

WSDOT Frequent Transit Proviso study

Policy and technical advisory group joint meeting

Session 1: 3 - 5 p.m., October 25, 2022

Session 2: 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m., October 27, 2022

Session 1 participants

PAG and TAG members

- Paulo Nunes-Ueno, Front and Centered
- Mike Tresidder, Spokane Transit
- Tom Hingson, Everett Transit
- Brian Lee, Puget Sound Regional Council
- Alyson Cummings, Joint Transportation Committee
- Celeste Gilman, WSDOT
- Steffani Lillie, Capital Service Development

Project staff

- Emily Watts, WSDOT
- Jenny Thacker, PRR
- Justin Nawrocki, WSDOT
- Monica Ghosh, WSDOT
- Sabrina Lopez, PRR
- Sahas Sok, WSDOT
- Thomas Craig, WSDOT

Session 2 participants

PAG and TAG members

- Amy Asher (Mason Transit)
- Anna Zivarts (Disability Mobility Coalition – Disability Rights Washington)
- Justin Leighton (Washington State Transit Association)
- Karl Otterstrom (Spokane Transit)
- Lindsey Sehmel (Pierce Transit)
- Lisa Ballard (WSDOT)
- Melissa Gaughan (King County Metro)

Project staff

- Brian Lagerberg (WSDOT)
- Don Chartock (WSDOT)
- Emily Watts (WSDOT)
- Emma Dorazio (PRR)
- Jenny Thacker (PRR)
- Kate Gunby (PRR)
- Monica Ghosh (WSDOT)
- Thomas Craig (WSDOT)

Summary

The project team convened two joint meetings of the Policy Advisory Group (PAG) and Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to accommodate participants schedules. The project team scheduled the first meeting on October 25 from 3 – 5 p.m. and the second on October 27 from 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. The feedback gathered during both sessions is summarized below.

Slide numbers included in this meeting summary refer to the [PAG and TAG joint meeting presentation](#) saved on engage.wsdot.wa.gov/frequent-transit-service-study.

Slide 1-3 – Jenny Thacker

The project team welcomed PAG and TAG members to the second of the two PAG and TAG joint meeting options, led a round of introductions, reviewed meeting goals, and invited participants to share what they hoped to gain from the discussion. Participants shared the following priorities for the joint meeting sessions:

- Hearing feedback from others
- Learning how the results of the study will be packaged, rolled out, and shared with the public.
- Developing statewide standards for transportation access
- Building consistency in transit access work and vocabulary across agencies

Slide 4-6 – Thomas Craig

In September 2022, the project team met with most PAG and TAG members to review the results of the analysis and gather feedback. In the time since, the project team adjusted the model to reflect the input from the PAG and TAG members. The project team reviewed changes to the definition of frequency, the reasoning for each change, and each change affected the study results.

The project team shared the updated frequency levels, analysis results, and statewide map and invited the group to ask questions and provide feedback.

Generally, PAG and TAG members shared support for the model refinements and appreciation for incorporation of feedback. Participants also appreciated the refinements to the map, including the color palette.

Both sessions of the joint meeting discussed the updated numerical naming system for the frequency level definitions. Participants in the first joint meeting session shared concerns, noting that the new system is not user friendly and provides less context than the previous categories, which supported efforts to build a common vocabulary. However, participants in the second joint meeting session spoke in favor of the new numerical naming system for the frequency categories and appreciated that the naming system is simple, easy to understand, and subjective.

Participants in both sessions requested that the project team include additional maps in the report, including zoomed in maps for major metropolitan areas, a Washington population density map, and a Washington Active Transportation Plan population center map.

Other questions shared during the joint meeting sessions included whether the analysis provided any understanding of investment gaps, how the report will acknowledge high-quality transportation options that may not meet high standards for frequency, and whether the project team incorporated flagged stop data in the analysis.

Slide 7 – Monica Ghosh

The project team reviewed the draft key findings for the December 15 report and led a discussion to gather questions, feedback, and potential refinements.

Generally, participants requested that the project team incorporate information about potential exceptions to these key findings and clearly communicate the limitations of the study. Specifically, the report should emphasize the focus on fixed route transit and how the lack of accessibility data may result in overreporting access to available services.

- 1. The lack of accessibility data makes it hard to answer key questions. If we want to know about access to transit, we need to fill a data vacuum.**

Some participants shared support for the key finding and few shared questions, feedback, or refinements. Participants in the second joint meeting session discussed whether the term accessibility is most appropriate, but several participants advocated for the term to remain.

Some participants noted that WSDOT will be working with the Taskar Center in the next biennium to collect sidewalk data to help fill the data vacuum described in the finding.

2. Transit frequency mirrors density, with the most frequent transit existing in certain, most population dense parts of the state.

Participants in both joint meeting sessions requested refinements to acknowledge the factors other than density, including funding, local taxes, policy, and public action, that influence whether high frequency transit is available in a community. As written, the finding may suggest that transit is only appropriate or successful where population is dense.

Despite suggestions for improving the second key finding, participants still support its inclusion in the final report. Participants also suggested including a new map layer with population density to support readers in understanding the finding.

3. Roughly half of people in the state live within a half mile to at least lifeline transit.

Participants in both joint meeting sessions tied this finding to its inverse, noting that readers may interpret that roughly half of people in the state do not live within a half mile of at least lifeline service. This interpretation fails to acknowledge the human services transportation, tribal transportation services, or door-to-door services that may be filling those gaps. Participants requested that this acknowledgement is captured in the findings presented to the legislature.

Participants also noted that the finding also lacks clarity about next steps and priorities, for example, whether the state should prioritize expanding lifeline services or improving frequency where services already exist.

[Slide 8-9 – Jenny Thacker and Monica Ghosh](#)

The project team reviewed the draft December 15 report outline, which will include the following elements:

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Study results
- Recommendations and next steps
- Study process
- Appendices

Jenny asked participants to indicate comfort with the proposed key findings and the report structure by selecting a rating between one and five, where one represents “not at all comfortable” and five represents “very comfortable.”

The average comfort rating shared by the 12 participants of the two meeting sessions was 3.8 on the five-point scale.

Participants who expressed less comfort with the key findings and report outline shared their hesitations, including a lack of acknowledgement of study limitations and discomfort with the numerical naming system for the six frequency levels. These participants would have greater support for the report if the project team included case studies that exemplify exceptions to the key findings, restore the descriptive naming categories, and acknowledge the focus on fixed route transportation.

[Slide 10-14 – Thomas Craig, Monica Ghosh, Jenny Thacker, and Don Chartock](#)

The project team is close to concluding Phase 1 and will soon shift attention to Phase 2 of the project, which will aim to identify gaps in accessible frequent transit, analyze those gaps for disparities in race, age, and disability, and develop funding scenarios to address those gaps.

The project team is aware of other studies that could influence our analysis of gaps, disparities, and perhaps give insight into funding scenarios including a study of the needs of non-drivers led by the Joint Transportation Commission and an unmet needs assessment led by WSDOT.

PAG and TAG members recommended the sources below for the project team to consider for Phase II analysis.

Source	Author(s)	Purpose
High-capacity station access project	WSDOT, Sound Transit	Identifying barriers to accessing high-capacity transit stations in the state
	WSDOT	An analysis of traffic stress on roads with more than \$500,000 of state investment
2020 Pedestrian Plan	TriMet	Maps gaps in active transportation infrastructure
Complete Streets	WSDOT	Potential partner for developing case studies for the gap analysis
DMV records	DOL	Potential resource for developing understanding of car ownership statistics
Transportation Security Index	University of Michigan	Example transportation access report
Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program	USDOT	Example of demographics and gaps analyses
Remix by Via On-Demand Planning	King County Metro	planning examples
Transportation Alternatives	WSDOT	Investment allocation program based on census data.
EJ Screen	EPA	Environmental justice screening and mapping tool

PAG and TAG members shared their insights to guide how the project team should approach Phase II.

- Additional clarity or direction, perhaps from the proviso, is needed to guide whether the gap analysis will study service gaps, infrastructure gaps, or investment gaps.
- Needs vary from community to community, which makes identifying or defining gaps on a statewide level difficult.

- The project team should develop feasible and flexible goals should generally support the state in funding basic levels of service for community members, regardless of their local tax systems.
- A “strawman analysis” could piece together population density, travel routes, and transit availability to identify geographies where higher quality transit should be available and which services should fill the gaps.
- The project team should find or develop resources that would support a meaningful understanding of the intersections between race, income, gender, age, and transit access.
- Phase II analysis could support the creation of tools for jurisdictions and the public to understand and define their own transit access gaps.

Participants shared concerns about using imprecise sidewalk, geographic, and demographic data to identifying infrastructure gaps that may influence policy decisions. Participants also expressed interest in future study efforts to expand or complement the frequent transit proviso. These additional studies include an analysis of all transportation services, beyond just fixed route transit, studies to identify motivating factors for transit ridership, and recommendations to improve transit access through land use, zoning, and housing policies.

Slide 15-17 – Monica Ghosh

The project team reviewed next steps and thanked attendees for their participation.

- **November 1 - 3:** PAG and TAG members will have an opportunity to review and provide comment on the draft report
- **November 7:** Project staff will share draft report WSDOT decision makers for review and approval
- **November 15:** WSDOT staff will update the Joint Transportation Commission about progress on the Study
- **December 1:** The report draft will be finalized and submitted to WSDOT legislative relations for review and to transmit to the legislature
- **December 15:** Transmit initial report to the legislature

The project team will continue engage with the PAG, TAG, and other stakeholders on an ongoing basis while work on the final report due to the legislature by June 30, 2023 continues.