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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In its 2022 session, the Legislature directed WSDOT to conduct a study that proposes a definition of frequent fixed route transit and documents how many people in Washington live within a half-mile walk of frequent fixed route transit (ESSB 5689 – 2022 Sect. 221 (15)).

WSDOT engaged the Joint Transportation Committee, a variety of stakeholders, and rider advocates to guide the study design, findings, and recommendations. This initial report provides a detailed summary of results and methods of this work, recommendations, and next steps for the final report due to the Legislature June 30, 2023.

Levels of transit frequency

This study defines seven levels of transit frequency based on aspects such as headway (i.e., how often there is service), span (i.e., when does service take place), and days of service. These levels acknowledge that frequent transit differs in communities around the state, reflecting their unique characteristics. WSDOT established this study’s levels of transit frequency with service data from the state's fixed route transit agencies only. For specific agencies included, see General Transit Feed Specification feeds collected and included in analysis.

The study does not measure flexible service types such as flag routes, route deviated, and demand response service, as well as service provided by transportation providers other than transit agencies such as privately-operated intercity bus or non-profit providers. It also only includes currently operating fixed route service, not those in planning or construction phases. Some agencies are also operating reduced service due to cuts after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Levels of transit frequency defined in this study are in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency level</th>
<th>Weekday daytime headway (9 a.m.-5 p.m.)</th>
<th>Extended hours headway (6-9 a.m. and 5 p.m.-10 p.m.)</th>
<th>Weekend headway (9 a.m.-5 p.m.)</th>
<th>Days of service (minimum)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>&lt;=12 minutes</td>
<td>&lt;=15 minutes</td>
<td>&lt;=15 minutes</td>
<td>7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>&lt;=15 minutes</td>
<td>&lt;=30 minutes</td>
<td>&lt;=30 minutes</td>
<td>7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>&lt;= 30 minutes</td>
<td>&lt;= 60 minutes</td>
<td>&lt;= 60 minutes</td>
<td>7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>&lt;= 60 minutes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>6 trips per day any time</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>2 trips per day any time</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-hour</td>
<td>1 trip every 2 hours, overnight (10 p.m.-6 a.m.); 7 days</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
People living within a half-mile of frequent fixed route transit

For each level of frequency, WSDOT conducted an analysis using U.S. Census data processed in ArcGIS to estimate how many people live within a half-mile of frequent fixed route transit. Due largely to a lack of available walkway data, this approach does not take into account how easily these people can access frequent fixed route transit by walking. While the proviso specifically identified a “half-mile walk,” WSDOT and stakeholders determined that this approach was the best option to follow based on the current lack of walkway data. The table below shows the estimated number of people living within a half-mile of each frequency level.

Additionally, the population estimates are cumulative counts (i.e., the estimated 4.72 million people who have access to frequency level 6 service includes the estimated 4.61 million people who have access to frequency level 5 service).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency level</th>
<th>Population estimate living within one-half mile</th>
<th>Percent of Washington residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>530,000</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>1,520,000</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>3,040,000</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>4,390,000</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>4,610,000</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 6</td>
<td>4,720,000</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-hour</td>
<td>690,000</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key findings

- About 61 percent of people in the state live within a half-mile of fixed route transit service. About 7 percent of residents live within a half-mile of the most frequent fixed route transit service levels. The numbers of people who live within a half-mile walk of each frequency level are smaller than these numbers.

- By necessity, this study does not measure other forms of public transportation (e.g., demand response, micromobility, ridesharing). WSDOT recognizes that areas served by flag stops, paratransit, or route deviations, for example, provide critical access statewide to forms of mobility that are not included in the scope of this study.

- There are often barriers along a half mile walk to transit that prevent access. Lack of available data on walkways, multimodal paths, and barriers across the state makes it difficult to answer questions about walking access to transit. Understanding whether getting to transit is accessible requires addressing this data gap.

Recommendations and next steps

The study recommends the state invest in collecting statewide walkway and accessibility data and developing systems to process and maintain the data. This would enable analysis that could provide a more accurate picture of mobility and access to transit, enhancing transportation and land use planning and investment at all levels of government.

For the final report, WSDOT will:

- Identify gaps in access to frequent fixed route transit.
- Analyze those gaps for disparities in race, age, and disability.
- Develop funding scenarios to address the identified gaps.
INTRODUCTION

In its 2022 session, the Legislature directed WSDOT to conduct a study that proposes a definition of frequent fixed route transit and documents how many people in Washington live within a half-mile walk of frequent fixed route transit (ESSB 5689 – 2022 Sect. 221 (15)).

This is an initial report of the study. The final report is due to the Legislature June 30, 2023.

WSDOT engaged the Joint Transportation Committee, a variety of stakeholders, and rider advocates to guide the study design, findings, and recommendations.

This initial report:

- Provides results of the study's key question (i.e., “How many people in Washington live within a half-mile walk of frequent fixed route transit”) based on available data.
- Summarizes stakeholder engagement, methodology, and data sources.
- Outlines recommendations and next steps.

This initial report also details key findings, including that WSDOT produced an analysis about population living within a half-mile of frequent fixed route transit regardless of accessible walking paths. Walkable and accessible routes to transit were difficult to determine due to current data limitations. Stakeholders confirmed this finding during the engagement process. As such, this report includes a recommendation to address this data gap to more accurately understand how many people live within a half-mile walk of frequent fixed route transit stops.
STUDY RESULTS

Frequency

For the purposes of this study, frequent fixed route transit is a level of service that:

- Meets rider needs.
- Is measured at multiple frequency levels.
- Includes consideration of headway (i.e., how often there is service), span (i.e., when does service take place), and days of service.

Frequent transit differs in communities around the state, reflecting their unique characteristics. For example, differences in geography and demographics.

Readers should also note that WSDOT established this study's levels of transit frequency based on the state's fixed route transit agencies only. For specific agencies included, see General Transit Feed Specification feeds collected and included in analysis. The study does not measure flexible services (e.g., flag stops, route deviated, demand response) that help meet the transportation needs of people across the state, but whose data are not captured using schedule-based standards.

The table below shows levels of transit frequency in this study. See Frequent fixed route transit definition for information WSDOT's methodology to determine these levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency level</th>
<th>Weekday daytime headway (9 a.m.-5 p.m.)</th>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Population in proximity to frequent fixed route transit

For this study, WSDOT used available data and methods to estimate the number of people who live within a half-mile of frequent fixed route transit.

WSDOT determined through research and stakeholder engagement that accurately and precisely calculating half-mile walking routes is not practical due to inadequate statewide data on the presence, functionality, and condition of walkways (i.e., sidewalks, trails, crosswalks, and other facilities primarily for people of all ages and abilities using active transportation). See Data needs and limitations for more information.

WSDOT estimated the number of people who live within a half-mile of transit meeting each frequency level. See Study process for more information. Estimates are rounded to the nearest 10,000.

The number of people living within a half-mile walk to transit is less than the number living within a half-mile radius. As such, readers should consider the population numbers as high-end estimates or overestimates of the number of residents with access to each level of frequent fixed route transit service.

Additionally, the population estimates are cumulative counts (i.e., the estimated 4.72 million people who have access to frequency level 6 service includes the estimated 4.61 million people who have access to frequency level 5 service).

The table below shows the estimated number of people who live within a half-mile of transit meeting each frequency level.

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<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The maps below show areas within a half-mile of transit stops corresponding to each frequency level, followed by a map of the six levels (1 through 6, not including 24-hour service) together. A map of 24-hour service is also included, followed by three maps showing more detail of the Puget Sound area, Vancouver area, and Central/Eastern Washington.
Frequency level 1
Frequency level 2
Frequency level 4
24 Hour frequency
Accessibility

For the purpose of this study, accessibility refers to the ability of people to access fixed route transit stops by using walkway infrastructure (e.g., can a person walk or roll to a bus stop by using a sidewalk or trail?). WSDOT determined this usage by discussing the legislative language with project stakeholders and partners. While all fixed route service is required to have complementary ADA paratransit service, this study does not address the ADA accessibility of sidewalks or other walking routes.

As stated above and detailed in Data needs and limitations, complete data does not currently exist to systematically identify accessible walking routes. If that data did exist, different levels or categories of accessibility could be described and calculated based on different user needs. See Recommendation: collect walkway data for a description of the data required to fully analyze transit accessibility.

Recommendations and next steps

In addition to addressing key elements of the Legislature's request, WSDOT’s analysis produced a broad picture of frequent fixed route transit access across the state. The maps in Population in proximity to frequent fixed route transit show where frequent fixed route transit and gaps exist.

After reviewing the findings, WSDOT and stakeholders confirmed three salient takeaways through collaborative discussions:

• About 61 percent of people in the state live within a half-mile of fixed route transit service. About 7 percent of residents live within a half-mile of the most frequent fixed route transit service levels. The numbers of people who live within a half-mile walk of each frequency level are smaller than these numbers.

• By necessity, this study does not measure forms of public transportation (e.g., demand-response, micromobility, ridesharing). WSDOT recognizes that areas served by flag stops, paratransit, or route deviations, for example, provide critical access statewide to forms of mobility that are not included in the scope of this study.

• There are often barriers along a half mile walk to transit that prevent access. Lack of available data on walkways and multimodal paths across the state makes it difficult to answer questions about access to transit. Understanding whether getting to transit is accessible requires addressing this data gap.

The first two findings reflect that most frequent fixed route transit serves limited geographies in urban areas, while roughly half the people in the state have access to at least the least frequent type of service. The last finding informs this report’s recommendation, which is to collect necessary data to understand walking access.

Recommendation: collect walkway data

WSDOT found strong consensus among internal and external stakeholders, experts in the transit data field, transit operators, and transit riders that, to understand where accessible and walkable transit exists, it is necessary to first collect statewide walkway data.

To collect this data, WSDOT and its partners would first need to complete the following initiatives:

• Define a standard of walkway data quality for all relevant facilities in the state.

• Identify appropriate data collection and maintenance systems.

• Develop those data collection and maintenance systems.

• Institute a governance system to adapt data collection and maintenance processes over time.
Walkway data is recommended to include various subsets of data to fulfill the needs of a walkability analysis, including:

- Width
- Curb cuts
- Grades, slopes, clearances
- Material and physical condition
- Connections (i.e., with other pedestrian facilities), obstructions, and gaps
- Crossings of roadways, intersections, railways

These data needs significantly exceed current data collection processes for walkway attributes. Local and state transportation agencies often track walkways without these specifications merely as a general attribute of a roadway or not at all. Many transportation agencies, including WSDOT, collect some amount of more detailed walkway data. However, practices vary across the state and country such that many current collection methods would not support the quality of data required.

WSDOT is actively investigating options available for data collection to develop a business plan to fulfill the initiatives and needs described above.

**Next steps**

As WSDOT completes this initial report, the agency will begin addressing requirements of the final report due to the Legislature June 30, 2023. These requirements include:

- Identifying gaps in accessible frequent fixed route transit.
- Analyzing those gaps for disparities in race, age, and disability.
- Developing funding scenarios to address the identified gaps.

WSDOT has begun engaging stakeholders to discuss methods for collecting and analyzing data about disparities and to estimate costs associated with filling frequent transit gaps.
STUDY PROCESS

The following sections describe the major steps of this study, including formative decision-making and engagement structure, data assessment, frequent fixed route transit definition, and analysis.

Legislative direction and decision making

In its 2022 session the Legislature directed WSDOT to conduct this study (ESSB 5689 – 2022 Sect. 221 (15)).

WSDOT began work on the study by interviewing a cross-section of stakeholders. These stakeholders included:

- Urban, small urban, and rural transit staff.
- Nonprofit employees who represent transit riders and prospective transit riders.
- People knowledgeable about transit data science.

The project team used information from these interviews to develop a high-level approach for the study and create a structure for engagement throughout the project.

WSDOT also engaged the Joint Transportation Committee, stakeholders, and rider advocates to ensure this study is accurate, useful, and broadly supported. Additionally, WSDOT established advisory groups to provide recommendations to project staff and WSDOT executives. Input from these groups influenced the study.

Stakeholder engagement framework

In keeping with the agency’s Community Engagement Plan, WSDOT worked with individuals and groups to gain diverse perspectives on the study:

- **Ad hoc engagement** – WSDOT project team members, advisory group members, and individual stakeholders were encouraged to provide input when and however they wanted, one time or frequently.

- Examples of engagement included individual and small group discussions with project team members and advisory groups; presentations by project team members; emails; document review and comment, and an open house web site.

- **Advisory groups** – Project team members recruited and convened both technical and policy advisory groups to inform and guide the study and make recommendations to WSDOT executives. These groups provided continuity of engagement and group interaction, which supported learning and insights that emerged from iteration.

- **Joint Transportation Committee** – Project team members consulted with Joint Transportation Committee staff to develop an engagement approach, give periodic briefings at key project milestones, and perform draft document review.

- **WSDOT executives** – Project team members worked with WSDOT executives to develop an engagement approach, give periodic briefings at key project milestones, and perform draft document review.
Data needs and limitations

WSDOT assessed what data would be necessary to define and locate frequent fixed route transit around the state and determine the number of residents living within a half-mile walk of frequent fixed route transit. The WSDOT team considered available data related to the Legislature's direction for the study, documented gaps, and reviewed findings with stakeholders for confirmation.

WSDOT found that limited availability of high-quality walkway data constrains the ability to robustly address the question of who lives within a half-mile walk of frequent fixed route transit. Much of the data is missing, outdated, or insufficiently detailed in many locations statewide. The lack of walkway data means that it is not possible for WSDOT to determine whether a person can successfully navigate a street or pathway, especially if that person has a disability that affects their mobility. For example, some cities and regions have collected robust sidewalk data, while other areas have no data. Additionally standardized data sets are lacking, which makes it difficult to compare walkability and accessibility across the state or within a region.

Given this data limitation, WSDOT recommended to the study's advisory groups that the best course of action was to estimate the number of residents living near transit stops rather than calculate a precise number based on available walking routes. WSDOT also recommended including additional information in this report about what it would take to get better data for future use. See Recommendation: collect walkway data.

Frequent fixed route transit definition

With support from advisory groups and other stakeholders, WSDOT chose to create levels of frequency to address differing needs and contexts for transit across the state. Levels range from Level 6 service (necessary for people to meet their most basic travel needs) to Level 1 service (the most aspirational of levels currently only in dense urban corridors). Based on stakeholder feedback, WSDOT added a separate 24-hour service level because the six core frequency levels do not identify where service operates overnight.

The most important aspects of the levels are headway and span. Headway is how many times there is service during a specific period of the day. Span is what time the service starts and ends.

Through conversation with stakeholders, WSDOT defined spans for the three most frequent levels that include service until 10 p.m., given the importance of being able to travel in the evenings.

Additionally, the days-of-service minimum for the three most frequent levels is seven days a week, while the minimum for the three least frequent levels is five days a week, 9 a.m.-5 p.m.

Based on stakeholder input, WSDOT did not include seasonal (i.e., season-specific headway and hours), holiday (altered service on specific calendar days), or high-capacity transit considerations. This study is focused on frequency and not other factors, which distinguish high-capacity transit from other forms of fixed route transit service.

Additionally, through collaboration with the advisory groups, WSDOT decided to analyze service in terms of the frequency of each route at a stop, not based on the combined frequency of all routes at a stop. This means that the combined frequency of different routes at a transit stop might be more frequent than the analysis shows.
Analysis

WSDOT used the following steps to approximate how many people in Washington live within a half-mile of frequent fixed route transit:

1. Collect transit stop locations in the form of General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data from every transit agency in the state. Most data came from official agency sources. WSDOT staff developed some data for this project based on publicly available schedule information.

2. Sort all transit stops in the state into the six frequency levels developed with stakeholders using open-source software (transit_service_analyst and combine_gtfs_feeds from Puget Sound Regional Council).

3. Compile U.S. Census (2016-2020 American Community Survey) population data at block group level for the state.

4. Draw half-mile radius circles around each transit stop using ArcGIS software. Group all the circles (accounting for overlaps) around stops meeting each frequency level. Results are in the maps in Population in proximity to frequent fixed route transit.

5. For every census block group in the state, multiply the percent of that block group that is covered by each frequency level by the total number of people living in that block group. Assume that population is uniformly distributed throughout the block group and round to the nearest 10,000.
APPENDIX A: STAKEHOLDER ADVISORY GROUPS

Policy advisory group members

- Amy Asher, Mason Transit
- Don Chartock, WSDOT Public Transportation Division
- Celeste Gilman, WSDOT Active Transportation Division
- Tom Hingson, Everett Transit
- Justin Leighton, Washington State Transit Association
- E Susan Meyer, Spokane Transit
- Paulo Nunes-Ueno, Front and Centered
- Angie Peters, Valley Transit
- Anna Zivarts, Disability Rights Washington

Technical advisory group members

- Lisa Ballard, WSDOT Management of Mobility
- Thomas Craig, WSDOT Public Transportation Division
- Melissa Gaughan, King County Metro
- Cliff Hall, WSDOT Multimodal Planning and Data Division
- Brian Lee, Puget Sound Regional Council
- Justin Leighton, Washington State Transit Association
- Steffani Lillie, Kitsap Transit
- Karl Otterstrom, Spokane Transit
- Lindsey Sehmel, Pierce Transit
- Tony Tompos, Pullman Transit
- Brad Windler, Skagit Transit
APPENDIX B: DATA SETS AND TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

Tools used

- **Python**
- transit_service_analyst by Puget Sound Regional Council
- combine_gtfs_feeds by Puget Sound Regional Council
- ArcGIS Pro by ESRI

Population data

- American Community Survey 2016-2020 5-year

Transit service reference dates

- **Weekday Service**: Monday, Aug. 15, 2022
- **Weekend Service**: Sunday, Aug. 21, 2022

General Transit Feed Specification feeds collected and included in analysis

| Apple Line | Grant Transit Authority |
| Asotin County Public Transportation Benefit Area | Grape Line, WSDOT Travel Washington |
| Ben Franklin Transit | Grays Harbor Transit |
| Black Ball Ferry | HopeSource |
| C-TRAN | Intercity Transit |
| Central Transit | Island Transit |
| Clallam Transit | Jefferson Transit |
| Colville Confederated Tribes Department of Transportation | Kalispel Tribe of Indians, Kaltran |
| Community Transit | King County Metro |
| Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, Kayak Transit | Kitsap Transit |
| Dungeness Line, WSDOT Travel Washington | L.E.W.I.S. Mountain Highway Transit |
| Everett Transit | Lady of the Lake Stehekin Shuttle |
| Garfield County Transportation Authority | Lewiston Transit System |
| Gold Line, WSDOT Travel Washington | Link Transit |
| | Lower Columbia Community Action Program |
| Lower Elwah Klallam | Tulalip Transit |
| Lummi Nation Transit | Twin Transit |
| Makah Public Transit | Union Gap Transit |
| Mason Transit Authority | Valley Transit |
| Mount Adams Transportation Service | Wahkiakum on the Move |
| Muckleshoot Indian Tribe | Washington State Ferries |
| Okanogan County Transit Authority, TranGO | Whatcom Transportation Authority |
| Pacific Transit | Yakama Nation, Pahto Passage |
| People For People | Yakima Transit |
| Pierce County Ferries | |
| Pierce County Human Services | |
| Pierce Transit | |
| Pullman Transit | |
| RiverCities Transit | |
| Rural Resources Community Action | |
| Seattle Children's Hospital | |
| Seattle Monorail | |
| Selah Transit | |
| Skagit Transit | |
| Skamania County Transit | |
| Snoqualmie Valley Transportation | |
| Snow Goose Transit | |
| Solid Ground | |
| Sound Transit | |
| Special Mobility Services | |
| Spokane Transit Authority | |
| Spokane Tribe of Indians, Moccasin Express | |
| Squaxin Tribal Transit, Squaxin Island Transit | |
| Thurston Regional Planning Council, ruralTRANSIT | |
APPENDIX C: ACRONYMS, GLOSSARY, WEBSITES FEATURED

Acronyms

ADA  Americans with Disabilities Act  
ESSB  Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill  
GIS  Geographic Information System  
GTFS  General Transit Feed Specification  
WSDOT  Washington State Department of Transportation

Glossary

Access and accessibility  In this report, unless otherwise specified, accessibility refers to the ability of people to access fixed route transit stops by using the walkway infrastructure. This framing of accessibility includes considerations of American with Disability Act requirements for transit facilities, such as transit stops but does not include access to ADA required complementary paratransit service or ADA requirements for transit operations.

Demand response  A demand-response service is any service that responds to rider requests for service, by either stopping at an unplanned location along a fixed-route, deviating from a fixed-route, or by initiating a trip to serve the rider (and possibly other riders) that would not otherwise have been performed.

Fixed route  A fixed-route service is any shared-ride service that picks up or drops off passengers at designated locations according to a schedule.

Flag stop  A flag stop (also known as “hail and ride” or “request stops”) is a location near or anywhere along the route of a fixed-route service where a passenger can request a pick up or drop off by coordinating with the driver or the agency, depending on agency policies.

Headway  Headway is the time between consecutive buses running on a fixed-route schedule.

Micromobility  Micromobility is the use of relatively small and lightweight vehicles to move usually a single person, such as bikes, scooters, and other mobility devices.

Ridesharing  Ridesharing is the casual or formal carpooling of multiple trips into a single trip by the addition of riders to a planned trip. Can also be used to describe commercial mobility on demand services such as Lyft or Uber.

Route deviated  A route-deviated fixed-route service will depart from the fixed route to pick up or drop off passengers according to agency policies.

Span  Span is the time range during which a fixed-route service accepts passengers for pickup and drop off.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Websites featured</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>High-capacity transit</td>
<td>RCW 81.104.015</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equity and Civil Rights at wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA(4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.
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Thông tin về Đạo luật Người Mỹ tàn tật (Americans with Disabilities Act, ADA)

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