

# Transit Development Plan: 2022 – 2027

Whatcom Transportation Authority



Draft for Public Comment  
Date of Public Hearing: July 21, 2022



4011 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, WA 98226

Published July 1, 2022

## Table of Contents

---

Plan Adoption, Public Hearing, and Distribution .....	3
1. Introduction and Organization .....	4
2. Facilities.....	7
3. Service Characteristics and Fares .....	8
4. 2021 Activities.....	16
5. State and Agency Goals, Objectives, and Strategies .....	18
6. Local Performance Measures and Targets .....	22
7. Plan Consistency .....	25
8. 2022-2027 Planned Capital Expenses.....	28
9. Planned Operating Changes.....	30
10. Multiyear Financial Plan.....	31
11. Projects of Regional Significance .....	34

## Table of Figures

---

Figure 1 – Corporate Organizational Chart.....	6
Figure 2 – Whatcom Public Transportation Benefit District.....	8
Figure 3a – WTA Service Maps .....	10
Figure 3b – WTA Service Maps Continued .....	11
Figure 4 – ADA Paratransit and Zone Service Map.....	13
Figure 5 – Lynden Hop On-Demand Service Area.....	14
Figure 6 – In-Service Revenue Vehicle Fleet by Type, January 2022 .....	17
Figure 7 – Consistency between Agency and State Goals .....	18
Figure 8 – Productivity Standards.....	22
Figure 9 – Route Productivity Performance Matrix.....	23
Figure 10 – On-Time Performance Standards .....	23
Figure 11 – 2022-2027 Summary of Planned Capital Expenses .....	28
Figure 12 – 2022-2027 Summary of Planned Service Changes .....	30
Figure 13 – Capital Improvement Program .....	31
Figure 14 – Operating and Maintenance Financial Plan.....	32
Figure 15 – Projects of Regional Significance .....	34

## Plan Adoption, Public Hearing, and Distribution

---

### Plan Adoption

The Whatcom Transportation Authority Board of Directors will discuss the Transit Development Plan for 2022-2027 on July 21, 2022.

### Public Participation Process

*Public comment period:* July 1, 2022 – July 21, 2022  
*Comments submitted to:* customerservice@ridewta.com  
Whatcom Transportation Authority  
Tim Wilder, Planning Director  
4011 Bakerview Spur  
Bellingham, WA 98226

*Public hearing:* Whatcom Transportation Authority will hold a virtual public hearing during the regularly scheduled board meeting on the Transit Development Plan on July 21, 2022 at 8:00 a.m.

*Notice posted to the website:* Whatcom Transportation Authority will post a notice of the hearing on the Transit Development Plan to its website at [www.ridewta.com](http://www.ridewta.com) on July 1, 2022.

*Digital and Paper copies:* Whatcom Transportation Authority will post the digital copy of the Transit Development Plan on its website on July 1, 2022 at [www.ridewta.com/business/reports](http://www.ridewta.com/business/reports). Paper copies will be made available at the main office at 4011 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, WA 98226 and at the Bellingham Station at 205 E Magnolia, Bellingham, WA 98225.

*Notice published in local paper:* The Bellingham Herald will publish a notice of the hearing on the Transit Development Plan on July 10, 2022.

### Plan Distribution

On August 3, 2022, Whatcom Transportation Authority plans to distribute the adopted Transit Development Plan to:

- WSDOT Public Transportation Division online grants management system
- The Transportation Improvement Board via:
  - Vaughn Nelson, Finance Manager at [vaughnn@tib.wa.gov](mailto:vaughnn@tib.wa.gov)
  - Chris Workman, Engineering Manager at [chrisw@tib.wa.gov](mailto:chrisw@tib.wa.gov)
- All cities, counties and regional transportation planning organizations within which Whatcom Transportation Authority operates.

# 1. Introduction and Organization

---

## Introduction

Whatcom Transportation Authority's (WTA) Transit Development Plan (TDP) for 2022-2027 is designed to comply with the six-year planning requirements of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) as required by RCW 35.58.2795. This TDP contains the required elements including how WTA intends to meet state and local long-range priorities for public transportation; a description of capital improvements and significant operating changes planned for the transit agency's system; and a financial plan. In addition, this TDP includes information about the agency and its 2021 accomplishments.

Information contained in the plan is based on the WTA 2040 Long Range Transit Plan, adopted February 2022, and is consistent with WTA's adopted 2022 budget.

## Agency Description

WTA provides public transportation services throughout Whatcom County in Northwest Washington State. Our services include Fixed Route, ADA Paratransit, Zone service, a Vanpool program, and an on-demand service.

WTA's Mission is to enhance our community by:

- Delivering safe, reliable, efficient and friendly service
- Offering environmentally sound transportation choices
- Providing leadership in creating innovative transportation solutions
- Partnering with our community to improve transportation systems

## Governing Body and Public Processes

WTA is governed by a ten-member board of directors composed of mainly elected officials from jurisdictions located in its service area:

- Bellingham City Council Members (2 positions)
- Mayor of Bellingham
- City of Blaine – Elected official
- City of Ferndale – Elected official
- City of Lynden – Elected official
- Cities of Everson/Nooksack/Sumas – Elected official
- Whatcom County Council Member

- Whatcom County Executive
- Labor Representative (non-voting)

The Whatcom Council of Governments Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) consists of members representing different regions of the county, diverse professional disciplines, a wide range of stakeholders (including neighborhoods, schools, universities, tribes, social and health services) and different ages and abilities. CTAG meets regularly throughout the year to review and discuss significant service changes, the annual budget and other major agency initiatives.

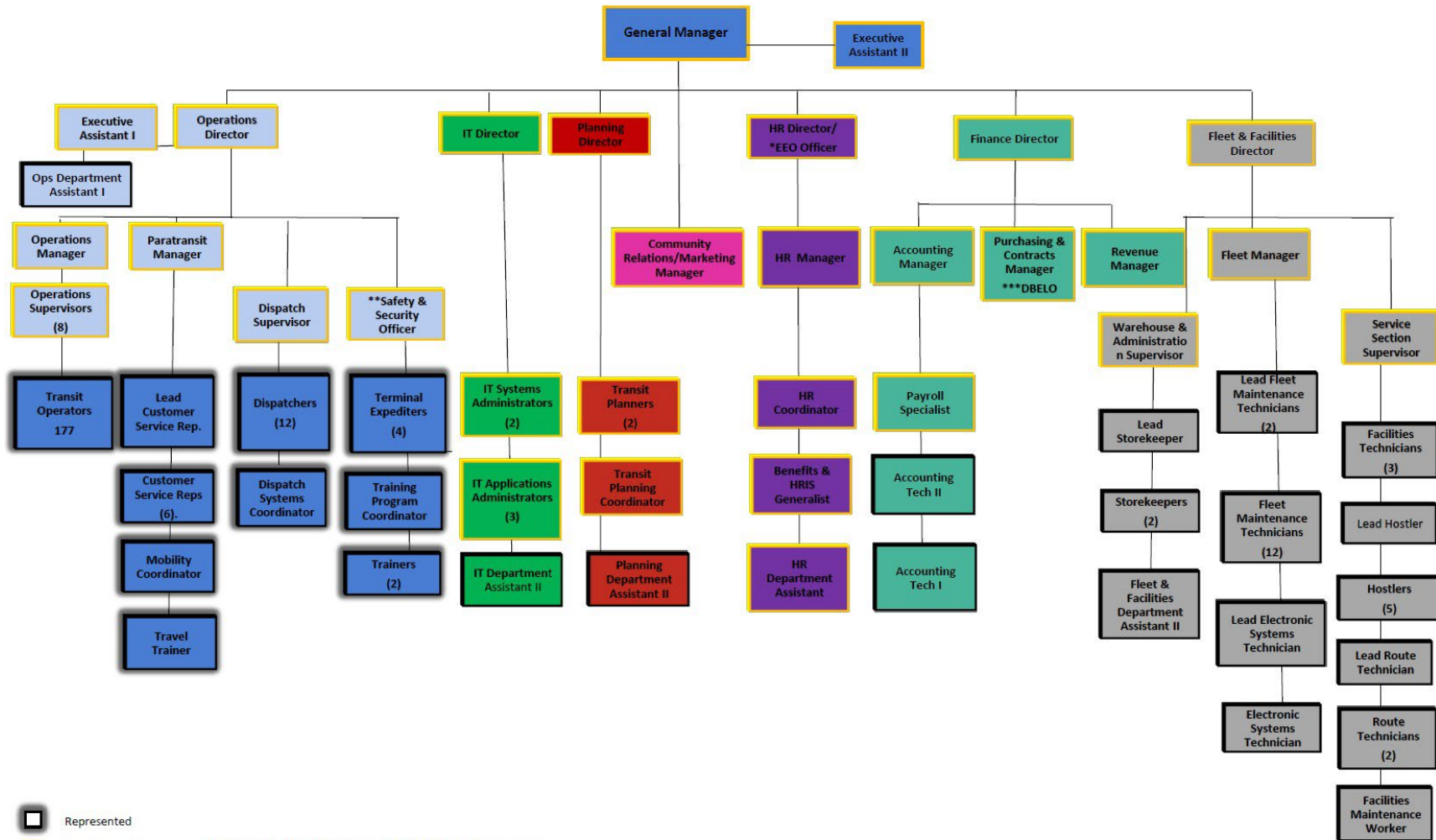
**2021 WTA Board Members**

Eric Davidson	Blaine City Council
Todd Donovan	Whatcom County Council
Seth Fleetwood	Mayor of Bellingham
Ali Hawkinson	Ferndale City Council
Hollie Huthman	Bellingham City Council
Scott Korthuis	Mayor of Lynden – Board Vice Chairperson
Jennifer Lautenbach	Everson City Council
Michael Lilliquist	Bellingham City Council - Board Chairperson
Satpal Sidhu	Whatcom County Executive
Dan Darwin	Amalgamated Transit Union Non-Voting Labor Representative

As approved in the 2021 Budget, the WTA had the authorization to employ:

<b>Division</b>	<b>Full Time Equivalent</b>
Executive Administration	2.00
Community Relations and Marketing	1.00
Human Resources	4.00
Finance	7.00
Information Technology (IT)	7.00
Fleet and Facilities	38.00
Operations	223.00
Planning	5.00
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>287.00</b>

Figure 1 - Corporate Organizational Chart



☐ Represented

☐ Non-Represented

The following programs report directly to the General Manager:

\*EEO – Equal Employment Officer

\*\* - Safety Officer

\*\*\*DBELO – Disadvantaged Business Enterprise Liaison Officer

Revised March 2021



## 2. Facilities

---

Maintenance, Operations and Administration building (MOAB) - located at 4011 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, Washington.



Bellingham Station (BTS) — located on the corner of Railroad Ave. and Magnolia St. in downtown Bellingham. This facility includes a customer service office, 10 passenger loading gates and is served by 22 routes.



Cordata Station (CTS) — located on the corner of Cordata Pkwy. and Olivine Ln. in Bellingham. This facility has a 70-stall park & ride, 3 passenger loading areas and is served by 11 routes.



Ferndale Station — located at I-5 and Axton Rd. in Ferndale. This facility has a 131-stall park & ride, 3 passenger loading areas and is served by 2 routes.



Lynden Station — located at Main St. and 19th St. in Lynden. This facility has an 89-stall park & ride, 2 passenger loading areas and is served by 1 route and the Lynden Hop on-demand service.



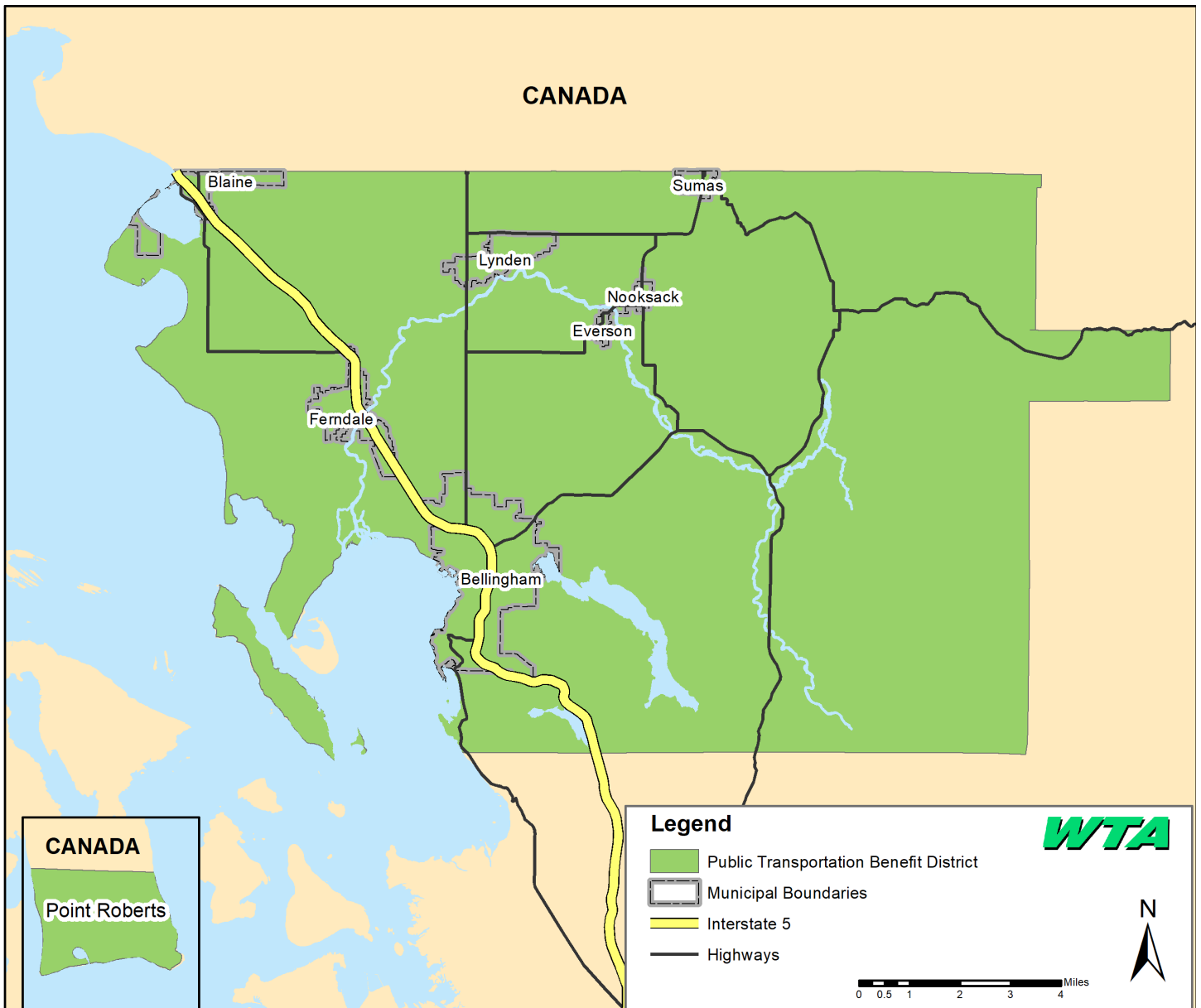


### 3. Service Characteristics and Fares

#### Service Area

WTA’s service area covers 776 square miles in northwest Washington adjacent to the Canadian border. It includes almost the entire populated area of Whatcom County including seven incorporated cities and several unincorporated places.

Figure 2 - Whatcom Public Transportation Benefit District



Founded in 1983, WTA is a Public Transportation Benefit Area Corporation (PTBA) incorporated under authority of Chapter 36.57A of the Revised Code of Washington. WTA is currently funded through a combination of sales tax revenues (at 0.6 percent of the full 0.9 percent that could be authorized by the electorate), fares and grants, as further detailed in Section 10.

Our services include fixed route bus service (including route deviated “flex” service), ADA paratransit, Zone service, and a Vanpool program. In addition, WTA began an agency-operated on-demand service in 2021 as a two-year pilot project. WTA also partners with the Whatcom Council of Governments on Transportation Demand Management services.

### Fixed Route Bus Service

WTA provides fixed-route bus serves all incorporated communities in Whatcom County as well as most small unincorporated places including Bellingham, Ferndale, Lynden, Blaine, Everson, Nooksack, Sumas, Birch Bay, Lummi Nation, Sudden Valley, and Kendall. WTA offers 28 fixed routes, including a network of four high-frequency corridors (“Go-Lines”) within Bellingham, small city and rural routes, and a regional service to Skagit County.

Service is provided seven days a week, with more limited service on Saturdays, Sundays and evenings. Generally, WTA operates on the following days and times:

On weekdays, service is available in most areas from about 6:00 am to 7:30 pm.

Saturday service is available in many areas from about 9:00 am to 6:30 pm.

On weekdays and Saturdays, later service is available in a few areas, up to 11:00 pm.

Sunday service is available in all but the most rural areas, from about 8:00 am to 9:50 pm.

Four high frequency Go-Lines offer 15-minute service throughout the weekday in to support higher density areas and heavily traveled corridors in Bellingham. They provide a backbone for less frequent local and regional service and typically have higher ridership than other routes.

During the Western Washington University (WWU) school year, WTA operates 4 shuttles on existing WWU routes as header or trailer buses to accommodate heavy passenger loads. These are in addition to routes that operate throughout the year to WWU.

Three routes connect people in small cities and rural parts of Whatcom County with Bellingham, and locations along the way. Each route has a designated flex area within which passengers can book a trip in advance, and the bus will travel off its normal route to pick up the passenger. ADA paratransit is not provided in these areas. Flex routes include:

Route 71X - Everson/Nooksack/Sumas

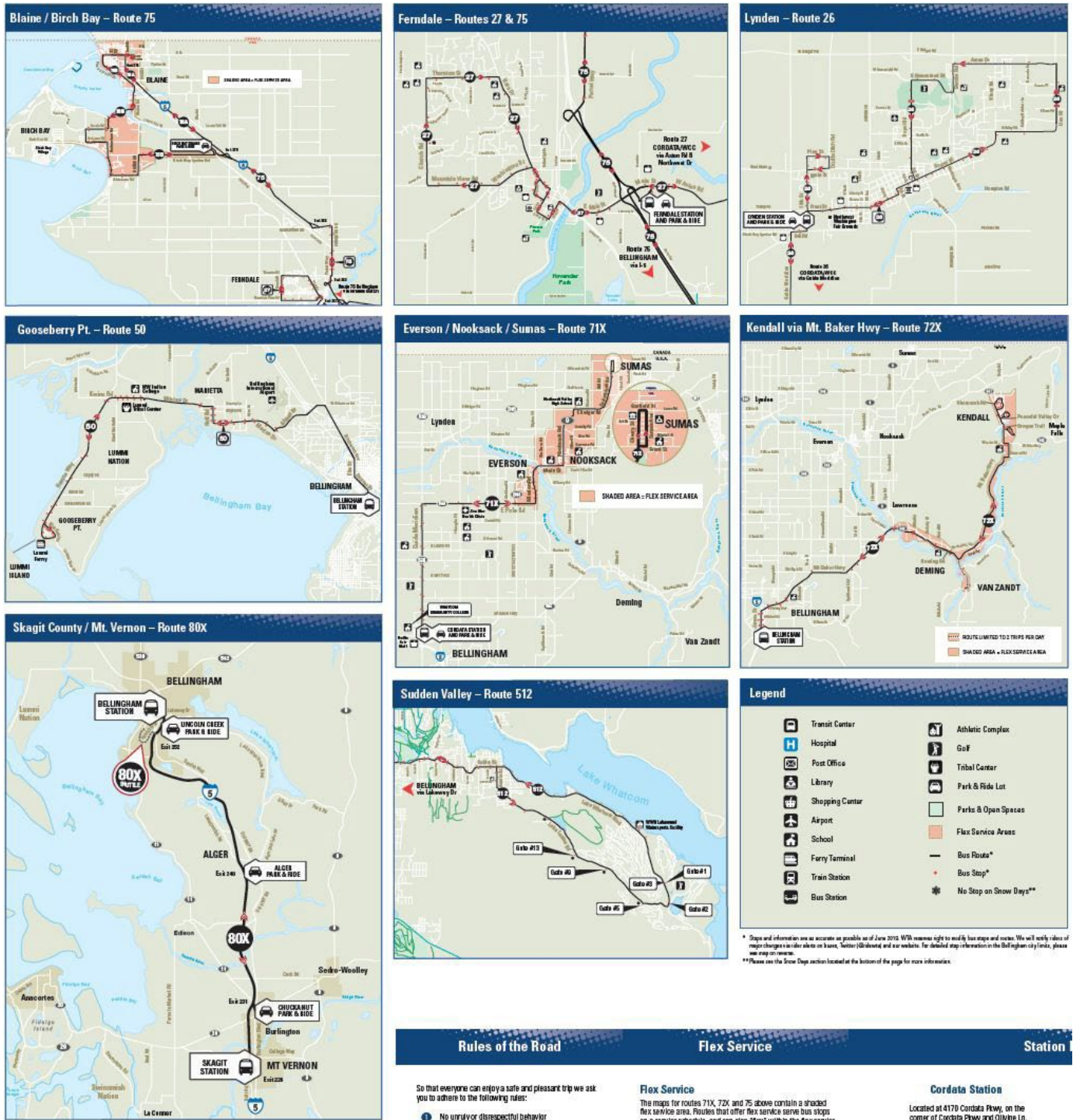
Route 72X - Kendall via Mt. Baker Highway

Route 75 - Blaine/Birch Bay

Figure 3a - WTA Service Maps



Figure 3b – WTA Service Maps Continued





## Service Connectors

WTA provides service to all major multi-modal facilities in Whatcom County. WTA coordinates its service with most area public and private transportation providers, as follows:

**Skagit Transit:** Route 80X connects Whatcom and Skagit counties and is jointly operated by WTA and Skagit Transit. Riders of Route 80X can transfer in Skagit County to routes serving Island and Snohomish counties.

**AMTRAK:** Fairhaven Transportation Center

**Lummi Nation Transit:** Lummi Nation

**Lummi Island Ferry:** Gooseberry Point

**Bellingham International Airport:** Terminal Building

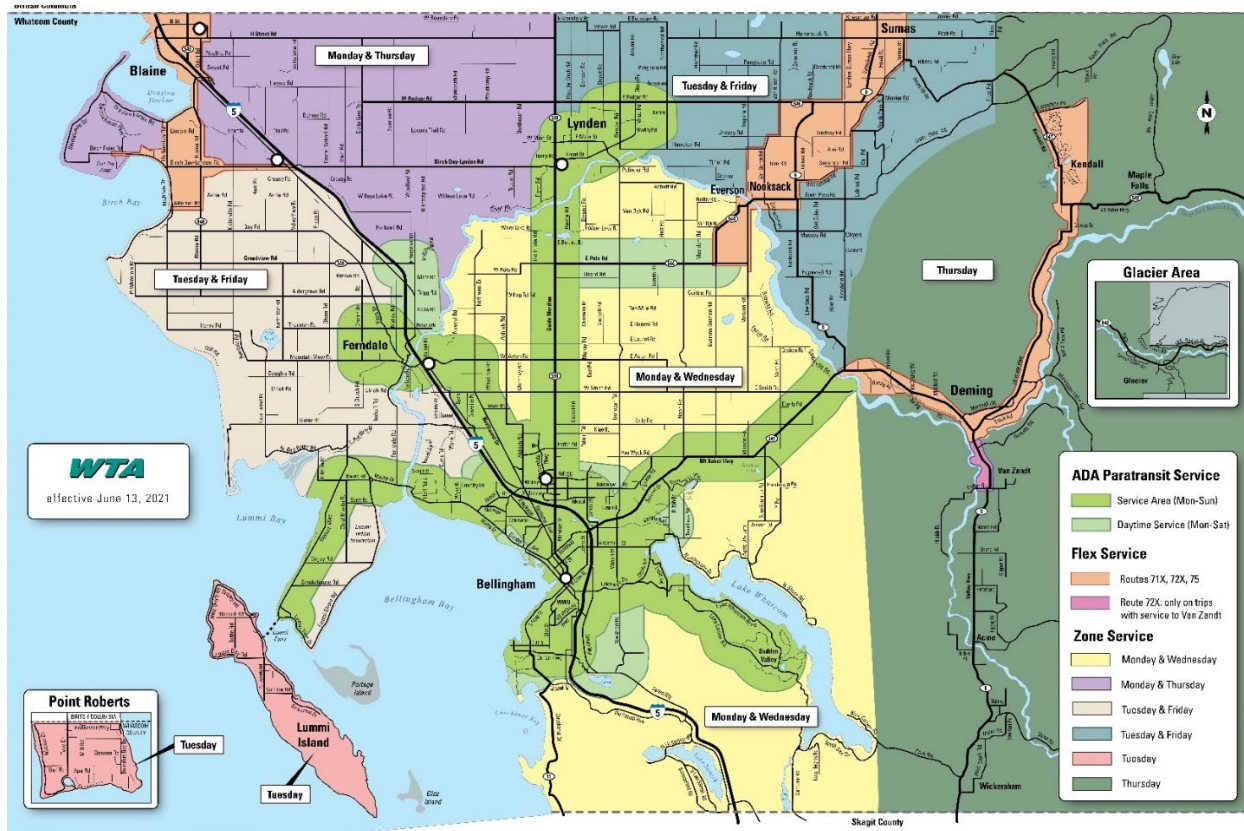
**Private Regional Bus Carriers:** Greyhound, Flixbus, and Sea-Tac Airporter Shuttle at the Fairhaven Transportation Center, WWU and other locations

**Area Schools:** WTA provides services to, or in the vicinity of, most public and many private schools, as well as Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and Northwest Indian College. There are elementary schools in the rural Mt. Baker, Meridian, and Nooksack school districts that do not have scheduled service. WTA attempts to coordinate schedules with school bell times when those times align with broader service objectives.

## ADA Paratransit Service

WTA's paratransit service provides curb-to-curb (and if needed, door-to-door) transportation to riders whose disability prevents them from riding our fixed route bus system. Paratransit service is designed to be equal to, not better than fixed route service. For this reason, paratransit's hours of operation mirror those of our fixed routes. The service area is within  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile of all fixed routes. Like fixed routes, paratransit is public transportation, so riders will often share their rides with others. Grouping rides efficiently is essential for meeting rider demand, as hundreds of trips are scheduled every day. Riders can book paratransit trips for any type of trip; no trip purpose is more important than another. Everyone who rides paratransit must qualify and be approved before riding.

Figure 4 – ADA Paratransit and Zone Service Map



### Zone Service

Zone service provides limited demand responsive transit service to rural areas of Whatcom County that are not served by fixed route. There are no eligibility requirements for using zone service and anyone within the designated area can request a ride. Service is only available to each zone on one or two days of the week. Advance reservations are required.

### Vanpool Program

WTA’s Vanpool program allows groups of people to use a WTA-owned van for the purpose of commuting to and from a common worksite. The vanpool group pays a fare based on the number of miles the van travels each month. Vanpoolers share the cost of commuting, and the service reduces drive alone trips. In 2021, the average number of vans in service was 7.

### On-Demand Service

In 2021, WTA began offering on-demand service in Lynden as a two-year pilot project called the “Lynden Hop”. The service is operated by WTA using agency drivers, support staff and in-house software. Passengers can hail a ride anywhere within Lynden, using a mobile app, arranging through the website, or calling customer service. A customized WTA van responds to pick-up and drop-off requests, and most requests can be made within 15 minutes. The service is open

to everyone, and fares are the same as the overall system. This service will be evaluated in 2023 with the intent to determine whether it should continue, and/or be replicated in other parts of the service area.

Figure 5 – Lynden Hop On-Demand Service Area



### Transportation Demand Management

WTA supports the Whatcom SmartTrips program administered and operated by the Whatcom Council of Governments through an annual financial contribution of \$50,000. WTA also provides staff support to educational activities and to produce marketing materials as needed.

WTA also offers a Travel Training program for anyone who wants to learn to ride the fixed route bus independently. A Travel Trainer works with people who are new to riding the bus and new to the area, regardless of age and ability.

### Fares

#### Fixed/Flex Routes Fare Rates

Cash Fare/Reduced Fare (Single Ride) .....	\$1.00/0.50
Route 80X Cash Fare/Reduced Fare (between counties) .....	2.00/1.00
Day Pass .....	3.00
11-Ride Pass .....	10.00
31-Day Pass .....	30.00
90-Day Pass .....	90.00
Select (for Veterans, Seniors and Riders with Disabilities) 31/92-Day Pass .....	15.00/45.00
Youth 31/92-Day Pass .....	FREE
Student 31/92-Day Pass .....	15.00/45.00
Skagit-Whatcom Day Pass .....	6.00
County Connector 31-Day Pass Regular/Youth/Student/Select .....	50.00/25.00



UMO (TouchPass) Stored Value Fare Caps

Once a Fare Cap is reached all subsequent rides in that period are free.

Paratransit Fare Rates

Cash Fare (Single Ride).....	\$1.00
Paratransit Companion Riders .....	1.00
Paratransit Riders Youth or 75 & older.....	FREE
Paratransit Calendar Month Pass (Pass on File) .....	13.00
Paratransit Calendar Quarter Pass (Pass on File) .....	35.00

Zone Service Fare Rates

Cash Fare (Single Ride).....	\$1.00
------------------------------	--------

Vanpool Fare Rates

Vanpool fares cover a portion of direct costs. The goal is 100%. Fares for vanpool vehicles are charged based on the monthly miles logged per van.

## 4. 2021 Activities

---

### Ridership

In 2021, WTA provided approximately 1.7 million boardings on its fixed route bus system, which was down 11% compared to the 2 million boardings in 2020. Boardings were down 61% from 2019, when WTA had 4.5 million boardings. Paratransit boardings were 128,441, an increase of 15% from 2020 (111,969) but a decrease of 41% from 2019. Vanpool boardings were 15,875, down 15% from 2020.

Social distancing requirements, increased teleworking, remote learning, and lingering safety concerns all had an impact on services. However, beginning in the second quarter 2021, fixed route ridership began to rebound, albeit at lower levels than before the pandemic.

### Changes to Service and Service Assistance

In March 2020, WTA reduced its service due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For over a year, WTA operated Saturday level service Monday-Saturday and Sunday level service on Sunday, with the addition of a few additional trips on some routes. The service reductions were necessitated by reduced rider demand as well as staff shortages. In June 2021, WTA restored service and implemented service changes that had been delayed for a year. The changes, listed below, increased service by approximately 4,000 revenue hours.

- Route 15 – Meridian/Cordata: Minor realignment in the downtown area.
- Route 26 – Lynden: Added hourly service.
- Route 27 – Ferndale: Added a weekday departure from the Cordata Station.
- Route 29 – Cordata: A new hourly route that restored service to West Horton Road after being eliminated due to construction of a new street.
- Route 232: Added a weekday departure from the Bellingham Station.
- Route 331: Added two weekday departures from the Cordata Station.
- Began On-demand pilot project in Lynden (Lynden Hop).

WTA continued to assist local partners with special transportation services (non-charter). WTA drivers helped Whatcom Unified command and Bellingham Food Bank by making Friday deliveries to local families. Participated in countywide response to extreme heat event, by hosting cool water stations at our transit hubs, for riders and the public. We also partnered with City and County officials on flood evacuations, transportation for flood response volunteers, and provision of warming buses.

### Fare Changes and Programs

Fare collection was suspended until July 1, 2021. After July, WTA implemented its planned fare changes and introduced a Youth Ride Free program. These changes were approved in early 2020 but delayed due to the pandemic. The changes increased general public, student, and

select pass prices. The Youth Ride Free program enabled all youth 17 and under to ride for free, with a pass required for high school students. WTA's Fare Rates and Rules were also amended to allow stored value on a TouchPass (UMO) account. Finally, WTA implemented a new regional fare payment system with Skagit Transit.

As part of an annual program, WTA distributed 36,200 packets of 6-ride tickets, free of charge, to qualified social and health service agencies throughout Whatcom County.

## Fleet

In 2021, WTA took delivery of 2 new electric buses and 8 new diesel buses.

*Figure 6 - In-Service Revenue Vehicle Fleet by Type, January 2022*

Type	Propulsion	Count
35 Foot Bus	Diesel	11
40 Foot Bus	Diesel	42
40 Foot Bus	Hybrid	8
40 Foot Bus	Electric	2
<b>Bus Subtotal</b>		<b>63</b>
Paratransit	Gasoline	50
Paratransit	Propane	22
Vanpool	Gasoline	16
On-Demand Van	Gasoline	2
<b>Total Fleet All Types</b>		<b>153</b>

## Capital Projects

WTA completed a purchase of the "North Lot," adjacent to Maintenance, Operations and Administrative Base in order to accommodate future buildings and vehicles.

## Technology Improvements

WTA completed the following technology actions:

- Major upgrade to fleet maintenance software
- Implemented "GreyHawk" mobile data terminals in paratransit buses
- Implemented paratransit automated "call aheads," which alert paratransit riders when the bus is on its way
- New contract management software

## 5. State and Agency Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

WSDOT requires WTA to demonstrate consistency between the agency’s objectives and strategies and the Washington State Transportation system policy goals. The completion of WTA 2040, WTA’s long range transit plan, resulted in the identification of three key priorities that will help guide future WTA decisions and investments:

- Equity** – Focus on providing access to opportunities and service to those who need it the most in the community
- Efficiency** – Match the levels and types of service to demand
- Environment** – Be a leader in advancing environmental initiatives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions

The three “E’s” help frame WTA’s goals and strategies. The following section documents alignment between the goals and key strategies from WTA 2040 and the statewide goals.

Figure 7 - Consistency between Agency and State Goals

WTA 2040 Goals and Strategies	State policy goals*					
	Economic Vitality	Preservation	Safety	Mobility	Environment	Stewardship
<b>Goal #1: Be Flexible, Nimble, and Innovative</b>	X	X	X	X	X	X
Strategies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form a cross-departmental Collaborative Innovation Team. Generate and pursue new ideas while allowing for calculated risks.</li> <li>• Track emerging transportation technology, assess its potential impact on WTA, and prepare strategies to respond before impacts are felt.</li> <li>• Pursue grants and partnerships that allow WTA to experiment with new ways of meeting transportation needs.</li> <li>• Improve customer information tools, management of vehicles on the road, load and ridership data, and reporting by building on the Smart Bus architecture.</li> <li>• Enhance ridership data collection and better integrate data into planning and customer service.</li> <li>• Reduce the time needed to make to service-related changes while still providing opportunities for robust community input.</li> <li>• Keep current with changes in private sector transportation and seek partnership opportunities that enhance options for priority populations.</li> <li>• Continue to monitor autonomous and connected vehicle technology and assess opportunities and impact to WTA.</li> </ul>						

<p><b>Goal #2: Serve as a leader and a key partner in improving the equity and efficiency of local transportation</b></p> <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to partner with Whatcom Council of Governments to extend the reach of the Whatcom Smart Trips program. Work with Smart Trips to provide tools and incentives through employers, schools and community groups to increase walking, biking and transit trips.</li> <li>• Work with large employers to identify their needs and tailor programs and services to increase their use of walking, biking and transit.</li> <li>• Support the work of local community partners to establish car share, bike/scooter share and other shared mobility devices, and identify opportunities to accommodate shared vehicles at transit centers or WTA park and rides.</li> <li>• Work with local universities and colleges to promote walking, biking and transit, and to help manage transportation demand.</li> <li>• Plan and construct secure and sheltered bicycle parking at transit stations and install bicycle racks at stops with high bicycle traffic.</li> <li>• Support efforts of local jurisdictions to reduce parking demand and manage parking supply.</li> <li>• Formalize ongoing discussions between WTA and school districts to make transit a more viable option for K-12 students.</li> <li>• Support efforts to increase the convenience of public transportation service to Skagit County and the greater Puget Sound area.</li> <li>• Support partner efforts for high capacity transportation modes such as ferry service to the San Juan Islands and Point Roberts and regional rail (High Speed and Amtrak) by ensuring efficient WTA transit connections.</li> </ul>	X			X	X	X
<p><b>Goal #3: Improve accessibility and mobility for priority populations</b></p> <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with institutions, agencies, and municipalities to support low barrier fare polices that decrease transportation barriers for priority populations.</li> <li>• Seek alternative funding sources, such as local, state, and federal grants to build ADA-accessible bus stops and to purchase and install bicycle and pedestrian amenities.</li> <li>• Create an “Access to Transit” fund to support local projects that improve sidewalks, crossings and other pedestrian infrastructure at bus stops.</li> <li>• As new resources become available, focus them on areas serving priority populations.</li> <li>• Advocate for land use polices that locate low-income housing and social services near frequent transit service.</li> <li>• Ensure trip planning materials and other essential communications are accessible to people with disabilities, low literacy, low English proficiency, etc.</li> <li>• Create a community rideshare program and support community groups that provide ridesharing options to priority populations</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise service standards to incorporate equity measures and other adjustments to account for new data sources.</li> </ul>						
<p><b>Goal #4: Serve as stewards of the environment</b></p> <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create a sustainability plan with strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and energy use throughout all facets of our operations.</li> <li>Pursue grant funding to support the transition to a zero-emission fleet by 2040.</li> <li>Evaluate the carbon emission impacts of all planning, procurement and business decisions.</li> <li>Support the implementation of the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Climate Actions Plans. Promote the value of public transportation as a way for individuals to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.</li> </ul>					X	X
<p><b>Goal #5: Provide a range of services tailored to the communities we serve</b></p> <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focus high frequency transit in areas with land use density that supports frequent service.</li> <li>Promote transit-oriented development and other transit supportive development to improve the viability and attractiveness of fixed route service.</li> <li>Work with developers during the design review process to integrate pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive design in projects along high frequency corridors.</li> <li>Participate in the planning efforts of partner communities to tailor transit service to community needs and to ensure planned land uses and zoning codes can support the desired level of transit service.</li> <li>Enhance and expand the transit network based on adopted service standards.</li> <li>Participate in local transportation projects to ensure that projects incorporate transit street design best practices and meet WTA’s infrastructure standards and guidelines.</li> <li>Continue to assess the feasibility of on-demand service and evaluate replacing fixed route and paratransit in areas deemed appropriate for such service.</li> <li>Work with community organizations to help address transportation gaps through programs such as community van grants.</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X
<p><b>Goal #6: Provide attractive, efficient, and financially sustainable services</b></p> <p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with local jurisdictions to implement speed and reliability improvements such as queue jumps and transit signal priority.</li> <li>Pursue improvements to make boarding faster and easier.</li> <li>Build on the existing Smart Bus infrastructure to support the management of vehicles on the road, to make our service faster and</li> </ul>	X	X	X	X	X	X

<p>more reliable, and to provide customer information tools that would make our system easier to use.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with Western Washington University to design and construct infrastructure and facilities that provide for more efficient and convenient service on routes traveling to campus.</li> <li>• Continue to make improvements to paratransit service that enhance convenience while maximizing efficiency.</li> <li>• Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of Zone Service and Flex Service and explore new ways of serving outlying areas.</li> <li>• Right-size park and ride facilities for current and future demand and identify potential transit-supportive opportunities with the available assets.</li> <li>• Seek state funding for regional bus service between Bellingham and Seattle.</li> </ul>						
--	--	--	--	--	--	--

\*The State’s six policy goals are:

**Economic vitality** – To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy

**Preservation** – To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services

**Safety** – To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system

**Mobility** – To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State

**Environment** – To enhance Washington’s quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment

**Stewardship** – To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system



## 6. Local Performance Measures and Targets

---

WTA is undergoing an update to its performance measures in 2022 based on guidance in WTA 2040. It is anticipated that WTA’s current service standards will be revised, and potentially new performance or service standards will be added. In particular, WTA is working on ways to measure equity, such as “access to opportunity” provided by its transit service.

In the meantime, WTA uses five standards to evaluate its fixed route network: productivity, on-time performance, vehicle load standards, service headway minimum and service availability.

Note that WTA suspended measuring and reporting on these standards in 2021 due to systemwide impacts of COVID-19.

### Productivity

Measured By: Boardings per revenue hour and passenger miles per revenue hour

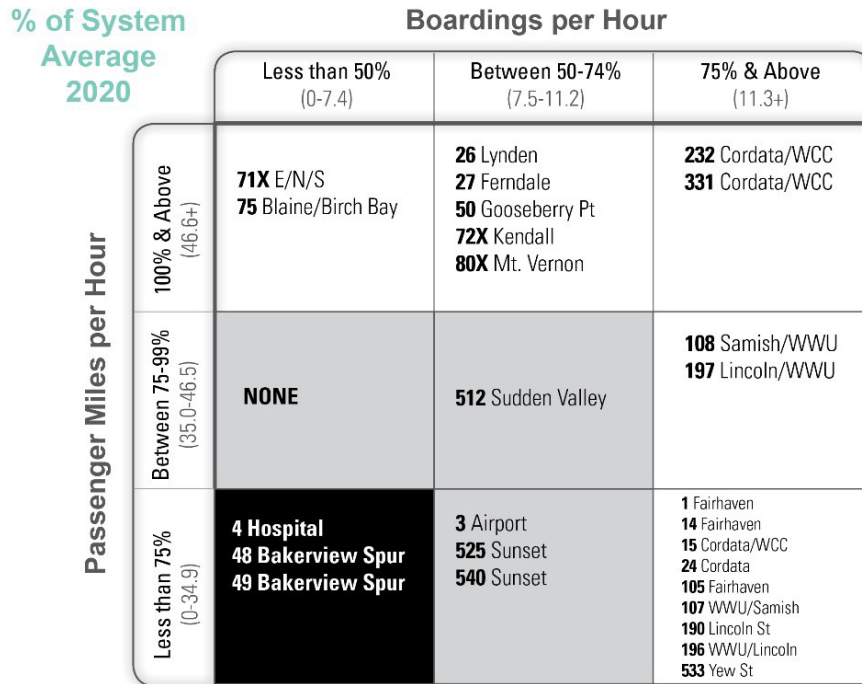
*Figure 8 - Productivity Standards*

Measure	Failing if below BOTH of these Standards:	On “Watch List” if below BOTH of these Standards:
Boardings/Revenue Hour	50% of average for all services in same category	75% of average for all services in the same category
Passenger Miles/Revenue Hour	75% of average for all services in the same category	Below the average for all services in the same category

When poor performance of a route places it on the “watch list,” WTA will continue to monitor performance for 12 months. During this time, WTA will apply targeted efforts to improve route performance, such as marketing, community outreach, re-routing, etc. after 12 months, if the route falls into the “failing” category, it will be considered for elimination.

WTA uses a graphical representation of these measures in its annual reports as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9 - Route Productivity Performance Matrix



### On-Time Performance

Measured By: Percentage of trips that arrive on time (at a station) Standards

Figure 10 - On-Time Performance Standards

Period	Standard
ALL	No early departures from a timepoint
AM & MID DAY PEAK (7:00-14:59)	95% of scheduled trips will be between 0 and 5 minutes late
PM PEAK (15:00 – 18:00)	90% of scheduled trips will be between 0 and 5 minutes late

On-time performance is currently measured at the Bellingham and Cordata stations.

### Vehicle Load Standards

*Measured by:* Maximum Passengers on board to the number of seats on a bus.

Service Type	Adequate	Optimal
High ridership urban service on segments of <10 mins.	≤1.75	≤1.75
Other Urban Service	≤1.4	≤1.25
Rural Intercity (trips 10> mins.)	≤1.25	≤1.0

### Service Headway Minimum Standards

*Measured by:* Minutes between buses

Service Type	Peak Hour	Non-Peak	Evening	Saturday	Sunday
High Frequency Corridors	15	15	30	30	30
Other Urban Service	60	60	...	60	...
Rural Service	90	...	...	...	...

'...' indicates that service levels are determined on a case-by-case basis

### Service Availability

*Measured by:* Maximum average distance between stops

Route Type	Distance Between Stops
Urban	¼ Mile
Rural	1 Mile

## 7. Plan Consistency

---

WTA is a voting member on the Transportation Policy Committee and Transportation Technical Advisory Group (TTAG) of the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG).

WTA has also entered into a formal agreement with the Whatcom Council of Government (WCOG) and Washington State Development of Transportation (WSDOT) to ensure a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process ("3-C" Process) for the WCOG MPA that involves coordination between and among WCOG, WSDOT, and WTA, known colloquially as the "314 Agreement". The agreement establishes membership on the WCOG board and committees; coordination with the Unified Planning Work Program; regional data coordination including with the regional model; cooperation between planning efforts and transportation programming; integrated public involvement; and cooperative financial planning funding and funding.

WTA 2040 goals are consistent with the goals of the following comprehensive plans: Whatcom County and the cities of Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas. WTA's goals are also consistent with Whatcom Council of Governments' Whatcom Mobility 2040 and the Washington State Public Transportation Plan. The following section lists local comprehensive plan goals applicable to WTA's services and programs.

### Whatcom County:

- 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.
- Goal 6D: Support land use planning efforts in Whatcom County which include land use types and densities that reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles.
- Goal 6E: Balance the needs of all users of all modes of transportation when planning and designing transportation facilities.
- Goal 6H: Coordinate with other governmental agencies in planning the County's transportation system.
- 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.

### City of Bellingham:

- Goal LU-2 Foster vibrant urban villages.
- Goal LU-3 Support a thriving local economy across all employment sectors.
- Goal CD-5 Ensure that the design and development of urban villages and transit corridors convey a positive image of the district they are located within contribute to the economic vitality and perception of the City and improve visual and physical transitions into adjacent neighborhoods.

- Goal T-1 Limit urban sprawl by linking land use and transportation planning.
- Goal T-2 Provide safe, well-connected, and sustainable mobility options for all users.
- Goal T-3 Increase infrastructure for bicycles, pedestrian, and non-single-occupancy vehicle modes of transportation.
- Goal T-4 Reduce dependence on single-occupancy vehicles.
- Goal T-5 Maintain and improve streets, trails, and other infrastructure.
- Goal EV-7 Maintain good air quality.
- Goal EV-8 Reduce contributions to climate change.
- Goal CF-1 Deliver safe, inclusive, cost-effective, and accountable public facilities and services.

#### City of Blaine:

##### Transportation Element

- Goal 2: Intergovernmental Coordination  
To coordinate efforts in planning, construction, and operation of transportation facilities with other agencies' programs as appropriate. This coordination will allow City efforts to support and complement the transportation functions of the State, Whatcom Council of Governments, Whatcom County, neighboring cities, Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA), and other entities responsible for transportation facilities and services in City.
- Goal 3: Transit Coordination  
To cooperate with Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) to provide facilities that will enhance and encourage transit use.
- Goal 17: Transportation Demand Management (TDM)  
The City will implement a TDM system to reduce vehicle trips, as mandated by Washington State law. TDM encourages alternate modes of transportation to reduce the numbers of single-occupancy vehicles.

#### City of Everson:

##### Transportation Element

- Goal: Coordinate transportation planning and construction with neighboring jurisdictions and with the state.

#### City of Ferndale:

The City will encourage the use of transportation modes that maximize energy conservation, circulation efficiency, and economy.

#### City of Lynden:

##### Transportation Element

- Goal 1: Public Participation and Agency Coordination  
Encourage public participation and the involvement of other agencies in the city planning process including in the enhancement of the transportation network.
- Goal 6: Public Transit and Transportation Demand Management  
Encourage transit as viable regional transportation mode through programs and

policies.

City of Nooksack:

Transportation Element

Goal 4: Cooperate and coordinate among federal, state and other local jurisdictions in transportation planning to ensure a seamless, effective system.

City of Sumas:

Transportation Element

Goal: Coordinate transportation planning and construction with neighboring jurisdictions and with the state.

Whatcom Council of Governments:

WTA goals are consistent with the Whatcom Mobility 2040 plan that identifies the following 7 regional goals of Safety; Environmental quality; Efficiency, Effectiveness and System Sustainability; A Multimodal Transportation System; Access and Convenience, Maintenance and Preservation, and Freight.

Washington State Public Transportation Plan:

- Goal 1 Thriving Communities  
Cultivate thriving communities by supporting health, equity, prosperous economies, energy conservation and a sustainable environment through transportation
- Goal 2 Access  
Provide and sustain transportation that allows people of all ages, abilities and geographic locations to access jobs, goods, services, schools and community activities
- Goal 3 Adaptive Transportation Capacity  
Use new technologies and partnerships to make better use of existing transportation assets and meet changing customer needs
- Goal 4 Customer Experience  
Enhance everyone’s transportation experience by providing public transportation that is safe, seamless, pleasant, convenient, reliable, relevant and understandable
- Goal 5 Transportation System Guardianship  
Protect, conserve and manage Washington’s transportation assets in a manner that maximizes and sustains their value to the public, public transportation and the statewide transportation system

## 8. 2022 – 2027 Planned Capital Expenses

---

WTA is undertaking several key planning projects in 2022 to address several key capital needs. These projects were identified in WTA 2040. WTA’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and this TDP will be updated to reflect results of these projects and future vehicle needs emerging from planned service changes.

**High Frequency Transit Corridors Study:** Assess the feasibility of a bus rapid transit (BRT) line and identify key speed and reliability improvements on high frequency Go-Lines. If the project determines BRT is feasible, design and environmental work could take place in 2026-2027 and construction as early as 2028. This project could result in speed and reliability infrastructure improvements, with implementation as early as 2024.

**Zero Emission’s Fleet Transition Plan:** Assess propulsion technology, identify operating impacts, determine facility needs, and develop a timeline and cost estimate for the transition to a zero-emission fleet by 2040. The resulting sequence of procurement and infrastructure improvements will be reflected in future CIP updates and in this TDP.

**Bellingham Station Visioning Process:** Engage downtown Bellingham stakeholders to develop a vision and concept design for the Bellingham Station and surrounding area. This work will precede more detailed station design in 2023-2024 and construction in 2025. The current CIP and this TDP may be updated to reflect an expanded or modified BTS project as a result of this effort.

The figure below outlines WTA’s planned capital expenses for 2022-2027.

Figure 11 - 2022-2027 Summary of Planned Capital Expenses

Year Expended	Type	Preservation/ replacement (quantity)	Expansion/ improvement (quantity)
<b>Rolling Stock</b>			
2022	Fixed route heavy duty buses	7	
2022	Cutaway buses	24	
2022	Refurbish fixed route heavy duty buses	4	
2023	Fixed route heavy duty buses	10	
2023	Cutaway buses	5	
2024	Fixed route heavy duty buses	10	
2024	Cutaway buses	6	
2024	Vanpool vans	3	
2025	Fixed route heavy duty buses	8	
2025	Vanpool vans	3	
2026	Cutaway buses	11	
2026	Vanpool vans	3	
2027	Cutaway buses	12	



<b>Equipment</b>			
2022	Install and implement Ops Web	1	
2022	Replace shuttle vehicles	3	
2022	Cordata Station electric bus charging station		1
2023	Install wash bay and detailing booth		1
2023	Install bus lift		1
2024	Midway Lot backup generator		1
2024	Install bus lift		1
2024	Automated Passenger Counting System		1
<b>Facilities and Infrastructure</b>			
2022	Fleet and Facilities office remodel	1	
2022	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters and ADA access)	5	
2022	Facilities and Infrastructure	1	
2023	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters and ADA access)	5	
2023	North Lot property development - Phase 1		1
2023	Midway Lot building		1
2024	MOAB 1st floor expansion		1
2024	North Lot property development - Phase 2		1
2024	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters and ADA access)	5	
2024	Facilities and Infrastructure		1
2024	Bellingham Transit Station new concourse - design		1
2025	Bellingham Transit Station new concourse - construction		1
2025	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters and ADA access)	5	
2025	Facilities and Infrastructure	1	
2026	Midway Lot building		1
2026	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters)	5	
2027	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters)	5	

\*MOAB – Maintenance, Operations and Administrative Base

## 9. Planned Operating Changes

WTA 2040 outlines a network plan which includes increases in service based on projected revenues under the existing sales tax rate. However, significant uncertainty surrounds future expansion plans. Ridership levels remain at around 50% of pre-pandemic levels despite a return to full operations and high gas prices. Depending on evolving public transportation needs, service levels may need to be increased or decreased to address both equity and efficiency goals.

WTA has started sequencing these service changes as part of its 6-Year Service Plan, beginning with the June 2022 mark-up. Service adjustments have been targeted for certain years based on a variety of factors, such as gaps in service and expressed customer need, the timeframe of development and street construction projects in certain areas, and changes that are linked due to interlinements or service area overlap. Regardless of more substantial network changes, WTA will continue to make annual schedule adjustments. All significant changes will be processed through WTA's biennial service change process and subject to Board approval. Figure 12 outlines Whatcom Transportation Authority's planned 2022-2027 service changes.

Figure 12 - 2022-2027 Summary of Planned Service Changes

Year	Type	Reduction	Expansion*	Add'l Vehicles Needed
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule improvements – no new service hours</li> </ul>	None	None	0
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add trips on routes 1, 4, 71x, 72x, 232, 331, 512</li> <li>Increase frequency on routes 50 (Gooseberry Pt) and 107 (Samish Way)</li> <li>Expand paratransit service to Blaine/Birch Bay area (hours not included) and remove FLEX on Route 75</li> </ul>	None	9,600 revenue hours/6% increase	1-2 fixed route buses (already in service)
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Realign and increase service on Route 4 (St. Joseph's Hospital)</li> <li>Schedule improvements</li> </ul>	None	2,100 revenue hours/1% increase	1 fixed route bus
2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase frequency on Gold Go-Line (Route 331) and Route 1 (Fairhaven)</li> <li>Add on-demand service to Ferndale</li> <li>Schedule improvements</li> </ul>	None	10,300 revenue hours/6% increase	3 fixed route buses, 3 on-demand vehicles
2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule improvements</li> </ul>	None	None	0
2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add/modify service to Bakerview/Irongate/Airport (routes 3, 48 &amp; 49)</li> <li>Add Saturday trips and Sunday service on Route 75 – Blaine/Birch Bay</li> <li>Increase frequency on Route 15 – Meridian</li> <li>Schedule improvements</li> </ul>	None	7,900 revenue hours/4% increase	3 fixed route buses

\* % increase from previous year.

## 10. Multiyear Financial Plan

---

### Capital Improvement Program

WTA's capital improvement program includes the capital expenses identified in Section 9.

Funds for capital projects are from federal, state, and local funds. The local match for federal and state grants is 15-20 percent for vehicles.

*Figure 13 - Capital Improvement Program*

<b>Category</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>
Equipment	170,000	-	-	-	-	-
Facilities	3,908,634	2,060,800	7,552,600	5,131,600	2,944,000	-
Technology	-	150,000	800,000	-	-	-
Vehicles, Non-Revenue	105,000	-	-	-	-	-
Vehicles, Revenue	13,007,239	12,049,425	15,904,500	11,168,000	2,689,600	3,010,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>17,190,873</b>	<b>14,260,225</b>	<b>24,257,100</b>	<b>16,299,600</b>	<b>5,633,600</b>	<b>3,010,000</b>

## Operating Financial Plan

WTA is funded locally through retail sales tax collection as the primary revenue source. We also obtain funding through fares paid to ride the bus, grant funding, advertising and other miscellaneous revenues.

Figure 14 details WTA's operating and maintenance financial plan.

Figure 14 - Operating and Maintenance Financial Plan

Operating Revenues	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027
<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>\$38,800,479</b>	<b>\$23,262,065</b>	<b>\$9,654,158</b>	<b>\$2,646,012</b>	<b>-\$7,248,632</b>	<b>-\$18,501,544</b>
<b>Revenues</b>						
Sales Tax	35,101,544	36,856,621	38,699,452	40,634,425	42,666,146	44,799,453
Farebox	1,455,436	1,470,614	1,473,294	1,476,000	1,478,734	1,481,496
Vanpool Income	100,080	101,081	102,092	103,113	104,144	105,185
Transit Support Grants	0	2,925,823	2,925,823	2,925,823	2,925,823	2,925,823
Operating Grants	1,350,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000	3,000,000
Other	188,072	191,833	195,670	199,584	203,575	207,647
Interest Income	264,000	265,848	267,709	269,583	271,470	273,370
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>38,459,132</b>	<b>44,811,821</b>	<b>46,664,040</b>	<b>48,608,527</b>	<b>50,649,892</b>	<b>52,792,974</b>
<b>Annual % Change</b>						
<b>Operating Expenses</b>						
Fixed Route	31,998,832	33,598,774	35,278,712	37,042,648	38,894,781	40,839,520
Paratransit	14,412,755	15,133,393	15,890,062	16,684,565	17,518,794	18,394,733
Vanpool	186,392	195,712	205,497	215,772	226,561	237,889
Depreciation	5,469,962	5,606,711	5,746,879	5,890,551	6,037,815	6,188,760
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>52,067,941</b>	<b>54,534,589</b>	<b>57,121,151</b>	<b>59,833,536</b>	<b>62,677,949</b>	<b>65,660,901</b>
Add back Depreciation	5,469,962	5,606,711	5,746,879	5,890,551	6,037,815	6,188,760
<b>Total Available</b>	<b>-8,138,847</b>	<b>-4,116,057</b>	<b>-4,710,232</b>	<b>-5,334,458</b>	<b>-5,990,243</b>	<b>-6,679,167</b>
<b>Grant Revenue</b>						
Federal Capital Grants	556,433	0	0	0	0	0
Paratransit Vehicles	3,746,800	735,250	909,500	0	1,717,000	1,929,500
Fixed Route Vehicles	5,488,073	4,219,040	8,650,491	4,476,000	80,303	82,755
Vanpool Vehicles	0	74,785	76,625	78,464	0	0
<b>Total Grant Revenue</b>	<b>9,791,306</b>	<b>5,029,075</b>	<b>9,636,616</b>	<b>4,554,464</b>	<b>1,797,303</b>	<b>2,012,255</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>						
Vehicles	13,007,239	6,260,800	11,531,813	5,723,000	2,151,000	2,405,000
Non-Revenue Vehicles	105,000	0	0	0	0	0
Facilities	3,398,634	8,260,125	402,716	3,391,650	4,908,972	150,000
Technology	170,000	0	0	0	0	0
Equipment	510,000	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>17,190,873</b>	<b>14,520,925</b>	<b>11,934,529</b>	<b>9,114,650</b>	<b>7,059,972</b>	<b>2,555,000</b>
<b>Grant Revenue Less Capital Exp</b>	<b>-7,399,567</b>	<b>-9,491,850</b>	<b>-2,297,913</b>	<b>-4,560,186</b>	<b>-5,262,669</b>	<b>-542,745</b>
<b>Transfers (net)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Ending Balance 12/31</b>	<b>\$23,262,065</b>	<b>\$9,654,158</b>	<b>\$2,646,012</b>	<b>-\$7,248,632</b>	<b>-\$18,501,544</b>	<b>-\$25,723,456</b>

This Operating and Maintenance Financial Plan reflects significant revenue uncertainty stemming from unknown future sales tax collection rates and lost revenue from sources like fare revenues and contracts. The full impacts of COVID-19 on future budgets is difficult to predict, and adjustments are expected as the situation evolves.

Below are the assumptions used in the above figures.

#### Revenues:

- 2022-2027 Sales tax revenue - 5% annual increase beginning in 2022.
- 2022-2027 Vanpool income – 2022 is an increase of 22% from 2019 actuals, then steady revenue with no growth. Recent approved changes in vanpool legislation may impact revenues in future years. WTA is assessing how/if to implement the changes.
- 2022-2027 paratransit revenue - 2% annual increase beginning in 2022.
- 2022-2027 fixed route revenue - increasing .5% each year. No current plans to dramatically increase ridership or revenue. Planned fare increase contributes a small amount to revenue.
- 2022-2027 investment income – 1% annual increase beginning in 2022.
- 2022-2027 Operating grants - 3% annual increase beginning in 2022.
- Federal relief funds are shown as operating grants and will be reported in a new BARS code.

#### Expenses:

- 2022-2027 – 3% annual increase beginning in 2022. The impacts of the WTA 2040 plan are not included in the projected expenses.

## 11. Projects of Regional Significance

---

WTA has submitted the projects to the WCOG for inclusion in the TIP as listed in Figure 15 below. These projects are included in WTA's CIP (Figure 13).

Figure 15 - Projects of Regional Significance

Year	2022-2028 TIP Project Description	\$
2022	Replace eight (8) Fixed Route Buses - Diesel	5,273,800
2022	Replace eight (8) Fixed Route Buses - Electric	10,400,000
2022	Replace Paratransit Mini Buses - 2022 (approx. 12)	2,480,000
2022	North Lot Property Development	4,400,000
2023	Replace Fixed Route Buses - 2023 (approx. 10 - Diesel)	7,050,000
2023	Replace Paratransit Mini Buses - 2023 (approx. 5)	1,064,000
2023	MOAB First Floor Expansion	2,600,000
2024	Replace Fixed Route Buses - 2024 (approx. 8 - Diesel)	5,816,000
2024	Replace Paratransit Mini Buses - 2024 (approx. 6)	1,315,500
2024	Replace Vanpool Vans - 2024 (approx. 3)	125,000
2024	Midway Lot Electric Bus Backup Generator	821,000
2025	Replace Vanpool Vans - 2025 (approx. 3)	128,000
2025	Bellingham Transit Station Building Remodel	387,600
2025	Bellingham Transit Station Concourse	4,887,600
2026	Replace Paratransit Mini Buses - 2026 (approx. 11)	2,558,600
2026	Replace Vanpool Vans - 2026 (approx. 3)	131,000
2026	Midway Lot Building	2,700,000
2027	Replace Paratransit Mini Buses - 2027 (approx. 12)	2,875,200
2027	Replace Vanpool Vans - 2027 (approx. 3)	135,000
2028	Replace Fixed Route Buses - 2028 (approx. 7 - Diesel)	5,726,000
2028	Replace Paratransit Mini Buses - 2028 (approx. 13)	3,208,400
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>64,082,700</b>