



Chapter 4. Transportation

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is organized into the following sections, which correspond to major issue areas identified throughout the comprehensive planning process. Each section contains proposed goals, policies, and implementation measures for consideration and inclusion in the final comprehensive plan:

- Inventory of Existing Facilities and Services
- Land Use, Environment and Economic Development
- Level of Service and Concurrency
- Finance
- Intergovernmental Coordination and Public Participation

The complete Long-Range Transportation Plan is maintained by the Kittitas County Department of Public Works. The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan includes the Transportation Plan by reference. The Transportation Plan is adopted through a separate process than the annual amendment plan. Any changes made are adopted by reference to the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan at adoption.

4.2. Description of the Existing Transportation System

Kittitas County's road system in the lower valley is roughly based on a one-mile grid system, which is intended to follow section lines or reasonable fractions of a section subdivision (i.e. quarter sections, 1/16th lines, etc.). The upper reaches of the county are mountainous and roads lend themselves more to terrain and other physical conditions than to survey features.

There are various categories of roads within Kittitas County that are administered and maintained by different agencies and property owners, including federal, state, county, city, and private.

- Federal roads include the interstate highway system and US Forest Service roads. These roads are administered by federal agencies.
- State roads include highways that are administered and maintained by the Washington State Department of Transportation and Department of Natural Resource roads, which provide direct access to state lands.
- County roads are officially adopted onto the Kittitas County Road system by the Board of County Commissioners and are also known as “on-system” roads. The county is responsible for maintenance and improvements to these roads.
- City roads are administered and maintained by the cities of Cle Elum, Ellensburg, Kittitas, Roslyn, and the Town of South Cle Elum.
- Private roads are usually created by developments. They are owned, controlled, and typically maintained by private property owners. Private roads can be dedicated to the public through a platting process or by being used by the public for over 10 years without being accepted as a part of the county road system by the Board of County Commissioners. These roads are known as public “off system” roads and cannot be gated or obstructed.

4.2.1. County Roads

The Long-Range Transportation Plan, adopted by reference, provides a summary of the county road log inventory of existing conditions for all county on-system roads. They are grouped according to functional classification and include mileage for each road and then a total for each classification. The “Urban” and “Rural” classifications refer to the federal urban area around Ellensburg. Also included in the Long-Range Transportation Plan is an inventory of existing conditions including pavement width, pavement type, a history of Average Daily Traffic (ADT) volumes, roadway capacity, and roadway level of service (LOS).

4.2.2. Changes to Road Inventory

Some of the existing county roads may be vacated or annexed in any given year. Road vacations take the mileage off the inventory through a public transfer of the property. Annexations of properties into city limits can involve transferring ownership and maintenance responsibilities of adjacent roads to a city. Road vacations and annexations remove road mileage from the county road log inventory.

Just as annexations and vacations remove roads from the inventory, construction of new county roads adds mileage to the inventory. New roads can be constructed either by County resources or as part of developments.

4.2.3. Other Transportation Modes

There are several alternative transportation modes utilized in Kittitas County other than driving passenger vehicles on roads. These transportation modes include rail, truck service, public transportation, air, and non-motorized systems. The Long-Range Transportation Plan that is maintained by the Kittitas County Department of Public Works and adopted by reference provides a detailed description of these various modes. It describes:

- Rail service - available freight rail and potential passenger rail.
- Truck movements throughout the County.
- Public transportation options available – demand response services, shuttle bus services, and intercity services.
- Air transportation - provided at Bowers Field Airport, Cle Elum Municipal Airport, DeVere Field, and Easton State Airfield.
- Non-Motorized systems – pedestrian and bicycle services and recreational paths.

4.2.4. Transportation System Maintenance

Preserving and maintaining the public’s investment in transportation infrastructure is an important expenditure of public funds. Kittitas County prioritizes maintenance activities as follows: first priority is for emergencies, immediate action is taken to repair damage and correct problems as soon as they are reported; second priority is for items that are scheduled on a yearly basis, including but not limited to: crack sealing, preleveling, sealcoating, and roadway striping; and the third priority is for preventive maintenance activities that are scheduled on a seven-year maintenance cycle to keep the pavement conditions above a level that would require corrective maintenance or other major repairs.

4.3. Land Use, Environment and Economic Development

Many of the decisions related to transportation have an effect on land uses, the environment and economic development. Different land uses have different transportation needs and impacts. Transportation improvement projects need to address the environmental impacts of the proposed actions. Similarly, many economic development strategies include the need for transportation facilities. These areas are all inter-related and their relationships need to be recognized.

4.3.1. Land Use

The final comprehensive plan will contain a land use element with a land use plan and policies, which will need to be consistent with the transportation element. In the event that the land uses proposed cannot be supported by the existing transportation system and there are no identified means to fund the necessary improvements, there needs to be a mechanism in place to review

both plans and either revise the land use plan or otherwise change the level of service standard or project priorities and funding in the transportation element. This needs to be an iterative process in which both plans are routinely reviewed for consistency and compatibility.

Presently, the transportation-related assumptions used in the alternative draft land use plans have been developed as part of the SEPA process.

4.3.2. Environment

Transportation decisions are not, and should not be, exempt from environmental review. Impacts to the natural and built environment need to be taken into consideration before any major transportation decisions are made. Most local transportation improvement projects are subject to state and federal environmental regulations as well as any local environmental laws that apply. County road projects (CRPs) routinely follow SEPA regulations unless they are specifically exempted under WAC 197-11-305, 800 through 880. Some large transportation improvement projects are also subject to NEPA -- the National Environmental Policy Act. Other environmental reviews are part of permitting for work over or adjacent to streams.

4.3.3. Economic Development

Transportation facilities are an important consideration to a business or industry making location decisions. The decision whether or not to locate in a particular jurisdiction can rest solely in the balance of access to transportation facilities. Businesses look at their need to get customers and supplies to their location with ease. Industrial developments need access to transportation facilities for shipping and receiving. Many local jurisdictions have to balance their desires to attract new businesses and industries against the obligation to provide transportation services.

4.4. Level of Service / Concurrency

Kittitas County measures level of service (LOS) for arterial roadways utilizing the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) LOS methodology. The Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) method of measuring LOS is recognized as a national standard and is currently being utilized by other jurisdictions throughout the state and within Kittitas County including the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the City of Ellensburg.

4.5. Existing Deficiencies

The adopted LOS methodology and threshold determinations are stated in Section 4.8 Goals, Policies, and Objectives, specifically Level of Service (LOS) and Concurrency GPO 4.25 through GPO 4.33.

4.5.1. Twenty-Year Forecast

As the population grows within the county, the number of registered vehicles and drivers will also increase. Where those vehicles travel will depend, in large part, on where the drivers reside, shop and work. Determining the likely increases in traffic along transportation facilities is based on the land uses, which will be permitted and even encouraged in various parts of the county. The Long-Range Transportation Plan that is maintained by the Kittitas County Department of Public Works and adopted by reference indicates the twenty-year forecasted traffic growth and level of service impacts to the County's transportation system.

4.5.2. Planned Improvements

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program

The County's Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is reviewed, updated, and adopted every year. Washington State Law requires counties to develop six-year transportation improvement programs as provided under RCW 36.81.121.

In addition to state laws, federal laws also dictate transportation improvements. It is our objective to meet as many of the needs of the traveling public: county residents, visitors, and service providers, in order to provide a safe and efficient transportation system while recognizing the fiscal realities of funding for construction and maintenance of the transportation system.

The Six-Year TIP is updated every year by the Department of Public Works and changes are made to reflect funding secured or shifts in priorities. The Annual Construction Program, adopted with the county's budget, provides an accurate picture of the first year of the TIP.

New Roads and Planned Extensions

The Transportation Plan has a list of proposed new roads or extensions, which have been identified through various planning processes to date.

4.6. Financing Transportation Improvements

4.6.1. Revenue Sources

Revenue sources change annually and are projected and included in the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program and in the Long-Range Transportation Plan as it is updated. Both of these documents are adopted by reference and should be reviewed for the latest information on tax revenues, grants, and loans available for transportation system improvements. Revenue sources for all programmed improvements are listed in the Transportation Improvement Program and the

Long-Range Transportation Plan to indicate that the plans are financially feasible and constrained.

4.7. Public Participation

Discussions and decisions related to transportation are not made without active consultation with the public. A variety of forums are used to solicit quality input from a broad cross-section of interests. The Long-Range Transportation Plan has been developed through an intergovernmental coordination process involving all Kittitas County jurisdictions and those agencies and individuals indicating interest in transportation issues including QUADCO Regional Transportation Planning Organization, Washington State Department of Transportation, local area transportation providers, and local citizens. The draft plan has been posted on Kittitas County's website for review and comment by the public from October 2005 through October 2006. Open Houses will be scheduled for further public input in early November, 2006 and a Public Hearing will be scheduled mid November, 2006 with the County Commissioners for final public involvement in this update process.

4.8. Goals, Policies and Objectives

Multi-Modal Transportation System, Arterial System, and System Maintenance

GPO 4.1 To develop and maintain a safe, efficient and environmentally sound multi-modal transportation system in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements.

GPO 4.2 Kittitas County shall promote a variety of transportation modes through the selection of transportation improvement projects and review of development proposals in the Urban Growth Areas, by considering alternative modes when reviewing development applications, incorporating multiple modes into transportation improvement projects, and by establishing development standards to support the use of alternative transportation modes.

GPO 4.3 To create a transportation system that provides reasonable circulation for all users throughout the County.

GPO 4.4 Kittitas County shall provide a transportation system that enhances the safety of the community and which maximizes the use of the existing road system by maintaining a system of arterials, collectors and local access roads that forms an interconnected network for vehicular circulation.

GPO 4.5 To provide all-weather, all-season use of the arterial system for the movement of goods and services.

GPO 4.6 Kittitas County shall strive to maintain an arterial system that can accommodate legal weights year-round by developing a program for identifying and prioritizing maintenance and reconstruction projects for roads, which are used primarily for freight and good movement.

GPO 4.7 To ensure an efficient regional system of arterials is functional, safe and consistent with regional priorities and comprehensive plans.

GPO 4.8 Kittitas County shall work with WSDOT, cities and neighboring counties to develop and maintain a system of arterials, collectors and local access roads that forms an interconnected network for the efficient movement of goods and people, by prioritizing arterials improvements and maintenance activities based on the function a facility serves, by providing for local vehicular access to arterials while minimizing conflicts with through traffic, and by participating in regional coordination efforts such as QuadCo RTPO.

GPO 4.9 To identify and encourage preservation of transportation corridors for future rights-of-way by identifying corridors to be preserved as part of the overall transportation plan, by requiring right-of-way dedication or easements as part of development approval, and by acquiring right-of-way for future needs through purchase from willing sellers.

GPO 4.10 Kittitas County will place the appropriate emphasis on maintenance activities in order to preserve the capital investment in the transportation system by dedicating maintenance funding through the annual budgeting process and by developing performance measures to demonstrate the cost savings associated with appropriately scheduled maintenance activities.

GPO 4.11 Encourage and initiate Road Improvement Districts and arterial road building projects with the capital facilities six-year plan to meet Concurrency requirements of anticipated growth.

GPO 4.12 Encourage a grid system in the UGAs where practical.

GPO 4.13 Kittitas County shall require new development that reduces County road LOS below the LOS standards to mitigate their impacts.

GPO 4.14A To recognize non-motorized travel as a viable transportation mode by developing a countywide non-motorized system plan and by improving and maintaining existing non-motorized facilities.

GPO 4.14B Encourage new development to provide for safe transportation alternatives.

GPO 4.15A To maintain a Non-Motorized Transportation System Plan that clearly reflects the direction for Kittitas County.

GPO 4.15B To work with other entities to identify viable options and projects for a connection of the John Wayne Pioneer Trail through, adjacent to, or around the City of Ellensburg.

GPO 4.15C Kittitas County discourages new public trail systems in farming areas.

GPO 4.15D To recognize air transport and airports as an important element.

GPO 4.15E Recognize public-use airports as essential public facilities.

GPO 4.15F Protect Kittitas County Airport (Bowers Field), Cle Elum Municipal, DeVere Field and Easton State airports from adjacent incompatible land uses and/or activities that could impact the present or future use of the airports as essential public facilities.

GPO 4.15G A notice to title or disclosure statement should be required for new or substantial redevelopment of lots, buildings, structures, and activities located adjacent to public-use airports. The notice should indicate that the property is located adjacent to the airport and may experience low overhead flights, odor, vibrations, noise and other similar aviation impacts.

GPO 4.14H Protect public-use airports from height hazards by developing a height overlay district that will prohibit buildings or structures from penetrating the Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 77 “Imaginary Surfaces.”

Land use, Environment and Economic Development

GPO 4.16 To provide a transportation system that corresponds to and is consistent with patterns of land development in accordance with the adopted land use plans.

GPO 4.16A To adopt plans and regulations in compliance with RCW 36.70.547, or as amended thereafter, to protect airport operations.

GPO 4.17 Kittitas County shall ensure consistency between the land use and transportation plans through an iterative process for adjusting either or both plans by developing a process for reviewing plans for consistency and developing a policy for resolving inconsistencies or incompatibilities through an identification of needs and alternatives.

GPO 4.18 To ensure the transportation system can support new development and that new development finances all new construction and improvements that might be necessary.

GPO 4.19 Kittitas County shall evaluate the merits of a proposed land use action against the potential impacts on the transportation system by reviewing development proposals for potential impacts to the transportation system and requiring developments to identify and mitigate their transportation impacts through SEPA or other local regulatory actions.

GPO 4.20 To provide a transportation system that is safe, reliable and financially feasible while providing for the future needs of Kittitas County by evaluating system improvements with current and future needs in mind and by providing system improvements which reduce conflicts between passenger, freight, and agriculturally related transportation modes.

GPO 4.21 Kittitas County shall consider the environmental impacts of any proposed transportation decisions by proposing alternative transportation improvements which minimize environmental impacts, by complying with all application federal, state, and local environmental

rules, and by integrating environmental review through the transportation decision making process.

GPO 4.22 To provide a transportation system, which supports economic growth and vitality by developing policies related to capital improvements to support economic development.

GPO 4.23 Kittitas County shall develop and maintain a transportation system, which provides access to and from centers identified in the comprehensive plans.

GPO 4.24 Kittitas County shall consider the traffic volumes, type of use, adjacent land uses, and maintenance costs before approving any new county-maintained gravel roads.

Level of Service (LOS) and Concurrency

GPO 4.25 To implement LOS standards that evaluates the adequacy of transportation facilities, which are measurable, understandable, and appropriate to the services and/or facilities being considered under local conditions.

GPO 4.26 Kittitas County shall utilize the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) methodology to measure the effectiveness of the arterial system at arterial intersections by evaluating all arterial/arterial intersections (including state highways) to identify existing service levels and by developing a transportation model to evaluate the impacts of future land use alternatives on arterial/arterial intersections. Intersections, which fall below level of service “C” in rural areas and “D” in federal urban areas, shall be considered deficient.

GPO 4.27 To ensure that necessary transportation facilities and services to maintain adopted level of service standards are available when the impacts of development occur.

GPO 4.28 Kittitas County shall develop and implement a concurrency management system, which identifies existing deficiencies, funded improvements, and system capacity balances.

GPO 4.29 To develop a LOS standard that corresponds to land development goals and policies as expressed in the overall Comprehensive Plan for Kittitas County.

GPO 4.30 To encourage land use development patterns and support technology infrastructure, which reduce the demand for increased capacity on roadways.

GPO 4.31 Reserved

GPO 4.32 To develop a variety of performance measurements to evaluate the transportation system and prioritize improvements.

GPO 4.33 Kittitas County shall establish appropriate performance measures by developing and implementing a Pavement Management System (PMS) to measure pavement conditions and to prioritize maintenance or improvement projects, and by developing and implementing a Safety

Management System (SMS) to identify potentially hazardous locations and to prioritize mitigation measures.

Financing Transportation Improvements

GPO 4.34 To maximize local funds by pursuing outside funding sources for transportation improvement projects.

GPO 4.35 Kittitas County shall pursue grant funding for appropriate transportation improvement projects by identifying possible funding sources for specific transportation improvement projects, by submitting grant applications to the appropriate reviewing agencies during the grant cycle, by developing grant proposals with realistic cost estimates and by following-up on grant applications denials to seek advice to become more competitive.

GPO 4.36 To consider all local revenue options for financing transportation improvements by evaluating the potential revenues against the political costs of imposing additional taxes and by seeking advice from other local agencies who have successfully implemented optional revenues.

GPO 4.37 To maximize benefits from expenditures of transportation funds

GPO 4.38 Kittitas County shall seek partnerships with other public or private agents when mutual benefits and significant cost savings are anticipated as a result of a coordinated transportation improvement project by coordinating transportation improvement projects with other jurisdictions, utilities and adjacent property owners to maximize benefits while minimizing costs.

GPO 4.39 To reduce administrative costs associated with transportation improvements

GPO 4.40 Kittitas County shall encourage efforts to reduce the costs associated with administration of transportation improvement projects by identifying opportunities to consolidate or coordinate administration responsibilities throughout a transportation improvement project as well as provide training on grant accounting and project administration.

GPO 4.41 To fund transportation improvement projects which meet the identified needs of the community.

GPO 4.42 Kittitas County shall prioritize transportation improvement projects without identified funding sources based on community needs.

GPO 4.43 Reserved.

GPO 4.44 Reserved.

Intergovernmental Coordination and Public Participation

GPO 4.45 To identify, review and resolve interjurisdictional transportation concerns within or affecting Kittitas County

GPO 4.46 Kittitas County shall coordinate transportation planning, construction and maintenance efforts with all affected agencies by developing joint transportation standards for UGAs with the adjoining city or town, by identifying stakeholders and including them in the decision-making process and jointly develop a process for resolving conflicts between jurisdictions.

GPO 4.47 To ensure coordination among federal, state, regional, and local transportation agencies related to laws, policies and plans in order to seek consistency and ensure compatibility with regional priorities.

GPO 4.48 Kittitas County shall actively participate on selected state, regional and local transportation committees by encouraging County representation on state, regional and local transportation committees, by actively participating in coordination efforts, and by reviewing County plans and policies for consistency with other plans and policies within the region.

GPO 4.49 Provide a variety of opportunities for public input on transportation decisions from a representative cross section of the community.

GPO 4.50 Kittitas County shall promote public information and communication with businesses, organizations, and individual citizens as part of the transportation planning and decision-making process by exploring innovative means to promote public dialog on transportation issue, and by encouraging meaningful public input throughout the decision-making process.

GPO 4.51 Kittitas County shall recognize the grandfathered rights of private landowners to use roads built on public lands under federal statute RS 2477.

GPO 4.52 To ensure concurrency of transportation planning and infrastructure in areas of high settlement patterns, Kittitas County will establish a formal bi-annual review process for levels of service (LOS) and land use settlement patterns.

