



**Washington State  
Department of Transportation**

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February 14, 2020

The Honorable Steve Hobbs  
Washington State Senate  
PO Box 40444  
Olympia, WA 98504-0444

The Honorable Jake Fey  
Washington State House of Representatives  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

The Honorable Curtis King  
Washington State Senate  
PO Box 40414

The Honorable Andrew Barkis  
Washington State House of Representatives  
PO Box 40600

Dear Chairs Hobbs and Fey and Ranking Members King and Barkis:

I write to clarify WSDOT's position on SB 6398 and HB 2688, bills relating to our transportation policy goals. There has been confusion expressed by our partners over whether WSDOT supports our existing goals, particularly the mobility goal, "To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington state, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility." Let me state unequivocally, WSDOT wholeheartedly supports our current transportation policy goals in RCW 47.04.280. Our mission, which is based on those goals, is to provide safe, reliable and cost-effective transportation options to improve communities and economic vitality for people and businesses.

While we believe the concepts contained in SB 6398 and HB 2688 merit serious consideration, WSDOT was not asked to participate in the drafting of the bills and had no knowledge of their content until they were introduced. As WSDOT has discussed with the bill sponsors and in our testimony at hearings in both houses, the bills as originally drafted would be very difficult to implement and remove important existing policy goals. However, the bills do serve as a platform for addressing two issues of importance:

- 1) The need for a periodic revisiting of our transportation policy goals in response to changing conditions; and
- 2) The importance of aligning transportation investments with those policy goals.

A lot of thoughtful work by many people over many years went into establishing our current six transportation policy goals. Transportation policy goals do change from time to time, most recently in 2015 when congestion relief and freight mobility were added to the mobility goal. We do believe the additional policy goals proposed in the legislation – accessibility, environment and climate, health, and equity and environmental justice – address important and often overlooked issues. We believe

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they should be factored into a robust discussion of our policy goals going forward. Senator Saldaña and Representative Shewmake's bills have provided an opportunity to begin this important discussion, and we appreciate their initiative.

As important as it is to conduct a periodic refresh of our transportation policy goals, we should also use those goals to guide transportation investment decisions in ways that are transparent and measurable. Other states are taking this approach to great success. When done well, a performance-based evaluation of projects, based on established and understood goals, can give confidence to taxpayers that their dollars are being invested in the best possible projects.

With our testimony on SB 6398 and HB 2688, we were supporting the Legislature having more performance-based information on which to base its decisions. We do this performance-based work now with a number of grant programs for which you provide WSDOT with appropriation and policy direction. WSDOT accepts applications from local governments, ports, transit agencies, and other partners for these programs. We then evaluate those applications based on transparent measures and we forward a list of the successful applicants to the Legislature for final consideration and award. This is a successful model that could be replicated for highway improvement projects.

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. As the session continues and during the interim, we hope to continue this discussion with you and continue our partnership as stewards of the state's multimodal transportation system.

Sincerely,



Roger Millar, P.E., FASCE, FAICP  
Secretary of Transportation