



WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION DEMAND MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

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Date: Jan. 27, 2021

Re: Multimodal investments

Attn: Chairs Fey and Hobbs; Ranking Minority Chairs Barkis and King; Vice Chairs Bronoske, Ramos, Wylie, and Saldaña

As the Transportation Demand Management Technical Committee (aka the Commute Trip Reduction Board), in our role established in RCW 70.94.537, we write to you regarding important investments in the multimodal transportation system.

As you know, the state gas tax raises a large amount of revenue for purposes protected by the 18th Amendment. The state's Multimodal Transportation Account, on the other hand, is much smaller in size and those funds are particularly valuable as they can be used for flexible transportation purposes, including for programs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and address needs in underserved communities across the state. As you develop the transportation budget for the 2021–2023 biennium, we encourage you to preserve the use of the Multimodal Transportation Account for multimodal programs and projects to the maximum extent practicable.

We applaud the Governor's efforts to use his budget proposal to increase investment in the multimodal system. Examples of multimodal investments include public transportation, human services transportation, active transportation, telework, carbon reduction of public transportation fleets, and transportation demand management. Increasing investment in these important purposes will contribute to the achievement of Washington's six transportation goals: preservation, safety, mobility, environment, stewardship, and economic vitality.

The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of investing in the multimodal transportation system, as these options are essential to the state's emergency response. Many workers who provide essential services like healthcare and food (meal and grocery) services rely on multimodal transportation to get to work. In many communities, multimodal transportation providers pivoted to provide lifeline services like food and prescription delivery, including delivery of the vaccine. For unemployed and underemployed Washingtonians and the nearly one-quarter of Washingtonians who do not have a driver's license, multimodal options are not a luxury – they are essential.

Looking toward the future, multimodal solutions also help Washington cut greenhouse gas emissions and address longstanding environmental equity disparities. Washington's transportation sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, accounting for nearly 45 percent of the state's emissions. Underrepresented communities all too often bear the brunt of this pollution, living, working, and playing in areas directly adjacent to transportation corridors.

Multimodal options like the state's Green Transportation Capital Grant Program and Commute Trip Reduction Program reduce emissions. By removing single-occupancy vehicle trips from the system and emphasizing people throughput, multimodal investments also free up existing highway capacity for freight and other needs that cannot be served through multimodal travel. Such investments also increase safety for all and reduce system maintenance and preservation costs.

The pandemic has reduced farebox recovery and sales tax revenues that support multimodal transportation, and the financial rebound will be slow. Current funding for multimodal options falls far short of these needs. This underscores the critical importance of state multimodal funding. As an example of just how strained multimodal funding is, the Regional Mobility Grant Program—the state’s largest multimodal grant program—was over-prescribed by more than \$30 million (or 60 percent) for the 2021–2023 funding cycle.

We look forward to working with you in the 2021–2023 session and beyond to create a sustainable transportation system that serves all Washingtonians, protects our environment, and supports a strong economy.

We encourage the Legislature to use the Multimodal Transportation Account to fund these multimodal programs:

Equity and active transportation

- **Paratransit/Special Needs Transportation Grant Program:** Increase support beyond the status quo funding levels for transit and nonprofit agencies to sustain and expand services to people with disabilities, older adults, children, and people in rural areas.
- **Safe Routes to School and Pedestrian/Bicycle Grant Program:** Increase support beyond the status quo level to help public agencies fund cost-effective projects that support pedestrian and bicyclist safety; and mobility projects such as pedestrian and bicycle paths, sidewalks, and crossing improvements in population centers to give all people facilities to walk or bike for transportation.
- **Vanpool Investment Program:** Support partners in providing vanpool flexibility, including funding for non-commute trips, non-peak-hour trips, and targeting disadvantaged populations.

Sustainability

- **Green Transportation Capital Grant Program:** Support the Governor’s proposal to increase funding for this program and extend the program beyond 2025 to meet more demand for local projects, such as electrification of vehicle fleets and hydrogen refueling stations. In the 2019–2021 transportation budget, \$12 million was appropriated for the program and the state received more than \$20 million in grant requests.
- **Commuter Trip Reduction Program:** Increase support beyond the status quo level for the base program as well as for new funding for non-commute-trip programming.
- **Regional Mobility Grant Program:** Increase funding beyond the status quo levels that enables local jurisdictions to propose expansion projects and maximize new opportunities.

New mobility options

- **Mobility on Demand programs:** Develop and support programs that pilot and test innovations in technology, public-private partnerships, and traditional and non-traditional transportation models and modes.
- **First Mile/Last Mile Connections Grant Program:** Support the Governor’s proposal to extend this program beyond the current 2019–2021 biennium to meet local demand for projects such as demand-responsive micro-transit, trail connections, and pedestrian facilities that provide first- and last-mile connections to transit. In the 2019–2021 transportation budget, \$1 million was appropriated for this program and the state received nearly \$5 million in grant requests.

Telework

- **Business and Occupation (Commuter Trip Reduction) Tax Credit:** Extend the tax credit beyond 2024 and allow telework to be eligible. \$2.75 million in tax credits are available annually and will expire in 2024. Each year, WSDOT receives more applications to participate than the tax credit can cover.
- **State-agency telework:** Provide funding to state-government agencies for up-front investments in technology, equipment, and personnel to significantly expand telework for state employees.
- **Statewide Telework Assistance Program:** Support the Governor’s proposal to create and fund a new Statewide Telework Assistance Program to provide human-resource materials and assistance for employers interested in establishing a telework program. This program would model King County Metro’s WorkSmart program, which received a portion of its funding through state grants.
- **Telework-specific tax credit:** Create a pilot program offering a Business and Occupation Telework Tax Credit for businesses who incentivize telework. The process would model the state’s existing Business and Occupation (Commuter Trip Reduction) Tax Credit.