

Chapter 7 – Transportation Priorities

Defining priorities is an important part of the planning process. The analysis of existing and future deficiencies indicates that the County transportation system needs significant improvements to address current and future deficiencies. The costs of the transportation improvement needs will far outstrip the likely available future funding. Because not all identified projects can realistically be funded during the next 20 years, the County establishes priorities for its transportation improvements. The prioritization process helps guide the allocation of resources among the various subareas of the County, and among the various types of transportation improvement projects.

To help guide the development of the County transportation system, priorities were identified based on the general goals and policies identified for the Transportation Element (see Chapter 4) and input from the general public and the stakeholder group. The countywide priorities, along with other criteria such as how much a facility is used and project costs, were used to evaluate each transportation improvement project and group the projects into priority tiers (see Table 7-3). This prioritization process is used to help direct future available funding, including grant monies, toward specific projects and programs reflecting the County's priorities.

Regional Priorities

Regional transportation priorities have been identified in the regional Transportation Plan developed by the WVTC. The County Transportation Element must be consistent with those regional priorities as identified in the regional Transportation Plan (Confluence 2025). The goals that guided the development of the regional priorities included the following:

- Public involvement in decision-making
- Intergovernmental coordination
- Transportation safety
- Ease of travel to, from and within the community
- Make the best use of the existing transportation system
- Balanced travel options
- Environmental stewardship
- Adequate funding

The priorities of the County Transportation Element also must be consistent with the priorities adopted by the state through the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP). The 2007 to 2026 WTP identifies and prioritizes a set of transportation investments to serve the citizens' safety and mobility needs, the state's economic productivity, the communities' livability and the ecosystem's viability. The adopted plan follows a strategic approach to future investment by establishing guiding principles for investments in current and future facilities. The five guiding principles are as follows:

- 1. Preservation**—Preserve and extend prior investments in existing transportation facilities and the services they provide to people and commerce.
- 2. Safety**—Target construction projects, enforcement, and education to save lives, reduce injuries, and protect property.
- 3. Economic Vitality**—Improve freight movement and support economic sectors that rely on the transportation system, such as agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing.

4. Mobility—Facilitate movement of people and goods to contribute to a strong economy and a better quality of life for citizens.

5. Environmental Quality and Health—Bring benefits to the environment and the citizens' health by improving the existing transportation infrastructure.

Countywide Issues

In updating the Transportation Element of the County Comprehensive Plan, a variety of stakeholders provided input regarding the local and regional transportation issues affecting Chelan County. The Transportation Element process also included a review of prior studies, data assembling and analysis, interviews with agency staff and community stakeholders, as well as public meetings. The process revealed that the countywide transportation issues can be summarized into five main themes:

- **Funding for Maintenance and Preservation of the Roadway System**
There is a general concern that the County and Cities do not have adequate resources to fund their regular maintenance and preservation programs. As a result, roadway conditions will continue to deteriorate and more roadways will reach the point where capital improvements will be required to address the failed roadway.
- **Transportation Improvements to Support Anticipated Growth**
Many areas within the County have experienced traffic growth due to residential development and increased tourism, and more growth is anticipated in the future. Many roadways are transitioning from primarily agricultural use to general purpose. There is a need to ensure that developments pay for their fair share of the transportation improvement needs they generate.
- **Connectivity and Need for Alternative Routes**
Several communities within the County can only be reached by one primary roadway, which raises some concerns related to mobility, emergency management and the potential to safely and efficiently accommodate more residential, industrial or tourism development in the future.
- **State Highways through Communities**
Issues related to safety, speeds, access and community character along the State Highways were a main concern to County residents. In many cases, the state highway effectively acts as the main street through a community. Mobility, access, and safety are critical concerns. At the same time, residents expect these corridors to be the commercial main street and support pedestrian activity. As a result, the local community and WSDOT priorities for the State Highways often conflict.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities**
The need for more and improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities emerged as an issue. Providing adequate facilities for non-motorized travel along State Highways, County roads and other local roads is critical from a safety and quality of life perspective. In addition, non-motorized facilities provide the traveling public with additional travel options besides the automobile. There is a perception for increased economic development potential from improved sidewalks, bike paths and multi-purpose trails.

These five issues were used in developing a list of priorities for Chelan County stakeholders and the general public to further prioritize. The goal was to define the top three priorities from the list of issues identified above. In many cases, the issues overlapped one another in terms of separate and distinct priorities. For example, a priority to address “safety” could be part of the “connectivity and need for alternate routes” or the “state highways through communities” issues

summarized above. Therefore the priority issues were further defined by twelve separate and stand-alone topics as defined below.

Defining Priorities

Transportation improvements address issues that generally fall under three broad categories, as illustrated in Table 7-1. Depending on the context and the specific local needs, some issues may be more relevant or important to address in priority.

Table 7-1. General List of Issues Addressed by Transportation Improvements

Category	Context	Priority Issues
Economic Factors	Some transportation improvements focus on supporting important economic sectors for the County, such as agriculture and tourism. Transportation plays an important role in the process of attracting and maintaining economic activities. The movement of freight and goods is a critical element of the economic vitality for the area. Another important economic factor is the cost of the transportation improvements, and whether or not adequate funding sources are available to meet the current and future needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting economic development plans • Cost of potential improvements • Enhancing movement of freight and goods
Facilities & Services	Many types of transportation improvements are necessary to provide for a balanced system that will work effectively and safely over the 20-year planning horizon. Priorities may be given to rehabilitating existing facilities, or building new facilities; improving existing services or creating new ones. Specific issues generally emerge for certain modes of transportation such as non-motorized transportation or transit. There are also concerns that are more general in nature and relate to different aspects of the transportation system: congestion, safety, and emergency response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining and upgrading existing roads • Congestion • Safety • Improving regional connections • Pedestrian and bicycle transportation • Transit, ridesharing, and other alternatives • Security and emergency response
Land Use & Environmental	These priorities are related to the consistency between land use and transportation policies, and general requirements of the Growth Management Act. Other types of priorities focus on energy and environmental factors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing impacts on the environment • Supporting adopted regional and local land use plans

SOURCE: Transpo Group 2008

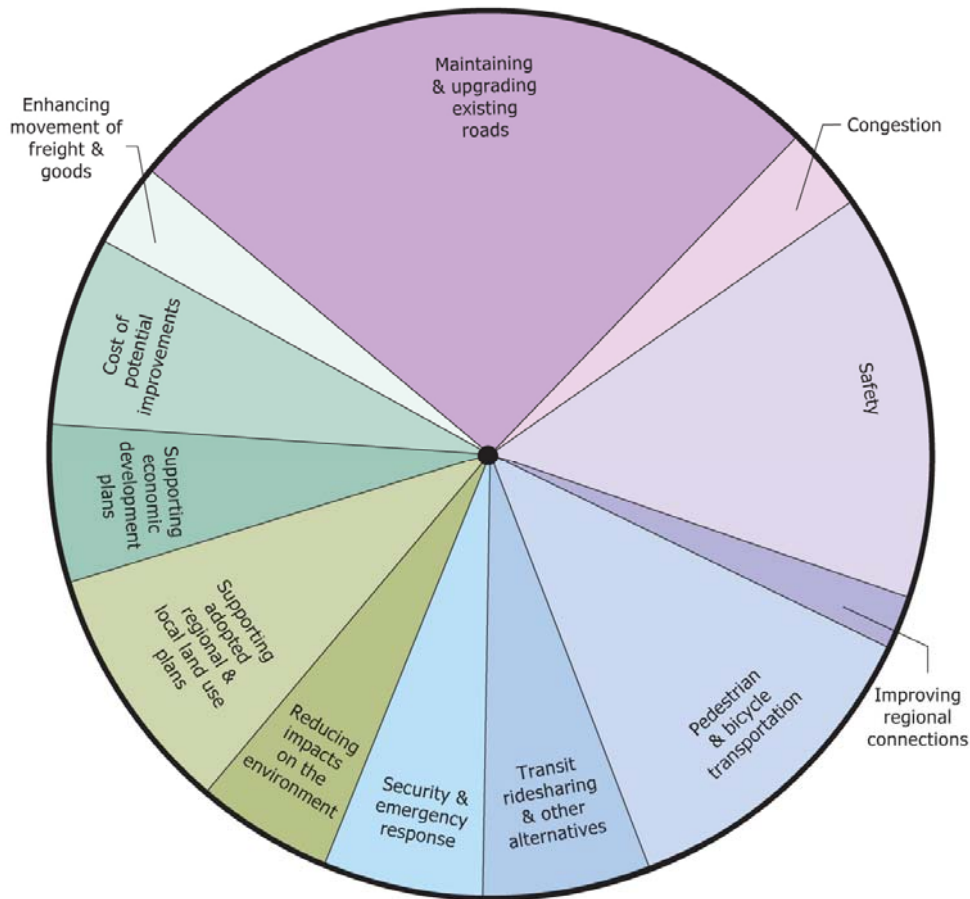
BOLD: The top three issues identified by Chelan County stakeholders and general public.

The Stakeholder Advisory Group and participants to the open house hosted by Chelan County in June 2008 were asked to note their three top issues for the Chelan County Transportation Element. Three issues emerged a being primarily cited by participants as top priorities to address:

- **Maintaining and Upgrading Existing Roads**
This priority refers to maintaining, preserving, and extending the utility of the existing transportation system. Preservation is critical to ensuring the usefulness of prior transportation investments and reducing future deficiencies.
- **Safety**
Safety should be one of the top transportation investment priorities in the County. Improving safety usually involves targeted locations identified by collision history and risk factors.
- **Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation**
The plan should emphasize the need to improve safety and mobility for pedestrians and

bicyclists. New or upgraded facilities should provide a network offering real options for walking and biking.

These three top priorities that emerged from the public and agency involvement process are consistent with the general goals and policies identified for the Transportation Element, along with many of the countywide issues defined earlier in the process. There are several goals and policies that identify these issues as being top priorities and provide courses of action the County will pursue to implement improvements that address the priorities. The priorities are also fully consistent with the statewide priorities adopted in the Washington Transportation Plan 2007-2026 (WTP).



*Each priority is weighted by input received from the June 2008 Public Open House and Stakeholder Advisory Group as shown in Table 7-2.

Figure 7-1. Priorities for Chelan County

Table 7-2 provides the approximate percent share for each issue as compared to one another. The likelihood of being chosen is the percent by which the issue was likely to be chosen as part of the top three by an individual. For example, “maintaining and upgrading existing roadways” was chosen by 76 percent of the respondents as a top priority.

Table 7-2. Priorities for Chelan County

Priorities	Likelihood of Being Chosen ¹	Overall Share	Ranking
Economic Factors			
Supporting economic development plans	17%	6%	
Cost of potential improvements	21%	7%	
Enhancing movement of freight and goods	10%	3%	
Facilities & Services			
Maintaining & upgrading existing roads	76%	26%	1
Congestion	10%	3%	
Safety	45%	15%	2
Improving regional connections	7%	2%	
Pedestrian & bicycle transportation	34%	12%	3
Transit, ride-sharing & other alternatives	17%	6%	
Security & emergency response	17%	6%	
Land Use & Environmental			
Reducing impacts on the environment	14%	5%	
Supporting adopted regional and local land use plans	28%	9%	

SOURCE: Input from the June 2008 public open house and stakeholder advisory group.

1. The likelihood of being chosen is the percent by which the issue was likely to be chosen as a top priority by an individual.

Project Prioritization Process

The list of multimodal transportation projects were prioritized into three Tiers (I, II and III). The tier system is used to support the implementation strategy by identifying which projects should be completed first. This approach creates three sets of investment tiers that can be implemented incrementally if and when funding resources become available. A general description of the characteristics of each Tier is provided in Table 7-3.

Table 7-3. Description of Priority Tiers

Tier I	Projects that could be done first, because they are usually lower-cost projects that can provide short term solutions to top priority issues. They primarily address maintenance/preservation, safety, and non-motorized transportation needs. They also typically address existing deficiencies on facilities where the level of demand is relatively high.
Tier II	Projects not likely to be completed using existing capital revenue streams. They generally address County priorities, but are more costly than Tier I projects. Some Tier II projects address an existing issue, while others address projected needs or improve a facility that is critical to many users.
Tier III	Longer-term projects that typically include higher cost solutions. In addition, many Tier III projects are needed primarily to accommodate future new developments. They are likely to be primarily funded by new developments or grant revenues.

SOURCE: Transpo Group 2008

A rating system was developed to categorize each proposed transportation improvement into a tier. The general considerations for assigning priorities and the point system are further highlighted in Appendix B.

The project lists and maps presented in Chapter 8 – Transportation Improvement Projects, identify which Tier each project is included under.