



TRANSPORTATION

The Wenatchee Valley sits at the confluence of the Columbia and Wenatchee River valleys. This creates a transportation choke point for traffic and freight running both North-South and East-West through North Central Washington. The Wenatchee Valley is the junction of major highway systems including US 2 (running east-west through the State), US 97 (running north-south through the State) and SR 28 (connects to I-90). The Wenatchee Valley is also host to a BNSF switchyard and crew change depot that connects BNSF's Columbia River Subdivision (Spokane-Wenatchee) with BNSF's Scenic Subdivision (Seattle-Wenatchee); and also connects BNSF's lines to Cascade & Columbia River Railroad (Wenatchee to Oroville). These road and rail transportation lanes run directly through the business core of Wenatchee/East Wenatchee; and thus, have significant impact upon people and businesses.

The Wenatchee Valley's unique topography and road/rail/bridge infrastructure is already causing mobility congestion which is expected to increase in the future absent new transportation infrastructure projects. These projects will be initiated and funded with public funds, primarily

by the State of Washington. The Chamber is interested in making sure that the projects chosen are optimal for the long-term economic health of the Valley and are funded equitably and appropriately.

As Washington businesses and residents transitioned to working from home, and new virtual meeting platforms emerged, daily commuting and car trips declined dramatically, impacting gas tax revenues used to fund transportation projects. During the May-June period, gas tax revenues declined by more than \$100 million per month. Some legislators had already initiated discussions about a new transportation revenue package largely due to the backlog of needs around the state. The impacts of COVID-19 will likely spark further discussion into ideas such as new gas taxes, adding carbon taxes, road usage charges, and fees on car and truck licensing. However, new transportation revenue packages have historically been adopted with strong bi-partisan support from around the state and are the outcome of carefully identifying project and maintenance priorities across every legislative district. Although COVID-19 may accelerate discussions, at this time it seems like a large scale bi-partisan transportation package is not imminent.

Guiding Principles

- » The Chamber supports transportation infrastructure projects in the Wenatchee Valley that improve movement of people and freight in a safe, efficient and equitable manner.
- » The Chamber will not lend its support to any project prior to fully vetting the project. The Chamber's vetting of a project does not obligate it to lend its support.
- » The Chamber will support transportation funding mechanisms that are broadly applied to all users and not specific user groups.
- » The Chamber supports transportation funding mechanisms being fully dedicated (100%) to transportation needs and include language that prevents transportation dollars being diverted to other uses.
- » The Chamber supports performance and accountability systems for transportation infrastructure plans to measure progress and results.