

# 2023 – 2028 Transit Development Plan



Approved August 17, 2023



4011 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, WA 98226

## Table of Contents

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Plan Adoption, Public Hearing, and Distribution .....	3
1. Introduction and Organization .....	4
2. Facilities.....	7
3. Service Characteristics and Fares .....	8
4. 2022 Activities.....	16
5. State and Agency Goals, Objectives, and Strategies .....	18
6. Local Performance Measures and Targets .....	22
7. Plan Consistency .....	24
8. 2023-2028 Planned Capital Expenses.....	27
9. Planned Operating Changes.....	29
10. Multiyear Financial Plan.....	30
11. Projects of Regional Significance .....	33

## Table of Figures

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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 – 2022 Ridership .....	16
Figure 7 – In-Service Revenue Vehicle Fleet by Type, March 2023.....	17
Figure 8 – Consistency between Agency and State Goals .....	18
Figure 9 – Productivity Standards.....	22
Figure 10 – On-Time Performance Standards .....	23
Figure 11 – 2023-2028 Summary of Planned Capital Expenses .....	27
Figure 12 – 2023-2028 Summary of Potential Service Changes.....	29
Figure 13 – Capital Improvement Plan .....	30
Figure 14 – Operating and Maintenance Financial Plan.....	31
Figure 15 – Projects of Regional Significance .....	33

## Plan Adoption, Public Hearing, and Distribution

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### Plan Adoption

The Whatcom Transportation Authority Board of Directors approved the Transit Development Plan for 2023-2028 on August 17, 2023.

### Public Participation Process

*Public comment period:* July 31, 2023 – August 17, 2023  
*Comments submitted to:* customerservice@ridewta.com  
Whatcom Transportation Authority  
Tim Wilder, Planning Director  
4011 Bakerview Spur  
Bellingham, WA 98226

*Public hearing:* Whatcom Transportation Authority held a public hearing during the regularly scheduled board meeting on the Transit Development Plan on August 17, 2023, from 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

*Notice posted to the website:* Whatcom Transportation Authority posted a notice of the hearing on the Transit Development Plan to its website at [www.ridewta.com](http://www.ridewta.com) on July 31, 2023.

*Digital and Paper copies:* Whatcom Transportation Authority posted the digital copy of the Transit Development Plan on its website on July 31, 2023, at [www.ridewta.com/business/reports](http://www.ridewta.com/business/reports). Paper copies were 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 published a notice of the hearing on the Transit Development Plan on August 6, 2023.

### Plan Distribution

On August 24, 2023, Whatcom Transportation Authority distributed 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

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## Introduction

Whatcom Transportation Authority's (WTA) Transit Development Plan (TDP) for 2023-2028 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 2022 accomplishments.

The information contained in the plan is based on the WTA 2040 Long Range Plan and is consistent with WTA's 2024-2029 Capital Improvement Plan and adopted 2023 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.

### 2022 WTA Board Members

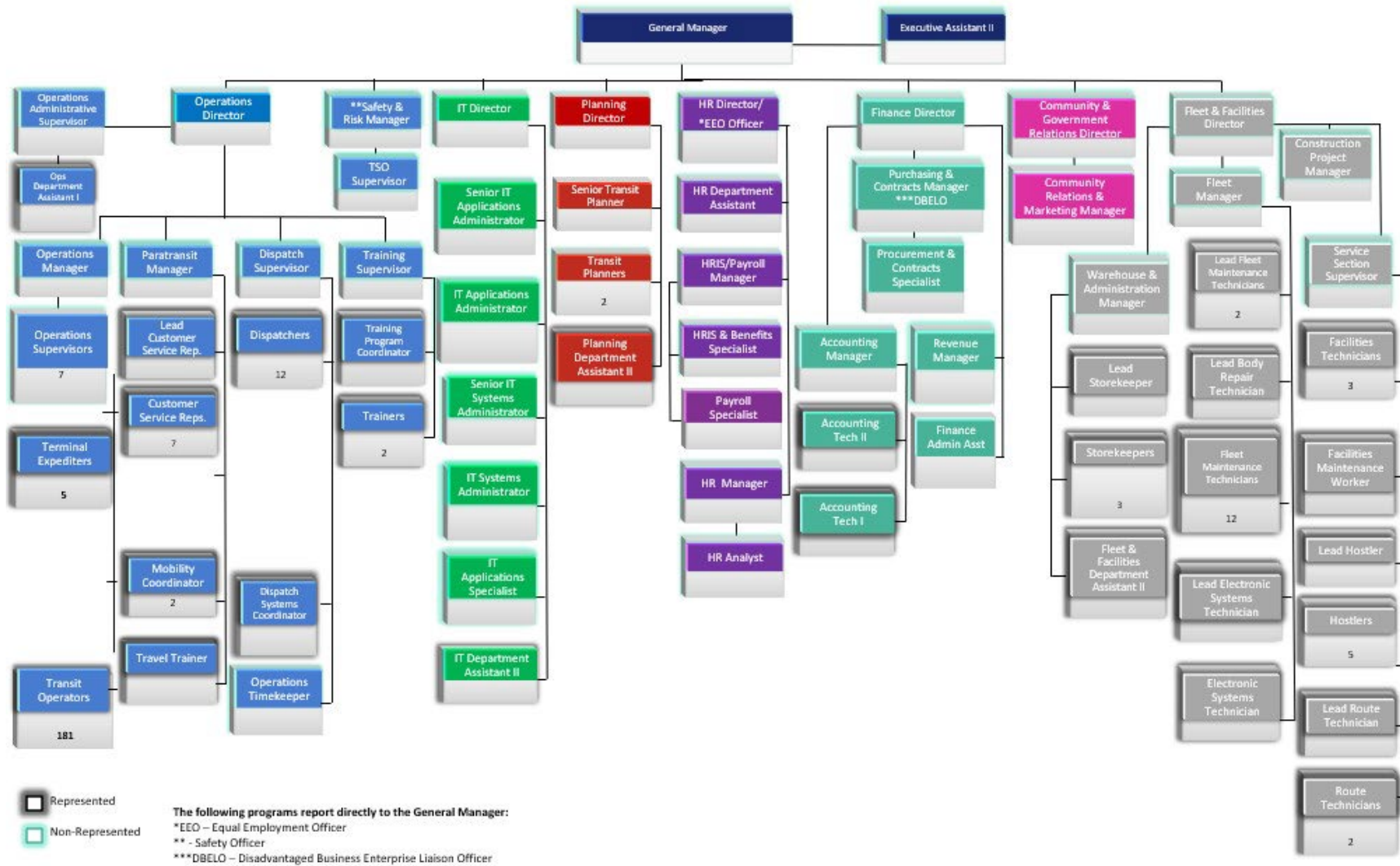
Eric Davidson	Blaine City Council
Todd Donovan	Whatcom County Council
Seth Fleetwood	Mayor of Bellingham
Ali Hawkinson	Ferndale City Council
Hollie Huthman	Bellingham City Council
Scott Korthuis	Mayor of Lynden – Board Vice Chairperson
Jennifer Lautenbach	Everson City Council
Michael Lilliquist	Bellingham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

The joint WTA and Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) Community Transportation Advisory Group (CTAG) consists of members representing a wide range of stakeholders, including citizens, government representatives, neighborhoods, schools, tribes, and social and health services. CTAG meets regularly throughout the year to review and discuss significant service changes, the annual budget and other major agency initiatives.

As approved in the 2022 Budget, the WTA had the authorization to employ:

<u>Division</u>	<u>Full Time Equivalent</u>
Executive Administration	4.00
Community Relations and Marketing	2.00
Human Resources	5.00
Finance	8.00
Information Technology (IT)	7.00
Fleet and Facilities	40.00
Operations	228.00
Planning	6.00
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>300.00</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

## 2. Facilities

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Maintenance, Operations and Administration Building (MOAB) - located at 4011 Bakerview Spur, Bellingham, Washington. Also have adjacent properties called the North Lot that is connected on the North side of the property and the Midway lot which is across the street on Midway Ln.



Bellingham Station (BTS) — located on the corner of Railroad Ave. and Magnolia St. in downtown Bellingham. This facility includes a customer service office, ten passenger loading gates, customer restrooms and waiting area, and operations and administrative space.



Cordata Station (CTS) — located on the corner of Cordata Pkwy. and Olivine Ln. in Bellingham. This facility has bus bays, three passenger loading areas, outdoor customer waiting areas, customer restrooms, and a 70-stall park & ride lot.



Ferndale Station — located at I-5 and Axton Rd. in Ferndale. This facility has three passenger loading areas and a 131-stall park & ride lot.



Lynden Station — located at Main St. and 19th St. in Lynden. This facility has two passenger loading areas, an 89-stall park & ride lot, and a commercial building leased by a vendor.



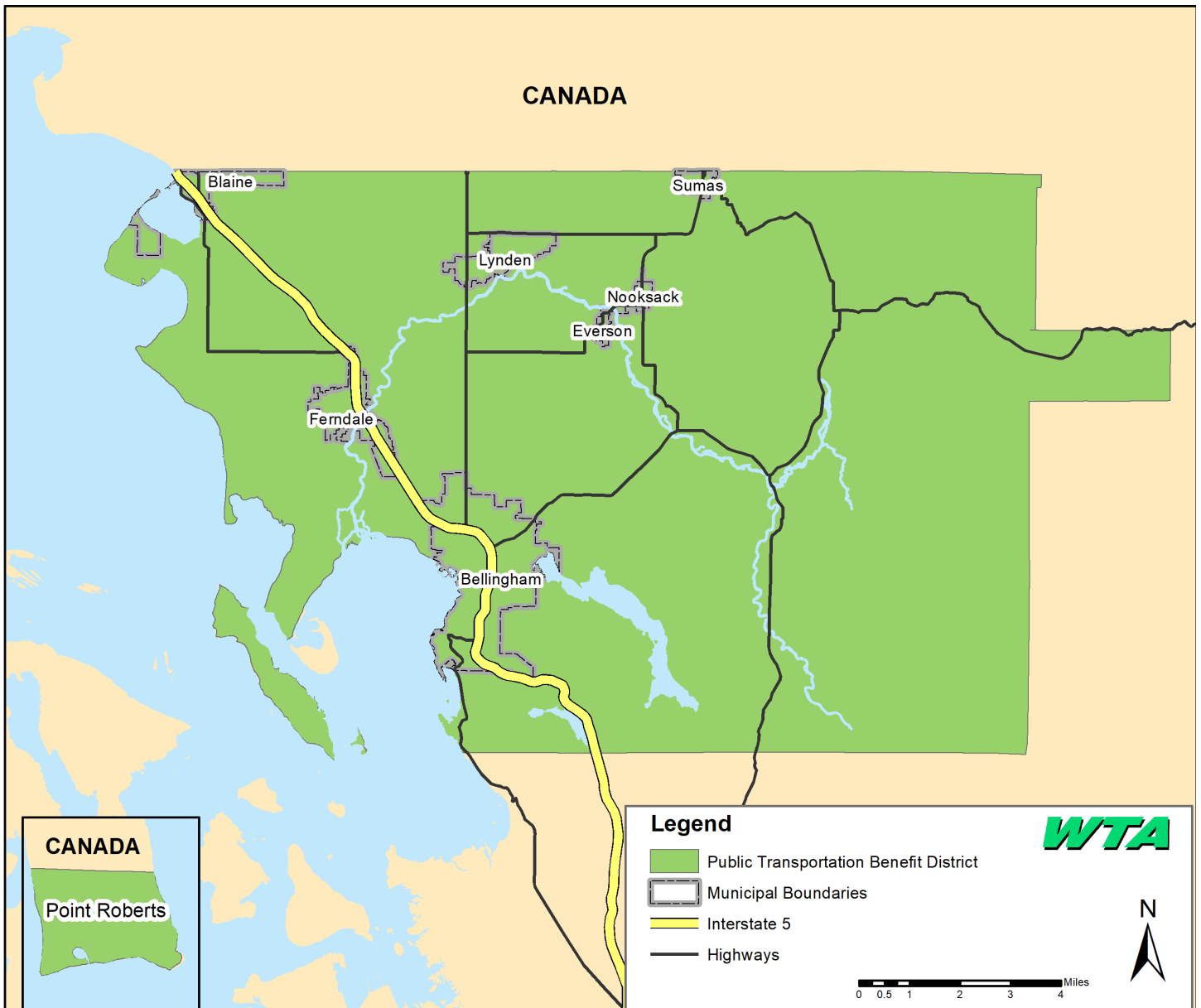


### 3. Service Characteristics and Fares

#### 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 throughout the service area, 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 service to all incorporated communities in Whatcom County as well as most small unincorporated places. Primary communities include 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 limited service on Saturdays, Sundays, and evenings. Generally, WTA operates on the following days and times:

- Weekdays: service is available in most areas from about 6:00 am to 7:30 pm.
- Saturdays: service is available in many areas from about 9:00 am to 6:30 pm.
- Both weekdays and Saturdays: later service is available in a few areas, up to 11:00 pm.
- Sundays: 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 support of 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 up to 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. Flex routes include:

Route 71X - Everson/Nooksack/Sumas (no ADA paratransit service)

Route 72X - Kendall via Mt. Baker Highway (no ADA paratransit service)

Route 75 - Blaine/Birch Bay (in 2023, FLEX area was reduced and paratransit added)

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

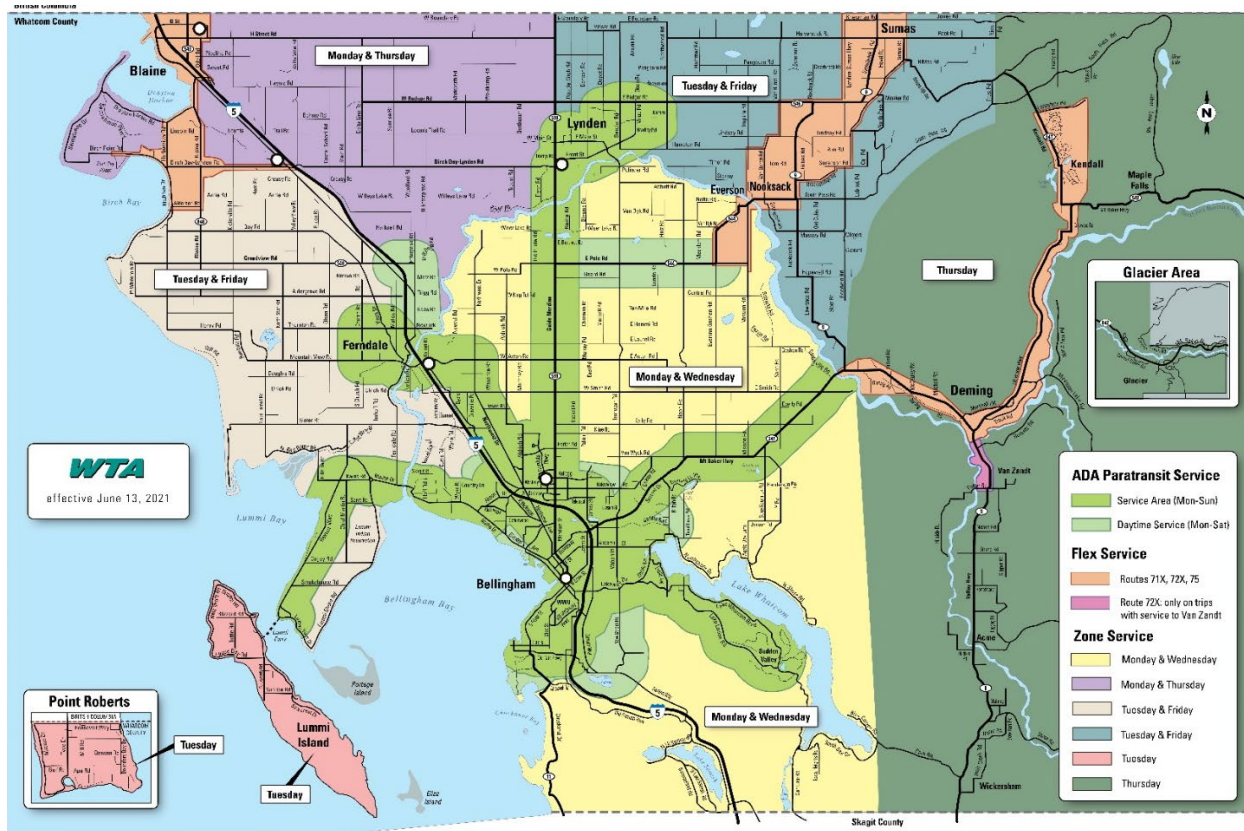
**Regional Bus Carriers (Greyhound, Flixbus, & Sea-Tac Airporter Shuttle):** Fairhaven Transportation Center, WWU and other locations

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

## 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 the fixed route bus system. Paratransit service is designed to be comparable to 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, except for flex routes and the 80X regional route. 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 a 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

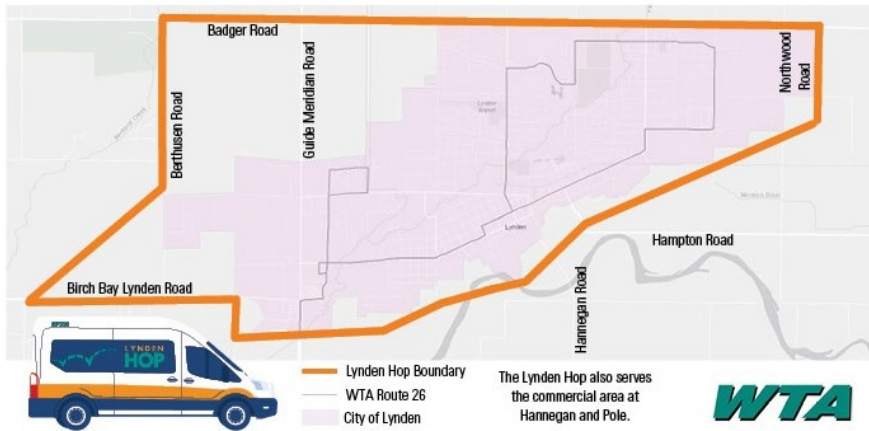
WTA’s vanpool program allows groups of people to use a WTA-owned van for the purpose of commuting to and from a common worksite. The vanpool group pays a fare, based on a tiered general destination – the further the destination, the higher the rate. Vanpoolers share the cost of commuting and assign a trained driver. Fares cover almost all of the cost to operate the van, including fuel, maintenance, and insurance. In 2022, the average number of vans in service was 8.

### 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 vendor software managed in-house. 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 are made within 15 minutes. The service is open to everyone, and fares are the same as the overall system. This service was 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 region’s Transportation Demand Management Program and Whatcom SmartTrips, administered and operated by the Whatcom Council of Governments. WTA provides an annual financial contribution of \$50,000, in-kind marketing support, and support at educational events with a transit operator and bus.

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

#### Fare Rates for Fixed Route and Lynden Hop:

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/Student/Select..... 50.00/25.00

UMO (TouchPass) Stored Value Fare Caps

Once a fare cap amount 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 most costs to operate the van, including fuel, maintenance, and insurance. The vanpool group pays a fare, based on the number of miles the van travels each month.



## 4. 2022 Activities

### Ridership

Figure 6 – 2022 Ridership

<b>2022</b>	<b>Fixed Route</b>	<b>Paratransit</b>	<b>Zone</b>	<b>Vanpool</b>	<b>Hop</b>
					
Boardings	<b>2,913,033</b>	<b>154,428</b>	<b>1,419</b>	<b>19,991</b>	<b>13,109</b>
Revenue Hours	<b>157,245</b>	<b>63,062</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>2,145</b>	<b>5,484</b>
Revenue Miles	<b>2,133,859</b>	<b>799,266</b>	<b>15,838</b>	<b>115,097</b>	<b>56,942</b>
Passenger Miles	<b>8,485,521</b>	<b>764,763</b>	<b>21,827</b>	<b>682,081</b>	<b>40,169</b>
Boardings per Hour	<b>18.5</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>2.2</b>	<b>9.3</b>	<b>2.4</b>
Passenger Miles per Hour	<b>53.9</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>34.0</b>	<b>318.0</b>	<b>7.3</b>
Passenger Miles per Boarding	<b>2.9</b>	<b>5.0</b>	<b>15.4</b>	<b>34.1</b>	<b>3.1</b>

Ridership in 2022 continued to recover following the pandemic. Fixed route ridership was 65% of the 2019 total but increased 70% over 2021. As with many transit agencies, WTA ridership continues to be impacted by high levels of teleworking, shifts to other modes, and lingering safety concerns. While ridership is the most common way to share data about an agency’s performance, using one ridership number does not distinguish between different types of trips and the importance of public transportation to a user and to the community. In addition to ridership, it will also be important in the future for WTA to measure other outcomes, such as mode shift (and the percentage of riders who would have otherwise driven) and access to opportunity (or the percentage of key destinations served by transit).

### Changes to Service and Service Assistance

WTA had no major service changes in 2022.

WTA continued to assist local partners with non-charter special transportation services. WTA also contributed to a countywide response to an extreme heat event by hosting cool water stations at our transit hubs, for riders and the public. We also partnered with City officials in

providing warming buses and transportation to and from the cold weather shelter.

### Fare Changes and Programs

The Youth Ride Free program that was established in July of 2021 was adjusted to include all youth 18 and under or enrolled in high school in compliance with Washington State legislation. WTA also updated who is required to use a pass on the system.

As part of an annual program, WTA distributed 48,550 packets of 6-ride tickets, to social and health service agencies throughout Whatcom County who service low income individuals and persons with disabilities.

### Fleet

In 2022, WTA took delivery of 7 new diesel buses.

*Figure 7 - In-Service Revenue Vehicle Fleet by Type, March 2023*

Type	Propulsion	Count
35 Foot Bus	Diesel	8
40 Foot Bus	Diesel	49
40 Foot Bus	Hybrid	8
40 Foot Bus	Electric	2
<b>Bus Subtotal</b>		<b>67</b>
Paratransit	Gasoline	25
Paratransit	Propane	22
Vanpool	Gasoline	17
On-Demand Van	Gasoline	2
<b>Total Fleet All Types</b>		<b>127</b>

### Technology Improvements

WTA implemented a new training and learning management system to improve employee training and system safety.

## 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.

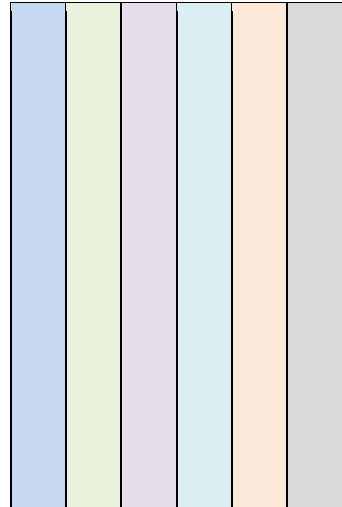
The three “E’s” help frame WTA’s goals and strategies. The following section documents alignment between the goals and key strategies from WTA 2040 and the statewide goals.

Figure 8 - 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 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 policies 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

<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>	
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\*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

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WTA is undergoing an update to its performance measures in 2023 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 some measurements and reporting on these standards due to impacts from the pandemic. In the meantime, WTA began a review and proposed modifications of its service evaluation criteria and started working on new reporting tools.

### Productivity

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

*Figure 9 - 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.

### 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

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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 entered into a formal agreement with the Whatcom Council of Government (WCOG) and Washington State Department 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, 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. 2023 – 2028 Planned Capital Expenses

In 2023, WTA was underway with key planning projects to address several large capital needs as identified in WTA 2040.

**Zero Emission Fleet Transition Study:** 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 Capital Improvement Plan (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 2024-2025 and construction after 2025. The CIP and this TDP will be updated to reflect an expanded BTS as a result of this effort.

**Rapid Transit 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 2025-2027 and construction as early as 2028. This project could result in short-term speed and reliability infrastructure improvements.

The figure below outlines WTA’s planned capital expenses for 2023-2028.

Figure 11 - 2023-2028 Summary of Planned Capital Expenses

Year Expensed	Type	Preservation/ replacement (quantity)	Expansion/ improvement (quantity)
<b>Rolling Stock</b>			
2023	Fixed route heavy duty buses	8	
2023	Paratransit minibuses	6	
2024	Fixed route heavy duty buses	8	
2024	Paratransit minibuses	24	
2024	Fixed route heavy duty buses	11	
2024	Paratransit minibuses	24	
2024	Mobility on demand vehicles	3	
2024	Automatic Passenger Counters		1
2024	Rideshare vehicles	14	
2025	Fixed route heavy duty buses	3	
2025	Paratransit minibuses	8	
2026	Fixed route heavy duty buses	4	
2026	Paratransit minibuses	9	
2026	Rideshare vehicles	3	
2026	Mobility on demand vehicles	3	
2027	Fixed route heavy duty buses	6	
2028	Fixed route heavy duty buses	8	

2028	Mobility on demand vehicles	3	3
2028	Mobility on demand vehicles		4
2028	Rideshare vehicles	8	
2029	Rideshare vehicles	9	
2029	Paratransit minibuses	12	
<b>Equipment</b>			
2023	Pneumatic Compressor	1	
2024	Install wash bay and detailing booth		1
2024	Install bus lift		1
2024	Midway backup generator		1
2024	Midway electrification		1
2024	Cordata charging equipment		1
2026	Zero Emission fleet infrastructure		1
<b>Facilities and Infrastructure</b>			
2023	Improve bus stop facilities (shelters and ADA access)	5	
2024	North Lot property development – Phase 1		1
2024	Midway Lot building		1
2024	Midway Facility Construction		1
2024	MOAB Expansion		1
2024	Bellingham station expansion		1
2024	Telegraph Rd. safety improvements		1
2024	Bus Stop Shelter		16
2024	MOAB elevator upgrades	1	
2024	North Lot swale and site prep		
2024	Paint booth and bay		1
2024	ADA bus stop improvements	5	
2025	MOAB Expansion		1
2025	Bellingham station expansion		1
2025	ADA bus stop improvements	5	
2025	Bus stop shelter increase	5	
2026	Development of a rapid bus line		1
2026	ADA bus stop improvements	5	
2026	Bus stop shelter increase	5	
2027	ADA bus stop improvements	5	
2027	Bus stop shelter increase	5	
2027	Development of a rapid bus line		1
2028	Bus stop shelter increase	5	
2028	ADA bus stop improvements	5	
2028	Development of a rapid bus line		1
2029	Bus stop shelter increase	5	
2029	ADA bus stop improvements	5	
2029	Development of a rapid bus line		1
*MOAB – Maintenance, Operations and Administrative Base			

## 9. Planned Operating Changes

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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. 2023 ridership levels remain at around 75% of pre-pandemic levels despite a return to pre-pandemic service levels. Depending on evolving public transportation needs, service levels may need to be increased or decreased to address both equity, efficiency, and environmental goals.

Potential service adjustments have been identified 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 schedule adjustments guided by new service evaluation standards. All significant changes will be processed through WTA's biennial service change process and subject to Board approval.

Figure 12 outlines WTA's potential 2023-2028 service changes.

Figure 12 - 2023-2028 Summary of Potential Service Changes

Year	Type	Reduction	Expansion	Add'l Vehicles Needed
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand paratransit service to Blaine/Birch Bay area and reduce FLEX on Route 75</li> <li>Schedule adjustments on Route 71X to make better connections</li> </ul>	None	Paratransit trips are expected to increase	None
2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to operate Lynden Hop On Demand as an ongoing service and modify Route 26</li> </ul>	Potentially a small reduction in fixed route hours	Ongoing increase in hours with HOP operations	1 vehicle (spare)
2025 and beyond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase frequency on Gold (331) and Green (232) Go-Lines</li> <li>Efficiency improvements on the Blue Go Line and connecting routes through Western Washington University</li> <li>Increase frequency on Route 50 (Lummi Nation)</li> <li>Add trips on routes 71x (Everson/Nooksack/Sumas) and 72x (Kendall)</li> <li>Realign and increase service on Route 4 (St. Joseph's Hospital)</li> <li>Add/modify service to Bakerview/Irongate/ Airport (routes 3, 48 &amp; 49)</li> <li>Efficiency improvements on routes 24 &amp; 29 (Cordata area)</li> <li>Add on-demand service to Ferndale and modify Route 27 (Ferndale)</li> <li>Add on-demand service to Blaine/Birch Bay and modify Route 75 (Blaine/Birch Bay)</li> <li>Eliminate very low ridership trips.</li> <li>Schedule improvements</li> </ul>	To Be Determined	To Be Determined	To Be Determined

## 10. Multiyear Financial Plan

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### Capital Improvement Plan

WTA's 2024-2029 CIP includes the capital expenses identified in Section 8.

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 Plan*

<b>Category</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>2026</b>	<b>2027</b>	<b>2028</b>
Equipment	964,959	1,100,000	-	-	-	-
Facilities	-	14,767,500	5,152,500	21,655,125	11,407,881	1,085,775
Technology	-	1,225,000	125,000	-	-	-
Vehicles, Non-Revenue	670,000	-	-	-	-	-
Vehicles, Revenue	1,111,835	26,766,732	5,500,000	7,600,000	7,800,000	13,050,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,746,794</b>	<b>43,859,232</b>	<b>10,777,500</b>	<b>29,255,125</b>	<b>19,207,881</b>	<b>14,135,775</b>

\*Expense shown in year of expenditure

NOTES: 2023 Projects shown are anticipated to be complete by 12/31/2023.

## 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	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
<b>Beginning Balance</b>	<b>\$57,679,922</b>	<b>\$53,172,274</b>	<b>\$31,694,436</b>	<b>\$26,476,298</b>	<b>\$17,615,807</b>	<b>\$6,343,487</b>
<b>Revenues</b>						
Sales Tax	39,855,134	41,050,788	42,282,312	43,550,781	44,857,304	46,203,024
Farebox	1,384,510	1,387,280	1,390,080	1,392,911	1,395,773	1,398,669
Vanpool Income	85,800	86,658	87,525	88,400	89,284	90,177
Transit Support Grants	2,925,823	3,369,493	3,369,493	3,436,883	3,505,621	3,185,411
Operating Grants	1,322,975	0	0	0	0	0
Consolidated Grant	0	183,264	186,929	190,668	194,481	198,371
Paratransit/Special Needs Grant	0	3,001,684	3,001,684	3,061,717	3,122,952	3,575,733
Regional Mobility Grants	0	219,986	219,986	204,400	204,400	208,488
Other	659,244	672,429	685,877	699,595	713,587	727,859
Interest Income	275,000	277,750	280,528	283,333	286,166	289,028
<b>Total Revenues</b>	<b>46,508,486</b>	<b>50,249,332</b>	<b>51,504,414</b>	<b>52,908,688</b>	<b>54,369,568</b>	<b>55,876,760</b>
<b>Annual % Change</b>						
<b>Operating Expenses</b>						
Fixed Route	32,625,289	34,256,554	35,969,382	37,767,851	39,656,243	41,639,055
Paratransit	14,694,921	15,429,667	16,201,150	17,011,207	17,861,768	18,754,856
Rideshare	190,041	199,543	209,520	219,996	230,996	242,546
Depreciation	6,366,276	6,525,433	6,688,569	6,855,783	7,027,178	7,202,857
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>53,876,527</b>	<b>56,411,197</b>	<b>59,068,621</b>	<b>61,854,837</b>	<b>64,776,185</b>	<b>67,839,314</b>
Add back Depreciation	6,366,276	6,525,433	6,688,569	6,855,783	7,027,178	7,202,857
<b>Total Available</b>	<b>(1,001,765)</b>	<b>363,568</b>	<b>(875,638)</b>	<b>(2,090,366)</b>	<b>(3,379,439)</b>	<b>(4,757,697)</b>
<b>Grant Revenue</b>						
Federal Capital Grants	206,433	3,000,000	3,000,000	16,600,000	0	0
State Capital Grants	0	2,580,000	0	0	5,000,000	0
Paratransit Vehicles	945,060	3,479,896	1,360,000	1,530,000	0	1,020,000
Fixed Route Vehicles	2,084,856	18,507,826	2,000,000	4,160,000	6,240,000	8,320,000
Rideshare Vehicles	0	556,800	0	120,000	0	320,000
Other Jurisdictions	75,000	800,000	75,000	75,000	75,000	0
<b>Total Grant Revenue</b>	<b>3,311,349</b>	<b>22,017,826</b>	<b>6,435,000</b>	<b>22,485,000</b>	<b>11,315,000</b>	<b>9,660,000</b>
<b>Capital Expenditures</b>						
Revenue Vehicles	3,884,735	26,766,732	5,500,000	7,600,000	7,800,000	13,050,000
Non-Revenue Vehicles	670,000	0	0	0	0	0
Facilities	1,592,000	11,267,500	5,152,500	21,655,125	11,407,881	1,085,775
Technology	0	1,225,000	125,000	0	0	0
Equipment	670,497	4,600,000	0	0	0	0
<b>Total Capital Expenditures</b>	<b>6,817,232</b>	<b>43,859,232</b>	<b>10,777,500</b>	<b>29,255,125</b>	<b>19,207,881</b>	<b>14,135,775</b>
<b>Grant Revenue Less Capital Exp</b>	<b>(3,505,883)</b>	<b>(21,841,406)</b>	<b>(4,342,500)</b>	<b>(6,770,125)</b>	<b>(7,892,881)</b>	<b>(1,085,775)</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>\$53,172,274</b>	<b>\$31,694,436</b>	<b>\$26,476,298</b>	<b>\$17,615,807</b>	<b>\$6,343,847</b>	<b>\$500,375</b>



Below are the assumptions used in the above figures.

Revenues:

- 2023-2028 sales tax revenue - 3% annual increase beginning in 2024
- 2023-2028 vanpool income - 1% annual increase beginning in 2024
- 2023-2028 paratransit revenue - 2% annual increase beginning in 2024
- 2023-2028 fixed route revenue - increasing .5% each year. No current plans to dramatically increase ridership or revenue.
- 2023-2028 investment income – 1% annual increase beginning in 2024
- 2023-2028 operating grants – show awarded grants for 2023-2025 biennium allocated equally between 2024 and 2025. Assumed same levels for future years.

Expenses:

- 2023-2028 – 5% annual increase in operating expenses (less depreciation) beginning in 2023. The impacts of the WTA 2040 plan are included in the projected capital expenses.
- 2023-2028 – 2.5% annual increase in depreciation expense beginning in 2023

Cash Balances:

- Beginning and ending cash balances include all cash sources (undesigned and all reserves). Reserve balances are not allocated in this document.

## 11. Projects of Regional Significance

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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	2024-2029 TIP Project Description	\$
2024	Replace Fixed Route Buses - (8 diesel w/electric)	10,400,000
2024	Replace Fixed Route Buses – (3 diesel/8 hybrid w/ hybrid)	11,346,900
2024	Replace Paratransit Minibuses – (24)	3,869,832
2024	Replace Mobility on Demand vehicles (approx. 3)	450,000
2024	Replace Rideshare Vehicles (approx. 14)	700,000
2024	Midway Facility Construction	1,500,000
2024	Install Midway Backup Generator	800,000
2024	Midway Electrification	2,285,000
2024	MOAB Expansion Remodel	3,750,000
2024	Bellingham Transit Station Expansion and Enhancement	350,000
2025	Replace Fixed Route Buses - (approx. 3)	3,900,000
2025	Replace Paratransit Minibuses - (approx. 8)	1,600,000
2025	MOAB Expansion Remodel	3,750,000
2025	Bellingham Transit Station Expansion and Enhancement	500,000
2026	Replace Fixed Route Buses – (approx. 4)	5,200,000
2026	Replace Paratransit Minibuses - (approx. 9)	1,800,000
2026	Replace Rideshare Vehicles - (approx. 3)	150,000
2026	Mobility on Demand Expansion Vehicles (approx. 3)	450,000
2026	Zero Emission Fleet Infrastructure	20,750,000
2026	Development of a Rapid Bus Line	250,000
2027	Replace Fixed Route Buses – (approx. 6)	7,800,000
2027	Bellingham Station Expansion and Enhancement	10,500,000
2027	Development of a Rapid Bus Line	250,000
2028	Replace Fixed Route Buses - (approx. 8)	10,400,000
2028	Replace Mobility on Demand Vehicles – (approx. 3)	450,000
2028	Mobility on Demand Expansion Vehicles – (approx. 3)	600,000
2028	Replace Rideshare Vehicles – (approx. 8)	400,000
2028	Development of a Rapid Bus Line	500,000
2029	Replace Paratransit Minibuses – (approx. 12)	2,400,000
2029	Replace Rideshare Vehicles – (approx. 9)	450,000
2029	Development of a Rapid Bus Line	26,750,000
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$134,301,732</b>