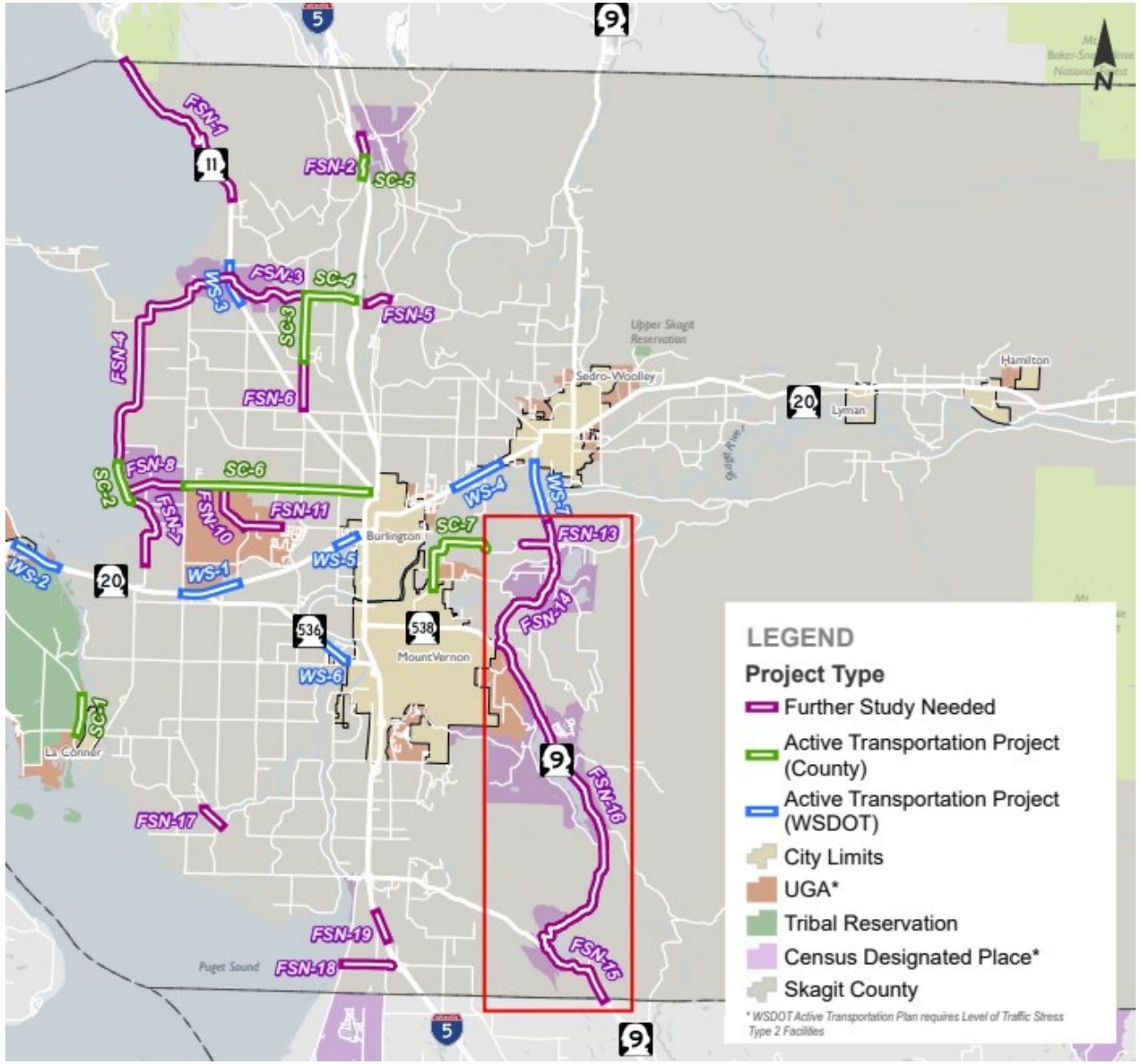
Despite best intentions:

- RCW 47.04.035 Complete Streets
- WSDOT 2020 Active Transportation Plan & LTS
- Multiple “Population Centers” along SR 9

Constraints to LTS Type 1 or 2 facilities on SR 9:

- Narrow 2-lane road; No physical space
- Winding road curves; Limited sight distance
- Cliffside bedrock; Steep slopes with guardrails
- Utility pole relocation; Possible ROW acquisition
- Environmental impacts; Mitigaton
- Permits (and delays): Federal, state, local
- ***All of above = Extreme cost; Infeasibility***

- If WSDOT funding is available, it’s restricted to State Routes, even if there are better parallel local routes
- No Complete Streets or LTS facilities required on State Routes between “Population Centers”



IMPLEMENTATION & BEST PRACTICES

WSDOT State Highway Plans and RCWs

- RCW 47.04.035 Complete Streets
  - All WSDOT-led state highway projects costing more than $1,000,000 in population centers must include facilities for users of all ages and abilities per Complete Street principals

Auto-Oriented Planning

- WSDOT Active Transportation Plan 2020 & Beyond
  - Goal: Level of Traffic Stress (LTS) Type 2 facilities or better on State highways in ***"Population Centers"*** on WSDOT map

Multimodal Planning

These are best practices and the right things to promote

… ***and***…

It will take many generations to implement these measures

where they are physically and financially feasible

transpogroup

OPPORTUNITIES

CHALLENGES

Option: Develop a Menu of Facility Types and Costs

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION NETWORK FACILITY OPTIONS AND PLAN-LEVEL COST ESTIMATES											
Level of Traffic Stress		LTS 4 to 3	LTS 4 to 3	LTS 3	LTS 3	LTS 2	LTS 1	FSN	LTS 4 to 3	LTS 3 to 2	LTS 1
Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Types		Install Designated Bike Route Signs & markings[4]	Install Chip Seal Paved Shoulders[5]	Convert Gravel Shoulder to Paved with Bike Route Signs, Markings[6]	Widen Road to Construct 5-Foot Paved Shoulder *(ROW, mitigation, & federal costs not included)*[6]	Convert Paved Shoulder to Buffer Separated Bike Lanes with Reflective Posts[5]	Off-Street Separated Multiuse Path *(ROW, mitigation, & federal costs not included)*[5]	Further Study Needed[1]	Shoulder Shared with Bikeway	Alternate ADA Walkway[4]	ADA Concrete Sidewalk[4]
Network Link	Linear Feet (LF)	$2/LF	$35/LF	$50/LF	$362/LF	$263/LF	$411/LF	$50,000 to $100,000	$0/LF	$280/LF	$665/LF
AT-07	3,034	$6,067	$106,177	$151,681	$1,098,172	$797,844	$1,246,820			$849,415	$2,017,361
AT-08	16,250	$14,731	$257,788	$368,269	$2,666,270	$1,937,096	$3,027,173			$2,062,308	$4,897,981

1) "Further Study Needed" = Study required to determine ped-bike construction feasibility, facility type, and cost.
2) Census Designated Places defined and mapped by WSDOT
3) Priority level: Short-term = 1-5 years; Medium-term = 5-10 years; Long-term = > 10 years
4) Cost estimates based on 2024 Bellingham Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plans
5) WSDOT Mt. Baker Region multiuse path project costs along State Highways.
6) Whatcom County engiineering cost estimate.

- ✓ **Scale short-term project scope to funding currently available**
- ✓ **Phase higher cost project scope to long-term future funding, if and when available**

transpogroup

INTEGRATE & LEVERAGE OPPORTUNITIES

Comp Plans and Safety Plans provide multi-year implementation lists and can …..

Fund SAFETY improvements

to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes, as well as travel risks, for vulnerable road users

Increase social and demographic EQUITY

by prioritizing ADA-compliant transportation investments in low-income and historically under-served neighborhoods

Increase SUSTAINABILITY

by completing streets and investing in active transportation improvements to reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles.

transpogroup

MAXIMIZE LOCAL FUNDING LEVERAGE

- **Transportation Benefit District →**
  - Sales tax based TBD: Visitors help to fund
- **Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)**
  - RCWs allow 1st & 2nd Quarter %
- **Multimodal TIF from new development**
  - Require mitigation, where warranted
- **Funding partnerships**
  - City, County, Transit, School, Port, etc.

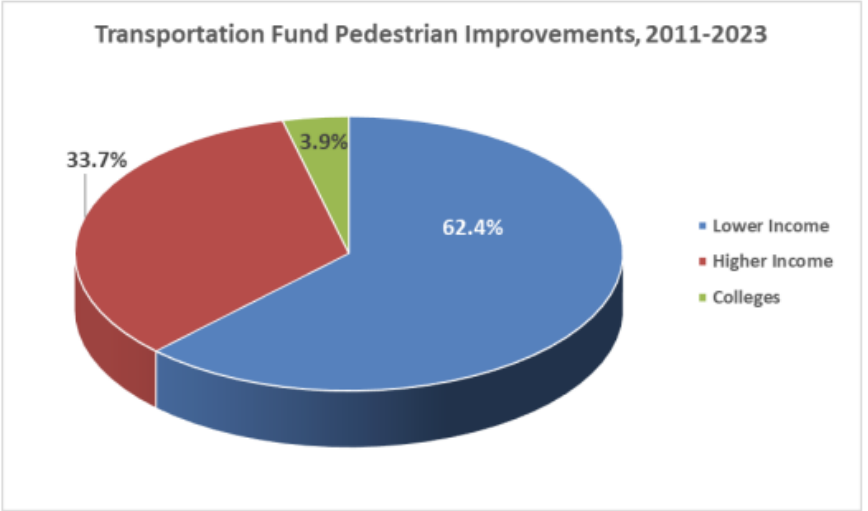


Figure 6.4. Since 2011, 62.4% of TBD/T-Fund pedestrian projects have been in lower income neighborhoods

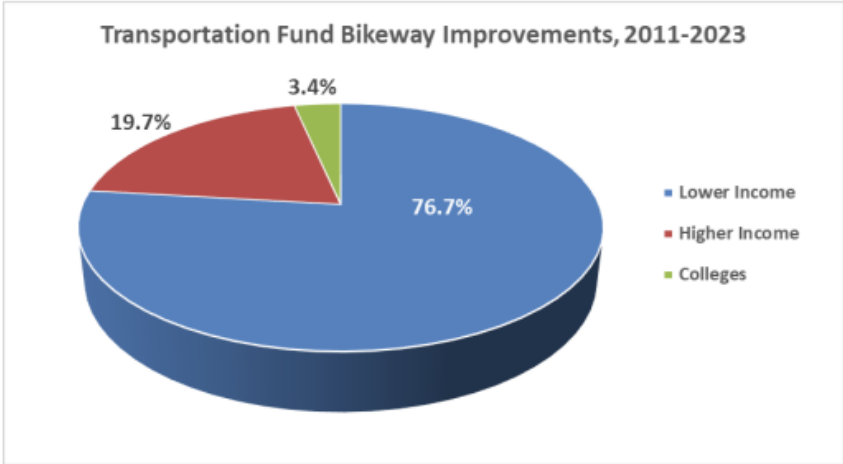
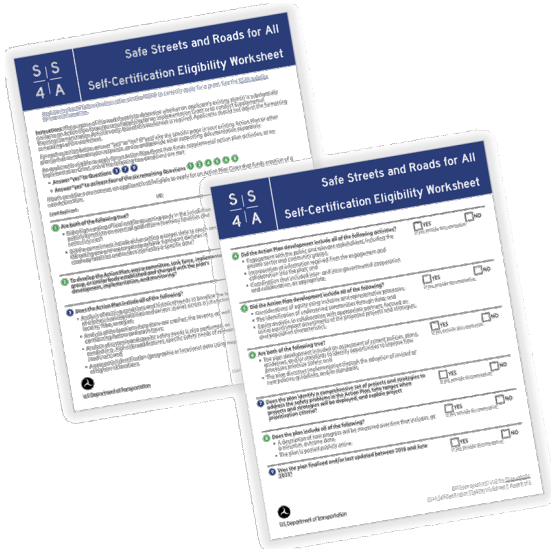


Figure 6.5. Since 2011, 76.7% of TBD/T-Fund bikeway projects have been in lower income neighborhoods

transpogroup

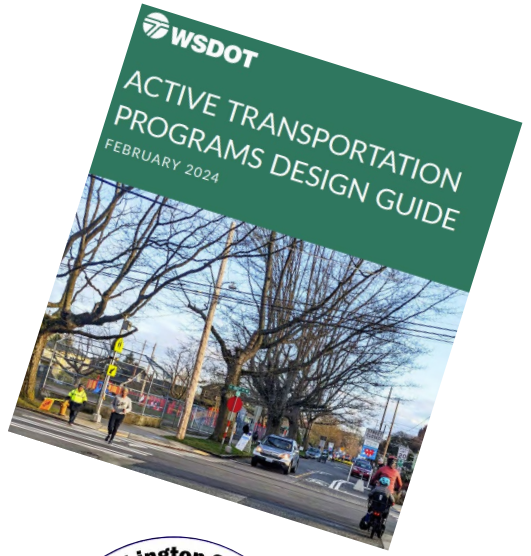
GRANT FUNDING FORESIGHT

- **Grants have funding limitations**
  - Right-size projects – “Sweet Spot”
  - Big projects = multiple grants
- **Understand grants, timing, criteria, & requirements**
  - Some annual; Some biennial
  - Some require match; Some don’t
- **Proactively budget for local match requirements (10-20%)**
- **Accumulate local TIF revenue for targeted capital projects**



U.S. Department of Transportation

Washington State Department of Transportation



Washington State Transportation Improvement Board

transpogroup

MAXIMIZE EFFICIENCIES, MINIMIZE COSTS

Focus on Existing Space Between Curbs

- Resurfacing streets; include bike lanes, crossings
- Rechannelize streets to reorganize user space →
- Repurpose existing space with road diets →
- Remove on-street parking to install bike lanes

Alternative Treatments

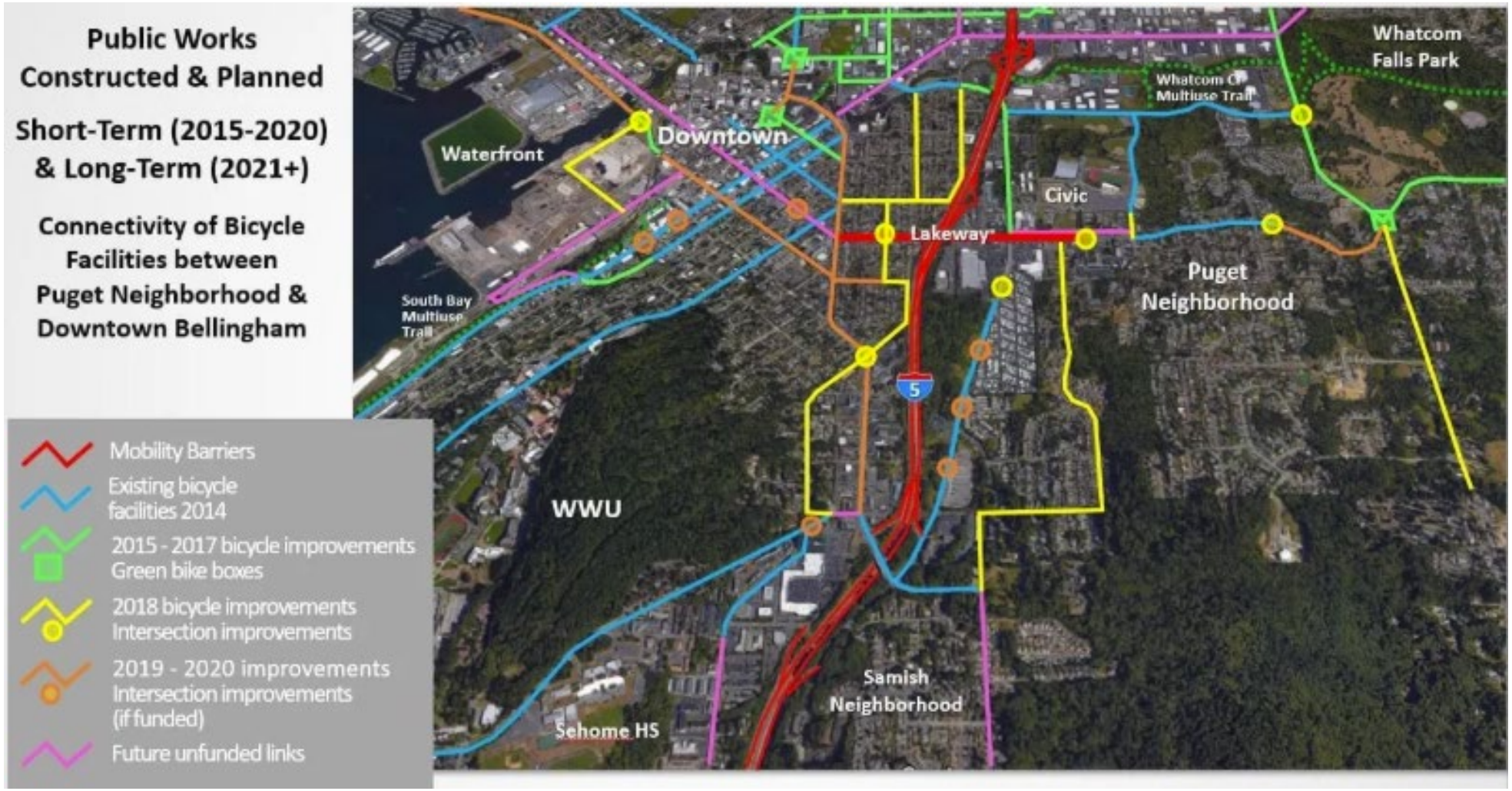
- Consider curb-separated walkways/shoulders →
- Widen paved shoulders when resurfacing
- Pave unpaved shoulders for walking and biking
- ADA upgrades and crossings at transit stops

transpogroup

RAPID IMPLEMENTATION (LOW COST-HIGH IMPACT)

Bellingham - 2019 Governor's Award for Rapid Implementation of Bicycle Master Plan

- 5 years (2014 -2019) Bellingham constructed 111 of 215 (52%) BMP planned improvements



transpogroup

CONSIDERATIONS

CONSIDERATIONS

There is no universal or one right way to implement projects

- “Best Practices” are ideal and aspirational recommendations
- Different geography = Different needs
- Metrics must be tailored to context
- Density begets amenity
  (Nobody likes to hear this, but it is a critical reality)
- Project lists must be fundable

CONSIDERATIONS

You Can't Build (or Use) What You Can't Fund

- Don't create expectations that can't be funded
- Yes, we should always advocate for safety and best practices

….. and …..

- We should always consider practical realities →
- **Do Not Let Perfect Be The Enemy of Good**
  (Some improvement is better than no improvement)

What I Want vs. What I Can Afford

Plans that cannot be implemented, do not serve anyone's interests

transpogroup

LOCAL CASE STUDY:

OLYMPIA

Case study: Olympia

Planning to implement meaningful change

Michelle Swanson, AICP

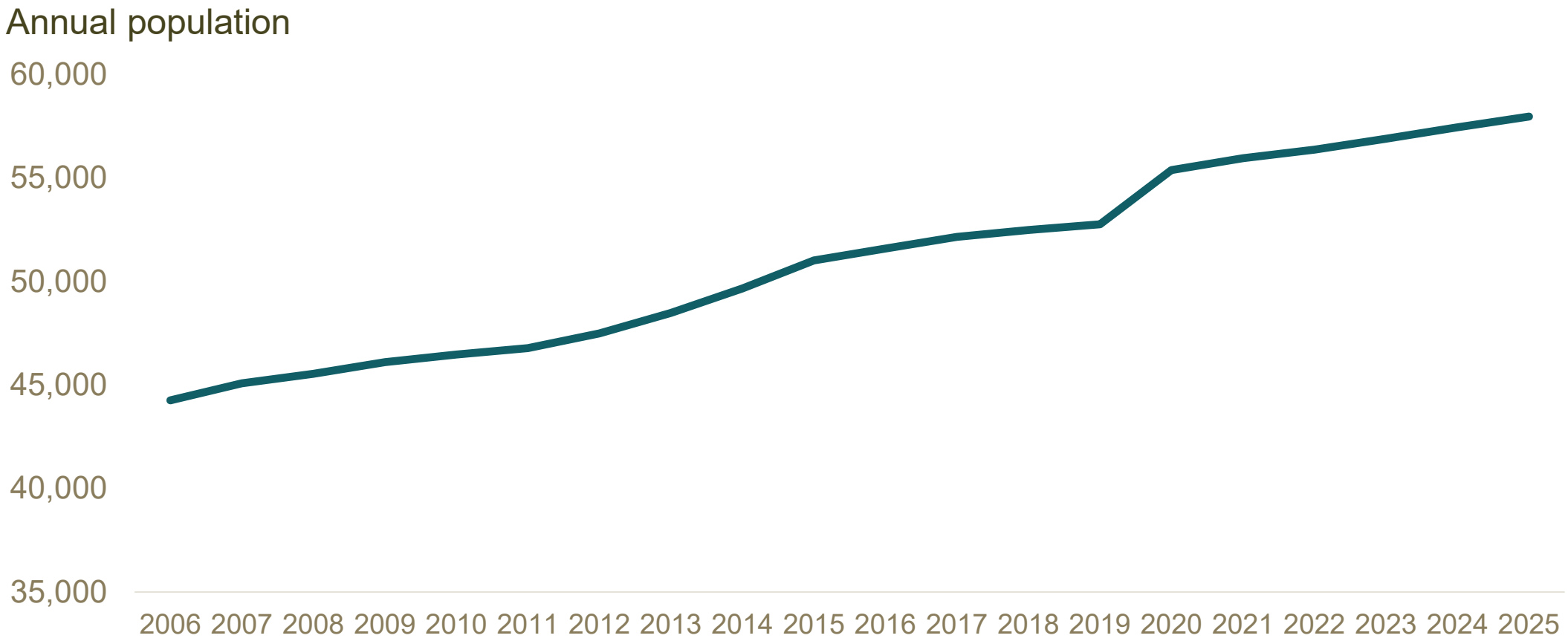
Principal Planner | Olympia Public Works, Transportation

Olympia

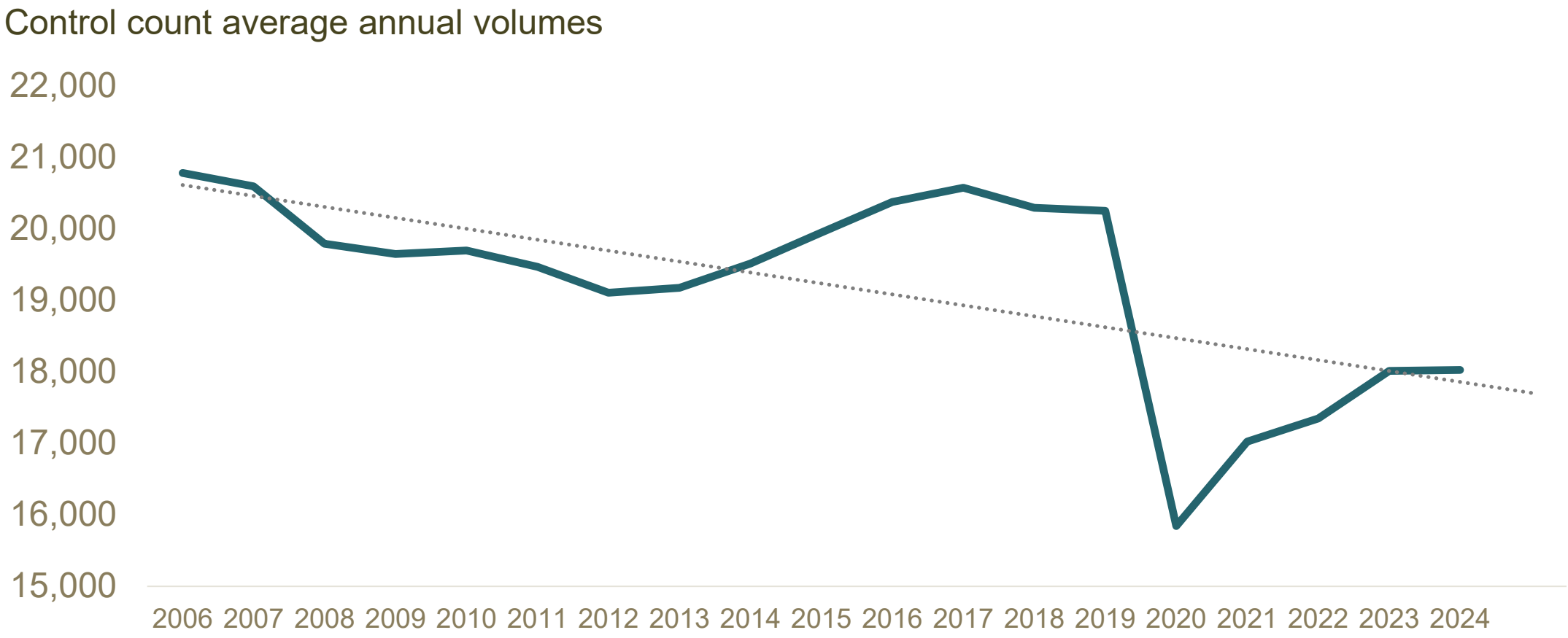
ABOUT OLYMPIA

- 57,970 residents in 2025
- Region of 309,100 people
- 56,763 jobs in 2022
- ~30% workers employed by state

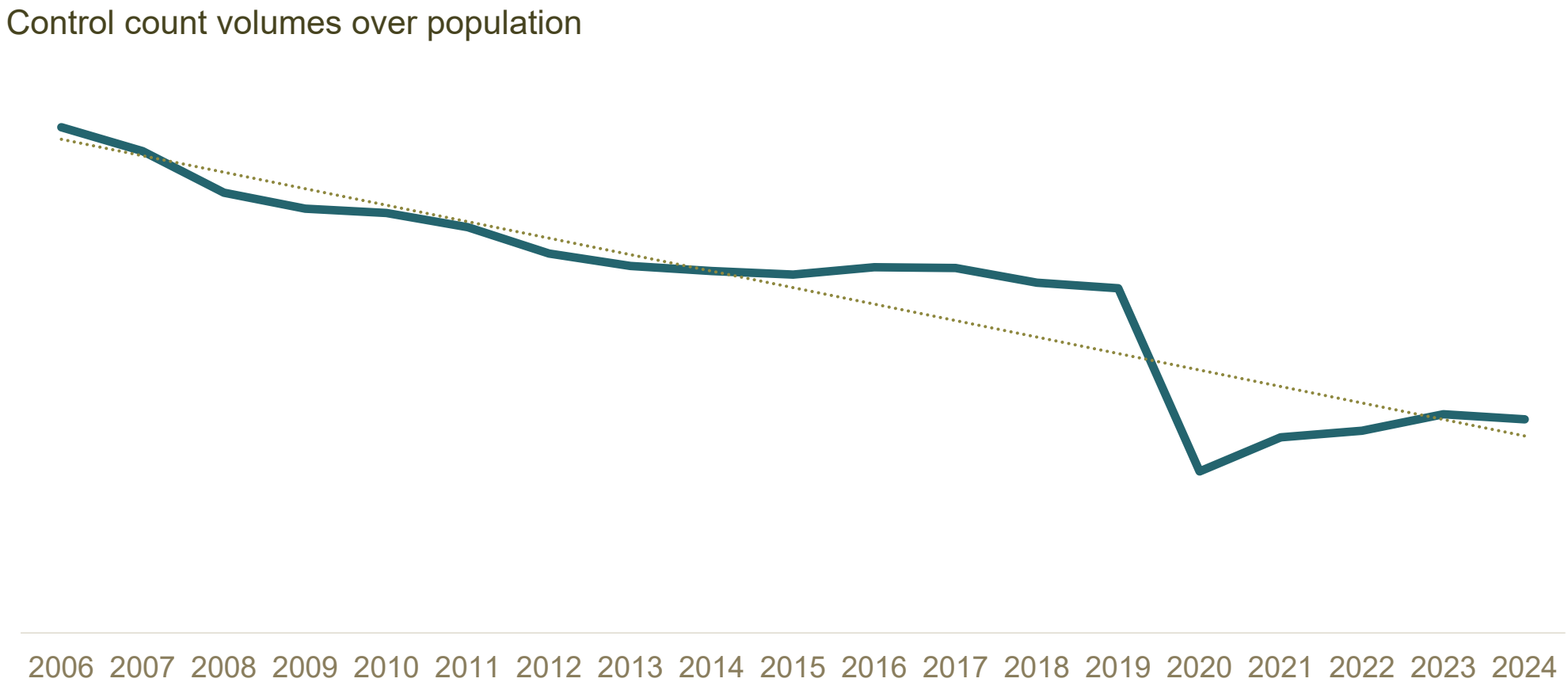
OLYMPIA IS GROWING



TRAFFIC VOLUMES ARE NOT GROWING



PUT ANOTHER WAY



REGARDING FUNDING

- State doesn’t pay property tax
- Federal formulary funding is lower here
- Federal competitive grants are very expensive
- New TBD sales tax for ped, bike, active transportation as of April 2024

EXAMPLE: FONES ROAD

Surface Transportation Program – Design	$1.2 M
Surface Transportation Program - Construction	$2.0 M
Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality	$0.5 M
Transportation Alternatives	$0.4 M
Carbon Reduction Program	$0.2 M
Urban Arterial Program	$2.0 M
Redistributed Federal Funds	$5.2 M
Transportation Capital Funds	$9.5 M
Drinking Water Capital Funds	$3.2 M
Wastewater Capital Funds	$0.3 M
Total	**$24.5 M**

Gray = federal funding

Blue = State funding

$2.0M

White = City funding

$13.0M

FONES ROAD

From this…

…to something like this

COMP PLAN UPDATE

- Required to include MMLOS
- Different from concurrency
- LOS measures how well the system functions

LEVEL OF SERVICE

- Historically measures vehicles through an intersection or road segment
- Neither GMA nor SEPA requires this way of measuring
- Used to determine where concurrency projects need to go
- 2016: Olympia City Council directed multimodal concurrency program

TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN

- Adopted 2021
- Defines complete system for all modes
- Includes funding analysis
- Identifies gap between what we have and what we need
- Includes multimodal concurrency & impact fee programs

Transportation Master Plan

City of Olympia

Olympia

February 2021

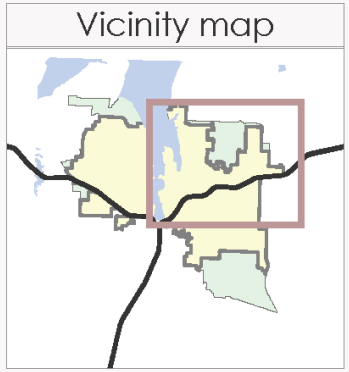
System Targets

The table below outlines the system targets we used to develop project lists. The table also summarizes the system we have today, what we need to build to have a full network, and the number of projects we can build in 20 years.

Type of facility	System target	Existing inventory	Full network list	20 year project list
Sidewalks	There will be sidewalks on both sides of our largest streets: arterials, major collectors and neighborhood collectors. The first priority is to have a sidewalk on at least one side of every major street, then both sides.	137 miles	65 miles	8 miles
Pathways	Existing informal pathways will be improved, followed by building pathways in locations where they are needed.	62	81	15
Enhanced crosswalks	There will be an enhanced crosswalk within 300 feet of major destinations on arterials and major collectors.	188	350	16
Curb ramps	Add or upgrade curb ramps on all sidewalks to comply with current federal standards	1,586 curb ramps are compliant with the current standards	4,014 curb ramps are missing or need to be upgraded	Typically, curb ramps are added or upgraded as part of other projects
Accessible signals	Add accessible devices to all traffic signals	18 audible signals	79 signals need accessible devices	Typically, accessible signals are added when signals are upgraded
Bike corridors	The low-stress bike network provides a route on a ½ mile spacing, so no one is more than ¼ mile from one.	1.5 miles of bike corridors	34 miles of bike corridors	10 miles of bike corridors
Enhanced bike lanes	The low-stress bike network provides a route on a ½ mile spacing, so no one is more than ¼ mile from one.	0 miles of enhanced bike lanes	52 miles of enhanced bike lanes	4.5 miles of enhanced bike lanes through resurfacing, and 2.5 miles as part of major street reconstruction
Intersections	Intersection improvements are built as needed for safety and function at major intersections.	12 roundabouts 97 signals	52 roundabouts	12 roundabouts
Safety projects	Improve the safety of our streets based on a routine analysis of collisions.	NA	56 current projects; ongoing need	23 projects
Resurfacing	Streets surfaces will be in good condition, with an average system rating of 75. (A rating of 100 is excellent.)	Our current system rating is 67	Not yet identified; ongoing need	69 miles in 6 years (20-year project list not defined)

Enhanced Crosswalks | Northeast

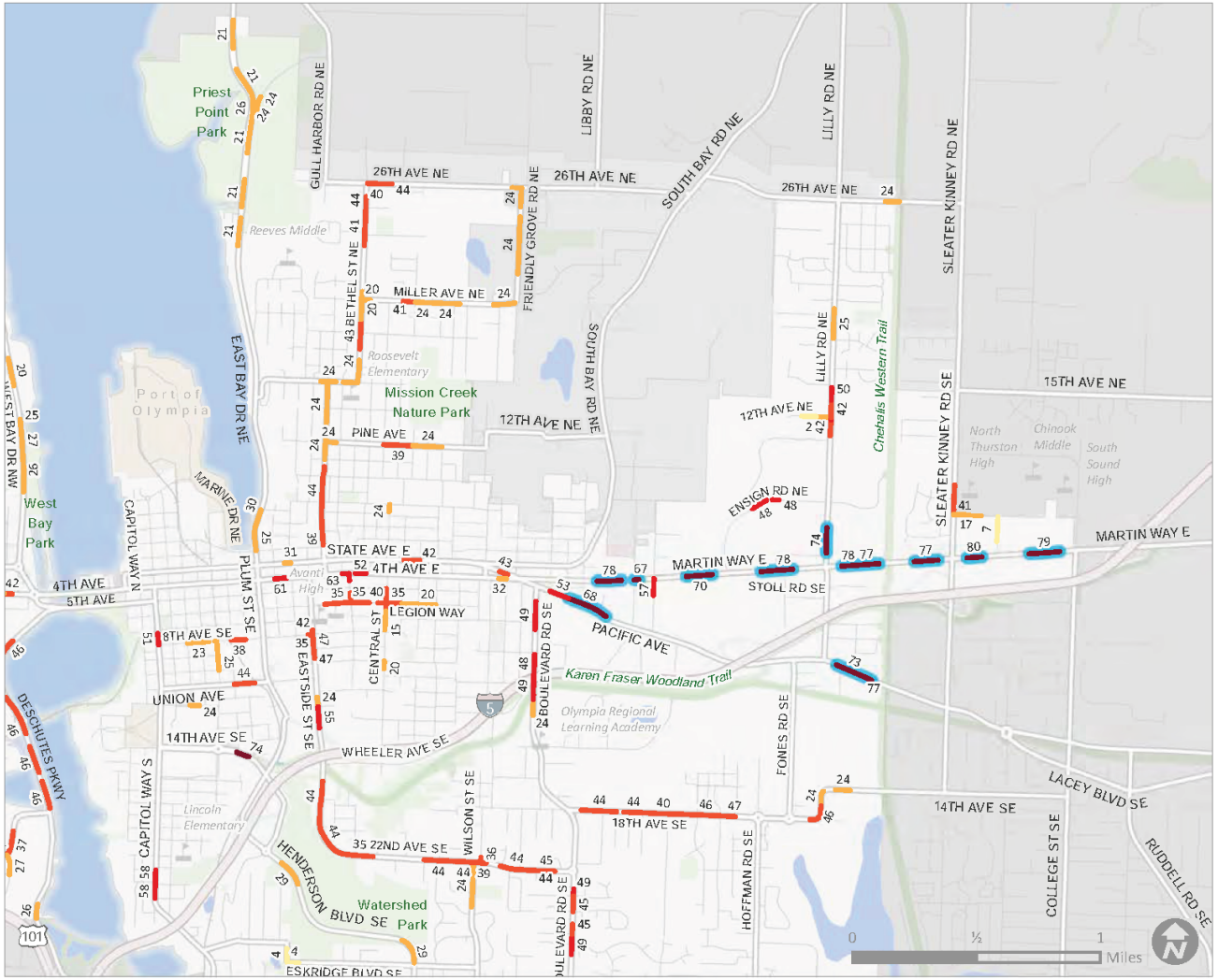
Vicinity map



Places that need enhanced crosswalks

Higher score = higher priority

- 64 - 84
- 48 - 63
- 33 - 47
- 8 - 32
- 0 - 7
- 20 year project list
- City Limits
- Urban Growth Area



Prioritization

Potential crossing locations were scored according to this method:

Traffic volume: 1 point for every 1,000 ADT*	Up to 30 points
Transit route	20 points
4 lanes	15 points
3 lanes	10 points
Actual speeds exceed 30 mph**	20 points
Actual speeds exceed 25 mph**	15 points

**Average Daily Travel = an average number of cars that travel on a street*

***Wherever possible, we used actual speeds. Where that was not available, we used the posted speed limit.*

IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

- Legislative vision is sweeping change
- SSB 5412: SEPA categorical exemptions
- Best practices not yet decided

CASE STUDIES FROM VARIOUS LOCATIONS

transpogroup

WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

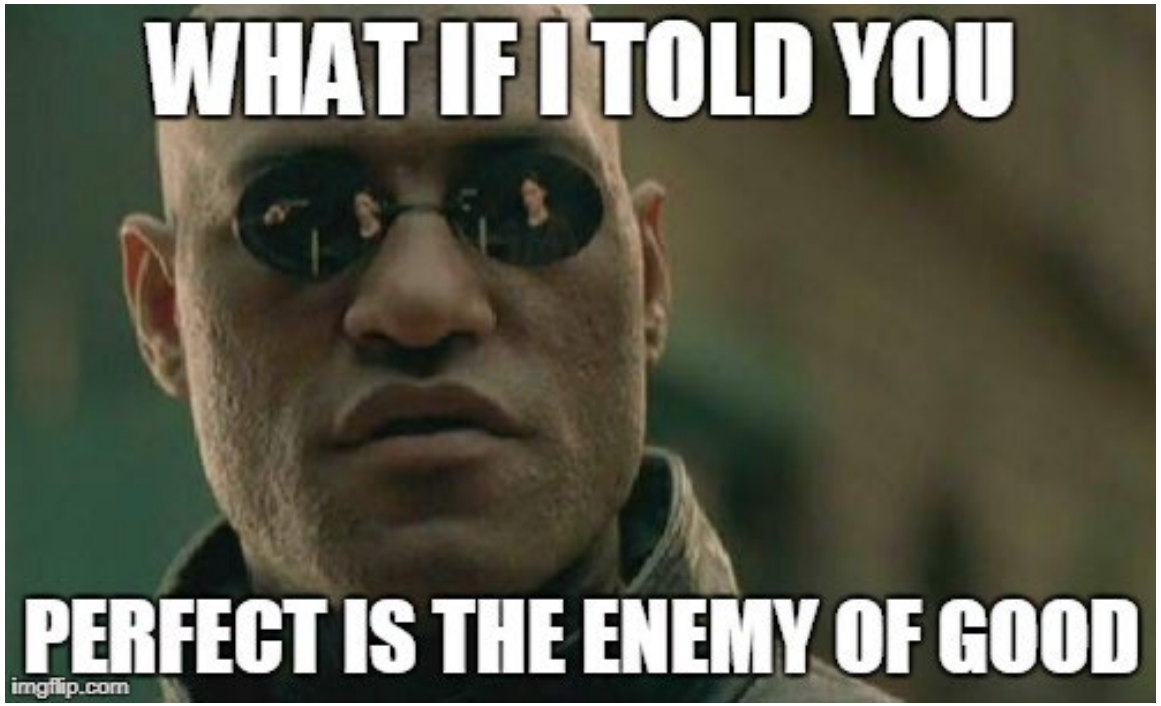
IMPLEMENTATION: A PLAN IS ONLY AS GOOD AS WHAT CAN BE BUILT

IMPLEMENTATION

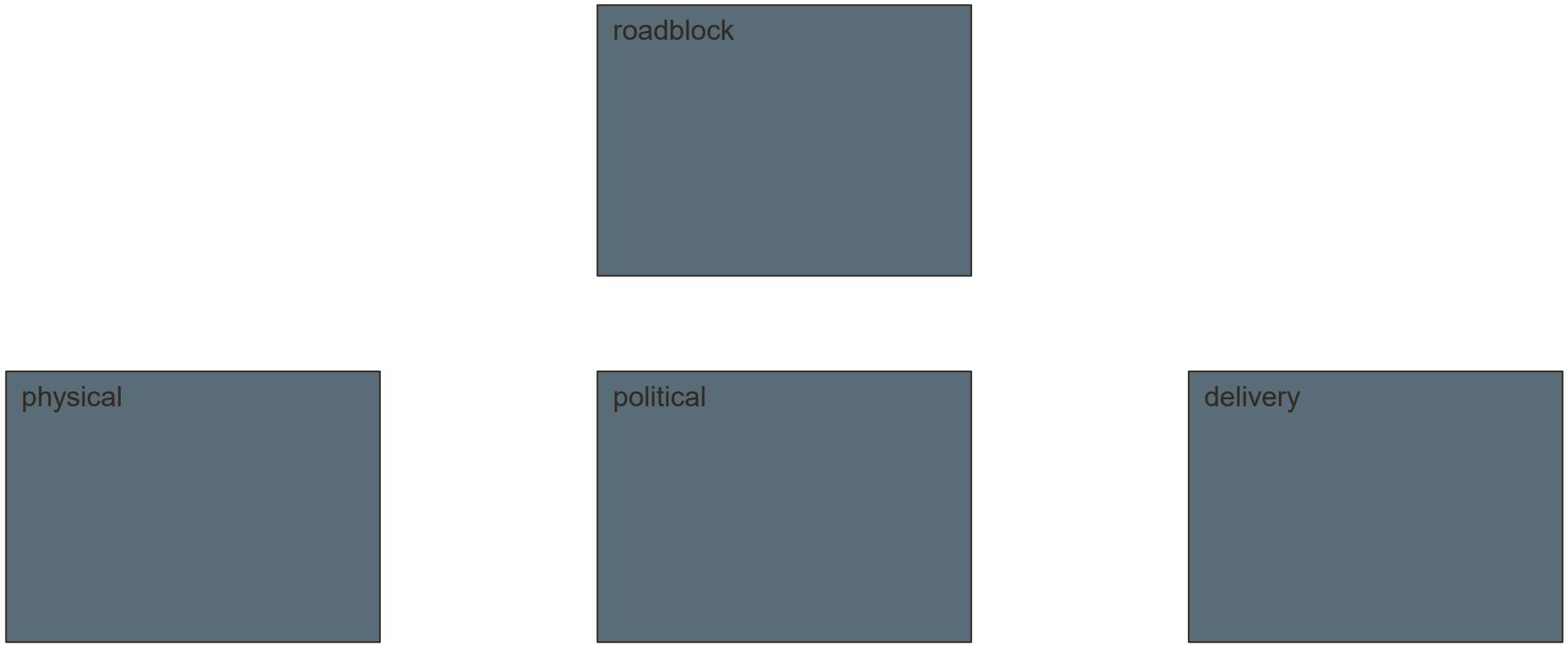
PROJECT LIMITS

FOCUS ON THE PRESENT

- Flexibility
- Context-sensitivity
- Focus on the goal, not the form
- **Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good**



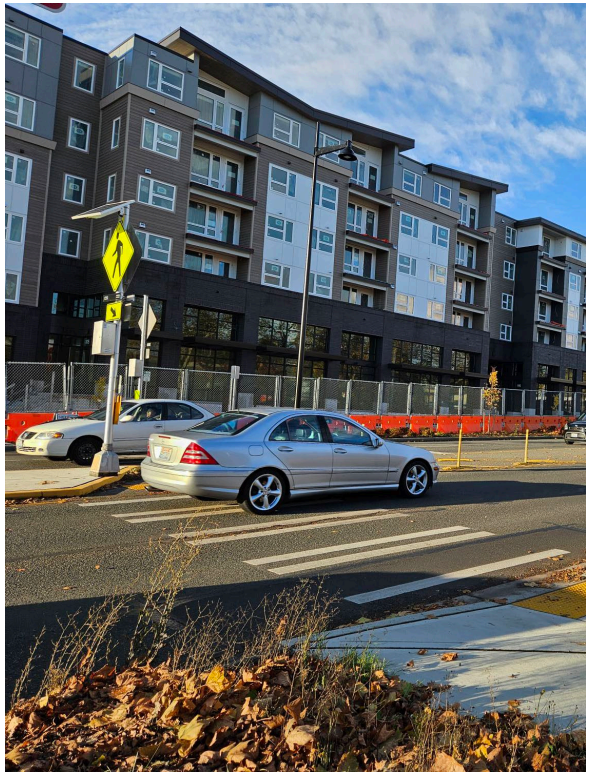
ROADBLOCKS



ROADBLOCKS: ENGINEERING CONSTRAINTS

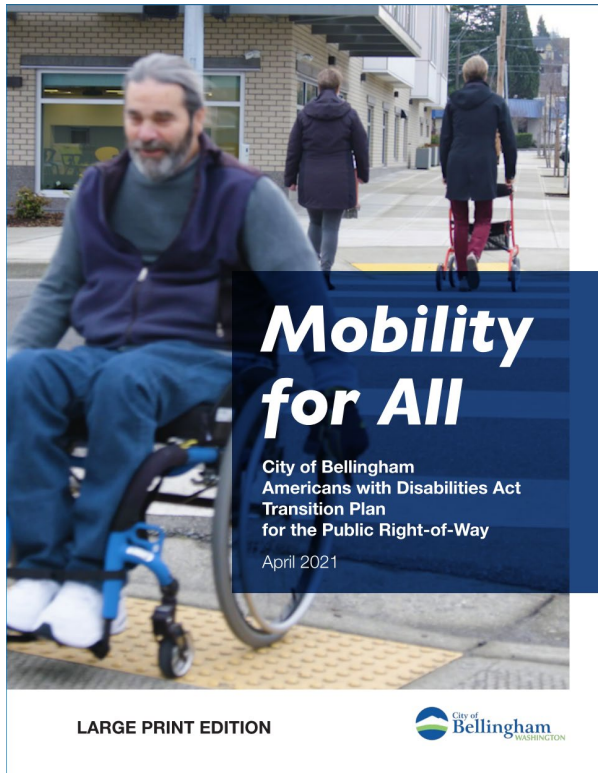
Environmental

Wetlands, streams, critical habitat



Development

Road features, driveways, private property



Mobility

ADA compliance, network completeness

transpogroup

ROADBLOCK: POLITICAL

Connecting Destinations

Complete Networks

transpogroup

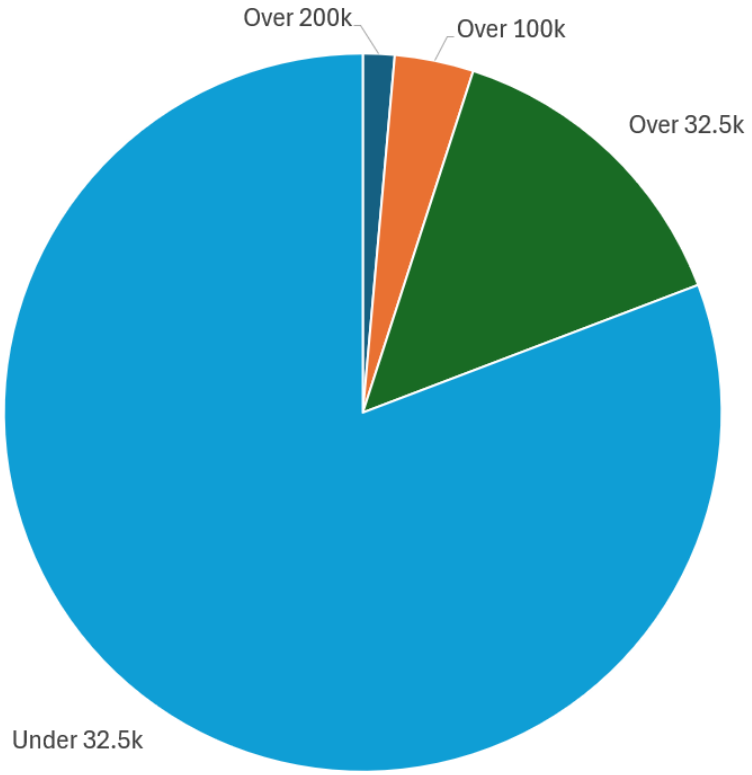
ROADBLOCK, POLITICAL: RISKS OF OVERDESIGN

- Unable to fund
- Unable to construct
- Limited use affecting perception of value

transpogroup

ROADBLOCK, DELIVERY: STAFFING

- Small agency staff limitations
  - Management of design
  - Management of funding programs
  - Management of construction



32,500 population threshold for WSDOT jurisdiction over state highways, RCW 47.24.020(17)(b)

transpogroup

ROADBLOCK, DELIVERY: GRANTS IMPACT

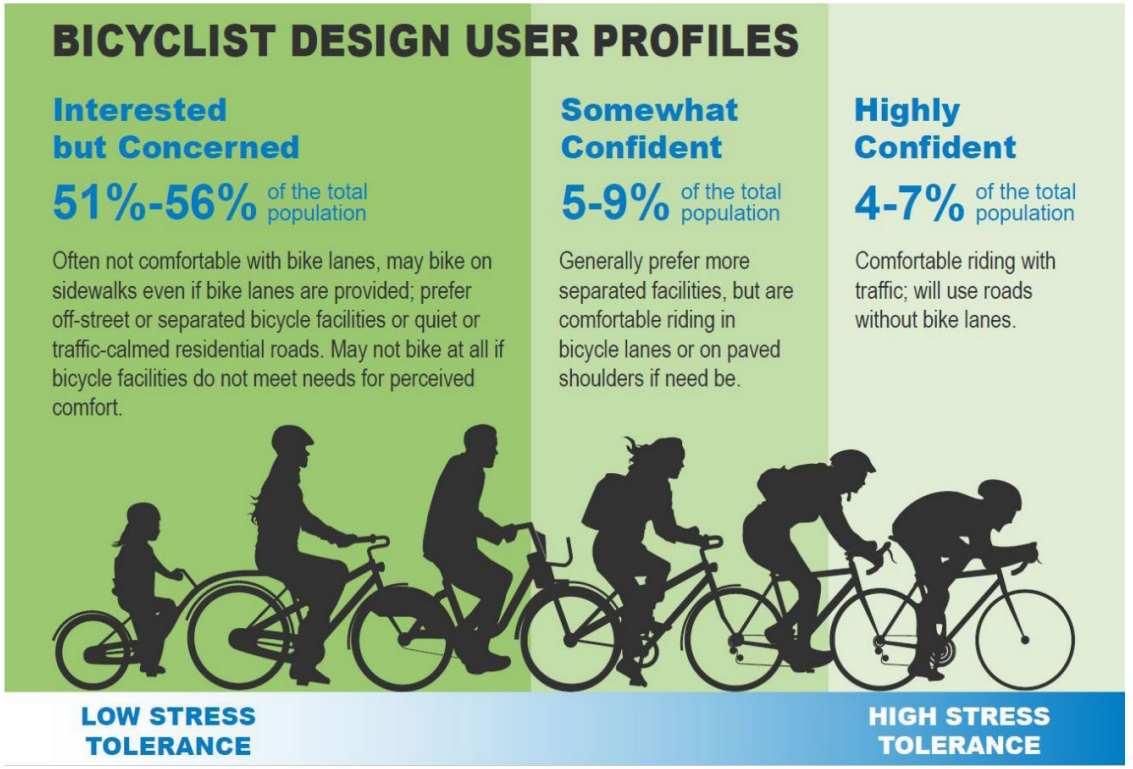
- Limitations of single awards
- Grant “mission statements”
- Grant packaging

transpogroup

WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

SOLUTIONS TO IMPLEMENTATION CHALLENGES

FOCUS ON THE DESIGN USER



FHWA Bikeway Selection Guide, Figure 6

transpogroup

LOW COST/HIGH IMPACT SOLUTIONS

Signing

Avoid sign fatigue

Striping

Big differences with little changes

Off-the-Shelf

Easier to procure, install and move/re-use

transpogroup

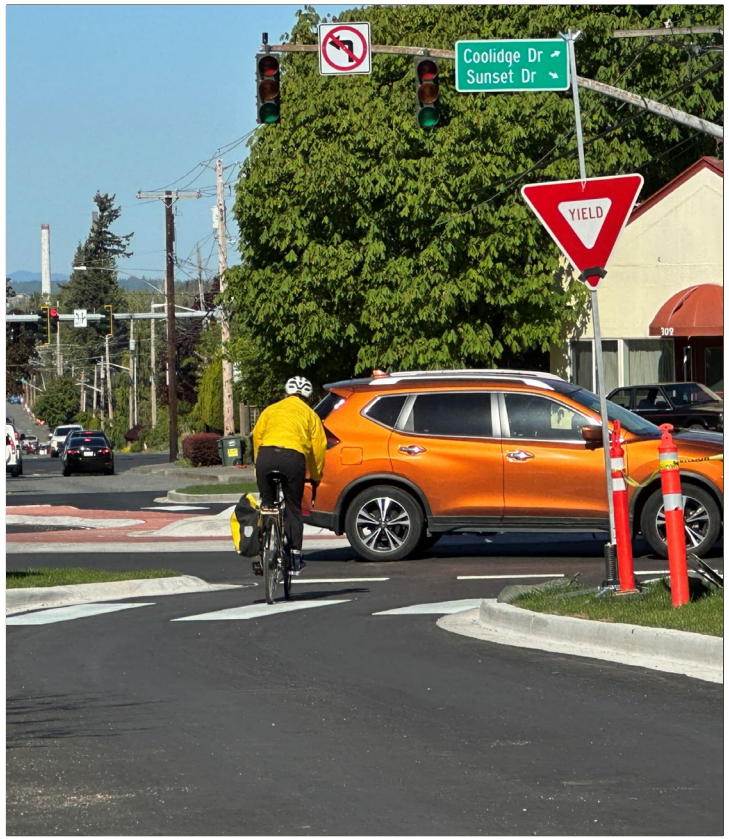

USE
PED
SIGNAL

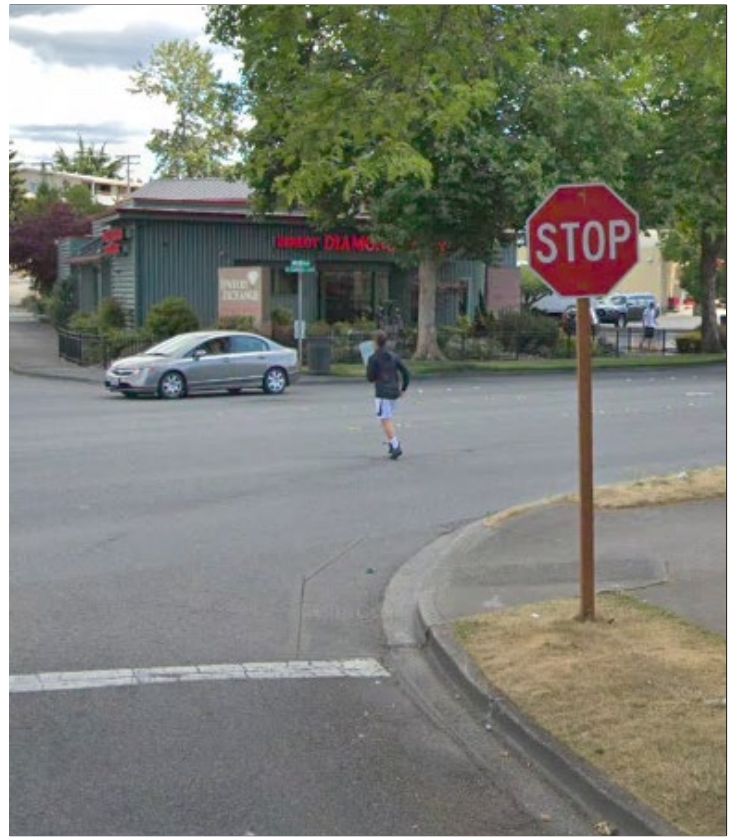

OLSON

FOCUS ON THE USER EXPERIENCE

- If the facility isn’t there
- If the facility is there, but isn’t ideal
- Incremental improvements

USERS MAKE THEIR OWN SOLUTIONS





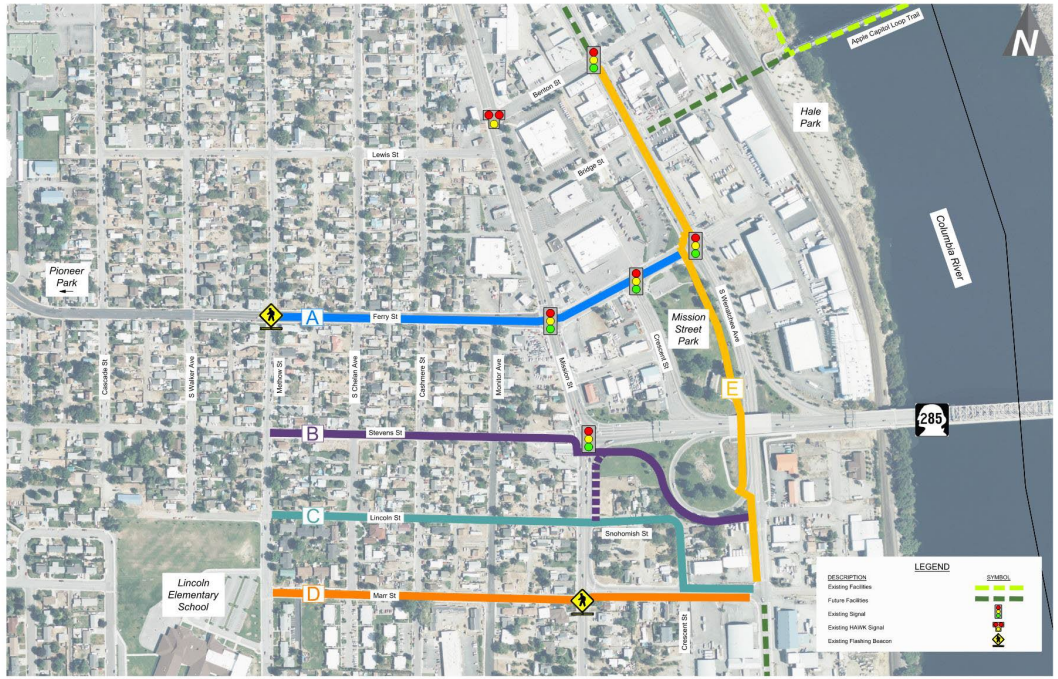
transpogroup

transpogroup

WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

CASE STUDIES – DESIGN FLEXIBILITY

S WENATCHEE BIKE PLAN



S Wenatchee Ave - Marr St to Benton St

Route Alternative Overview

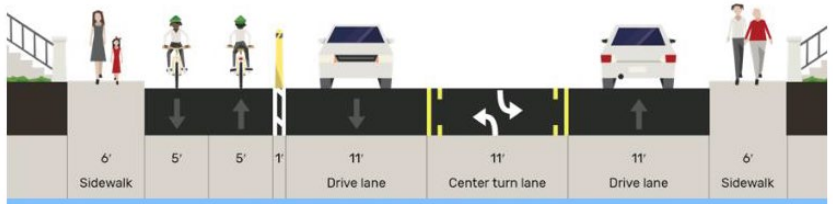
March 4, 2022

FIGURE 1

1.21200.00 - S. Wenatchee Bicycle Connectivity Study

Mar 04, 2022 - 4:16pm kristenc M:\21\1.21200.00 - S. Wenatchee Bicycle Connectivity Study\Engineering\CAD\Xrefs\WENATCHEE-CORRIDORS.dwg Layout: Overview

transpogroup



Methow Street to S Mission Street
North Side Cycle Track

Looking East

Methow Street to S Mission Street
Shared Road

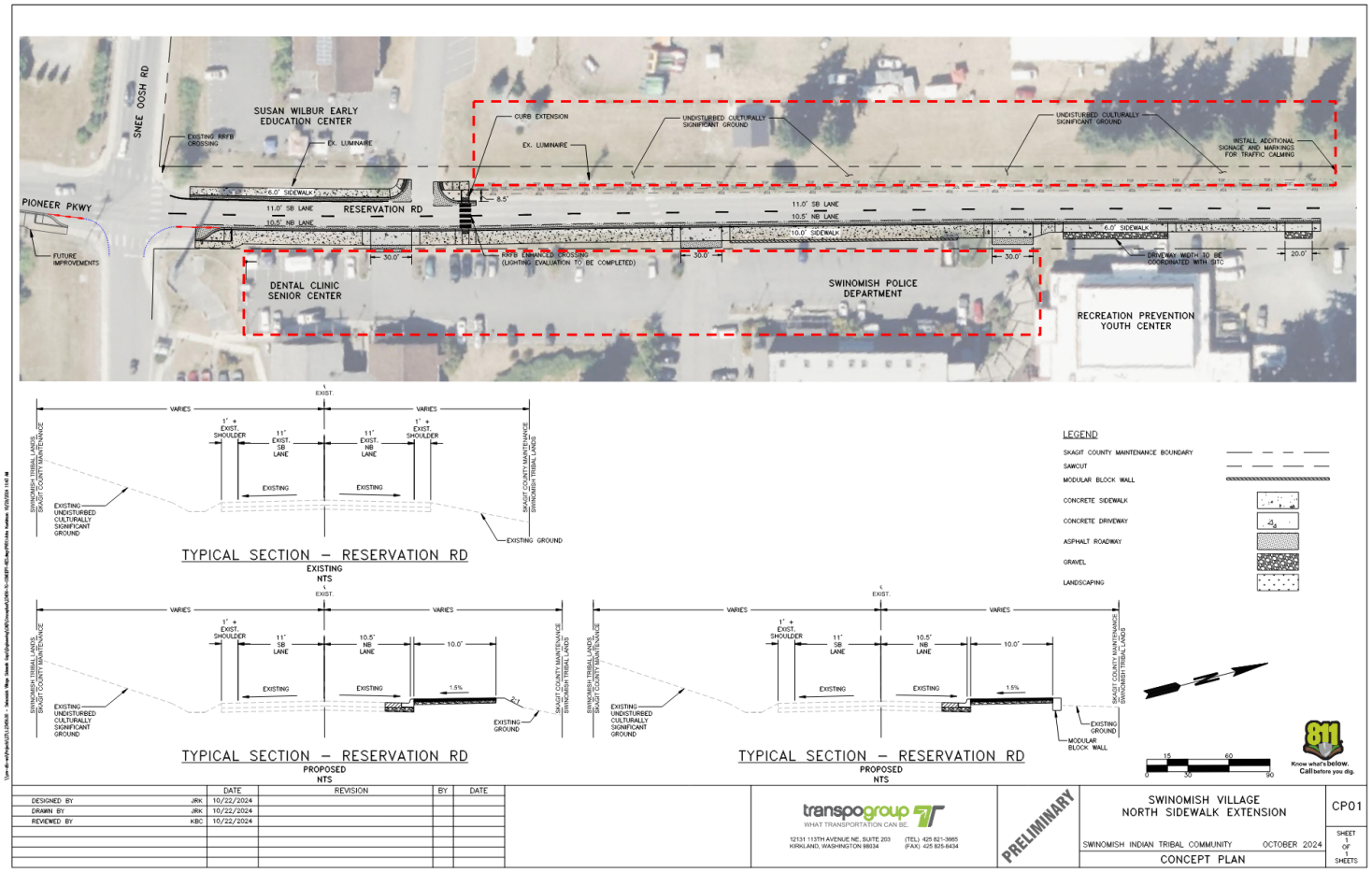
Looking East

Crescent St to S Wenatchee Ave
Cycle Track

Looking East

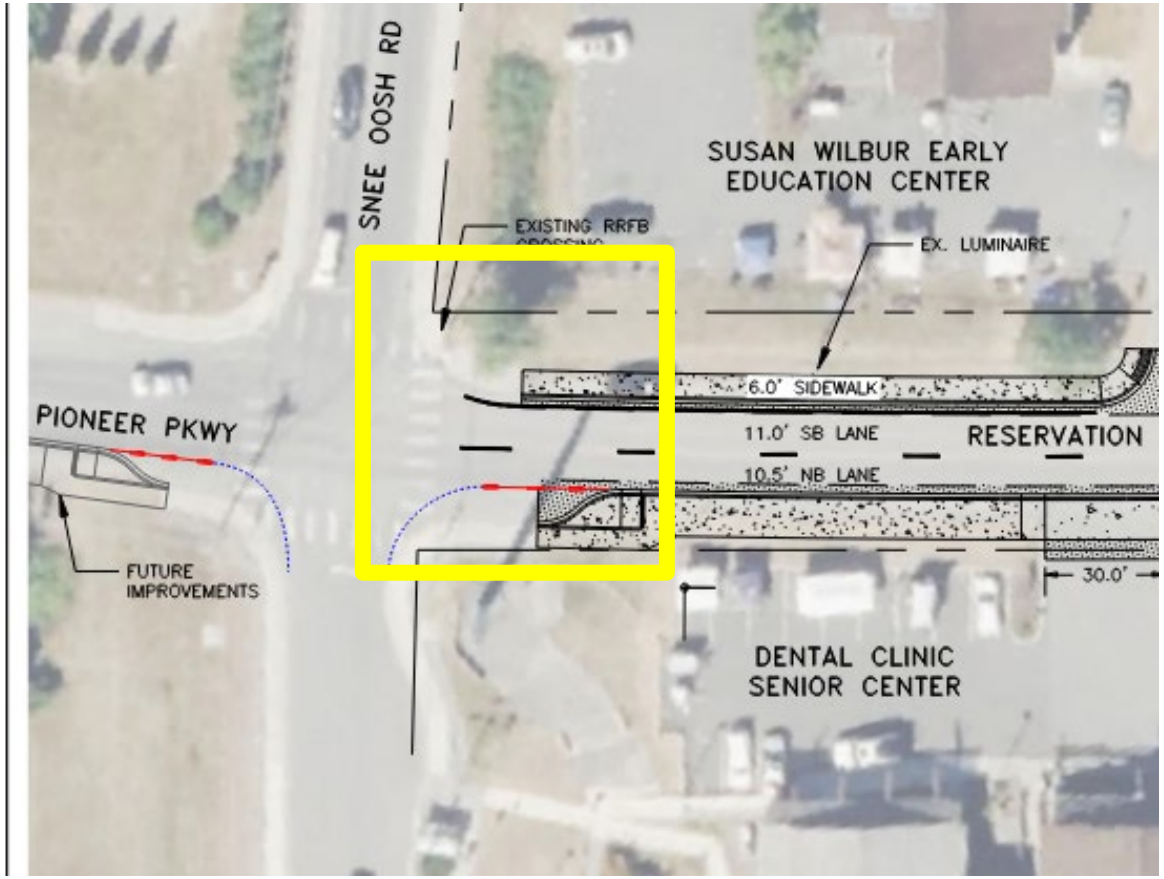
transpogroup

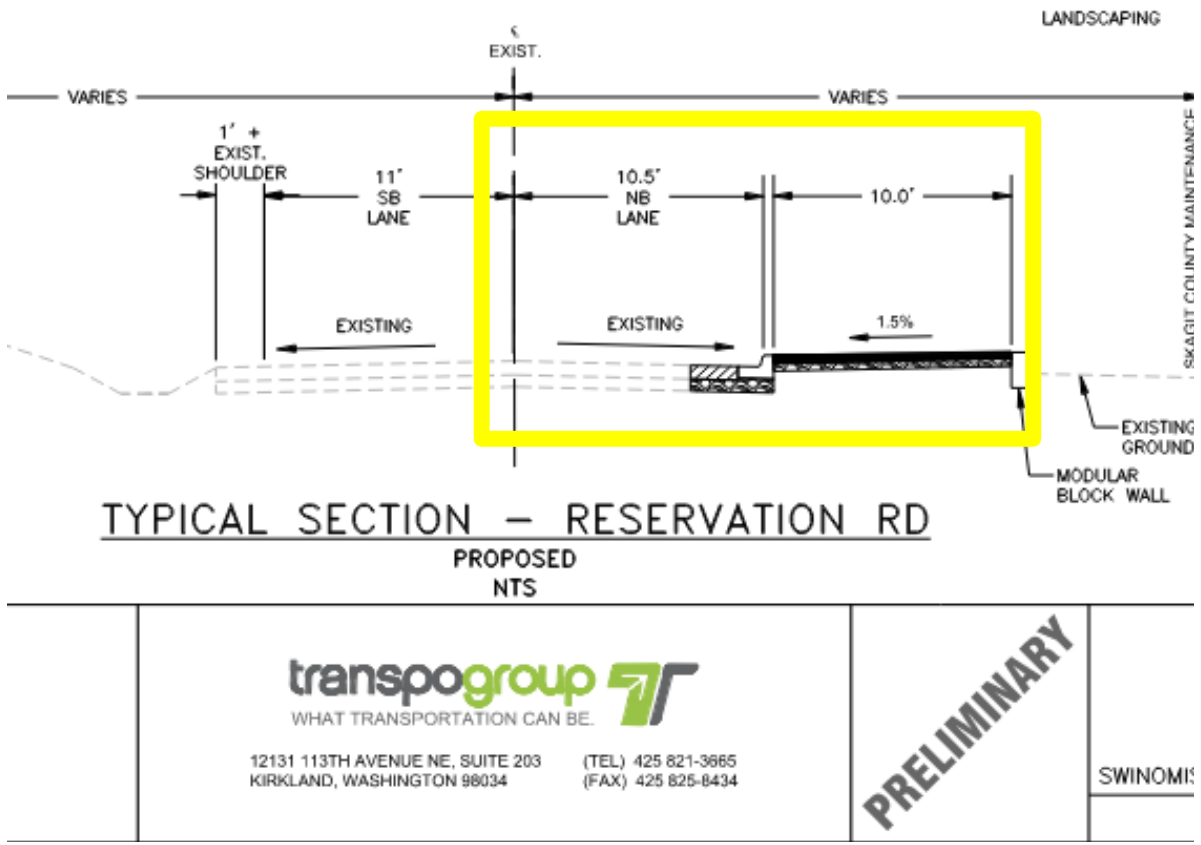
SWINOMISH VILLAGE NORTH SIDEWALK



transpogroup

SWINOMISH VILLAGE NORTH SIDEWALK





BELLINGHAM TBD PROJECTS

transpogroup

BELLINGHAM TBD PROJECTS

transpogroup

BELLINGHAM TBD PROJECTS

All Projects 2010 - 2021

Bike/Ped Facility

Existing Bike and/or Ped Facility

Bike Improvement Ped Improvement

TBD/Grant Funded

Grant Funds TBD Funds

transpogroup

transpogroup

WHAT TRANSPORTATION CAN BE.

“SO WHAT?”

EFFECTS OF OVERPROMISING

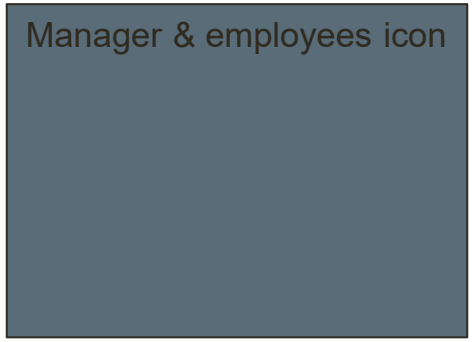
- People can’t connect
- Shorter effective paths
- Less utility

transpogroup

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Stay focused on the goals
  - Safety
  - Connectivity
- Dream big…
  - … but build piece by piece

RECOMMENDATIONS



Permitting
Environmental, ROW

Ask for input
Engineers, PMs, O&M

Funding
Grants, Local priorities

RESOURCES (GUIDES!)

- FHWA STAR guide
  - https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bicycle_pedestrian/publications/small_towns/
- WSDOT Active Transportation Design Guide
  - https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-02/WSDOT-Active-Transportation-Programs-Design-Guide_0.pdf
- WSDOT Categorical Exclusion guide
  - https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-10/LP_CE-Guidebook-Secure.pdf

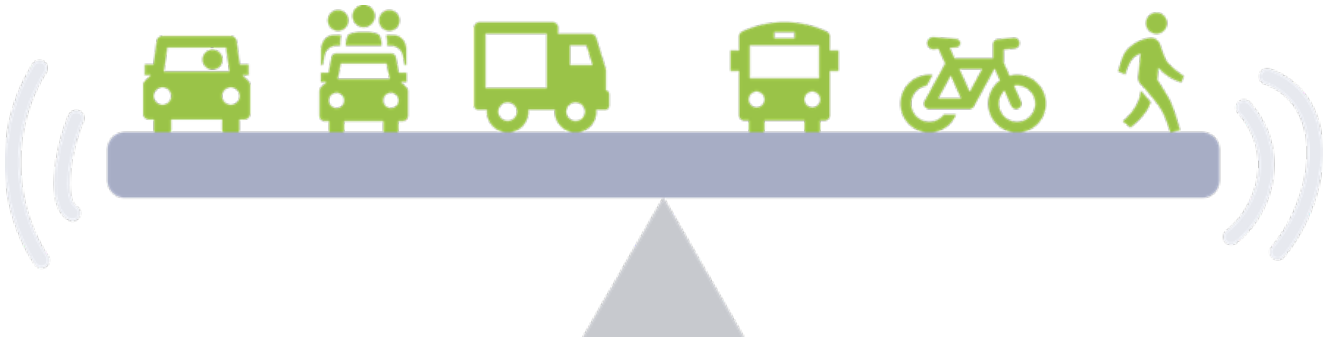
PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Q&A

- **Chris Comeau**, FAICP-CTP, Transpo Group
  - APA WA Allied Professions Host/Moderator
  - Chris.Comeau@transpogroup.com
- **Michelle Swanson**, AICP, City of Olympia
  - mswanson@ci.olympia.wa.us
- **Brett Schock**, PE, AICP, RSP2i, ENV SP, Transpo Group
  - Brett.Schock@transpogroup.com

transpogroup

BOLD ADVOCACY BALANCED WITH SMART IMPLEMENTATION



APA Washington Conference, Tacoma, WA October 9, 2025