

Frequent Transit Service Study final report draft process

Establishing statewide benchmarks, setting goals, identifying gaps, and estimating costs

[ESSB 5689 – 2021-22](#) requires WSDOT submit a final report to the Legislature by June 30, 2023 that “identifies gaps in accessible frequent transit, analyzed for disparities in race, age, and disability, and develops funding scenarios to address the identified gaps.”

WSDOT submitted the [Frequent Transit Service Study: Initial Report](#) to the Legislature December 2022. The final report will build off the initial report’s analysis and stakeholder input. Specifically, the final report will use the frequency levels and process to calculate the number of people within a half-mile of transit as foundational elements of benchmarking and demographic analysis for the final report.

Project staff recommend the following process to meet the Legislature’s requirements and deliver the final report:

- Step 1. Calculate the number of people from each demographic group who have access to each level of frequent fixed-route transit**
- Step 2. Use results from the previous step as the current statewide benchmarks of fixed-route transit access**
- Step 3. Select a goal for each calculated benchmark in the statewide analysis table**
- Step 4. Define “gaps to accessible frequent fixed-route transit” as the difference between the calculated statewide benchmark and goals**
- Step 5. Explore and discuss disparities in a narrative format, which will supplement and clarify analysis**
- Step 6. Define a “funding scenario” as the estimated cost to provide service that eliminates gaps**
- Step 7. Calculate the overall cost estimate to address the defined gaps in frequent fixed-route transit**

Further detail on the steps above follows.

Detailed process

Step 1. Calculate the number of people from each demographic group who have access to each level of frequent fixed-route transit

This process follows the process project staff used to produce the initial report (see [Draft Process: Estimate the Number of Residents within One Half Mile](#)).

Instead of using only total population data, project staff will use demographic data to calculate the number of people from each demographic category identified in ESSB 5689 – 2021-22, as well as other groups identified by project staff and stakeholders, who have access to each level of transit.

Currently planned demographic categories include the following:

- People of color
- People with a disability
- People living below 100 percent of the federal poverty line
- People living below 200 percent of the federal poverty line
- People 65 years old and up
- People under 18 years old

Step 2. Use results from the previous step as the current statewide benchmarks of fixed-route transit access

All numbers calculated in Step 1 will demonstrate various levels of transit access for different groups and will serve as benchmarks for the purposes of the study.

A statewide analysis table of current benchmarks is below.

	Total Population	% of total	Adults with a disability	% of disabled adults	People below 100% poverty line	% of people below 100%	People below 200% poverty line	% of people below 200%	People of Color	% of POC	Senior Population	% of Seniors	Youth Population	% of Youth
Statewide	7,512,000		870,000		751,000		1,780,000		1,991,000		1,164,000		1,653,000	
Level 6	4,720,000	63%	544,000	63%	525,000	70%	1,206,000	68%	1,455,000	73%	672,000	58%	1,006,000	61%
Level 5	4,612,000	61%	531,000	61%	514,000	68%	1,175,000	66%	1,429,000	72%	654,000	56%	977,000	59%
Level 4	4,395,000	58%	508,000	58%	497,000	66%	1,132,000	64%	1,376,000	69%	620,000	53%	923,000	56%
Level 3	3,037,000	40%	340,000	39%	362,000	48%	795,000	45%	1,031,000	52%	403,000	35%	611,000	37%
Level 2	1,522,000	20%	163,000	19%	183,000	24%	386,000	22%	559,000	28%	196,000	17%	273,000	17%
Level 1	526,000	7%	53,000	6%	67,000	9%	132,000	7%	228,000	11%	61,000	5%	77,000	5%
Level Night	690,000	9%	66,000	8%	80,000	11%	157,000	9%	277,000	14%	81,000	7%	105,000	6%

Step 3. Select a goal for each calculated benchmark in the statewide analysis table

There are 48 calculated benchmarks in the statewide analysis table. Project staff would set a corresponding goal for each benchmark.

Project staff will propose and discuss goals in one-on-one conversations with the study’s policy advisory group (PAG) and technical advisory group (TAG) members, as well as other stakeholders.

Based on feedback, project staff will present revised goals for consideration at PAG/TAG meetings. Project staff will make proposed goals and revisions available on the study's webpage.

In the end, project staff will gain consent from stakeholders on a set of goals that demonstrate a level of transit service in line with the state's values and capabilities.

Step 4. Define “gaps to accessible frequent fixed-route transit” as the difference between the calculated statewide benchmark and goals

ESSB 5689 – 2021-22 does not define “gaps,” but the legislation does require that gaps and funding scenarios are connected.

Defining the gaps between different populations and accessible fixed-route transit in this fashion allows for a clear link between the gap and a proposed funding scenario.

Step 5 Explore and discuss disparities in a narrative format, which will supplement and clarify analysis

Disparities are differences in levels of transit access between different demographic groups and are complex. Differences in access statewide could be related to:

- Negative rationale (i.e., historical and current oppression, unfair allocation of resources)
- Neutral rationale (i.e., geographic trends not explicitly related to historical and current oppression)
- Positive rationale (i.e., dedicated allocation of resources to underserved communities)

Project staff will address this complexity by developing narrative that uses multiple analytical frameworks to discuss and provide insight into how access to transit varies by demography and geography.

Step 6. Define a “funding scenario” as the estimated cost to provide service that eliminates gaps

For the purposes of this study, project staff defines “funding scenario” as the cost estimate required to provide service that eliminates gaps between current benchmarks and defined goals.

Consideration of funding mechanisms is outside of the scope of this study.

Step 7. Calculate the overall cost estimate to address the defined gaps in frequent fixed-route transit

Project staff would develop multiple cost estimation methodologies based on different units of account, for example:

- Cost per person served
- Cost per bus stop
- Cost per vehicle mile

In each method, project staff would aggregate all costs into the unit of account based on historical data from agencies. Project staff would then estimate the units required to address the gap to calculate a rough cost of providing those units of service in the state. This would include consideration of both capital and operational costs, as well as the expenses of expanding service versus ongoing expenses.

Stakeholders would receive complete documentation of assumptions so they may provide feedback and help refine methods.

The final report will present a range based on the results from different methodologies, as well as a level of confidence, which may be very low.