

Chapter Six Transportation

Introduction

Purpose

Whatcom County plans and maintains the County-owned portion of the region's transportation system. This chapter sets goals and priorities for Whatcom County's transportation facilities over the next 20 years. It inventories current facilities, projects future needs, and guides the planning and implementation of projects and programs to meet those needs. Its overall purpose is to ensure that Whatcom County's transportation system continues to allow for the movement of people and goods throughout the county in a way that is safe, efficient, environmentally responsible, accessible to all users, and cost effective.

Countywide Planning Policies

This chapter supports Countywide Planning Policies by encouraging alternative modes of transportation through goals and policies. It includes policies on demand management strategies and considers intercounty and international transportation links.

GMA Requirements

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires county comprehensive plans to contain "a transportation element that implements, and is consistent with the land use element." This chapter, together with the Capital Facilities Plan in Appendix E, provides that transportation element, incorporating the sub-elements also required by GMA, including inventory of facilities; level of service standards for highways, locally owned arterials and transit routes; estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities; land use assumptions; financing; intergovernmental coordination efforts; demand-management strategies; and a pedestrian and bicycle component. (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a))

The GMA also has a concurrency provision that requires counties to "adopt and enforce ordinances which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level of service on a locally owned transportation facility to decline below the standards adopted in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan, unless transportation improvements or strategies to accommodate the impacts of development are made concurrent with the development." (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(b)) Whatcom County's concurrency management program is codified in Whatcom County Code Chapter 20.78, based on levels of service established in below in Policy 6A-1.

Inventory

Map 6-1 shows the existing countywide transportation system. Whatcom County owns and maintains 943 miles of public roads. The county uses the federal function classification system to classify those roads; 3 percent of county roads are classified

as arterials, 18 percent are major collectors, 17 percent are minor collectors, while 62 percent are local access roads. About 23 miles of county roads include bike lanes or are designated as bike routes. There are 217 miles of state highways; 119 miles are highways of statewide significance and 98 miles are highways of regional significance.

The Port of Bellingham owns and operates three seaport facilities within the city of Bellingham, (Bellingham Shipping Terminal, Squalicum Harbor, and Bellingham Cruise Terminal) and one in the city of Blaine (Blaine Harbor). The Bellingham Cruise Terminal acts as the southern terminus of the Alaska State Ferry system and host to private cruise vendors. Adjacent to the Port's Bellingham Cruise Terminal is the Port's Fairhaven Transportation Station, Whatcom County's only passenger rail station and a terminal for the private Greyhound bus line. Whatcom County owns and operates a vehicle and passenger ferry on the 0.9-mile run between Gooseberry Point and Lummi Island, and the City of Blaine owns a passenger-only ferry between Blaine Harbor and the Semiahmoo resort within the Blaine city limits. There are no Washington State-owned ferry facilities in Whatcom County. Three privately-owned shipping terminals serve major industries in the Cherry Point Major Port Industrial UGA and small privately-owned recreational marinas exist in several rural communities, including Point Roberts, Sandy Point, and Sudden Valley, as well as Birch Bay Village, which is part of the Birch Bay UGA.

The Port of Bellingham owns and operates Bellingham International Airport in the unincorporated UGA of Bellingham. The City of Lynden owns and operates the Lynden Municipal Airport located inside the Lynden city limits. Privately owned and operated airports exist in Whatcom County, including Point Roberts (Point Roberts Airpark), on Lake Whatcom (Floathaven Seaplane Base), near Custer (Meadow Mist), and Eliza Island.

The Burlington Northern Santa Fe railway owns a north-south rail line that runs through Bellingham, Ferndale, and Blaine, and a parallel line that runs through Acme, Deming, Nooksack, and Sumas. Both lines are used to transport freight, and have industrial spurs that serve industries in the Cherry Point Urban Growth Area, and Lynden, respectively. The line through Bellingham also accommodates passenger service, the Amtrak Cascades between Seattle and Vancouver, BC.

Whatcom Transportation Authority operates the public transit system in Whatcom County, including fixed-route and dial-a-ride service. The system serves all seven of Whatcom County's incorporated cities, the County's non-city UGA's, Birch Bay and Columbia Valley, and rural areas in between. The transit system includes transit stations in Bellingham, Ferndale, and Lynden, three of which include park and ride lots. There are currently a total of nine park and ride lots in Whatcom County.

Goals and Policies

Level of Service – Motor Vehicles

GMA requires counties to adopt level of service (LOS) standards for arterials. For purposes of concurrency management, Whatcom County adopts level of service (LOS) standards for motor vehicle travel on county-owned arterials and major

collectors, per GMA requirements. In addition, it is appropriate to include concurrency for the county-owned ferry service (see Policy 6A-1 and Map 6-3). Levels of service for other facilities, which are used for planning purposes but not for concurrency management, are established in subsequent policies. The Whatcom Council of Governments sets LOS standards for state highways of regional significance (SR 11, 542, 544, 547, and 548). WSDOT, in consultation with local governments, sets LOS standards for highways of statewide significance (I-5, SR 9, SR 20, SR 539, SR 543, and SR 546). Level of service standards for state-owned facilities are included in this plan to help the state monitor the performance of the system, to evaluate improvement strategies, and to facilitate coordination between the county's or city's six-year street, road, or transit program and the department of transportation's ten-year investment program. Whatcom County does not use LOS standards on state-owned facilities for concurrency evaluation purposes.

For roadway segments (between but not including intersections) level of service is expressed as letters A-F, which correspond to the ratio of volume to capacity for a segment (see Table 6-1). That ratio is determined by dividing the projected weekday afternoon peak hour traffic volume of a roadway segment by the calculated per-hour capacity of that segment. Adopted LOS for all County and State-owned facilities are shown on Map 6-3. Whatcom County's concurrency management system is established in Whatcom County Code Chapter 20.78, and is based on roadway segment volume to capacity ratios.

For intersections, the LOS is determined by the time delay (seconds per vehicle) of the stopped approach vehicle, per the current Highway Capacity Manual. Congestion at intersections due to capacity and delay issues are identified and mitigated through the SEPA process. Intersection LOS is not used for concurrency evaluation purposes.

Table 6-1 County Roadway Volume/Capacity Range by LOS Designation

LOS Designation	V/C Range
A	0-0.59
B	0.60-0.69
C	0.70-0.79
D	0.80-0.89
E	0.90-0.99
F	>1.00

Level of Service – Other Modes

GMA also requires counties to include a level of service for transit routes in the transportation element. Whatcom Transportation Authority, the only public transit agency in the County, establishes its levels of service in its Strategic Plan document; this chapter references those adopted standards. For modes of transportation other than motor vehicles, transit, and ferry, Whatcom County does not establish levels of service based on volumes, but instead focuses on the *quality* of service through planning and design (see Goals 6D and 6E below).

Ferry service to Lummi Island does not comprise an arterial or transit route; therefore it is not subject to concurrency under GMA. It is, however, the only point of access for Lummi Island. For the purposes of future infrastructure planning, a LOS standard based on an estimate of the available passenger trips per capita Lummi Island population is established in Policy 6A-2. (See Lummi Island Ferry LOS methodology in Appendix J).

Goal 6A: Provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods by establishing and maintaining standard levels of service for motor vehicle traffic volumes compared to roadway capacity.

Policy 6A-1: Establish the following levels of service (LOS) for purposes of maintaining transportation concurrency:

- The Level of Service (LOS) standard for county arterials and major collectors located outside of urban growth areas during weekday p.m.-peak hours is C or better, except for specified primary routes as shown on Map 6-3, which shall have a LOS of D or better.
- The LOS standard for county arterials and major collectors within urban growth areas not associated with cities during weekday p.m. peak hours is D or better, which may be reduced for concurrency evaluation purposes in accordance with Policy 6A-4.
- The LOS standard for county arterials and major collectors within city urban growth areas weekday during p.m. peak hours is D or better, which may be reduced for concurrency evaluation purposes in accordance with Policy 6A-4.
- Coordinate with Whatcom Transportation Authority to ensure adequate transit service, in accordance with the level of service standards established in its current strategic plan.
- The Lummi Island Ferry Advisory Committee (LIFAC) is cooperating with Public Works to develop an updated LOS standard. LIFAC will present a revision to this section when that work is complete. The interim LOS is calculated using the scheduled trips, the estimated car unit of the ferry, and the Small Area Estimates Program (SAEP) population figure. The interim standard is established at 439. (LOS = (Scheduled one way trips X estimated car units for the boat) X 2 / SAEP population figure from OFM for Lummi Island.)

Policy 6A-2: Establish the following levels of service for county facilities other than arterials, major collectors, and transit routes (facilities not subject to concurrency requirements):

- The Level of Service (LOS) standard for county collectors located outside of urban growth areas during weekday p.m. peak is C or better.
 - The LOS for county collectors within urban growth areas not associated with cities during weekday p.m. peak hours is D or better.
 - The LOS for county collectors within city urban growth areas during weekday p.m. peak hours is D or better.
 - The LOS for all county intersections is LOS D.
- Policy 6A-3: List the following level of service standards for state highways, as established by WSDOT and WCOG:
- The LOS for state highways in urban growth areas is D or better.
 - The LOS for state highways in rural areas is C or better.
- Policy 6A-4: For proposed developments in urban growth areas, increase the volume-to-capacity ratio standard for impacted transportation facilities by 0.05 if at least one of the following amenities exists or is committed to being provided as part of the development:
- Transit service and stop within one quarter mile walking distance accessible from the development using nonmotorized facilities that meet or are functionally equivalent to Whatcom County Road Standards.
 - Nonmotorized facilities that meet or are functionally equivalent to Whatcom County Road Standards along the impacted facility.
- Policy 6A-5: Encourage extension of city concurrency review authority and LOS standards into their respective UGAs to provide for greater consistency in concurrency review for urban areas.
- Policy 6A-6: Identify and mitigate safety and other impacts to transportation facilities caused by development during SEPA review, using standards adopted for intersections and other minimum standards established by WCC Development Standards.

Current and Projected Levels of Service

Map 6-4 shows the 2013 daily motor vehicle traffic volumes in Whatcom County. Map 6-5 shows the 2013 volume-to-capacity data for County-owned arterials, based on the traffic volumes in Map 6-4 (adjusted to represent afternoon peak hour volume) and 2013 data on hourly roadway capacity for each road segment. When compared with the level of service standards adopted in Policy 6A and shown on Map 6-3, it is evident that there was only one road segment where roadway capacities were deficient in 2013 (where current volume-to-capacity ratios exceed

the adopted level of service standards for those county-owned arterials): Lakeway Drive between the Bellingham City limits and Lowe Avenue.

WCOG has developed a motorized travel demand model and has projected future travel demands based on assumptions of planned development patterns established in Chapter Two Land Use. Comparing the projected demand for peak hour trips with the hourly vehicular carrying capacity of County roadways shows how well the roadways are predicted to function (predicted level of service) in future years.

Map 6-6 shows projected daily traffic on County-owned arterials and state highways in 2036, based on the WCOG model, and Map 6-7 shows projected volume-to-capacity ratios for that year. For the roadways classified as arterials, the GMA requires the County to prohibit development approval—or assure needed improvements concurrent with development—if the development causes the level of service to fall below adopted standards.

Map 6-7 highlights segments where the projected ratio exceeds the adopted levels of service established under Policy 6A-1 above. The segments where County-owned roadways classified as arterials fall below the adopted LOS standards in 2036 are Hannegan Road between Van Wyck Road and Kelly Road (1.01 mile), and Lakeway Drive between the Bellingham City Limits and Terrace Avenue (0.63 mile).

Planning and Design of Transportation Improvements

The Capital Facilities Plan (Appendix E) includes a list of improvement projects planned for implementation over the next 20 years. This list was developed in response to safety and capacity needs identified by Public Works and through various citizen planning efforts such as the Whatcom County Pedestrian Bicycle Plan and the Birch Bay Community Plan. This list would also include any projects needed to bring into compliance any facilities that are currently below the established level of service standard, or are projected to fall below those standards within the 20-year planning period.

Each year the County adopts a six-year Transportation Improvement Program, which selects projects from the list of planned projects and assigns funding amounts to them, programming their construction over the next six years. Due to limited funding, not all the recommended projects can be programmed for construction.

Accordingly, in deciding how best to use its finite resources, the County must prioritize among many competing items, including new projects as well as preservation, operation, and maintenance of existing facilities. Improvements that are needed to reduce the risk of personal injury and property damage must be the County's top consideration. The next priority is preservation of current facilities, which not only supports the first priority of safety (preventing possible hazards from developing over time), but also addresses the need to maintain and operate the transportation system in a cost-effective manner, minimizing the need for costly reconstruction projects in the future.

The next priorities for implementation, after safety and roadway preservation, are projects aimed at increasing capacity and keeping facilities operating at acceptable

levels of service. Projects that address deficiencies on County-owned arterials should be the highest priority in this category.

Goal 6B: Create a cost-effective transportation system that prioritizes safety, roadway preservation, and concurrency.

Policy 6B-1: Programming of transportation programs and improvements should prioritize upgrading of unsafe and/or structurally deficient facilities and preservation and maintenance of the existing transportation system over new capital improvements. Exception to this policy should be allowed when a cost/benefit analysis indicates that the public interest is better served by new capital expenditures over preservation of existing infrastructure, or when capacity-increasing improvements are necessary to correct level of service deficiencies on County-owned roads and ferries to meet GMA concurrency requirements.

Policy 6B-2: Use a fair and equitable formula to assess development for transportation improvements, including but not limited to transit, pedestrian facilities, bikeways, ferry, and roadways that are considered reasonably necessary as a direct result of proposed developments in Whatcom County.

Arterial and Collector Improvements

Whatcom County's program of arterial and collector improvements addresses the following elements: uncongested traffic flow; sound engineering and construction; safety; mobility; facilities for public transit, bicycles, and pedestrians; access to air, rail, ferry, and other forms of transportation; and cost effectiveness.

GOAL 6C: Ensure an efficient regional system of arterials and collectors that is functional, safe, and consistent with regional priorities and city and county comprehensive plans.

Policy 6C-1: For road classifications higher than local access roads, develop access control plans which may include joint driveways, and require new developments to minimize the number of access points.

Policy 6C-2: Where new arterials or collectors are necessary, such routes should follow topographic or land use patterns which minimize disruption to residential neighborhoods and the environment.

Policy 6C-3: Identify a regional system of all-weather roads and develop emergency maintenance plans for adverse weather conditions.

- Policy 6C-4: Maximize the amount of county-designated arterials and rural major collectors that are all-weather roads.
- Policy 6C-5: Provide for commercial vehicle access from I-5 to major commercial and industrial land uses via all-weather roads that have adequate turning radii and signage.
- Policy 6C-6: Set appropriate speed limits based on collision data, speed studies, road geometry, and vehicle types.
- Policy 6C-7: Minimize delay at intersections by timely provision of warranted traffic controls and other improvements.
- Policy 6C-8: Study ways to improve east-west connectivity for commercial and passenger vehicle traffic between Interstate 5 and areas to the east.
- Policy 6C-9: Conduct a ferry feasibility study to inform the next annual Comprehensive Plan update so that sufficient planning, engineering, design and cost detail is available to use in competing for grants and other sources of funding for a replacement ferry. LIFAC should provide input on the scope of work and any consultants or vendors retained, as well as reviewing and providing input on key milestones.
- Policy 6C-10: Work with WSDOT to improve highway problems caused by truck traffic on county and state roads by adding this issue to the Council of Governments work plan, lobby WSDOT officials, and considering lower speed limits and improvements during discussions in the county six-year road program.

Coordination with Land Use

The way land is developed affects the need for transportation facilities; conversely, the availability of transportation can influence development. This two-way relationship needs to be taken into account in both land use and transportation planning. The Growth Management Act requires Whatcom County to link the two processes.

Goal 6D: Support land use planning efforts in Whatcom County which include land use types and densities that reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles.

- Policy 6D-1: Allow densities and mixed uses in urban areas to reduce the number and length of vehicle trips, increase opportunity to use public transportation, and encourage pedestrian and bicycle trips.
- Policy 6D-2: Discourage transportation improvements that would trigger development that is premature or not consistent with applicable comprehensive plans, policies, or zoning.

- Policy 6D-3: Support continual education of the public regarding the relationship between transportation and land use issues and ways to reduce traffic congestion.
- Policy 6D-4: Direct transportation planners to evaluate positive and negative impacts to the productivity of resource based industries when planning transportation corridors. Transportation improvements in areas designated "Resource Lands" should be constructed to facilitate the operations of those affected areas and industries.
- Policy 6D-5: Ensure that new developments provide safe and efficient infrastructure for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Policy 6D-6: Encourage new housing developments to be located in urban growth areas to help provide a sense of community and safe, nonmotorized transportation to community facilities and public transit nodes.

Multimodal Approach

Whatcom County’s transportation facilities must accommodate a variety of transportation modes including automobiles, bicycles, pedestrians, buses, ferries, emergency vehicles, commercial vehicles, and agricultural equipment. In the planning, design, and construction of these facilities, the County must balance the needs of all users in all modes, and make the improvements appropriate to the context of the area.

GOAL 6E Balance the needs of all users of all modes of transportation when planning and designing transportation facilities.

- Policy 6E-1: Adopt and use design standards that follow current best practices for balancing the needs of all modes of transportation, including motorized modes (automobile, commercial trucks, agricultural equipment, emergency vehicles, buses, airplanes, boats, trains, and ferries) and nonmotorized modes (bicyclists of all ages and skill levels, and pedestrians with or without disabilities). While not all modes can be accommodated fully in all areas, the County will work to achieve the best balance possible, given the context of the area and budgetary constraints.
- Policy 6E-2: Use multimodal design in all new transportation facility improvement projects as well as roadway preservation and maintenance projects, unless physically or financially impracticable. An example would be employing new striping designs following resurfacing to better accommodate all modes.
- Policy 6E-3: Multimodal design and implementation of that design shall consider the appropriate context established by land uses in the area. Urban pedestrian amenities such as sidewalks are

appropriate in portions of urban growth areas and areas of more intensive rural development, but not in rural areas, where wide shoulders can suffice.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

A system of facilities for nonmotorized travel enhances community access and promotes healthy lifestyles. These facilities can be adjacent to roadways or separated from them.

Level of service for pedestrians and bicyclists involves different characteristics than capacity and speed. Design should maximize the quality of the service rather than quantifiable measures of usage. Walkways serve pedestrians well when they provide a safe and convenient route. Pedestrians are well served by adequate crosswalks. Bicyclists may be well served by a low speed and traffic shared roadway lane in an urban location but may benefit from a wide shoulder on a rural higher speed road.

GOAL 6F: Develop a system of bicycle and pedestrian facilities that encourages enhanced community access and promotes healthy lifestyles and supports the recreational segments of our economy.

Policy 6F-1: Planning and design shall emphasize connectivity to the greatest extent possible, creating regional networks of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Regional networks include both an on-road bicycle facility and walkway network and a regional multi-use path network. These networks should be interconnected; for example, walkways connect seamlessly with pedestrian paths and bike lanes connect to shared-roadway bike routes. The networks should also be coordinated with public transportation hubs and activity centers to enable multimodal trips of longer distances.

Policy 6F-2: Provide safe pedestrian facilities in all new construction and reconstruction transportation projects where there is the potential for significant use, unless physically or financially impracticable. An example of such a location would be in a traffic corridor within one mile of a school or community center that links residents to such facilities. Traditional curb/gutter/sidewalk designs may not always be the ideal approach for projects since they require large impervious surfaces and may detract from the rural atmosphere. Other separated walkway designs should be considered that provide a physical barrier from motorized traffic.

Policy 6F-3: An effective bicycle and pedestrian system for Whatcom County will require facilities for both regional connectivity and local access. Regional connectivity can be defined as transportation routes connecting major activity centers, towns, and cities

within the region. A good example of a regional facility would be the proposed Nooksack Loop Trail or the existing bike route along Hannegan Road.

- Policy 6F-4: Coordinate with local community organizations, associations, or other governing structures in designing and implementing improvements, such as safety improvements and infrastructure. Identify, analyze, and prioritize pedestrian and bicycle projects based on the following criteria:
- safety improvements are needed
 - serves a residential or relatively high density rural or urban population area
 - serves a location frequently traveled by seniors, children, or people with disabilities
 - leads to a school or is part of a school route
 - provides access to a recreational facility or park
 - functions as a key network link for the regional nonmotorized network
 - offers economic development potential for an underserved area
 - ease of implementation due to low cost, public ownership, or other feature
- Policy 6F-5: Develop a nonmotorized improvement plan that identifies and prioritizes future pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Give priority to construction of pedestrian and bicycle facilities on streets within and between urban growth areas and rural communities where practical, and give priority to walkways and crosswalks along roadways within a one-mile radius of schools.
- Policy 6F-6: For commercial and residential developments within urban growth areas and rural communities, developers shall fund on-street walkways, paths, crosswalks, and other pedestrian accommodations, along with internal walkways or paths for onsite circulation that are necessary to provide pedestrian access from public streets to building entrances and within and between buildings.
- Policy 6F-7: In cases where environmental factors would limit or prohibit the construction of a uniform facility for the entire length of a roadway segment, a modified facility may be provided for a portion of the segment as an interim solution.

Commercial Transportation

In addition to the commercial traffic that serves Whatcom County industries and residents, the county's transportation system carries heavy cross border truck traffic between the United States and Canada. Freight vehicles' access to industrial

and commercial areas, safety on roads shared with private vehicles, efficient long-distance movement of goods, and coordination of commercial transportation with rural land uses are all issues for Whatcom County. Trucks make up the bulk of the commercial traffic, but rail, air, and ship transportation are involved as well.

Goal 6G: Provide for safe, efficient movement of commercial vehicles.

Policy 6G-1: Give priority to maintaining service levels for existing commercial/industrial areas. New commercial/industrial developments shall not materially diminish the transportation service levels to/from previously established commercial/industrial developments.

Policy 6G-2: Any new commercial/industrial development must not materially impact the safe, efficient movement of existing residential, commercial, public safety or emergency response traffic.

Intergovernmental Coordination and Implementation

Transportation planning is done in a regional context, involving many agencies and jurisdictions at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels. The Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG), the region’s Regional Transportation Planning Organization, publishes the Whatcom Transportation Plan. That plan is a combined Metropolitan and Regional Plan required by federal and state law, and was most recently adopted by the WCOG Whatcom Transportation Policy Board in 2012. It is a multimodal plan setting general policies and establishing a regional Transportation Improvement Program, while referencing the transportation plans of local jurisdictions. The seven incorporated cities of Whatcom County, as well as the Lummi Nation, each have transportation elements in their comprehensive plans. The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) owns, plans, and maintains state highways. The Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) and Port of Bellingham are also public entities that adopt plans influencing transportation in the region. Whatcom County Council Members are part of the WCOG’s Whatcom Transportation Policy Board and the WTA Board of Directors. The Whatcom County Health Department is also a participant in transportation planning, as transportation issues affect the health and safety of the community.

Goal 6H: Coordinate with other governmental agencies in planning the County’s transportation system.

Policy 6H-1: Support the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) to coordinate transportation planning that affects Whatcom County.

Policy 6H-2: Participate in the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) Transportation Technical Advisory Group as a mechanism to coordinate with the cities of Whatcom County, the Whatcom Transportation Authority, as well as other jurisdictions.

- Policy 6H-3: Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to identify, design, and strategically implement needed system improvements in locations where jurisdictional interests overlap. Such locations include unincorporated urban growth areas adjacent to cities, and non-urban areas where existing or proposed facilities serve regional interests. Improvements should be designed to standards appropriate to the planned land uses served by the facilities. In unincorporated urban growth areas adjacent to cities, design should meet the appropriate city design standards.
- Policy 6H-4: In cooperation with the Whatcom Council of Governments, identify a regional transportation network that includes state highways as well as County-owned routes.
- Policy 6H-5: Coordinate with WSDOT for access management on all state highways in the county, to minimize the number of access points and maximize public safety and highway capacity.
- Policy 6H-6: Coordinate with the Whatcom County Health Department regarding transportation’s role in promoting safe and healthy communities.
- Policy 6H-7: Support state and federal agencies that regulate rail safety, in order to maximize safety of people and property along railroad corridors.
- Policy 6H-8: Coordinate with the Port of Bellingham to facilitate convenient access to ports, airports, and other intermodal freight facilities.
- Policy 6H-9: Work with Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, and the cities to develop and implement a common Countywide Way-Finding system that encourages people traveling on the I-5 corridor to detour and easily find the many tourist attractions that Whatcom County has to offer.

Environmental Practices

Transportation facilities can potentially create adverse environmental impacts. Effective design and construction practices can reduce or eliminate impacts on wildlife, water quality, and nearby residents.

Goal 6J: Construction and operation of transportation systems, should avoid adverse environmental impacts, including impacts to wildlife, water quality, and to adjacent residential areas.

- Policy 6J-1: Maintain and restore fish passage when constructing new transportation systems. Where existing transportation systems have fragmented habitat, such as where culverts prevent fish from migrating upstream, strive to restore fish passage at every opportunity. For County transportation projects, the County Council will determine when such restoration is financially

- feasible through adoption of the six-year transportation improvement program, the annual road construction program, and the County budget.
- Policy 6J-2: When constructing new transportation systems, ensure that stormwater generated by the transportation system is treated prior to discharge to waterways used by salmonid fish populations or which flow directly into such waterways. Provide for regular, systematic maintenance of transportation system related stormwater control and treatment facilities.
- Policy 6J-3: Avoid or mitigate future wetland impacts from transportation system construction and maintenance.
- Policy 6J-4: When constructing new or maintaining existing transportation systems, retain or restore native riparian vegetation along streams and rivers to the greatest extent possible.
- Policy 6J-5: Avoid or mitigate future impacts to feeder bluffs, accretion shoreforms, driftways, eelgrass, kelp beds and other elements of marine shoreline habitat when constructing or maintaining transportation systems.
- Policy 6J-6: Allow natural stream processes to continue by minimizing bank hardening and streambed disturbances to the greatest extent possible, while meeting transportation objectives.
- Policy 6J-7: Implement best management practices for erosion control to prevent sedimentation during transportation system construction or maintenance. Maintain such erosion control devices until no longer necessary to protect water quality.
- Policy 6J-8: Promote designs to preserve mature trees, unique wildlife habitats, water quality, and other elements of the natural environment, including environmentally sensitive areas and shorelines, during the design and construction of road improvement projects.
- Policy 6J-9: Support the use of natural noise reduction techniques and visual screens between high-volume transportation routes and other facilities adjacent to residential uses, wherever possible.
- Policy 6J-10: Minimize the amount of impervious surface whenever practicable by using natural engineering design methods such as the use of open, shallow, grassed street swales instead of curbs and gutters and, where feasible, encouraging alternate surfacing options.
- Policy 6J-11: Engineer, construct, and maintain road improvements to control pollutants affecting water quality and reduce runoff entering surface or groundwater consistent with water quality standards.

Congestion and Emissions Reduction

Goal 6K: Reduce the need for costly capacity-increasing roadway construction projects, and minimize emissions from combustion of fossil fuels, through the use of motor vehicle travel demand reduction programs, transit, and intelligent transportation technology.

Policy 6K-1: Develop programs that reduce single-occupant vehicle use and vehicle miles traveled, minimizing trip length and reducing travel during peak periods, in order to minimize fuel consumption and the emission of greenhouse gases. These programs include, but are not limited to, trip reduction programs in coordination with major employers, other jurisdictions, and the Whatcom Transportation Authority.

Policy 6K-2: Support a regional public transit system that connects with various modes of transportation including auto, bicycle, and pedestrian travel and with the intercity bus, rail, ferries and airline facilities.

Policy 6K-3: Coordinate with Whatcom Transportation Authority to establish rural transit service in unincorporated areas, including Rural Communities and Rural areas, consistent with county land use plans, based on cost effectiveness, location of major trip generators, distance between generators, and the needs of transit-dependent individuals.

Policy 6K-4: Coordinate with Whatcom Transportation Authority and Washington State Department of Transportation to provide park-and-ride lots along major corridors and provide necessary and adequate services to encourage their use.

Policy 6K-5: Support multimodal use by encouraging, for example, provision of secure bicycle storage facilities at park-and-ride lots and other transit facilities, and allowing for the transporting of bicycles on public transit vehicles.

Policy 6K-6: Consider, where needed, bus pull-outs on street/road improvements.

Policy 6K-7: Consider implementation of Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology to increase safety, reduce traffic congestion, decrease delays, expedite commercial vehicle travel, and provide appropriate traveler information.

Policy 6K-8: Explore enhanced bus service to Sudden Valley to reduce traffic in the Lake Whatcom watershed.

- Policy 6K-9: Encourage the development and installation of a comprehensive electric vehicle rapid charging network, including the following opportunities:
- Allow rapid charging stations in commercial parking lots and other convenient locations;
 - Provide a streamlined and expedited permitting process for rapid charging stations;
 - Provide incentives to developers, employers, and organizations that provide rapid charging stations;
 - Consider requirements to include infrastructure for rapid charging stations in multifamily and commercial developments; and
 - Pursue partnerships with Puget Sound Energy to consider voluntary development of rapid charging stations to reduce costs.

Funding of Transportation Improvements

GMA requires an analysis of funding capability to judge needs against probable funding resources, and a multiyear financing plan based on the needs identified in the plan. The Capital Facilities Plan, Appendix E of this plan contains the funding analysis and the current 20-year list of transportation projects. The County also has a six-year Transportation Improvement Program, which is updated annually, and programs funding for specific projects over the next six years.

In addition, GMA authorizes counties to impose impact fees that fund a proportionate share of transportation system improvements made necessary by planned growth. In the event that Whatcom County enacts a transportation impact fee system, it would need to identify future system improvements eligible for impact fee funding (projects that are reasonably related to and reasonably benefit the planned growth).

Goal 6L: Provide for adequate funding to keep Whatcom County’s transportation facilities in good condition and current in terms of capacity.

Policy 6L-1: Identify and pursue funding sources for activities and improvements which encourage the use of transportation modes other than the single-occupant vehicle.

Policy 6L-2: In the event expected revenues and available funding fall short of the amount needed to meet identified needs the County shall work to resolve the shortfall during the annual review of the comprehensive plan. Such resolution could result in a reassessment and revision of land use plans and regulations (including uses and densities), level of service standards, or revenue sources (through revised impact or mitigation fees, or additional grant funding).

Policy 6L-3

Consider establishing impact fees to fund a proportionate share of the costs of transportation system improvements that benefit and are reasonably related to new development.