



# Island Access 2045

Island County Regional  
Transportation plan

Adopted March 2024

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# Orientation to Island Access 2045

It is hard to consider the relationship between transportation and land use without acknowledging the deep effect that relationship has on the sustainability of a region. Integrated transportation-land use decision-making is fundamental to economic vitality, social justice, and environmental health in the Island Region today and for generations to come. For that reason, *Island Access 2045* strives to put transportation into its broader community context and keep it there. This Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) supports bigger aims than “just” moving people and goods.

## 1.1 Introduction to Regional Transportation Planning

Transportation decisions impact the ability to move people and goods. Similarly, land use decisions impact the need for transportation facilities and services. For instance, land use decisions that locate assisted living facilities in rural areas with no existing transit create challenges for transportation service providers. Land use decisions that separate major employment centers from housing create a need for more roads and other facilities to connect commuters to jobs.

More than 30 years ago, the Washington State Legislature recognized the critical link between land use planning decisions and transportation infrastructure and service needs. Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) in the State of Washington were created at the same time as Washington’s Growth Management Act (GMA). Since 1990, RTPOs have been the regional conveners and coordinators, bringing local agencies, transit, and state and federal transportation agencies to the table to discuss regional transportation planning.

*“The success of our statewide transportation goals depends on our ability to integrate transportation and land use considerations. RTPOs and MPOs have insightful, real-world experience with what that entails and why it is easier said than done. They have practical knowledge of the challenges local agencies face in trying to meet what are, at times, competing objectives related to mobility, congestion, land use, housing affordability, equitable access, financial constraint, and other growth management objectives.”*

Washington Transportation Policy 2040 and Beyond, Washington State Transportation Commission, 2018, <https://www.wtp2040andbeyond.com/>

The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.030 specifies the requirement for RTPOs to provide a regional transportation plan, in coordination with the department of transportation, providers of public transit, high-capacity transit, ports, and local governments. The RCW specifies the methodology, contents, and review requirements of the plan. Further per RCW 47.80.010 the legislature declares it to be in the state's interest to establish a coordinated planning program for regional transportation systems to facilitate the coordination and cooperation among state and local jurisdictions.

## 1.2 Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization

The Island RTPO, or IRTPO, was formed in September of 2016. The IRTPO includes the following member agencies:

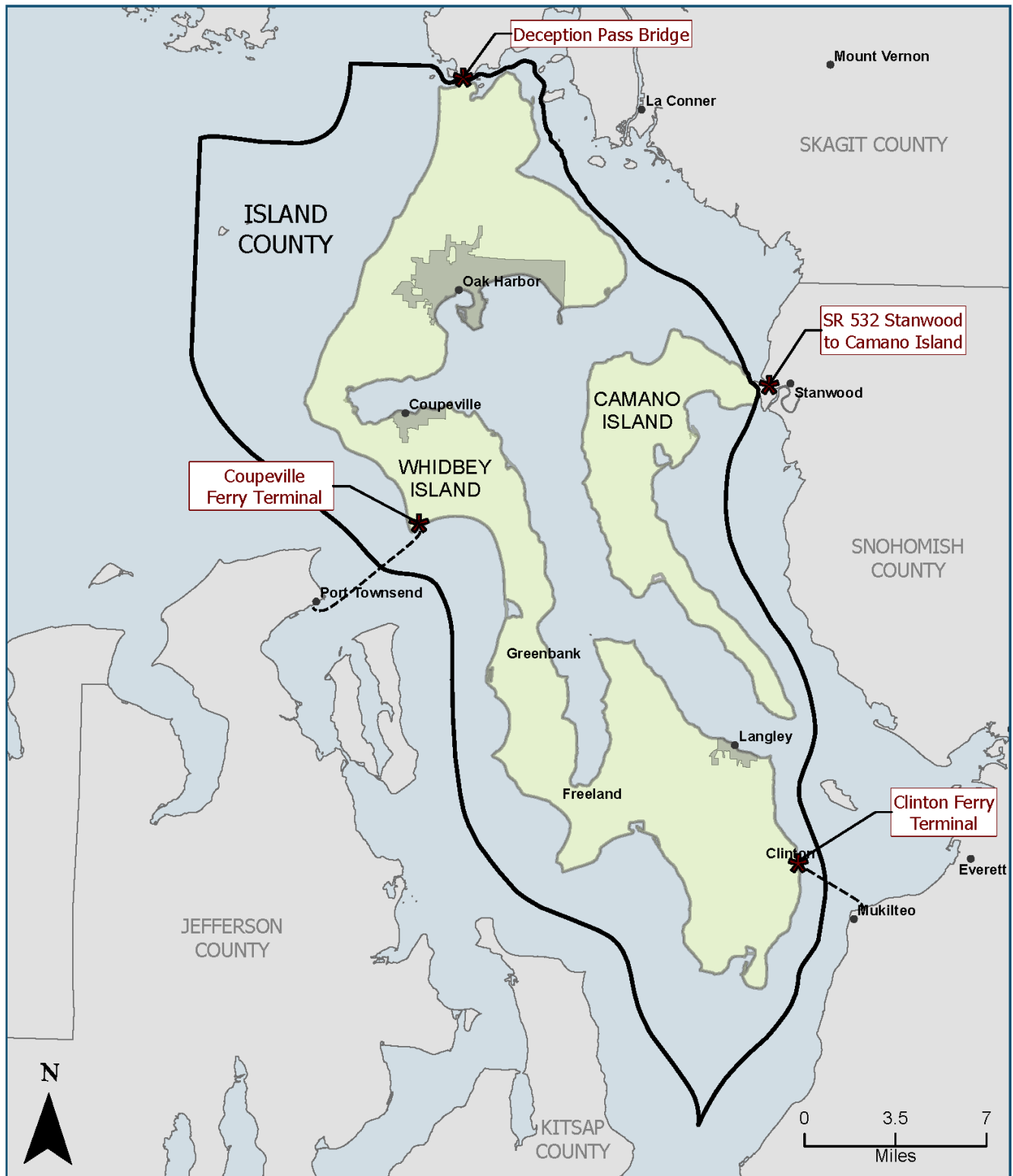
- Island County
- City of Oak Harbor
- Town of Coupeville
- City of Langley
- Port of Coupeville
- Island Transit
- Port of South Whidbey
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Northwest Region Office

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI) and The City of Stanwood are associate members. As part of WSDOT, the Washington State Ferry (WSF) system also sends representatives to IRTPO meetings. The member organizations voluntarily participate in the IRTPO and have elected Island County as the lead agency and fiscal agent. The IRTPO operates on State and Federal grant funding. No dues are collected from member agencies. The 13.5% matching funds required by any of the Federal grants the IRTPO receives are divided amongst the project-specific agencies. No matching funds are required for the IRTPO's State grants.



*Photo Credit: Island County Public Works*

Figure 1. Region Map





## 1.3 Island Access 2045

*Island Access 2045* is the strategic, long-range regional transportation plan for the Island Region. This plan is the product of the regional transportation planning process that involves coordination, collaboration, and cooperation among the members of the IRTPO, and between the IRTPO and the many partners and stakeholders that keep the Island Region moving.

Local transportation plans focus on the local networks and support Comprehensive Plan objectives. The role of regional transportation planning is to ensure on-going coordination and collaboration among all the local and state agencies working to provide safe, efficient, equitable, and reliable travel throughout the region. Regional coordination provides member agencies information to make day-to-day decisions and investments that meet their own needs, accomplish mutual goals, address system needs across the region, and support convenient travel for all.

## 1.4 Strategic Direction

A fundamental aim of *Island Access 2045* is to identify strategic actions that the IRTPO and any of its members or partners can pursue that will advance practical solutions to challenging issues or promising opportunities. It is a strategic action plan; it is not a project funding plan. However, many of the Action Items in this plan correspond with items in the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Documenting agreed-upon regionally significant projects in the local, regional, and state planning documents provides verification to future funders that the projects have been prioritized by the agencies and the public.

The IRTPO's first Regional Transportation Plan, *Island Access 2040*, included mostly planning and coordination actions. Because the IRTPO and its member agencies have been working together to coordinate transportation planning for over six years, they have established inter-regional and intra-regional coordination and have completed many of the previously identified planning activities. While some planning activities may still be included, this plan's Action Items will focus on future specific projects and services to be provided by the agencies of the IRTPO (e.g. some are agency actions with RTPO as a partner with resources and some are funded through the IRTPO similar to the Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) and EV study).

### *A Practical Approach to Regional Strategies*

*Island Access 2045* highlights issues and opportunities for further evaluation, and it poses more questions than it answers. It taps the expertise of a wide range of stakeholders to identify regional hot spots where the system doesn't work as well as it should, and opportunity areas where transportation might leverage broader community objectives over time. *Island Access 2045* highlights these areas for additional investigation; it doesn't jump to conclusions about what the solutions should be.

Delving into those areas in depth and over time to understand root issues and come up with real solutions is what the IRTPO and its partners will do over the next several years to implement this plan. *Island Access 2040* laid a coordinated foundation for the on-going regional work program so that planning efforts were targeted where they would have the most impact on regional mobility and set the stage for informed project development decisions.



## 1.5 Consistency with Local Plans

Because of the interrelated nature of transportation and land use, *Island Access* reflects the long-range local plans that are managing growth throughout the region and incorporates their underlying principles. Since the early 1990s, long-range Comprehensive Plans developed by Island County, Oak Harbor, Langley, and Coupeville have been shaping how the region grows; working to maintain orderly development patterns that keep rural areas rural; and directing more growth into the region's cities, town, and rural areas of intense development. This kind of growth creates transportation-efficient development patterns that help the overall transportation system operate efficiently and provide more travel choices for more people. This is the future that *Island Access 2045* is working to support.

It takes a mix of uses, proximity, and community-oriented design to make walking, transit, and biking viable alternatives to motor vehicles. Land use plans are working to direct future growth into those places where the transportation system will provide the greatest range of mobility options. In rural areas of the county, driving may continue to be the only practical alternative for some. Areas such as Oak Harbor, Langley, Coupeville, and rural centers like Freeland, Terry's Corner, Bayview, and Clinton will have better travel options available for those who live or work there as these areas grow. *Island Access* recommendations are integral to those growth strategies.

## 1.6 Consistency with Statewide Planning Objectives

In addition to local plans and community objectives, the RTP must consider statewide transportation policies set forth in RCW 47.04.280 with the intent to support public investments in transportation. The policy goals and their definitions are as follows:

**Economic Vitality:** Promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.

**Preservation:** Maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services.

**Safety:** Provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system.

**Mobility:** Improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State, including congestion relief and improved freight mobility.

**Environmental Health:** Enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.

**Stewardship:** Continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.

WSDOT actively engages IRTPO partners in planning for state facilities. Those planning processes, modal plans, and on-going collaboration and coordination with regional partners provide critical input to regional transportation planning. *Island Access 2045* policies and actions advance the statewide transportation goals and priorities addressed in WTP 2040 and Beyond (<https://www.wtp2040andbeyond.com/>).



## 2 The Island Region

Island Region encompasses Whidbey and Camano Islands and the other seven small, uninhabited islands of Island County. It is made up of historically rural islands with strong maritime connections; islands covered with vast tracts of land in working farms, state and county parks, historic settlements and reserves, large land trusts, and other community lands. Some of the agricultural lands in Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve have been farmed since Whidbey Island was settled in 1852. Both islands are known for their stunning vistas, distinctive heritage and cultural character, and wealth of environmental amenities. Whidbey Island is also home to NASWI, commissioned in September of 1942.

Island County typically divides the region into four planning areas (one on Camano Island, and three on Whidbey Island), identified in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan as follows:

**Camano Island Planning Area** The Camano Island Planning Area consists of all of Camano Island, and is characterized by its proximity to Snohomish County, the I-5 corridor and separation from Whidbey Island. Transportation improvements coupled with employment opportunities in Snohomish and Skagit Counties make residence on Camano Island attractive to commuters. In contrast to Whidbey Island, Camano Island has no Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). The planning area is comprised entirely of rural areas and Rural Areas of more Intense Development (RAIDs). Camano is primarily accessed using the road surface of the SR 532 Transportation System which involves movement through the urban area of Stanwood, bridging both the Stillaguamish River and Davis Slough to reach the Gateway of Stanwood.

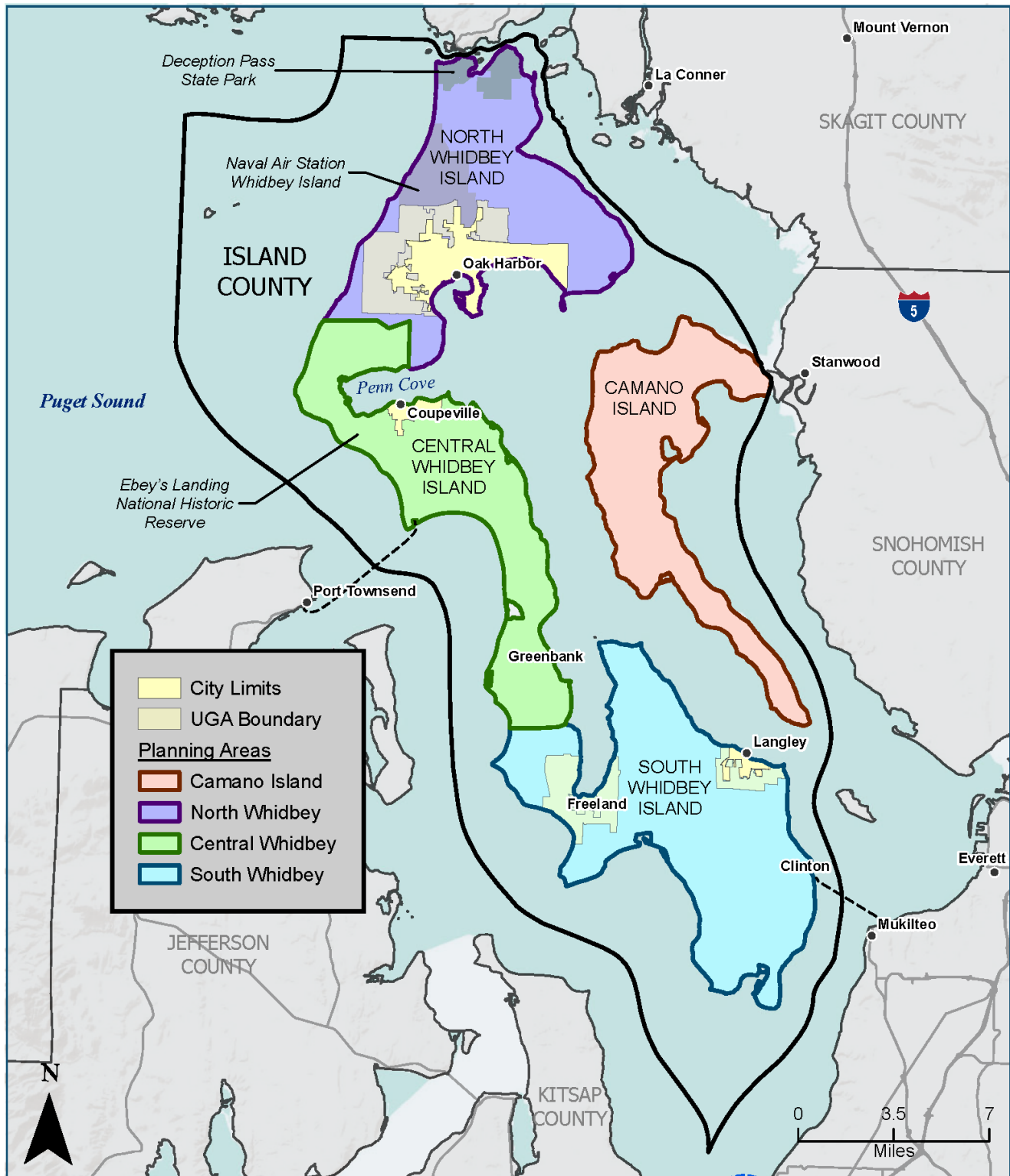
**North Whidbey Planning Area** North Whidbey, characterized by its association with Oak Harbor, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, and Deception Pass State Park, is the most developed region in the County. Of the nearly 36,000 acres in the North Whidbey region, 9,162 acres are state and federal lands. Most growth is related to expansion at the Navy base. The North Whidbey Planning Area is primarily accessed using the road surface of the SR 20.

**Central Whidbey Planning Area** Central Whidbey is characterized by the historic Town of Coupeville, the Greenbank community and Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve surrounding Penn Cove, as well as the Coupeville Ferry Terminal (connecting SR 20 to Port Townsend via Coupeville-Port Townsend Ferry). Growth in Central Whidbey is largely driven by retirees, those commuting to Oak Harbor, and employees of Island County or Whidbey General Hospital.

**South Whidbey Planning Area** The South Whidbey region is the largest planning area by land mass in Island County, characterized by the Clinton Ferry Terminal (connecting SR 525 to Mukilteo via the Clinton-Mukilteo Ferry), the City of Langley, and the Freeland Non-Municipal Urban Growth Area (NMUGA). Urban growth is expected to occur in the Freeland and Langley UGAs.



Figure 2. Island County Planning Areas



## 2.1 Island Region Demographics

### Populations

For years, the population of the Island Region tended to be older on average than that of the state or nation due to the large number of retirees who called Island County home. Currently, less than 25% of the population is 65 or older. Based on the 2021 ACS Demographic and Housing data (ACS DP05), the median age for residents of Island County is now just over 44 years. However, 15.6% of Island County residents are Veterans, compared to only 8.2% statewide. This is due in part to the large number of Naval service members who choose NASWI as their last stop before retirement, and to the relatively close proximity of a number of military medical facilities and veterans' support services along the I-5 corridor.

The majority of the Island County population is represented by 2021 ACS estimates as White Alone (78.6%), with over 8% Hispanic or Latino (of any race). The Black or African American Alone population is identified at 2.6% of total, Asian Alone at 4.6% of total, and Two or More Races at 4.4% of total. All other races or combinations of races were identified at less than 2% of the total population. It is important to note that a subset of the Asian Alone population identifies Filipino, which makes up 2.8% of the total Island County population.

Table 1. *Population by Age*

Island County		
Age Range	Estimate	Percent
Under 5 years	4,657	5.5%
5 to 9 years	4,007	4.8%
10-14 years	4,421	5.3%
15-19 years	3,728	4.4%
20-24 years	5,822	6.9%
25-34 years	11,576	13.8%
35-44 years	8,788	10.4%
45-54 years	8,510	10.1%
55-59 years	5,256	6.2%
60-64 years	6,747	8.0%
65-74 years	12,725	15.1%
75-84 years	5,995	7.1%
85 years and over	1,955	2.3%
Median age (years)	44.1 years	
Total population	84,187	

Source: U.S. Census, ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, ACS DP05Y2020, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Island%20County&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP05>

Table 2. *Population by Race*

Island County		
Race	Estimate	Percent
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	6,846	8.1%
White alone	74,908	89.0%
Black or African American alone	3,580	4.3%
Asian alone	5,932	7.0%
Filipino	2,327	2.8%
Two or more races	3,716	4.4%
Total population	84,187	

Source: U.S. Census, ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates, ACS DP05Y2020, <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/table?q=Island%20County&tid=ACSDP5Y2020.DP05>



## Jobs

In terms of jobs, the region's economy is anchored by some major employers, most notably NASWI. With about 9,000 military personnel (including 500 reservists and 2,100 civilian employees) NASWI is the region's largest employer and supports many ancillary businesses in the region.

In December of 2022, the Island County Economic Development Council (EDC) released a fact sheet listing Island County's major employers (Table 3). Other than NASWI, public agency employers included school districts and local governments, Whidbey Health, Island Transit, Skagit College. Large private employers located within the county included Walmart, Technical Services Inc, IDEX Health and Science, Nichols Brothers Boat Builders, Whidbey Telecom, Regency care facilities, Home Depot, grocery stores and pharmacies, Penn Cove Shellfish, and New Leaf. The EDC fact sheet also reports 900 aerospace manufacturing jobs at Boeing in Snohomish County.

Government Employers			
Company	# Employees	Industry	Location
Naval Air Station Whidbey Island Includes NEX, Commissary, Navy Clinic	10,800	Federal Government Active Duty: 8,700 Civilian/Contractor: 2,100	NASWI
Oak Harbor School District Includes substitute teachers	1,248		Oak Harbor
Whidbey Health	750		Coupeville
Island County	465		Coupeville
Stanwood Camano School District	237		Camano Island
South Whidbey School District	203		Langley
City of Oak Harbor Includes FT and PT	171		Oak Harbor
Island Transit	112		Coupeville
Coupeville School District Does not include substitute teachers	100		Coupeville
Skagit Valley College	50		Oak Harbor
Private Employers			
Company	# Employees	Industry	Location
Boeing <sup>1</sup>	900	Aerospace Manufacturing	Snohomish County
Walmart	210	Retail	Oak Harbor
Technical Services, Inc	200	Manufacturing	Oak Harbor
IDEX Health & Science <sup>2</sup>	169	Healthcare	Oak Harbor
Safeway	155	Retail	Oak Harbor
Myers Group	138	Retail	Island County
Payless Foods	129	Retail	Freeland
Nichols Brothers Boat Builders	125	Manufacturing	Freeland
Haggen Food & Pharmacy	115	Retail	Oak Harbor
Regency on Whidbey	114	Healthcare	Oak Harbor
New Leaf	110	Contractor to NASWI	Oak Harbor
Whidbey Telecom	106	Telecommunications	Langley
Home Depot	100	Retail	Oak Harbor
Regency Coupeville	97	Healthcare	Coupeville
Penn Cove Shellfish	75	Aquaculture	Coupeville
Camano Plaza IGA	70	Retail	Camano Island
Saar's Super Saver Foods	63	Retail	Oak Harbor

Table 3. *Island County Major Employers*

*Numbers not broken out by Full-Time, Part-Time, & On-Call Sources includes employers providing data and ReferenceUSA*

<sup>1</sup> *Island County residents employed by Boeing facilities located in Snohomish County*

<sup>2</sup> *Based on 2019 data - the latest available Released December 2022*

*Economic Development Council for Island County  
PO Box 279  
Coupeville, WA 98239  
www.iscoedc.com*

Prior to the disruptive events of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020, most workers in the Island Region commuted out of the county every day to jobs elsewhere. With restrictions on social distancing and the opportunities for many in the workforce to work from home, the commuting patterns changed drastically. The 2021 ACS estimated that 76.8% of workers remained in Island County, presumably taking advantage of remote work options (Table 4. Place of Work and Means of Transportation). Anecdotal evidence suggests that in 2023, the trend is reversing, as many employers are calling workers back to their worksites.

The Island Region’s proximity to the Seattle metropolitan region – the state’s largest economic center – and its rural character, mean that it is likely to remain a bedroom community, importing paychecks that support local businesses and government services. Ensuring reliable and efficient travel alternatives for outbound commuters is one way that regional transportation supports local economic vitality.

Table 4. *Place of Work and Means of Transportation to Work*

Island County	
Place of Work	Total Estimate
Worked in state of residence	99.8%
Worked in county of residence	76.8%
Worked from home	16.1%
Means of Transportation to Work	
Car, truck, or van	79.2%
Drove alone	70.8%
Carpooled	8.4%
In 2-person carpool	7.6%
In 3-person carpool	0.3%
In 4-or-more person carpool	0.4%
Workers per car, truck, or van	1.06%
Public Transportation (excluding taxicab)	0.8%
Walked	2.9%
Bicycle	0.0%
Taxicab, motorcycle, or other means	1.0%
Worked from home	16.1%

Source: U.S. Census, ACS Means of Transportation to Work, ACSST1Y2021.  
<https://data.census.gov/table?t=Commuting&g=050XX00US53029&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S0801>

## Planning for Growth

Growth in the region is managed jointly through the Comprehensive Plans of Island County, Coupeville, Langley, and Oak Harbor. Growth has historically been slow but has been increasing in recent years. Between the 2010 and 2020 US Census periods, Island County’s population increased nearly 10%. The 2021 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated the Island County population at 87,432, while the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimated the 2021 population at 87,100. The ACS 2021 estimates will be used as the source for demographic information for the remainder of this plan.

The Land Use element of Island County’s 2016 Comprehensive Plan discusses population growth projections through 2040. The county generally plans for growth based on the medium growth scenario as proposed by the OFM in the chart below. Based on current ACS estimates, the population of Island County has already exceeded the medium growth anticipated in the Comprehensive Plan through 2025. It has also slightly exceeded the updated OFM estimate for 2021.

Table 5. OFM 2015 Population Growth Projections for Island County

	Census	Projections					
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040
Low	78,506	71,110	70,516	69,867	69,411	69,020	68,949
Medium	78,506	80,337	82,735	85,073	87,621	90,239	93,205
High	78,506	91,944	99,714	107,419	115,351	123,358	131,741

Source: U.S. Census, ACS Means of Transportation to Work, ACSST1Y2021.

<https://data.census.gov/table?t=Commuting&g=050XX00US53029&tid=ACSST1Y2021.S0801>

The OFM has released the 2022 Population Growth Estimates for counties planning under GMA. Island County's projections will be used by Island County and the other municipalities within the county to plan for growth. The current OFM estimates are shown in Table 6.

Table 6. OFM 2022 Population Growth Projections for Island County

	Census	Projections					
	2020	2025	2030	2035	2040	2045	2050
Low	86,857	82,941	83,081	83,221	83,361	83,501	83,579
Medium	86,857	90,153	93,670	96,903	99,870	102,639	105,250
High	86,857	97,365	102,564	107,455	112,060	116,450	120,670

OFM - Forecasting & Research, December 2022

Beginning in 2023, Island County Long-range Planning is working on revisions to the Countywide Planning Policies and the Comprehensive Plan. The Countywide Planning Policies guide the coordination of planning across municipalities within the county. When completed, these policies will provide an updated picture of how growth is expected to be divided up throughout the county. The table below (Table 7) shows population growth estimations by planning area as envisioned in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan.

Table 7. Planning for Distribution of Population Growth

Planning Area	2010 Population	2036 Population	Growth	Urban Growth	Rural Growth
North Whidbey	36,757	42,989	17.0%	60%	40%
Central Whidbey	12,458	13,448	7.9%	15%	85%
South Whidbey	13,630	14,841	8.9%	19%	81%
Camano Island	15,661	16,679	6.5%	N/A	100%

The 2016 Island County Comprehensive Plan projected the vast majority of Whidbey Island's population growth to go into Oak Harbor and surrounding areas of north Whidbey Island, with smaller concentrations of growth in Langley and Coupeville, and in rural areas of central and south Whidbey Island. There are no incorporated municipalities on Camano Island. It is anticipated that the updated Island County Comprehensive Plan will follow similar growth projection patterns.

## 2.2 Island Regional Transportation System

*Island Access 2045* focuses on the regional transportation system, which includes elements of both local and state networks. It includes state highways, bridges, transit, airports and active transportation (pedestrians, bikes) and ferry facilities that are the backbone to the rest of the regional system. It includes local arterials and collectors accessing transit stations, ferry terminals, or activity centers such as shopping centers or employment clusters. It includes the primary freight network that supports local economies and the region's military, industrial manufacturing, and agricultural sectors.

Because regional transportation is multimodal, the regional transportation system also includes:

- Island Transit fixed-route, Intercounty Connector, paratransit, Island Transit GO, and vanpool services.
- Sidewalks, trails, and designated or signed bike routes.
- Public use marinas, boat launches, and facilities supporting marine freight transport or the Cascadia Marine Trail.
- Public Use-privately owned airports, to include operations within our cooperating adjacent Regional RTPs and access to International airports.
- Park-and-ride facilities and public-use electric vehicle (EV) charging stations.
- The Air-carrier and Air-cargo operations within our cooperating adjacent Regional RTPs and the surface transportation systems that enable Island People access to SeaTac, Paine Field, and Bellingham International Airports when they require air mobility beyond our Region.



*Photo Credit: Island Transit*

Island Region's regionally significant transportation system includes notable programs that support safe, efficient, and reliable mobility for all:

- System safety, hazard mitigation, and resiliency retrofit programs.
- Coordinated transportation services for vulnerable populations.
- Mobility management, education, and demand management programs that promote alternatives to driving alone.
- System preservation and preventive maintenance programs.
- Transportation system maintenance and operation programs.
- Data collection and analysis.
- Coordinated regional transportation planning programs.

These are the infrastructure, services, and programs that make up the regional transportation system in the Island Region and which are the focus of *Island Access 2045*.

*Island Access 2045* has a decidedly regional perspective on mobility. The transportation system is somewhat indifferent to jurisdictional boundaries or system ownership. The focus instead is on seamless travel between jurisdictions, and between the Island Region and the rest of the state. Interregional connections between the Island Region and adjacent regions are particularly important factors, as are the interregional partnerships needed to support those connections into and out of the region.



Photo Credit: David Evans and Associates, Inc.

# 3

## The Regional Transportation Vision, Policies, and Goals

*Island Access 2045* establishes a policy framework aligned with the IRTPO's roles and responsibilities as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the Island Region. Making decisions consistent with, and supportive of, the RTP policies supports the overall vision and regional strategy.

### 3.1 IRTPO Policies and Goals

To account for the dynamic nature of regional planning, good policies and goals must provide sufficient clarity of direction while at the same time maintaining – even encouraging – the flexibility to adapt and respond to emerging conditions and opportunities. Policies should not be cumbersome to the regional process but instead, provide useful and relevant guidance to the IRTPO and its partners and ensure coordinated decision-making in a variety of settings.

IRTPO articulates four key pillars of its responsibilities as a Regional Transportation Planning Organization:

- Leadership
- System Management
- Sustainability
- Preparedness



Each pillar is a responsibility that the IRTPO assumes at times, and each provides a lens through which to consider other regional goals and responsibilities. No one pillar is more important than the others. Each is a priority in different circumstances. The key pillars include major policies that guide the work of the IRTPO. These policies address the issues, opportunities, and challenges that shape the proposed plans and projects in the Action Plan. In all, twelve policies provide the framework within which the IRTPO and its partners will approach regional transportation planning for the Island Region.

### Vision Statement

*Island Region's transportation system provides a full range of equitable, efficient, reliable, resilient, well-connected travel choices for residents and visitors, and supports the mobility needs of the region's businesses. Transportation enhances overall quality of life, public health, sense of place, and economic well-being for the Island Region today and for generations to come.*

\* Vision Statement revised by IRTPO Executive Board, May 24, 2023





## Leadership

Leadership refers to actions that establish a shared vision or common goal, motivate others to pursue that direction, foster collaboration and innovation, and advance regional objectives.

*It is the IRTPO's goal to provide visionary leadership on regional transportation issues and opportunities.*

- Policies in this Pillar correspond to Washington State's Stewardship Planning Objective.

### PLANNING FOR REGIONAL MOBILITY

The IRTPO's regional mobility strategy is one of connections – connections between islands and with other places, between modes of travel, and between transportation and other community objectives related to economic vitality, social equity, and environmental health. The regional mobility strategy entails holistic, big picture perspectives with the long view in mind. Its success relies on collaboration, coordination, and enduring partnerships.

### GROWING TRANSPORTATION-EFFICIENT COMMUNITIES

The viability of walking, biking, and transit as alternatives to driving is as dependent on land use and development patterns as it is on supportive infrastructure and services.

- Urban places are best suited to support a range of multimodal travel options. The region's municipalities adopt coordinated land use and transportation strategies in their Comprehensive Plans to achieve more transportation-efficient development patterns over time that encourage more walking, biking, and transit while growing stronger local economies and increasing community access to housing and services.
- As of June 2023, the City of Oak Harbor is creating an Active Transportation Plan; the Town of Coupeville has added a new Goal of Multimodal Transportation to the Comprehensive Plan that includes development of an Active Transportation Plan; and the City of Langley has an adopted Complete Streets Ordinance to ensure safety, mobility and access for all users.
- Highly rural areas will remain auto dependent but existing pockets of more intensive development patterns in rural areas will help the region meet multiple growth objectives that align with local, regional, and state mobility goals. About two dozen non-residential RAIDs have been identified on both islands and include the region's gateways at Clinton, Terry's Corner, and Deception Pass. Development of these non-residential RAIDs provide the best opportunity in rural parts of the region to encourage more transit, biking, and walking for some trips.
- Municipalities and non-profit organizations (such as Goosefoot Housing Group) are actively creating more housing affordable opportunities close to transit routes reducing travel costs and increasing mobility independence for those who cannot or choose not to drive.
- Strategic opportunities to leverage transportation investments can generate economic opportunity for local communities and businesses in ways that complement regional transportation goals and overarching Comprehensive Plan and state plans and objectives.
- Ensuring safe and reliable freight mobility helps to protect existing industries and jobs in the region and enable growth as planned in designated commercial and industrial areas.
- Ensuring safe, reliable, and cost-effective small package pickup and delivery has become essential not only to commerce, but to the wellbeing of most individuals on the Islands.

## IRTPO'S LEADERSHIP POLICIES

### Policy 1. Consistency & Coordination

Advance consistency between transportation and land use plans as well as other community-based plans working to achieve adopted visions.

### Policy 2. Strategic Decisions

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

### Policy 3. Public Accountability

Advocate for increased multimodal connectivity for the Island Region.

### Policy 4. Visionary Direction

Promote the Island Region and its unique character through strategic transportation decisions.

## System Management

System management refers to those strategies and actions that keep all aspects of the multimodal transportation system working safely and efficiently, and which keep life cycle costs as low as possible.

*It is IRTPO's goal to support partners' efforts at building, maintaining, and operating a transportation system that safely and efficiently meets mobility needs for all modes of travel while keeping life costs as low as possible.*

- Policies in this Pillar correspond to Washington State's Safety, Mobility, and Preservation Planning Objectives.

## PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

Agencies are rethinking the traditional transportation project development process. Time spent up front developing a comprehensive understanding of a mobility issue or conflict area contributes to a better solution later. Increasingly, agencies are taking a systems approach to problem investigations, considering land use alongside transportation, evaluating operational strategies instead of defaulting to capacity increases, using pricing and incentives to manage demand, and integrating other community priorities like economic vitality, equitable access, and environmental stewardship into performance metrics and relevant context. This is the central premise of the Practical Solutions process endorsed by WSDOT and incorporated in project development processes across the state.



Photo Credit: WSDOT

*Island Access 2045* fully embraces this commonsense approach to planning and project development with an understanding that practical solutions begin in the regional transportation plan; they don't end there. Reflecting insights and input from an array of stakeholder interests and system experts, *Island Access 2045* identifies pinch points, opportunity areas, and disruptions meriting closer scrutiny over the next several years. It frames issues and provides context for the work that is needed to address the situation. *Island Access* doesn't presuppose what the solution should be other than that it should be the right solution at the right price at the right time. That is a practical approach to long-range regional planning in an era of rapid change and disruption.





## DATA FOR INFORMED DECISION-MAKING

A fundamental understanding of basic regional travel characteristics is needed to make informed decisions and develop practical solutions. Based on this need brought forth in *Island Access 2040*, IRTPO's State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2021-2023 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) identified a new Element 4: Data Collection and Analysis, as an ongoing effort of the IRTPO.

In 2020, IRTPO partnered with Fehr & Peers to explore innovative data sources that could help explain how transportation systems in Island County are used and to support long-range planning processes. Data was collected from IRTPO member agencies, downloaded from available state and federal websites, and purchased from digital data sources. The consultant compiled and analyzed this data to create a robust data repository and summarized findings in the *2021 Island County Transportation Data Book*. This partnership continued through June of 2023. The SFY 2024-2026 UPWP identifies the continuation of the Data Collection and Analysis element for the next biennium.

## SAFE MULTIMODAL MOBILITY

Creating a safe environment for all travelers requires a combination of strategies that minimize conflicts between modes of travel.

- As more people turn to walking, biking, and transit, opportunities for conflict between motorized and non-motorized travelers increase, especially in urban areas on facilities posted at 35 mph or more. Changing land use patterns as called for in locally adopted Comprehensive Plans may benefit from or even require corresponding changes in roadway characteristics to better align with urban objectives.
- The state highways connecting to local arterials are the primary transit corridors on Whidbey Island. In many cases, bus riders must cross SR 525 or SR 20 when accessing or departing transit. Posted speeds on these roadways are typically 40 miles per hour or more. The primary corridors pose particular risks to pedestrians, who have a hard time judging gaps in traffic. Drivers may be unaware that a person is crossing the transit route. Rural speeds will continue to be high in the future, but emerging technologies and innovative measures such as flashing beacons can help increase pedestrian safety when accessing transit.
- The local economy is supported by a tourism industry based in part on the region's natural beauty and abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation. Public perception about the safety of those opportunities and the ability to get around safely on bike or foot reflects on that sector of the economy. The Island Region is generally recognized as a safe and inviting place for active recreation; a characteristic worth preserving and nurturing.
- Traveler behavior is not something that can be dealt with solely by infrastructure investments. Education, enforcement, and evaluation measures work in concert with engineering and innovative design and technology considerations to improve safety for all.
- Absent a systemic evaluation of multimodal safety, investments tend to focus on hotspots without necessarily addressing the underlying root causes of the conflict or friction. Island County has completed a countywide speed limit assessment that includes bicycle and pedestrian uses of county roads. This information will help to inform strategic decision-making.



## IRTPO'S SYSTEM MANAGEMENT POLICIES

### Policy 5. State of Good Repair

Support efforts to maintain the transportation system in a state of good repair.

### Policy 6. Efficient Reliability

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

### Policy 7. System Safety

Work toward a safer transportation system for all users.

## Sustainability

Sustainability refers to those actions that support the triple-bottom line of social equity, environmental health, and economic vitality.

*It is IRTPO's goal to make transportation decisions today that support the Island Region's environment, economy, and social justice without compromising future opportunities or existing infrastructure.*


- Policies in this Pillar correspond to Washington State's Environmental Health, Economic Vitality, and Mobility Planning Objectives.

## MINIMIZE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Although the Island Region is, and will remain, car dependent for the foreseeable future, efforts are underway to reduce the per capita environmental impacts associated with travel.

- In 2021, the IRTPO adopted a policy document in support of electric vehicles (EVs) and EV infrastructure. In the 2024/2025 biennium, the IRTPO is planning to apply for EV grants to help install charging stations in rural communities and accessible locations.
- The robust bus service and vanpool programs operated by Island Transit reduces single-occupancy vehicle travel and per capita vehicle miles, both of which support Island Region objectives. It also reduces demand for vehicle capacity on Washington State Ferries, the Deception Pass Bridge, and SR 532.
- One factor inhibiting walk-on or bike-on ferry travel for weekend travelers is the lack of adequate long-term parking off island, particularly at the Mukilteo ferry terminal.
- Concentrating more of the region's forecasted rural growth into designated RAID increases opportunities for more walking, biking, and transit use which in turn reduces greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled, as well as opportunities for other transportation-efficient land use and housing affordability objectives.
- In March 2023 the Island Transit Board of Directors adopted a zero emissions fleet transition plan to fully decarbonize Island Transit's vehicle fleet no later than 2040. The transit agency has begun replacing its vehicles with zero emission vehicles.

The Washington State Department of Ecology reported that the 1990 greenhouse gas emissions totaled 93.5 million metric tons. By 2019, emissions totaled 111.5 million metric tons. In 2020, the State Legislature set goals for the gradual decline of emissions in Washington. The IRTPO embraces Washington State greenhouse gas emissions targets that aim to reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions to 45% below 1990 levels by 2030,



70% below 1990 levels by 2040, 95 percent below 1990 levels by 2050. It will not be easy to meet these targets. Transportation remains the largest contributor of greenhouse gases, at 39% in 2019. However, electricity production contributed 21% in 2019. It will be a challenge to find the right balance between reducing fossil fuel and increasing electrical production for vehicle use.

## TRANSPORTATION IMPLICATIONS FOR ECONOMIC HEALTH

Reliable, efficient transportation is a fundamental condition for economic stability and vitality.

- A strong economic climate that supports successful businesses is dependent on an efficient and reliable transportation system that gets goods and services where they need to be on time, and which provides reliable work access for employees. Such an economic climate generates revenues that support a myriad of community services and programs. Island Transit relies on those revenues to support its services as do local government and state programs.
- Despite the presence of NASWI and other significant private and public sector employers, the Island Region exports much of its work force to family wage jobs in other regions – primarily central Puget Sound – and imports paychecks that support local businesses, community groups, and the arts and culture. This strains the region’s transportation system at its gateways and underscores the value of an integrated multimodal transportation system.
- Business recruiters cannot overcome location decisions related to distance from the I-5 corridor if transportation at the gateways and along the connecting corridors is not efficient and reliable. System efficiency and reliability can overcome distance obstacles.
- Tourism is an important economic driver for the Island Region. Most of the state’s 7.5 million residents live within two hours of the Island Region and the remarkable recreation, historic, and cultural amenities the region offers. Mobility – to and from the region, as well as throughout – is central to coordinated planning for the tourism component of the region’s economy.
- The Island Region’s economy runs on a seven-day-a-week schedule. Historically, Island Transit has operated on a six-day-a-week schedule. Expansion of services in 2023 include Sunday service, as well as additional services to very rural areas outside of the main transit routes.
- Freight mobility must be reliable and efficient to support the needs of NASWI, the agriculture, manufacturing and high-tech sectors, and even grocery stores. These sectors have unique mobility needs that merit explicit consideration in any mobility strategy. Every business depends on reliable deliveries.

## EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR ALL

Continuous improvement in the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the regional transportation system will only be successful if those benefits are distributed fairly and do not exacerbate economic disparities.

- Island Transit operates the only fare-free transit service in Washington, eliminating economic barriers to regional transit for disadvantaged populations and providing critical links to statewide networks and multimodal transportation hubs.
- Many residents of the Island Region have special transportation needs that make independent access to basic needs of daily life a challenge. The IRTPO adopted a Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan in 2022 to address these issues.
- Mobility services (such as Uber and Lyft) commonly available in metropolitan and urban areas are difficult to procure in smaller urban and more rural regions like the Island Region.
- Health care access often entails interregional trips that require extra levels of coordination between regions and service providers. Island Transit coordinates with Skagit Transit and Community Transit on intercounty connector routes.
- Coordinated services help to match each passenger with the right transportation provider and stretch limited resources to support more mobility needs. Snow Goose Transit, headquartered in Stanwood, helps to serve the special mobility needs of Camano Island travelers.
- Lack of universal broadband access in some areas limits potential application of technology-dependent strategies. However, with the assistance of state and federal grants, municipalities and Internet providers are actively expanding broadband access throughout the region.



*Photo Credit: TransRants*

## IRTPO'S SUSTAINABILITY POLICIES

### Policy 8. Environmental Health

Facilitate a healthier environment for current and future generations.

### Policy 9. Economic Vitality


Support the economic health and vitality of the Island Region.

### Policy 10. Social Equity

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

## Preparedness

Preparedness refers to actions that increase the ability to respond and adapt to unexpected disruptions or harness emerging opportunities.



*It is IRTPO's goal to anticipate disruptive forces outside the control of any one agency and strategize on ways to mitigate negative impacts while harnessing beneficial opportunities.*

- Policies in this Pillar correspond to Washington State's Stewardship, Economic Health, and Safety Planning Objectives.

## DISRUPTIVE FORCES

*Island Access 2045* takes a long view of the future, exploring uncertainties that the region is likely to face over the next couple of decades. Even 2045 is an uncertain planning horizon – some of the issues and opportunities that influenced this plan will materialize sooner than might be expected while others will emerge later or not at all. During the life of this plan, major new issues will emerge that are not yet on any planning radar.

For instance, *Island Access 2040*, the previous version of this plan, was adopted in the fall of 2019. None of the participants at that time could have anticipated a global pandemic and the effects that would have on the transportation system. In order to maintain distance between persons, transit agencies limited ridership and required masks. Many people stopped riding transit and even paratransit; some out of fear and other as a response to changes in availability. In addition, much of the workforce (and most schools) shifted to remote work. Traffic on the roadways was significantly reduced.

Major disruptions, over which the IRTPO and its members have no control, will exert significant influence on the region's transportation system during the life of this plan.

- Ever-more extreme weather events, tidal events, and sea level rise associated with climate change will stress the region's transportation system in ways it has never been stressed, with Coupeville's loss of a portion of First Street due to bluff erosion an early example of the expense and inconvenience jurisdictions face in responding to these forces.
- In January of 2023, high winds downed trees across main travel routes, cutting off transit access for days. The storm also impacted the Puget Sound Energy and Snohomish Public Utility District main trunk lines causing power outages throughout Whidbey and Camano Islands.
- A seismic event can sever any or all the connections between Whidbey and Camano Islands, and the rest of the state. Under extreme scenarios the region may have to rely on its three small, public-use airports, public and private boat launches, and barges to support emergency response and recovery efforts.
- Island County Public Works Department, Division of Emergency Management (DEM) has a Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) in place. It also has a Multi-Jurisdiction Hazard Plan, that allows county decision makers to better allocate scarce resources for the greatest benefit to the county. <https://wa-islandcounty.civicplus.com/507/Comprehensive-Emergency-Management-Plan>.
- Coupeville's Keystone Harbor is increasingly vulnerable to marine conditions that imperil reliable system service. Long-term viability is questionable without significant intervention.
- Interdisciplinary collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders in assessing future risks and uncertainties will help the IRTPO and its partners to make policy and investment decisions that are nimble and robust under a wide range of plausible future circumstances. Incorporating regional transportation perspectives into existing emergency management planning and preparation activities can enhance overall coordination and cooperation.



One thing certain about the future is that it is uncertain. This uncertainty underscores the value of on-going regional collaboration so that the region and its partners are better prepared for whatever the future holds. *Island Access 2045* embraces that uncertainty while working to increase system resilience and preparedness.

#### **IRTPO'S PREPAREDNESS POLICIES**

##### **Policy 11. System Resiliency**

Maximize system resiliency in the face of climate change, extreme weather events, natural disasters, and other forces outside the control of IRTPO partners.

##### **Policy 12. Technology & Innovation**

Prepare for new technology alternatives and innovations that are transforming transportation decision-making.



## PILLARS AND POLICIES RE-CAP

### LEADERSHIP

Policy 1. Consistency & Coordination

Policy 2. Strategic Decisions

Policy 3. Public Accountability

Policy 4. Visionary Direction

### SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

Policy 5. State of Good Repair

Policy 6. Efficient Reliability

Policy 7. System Safety

### SUSTAINABILITY

Policy 8. Environmental Health

Policy 9. Economic Vitality

Policy 10. Social Equity

### PREPAREDNESS

Policy 11. System Resiliency

Policy 12. Technology & Innovation



## 4

# Measuring What Matters

*Island Access 2045* is required by statute (RCW 47.80.030) to define regional transportation system performance measures. At a minimum, those measures must include state highways and local arterials, and must include vehicle miles traveled and traffic volumes on those facilities.

*Island Access* recognizes those standards. It also recognizes the value of establishing comprehensive system performance measures specific to the Island Region. Those measures set the standard for what are considered successful outcomes when evaluating potential solutions to identified problems.

Transportation and associated land use considerations in the Island Region are multimodal in nature; system performance measures need to reflect this, to the extent practicable. Vehicle congestion is important but so is transit and ferry system reliability, safety for all modes of travel, compatibility with adjacent land use activities, equitable and independent access to basic mobility services, cost-effective system preservation, economic vitality, safe walking routes to school, and freight mobility, among many other important mobility considerations.

These are substantive measures that merit substantive consideration. Balanced performance measures will reflect the unique characteristics and objectives of the Island Region and help demonstrate the effectiveness of transportation policies and investments. That is why *Island Access* recommends development of appropriate measures specific to particular issues or study areas.

Chapter Four will identify specific elements of the existing regional transportation network. Each element will be assessed based on its own, unique performance metrics (to be developed) to establish realistic expectations for levels of service for each mode.

**TRANSPORTATION IS A MEANS  
TO AN END. THE END IS  
ACCESS.**

When thinking about system performance it's easy to measure transportation in a vacuum. Metrics like vehicle miles traveled, crash rates, and hours of delay tell only part of the story. In isolation, system performance metrics can result in efforts to solve a land use problem with a transportation solution – often with disappointing results. Effective measures to improve access and mobility will not only look at required counts of cars and trucks and how many miles they travel, but also at how well the system supports transit, walking, and biking. They may consider the role of ridesharing and travel demand management. And importantly, effective measures will consider the context of the built environment today and what is envisioned; the places where people live and work and shop and recreate. Effective measures will assess how well the system works in getting all people from where they are, to where they want to go. Because in the end, what really matters is access.



# 5

## Regional Transportation Network Conditions

### Gateways

Access to and from the Island Region is through four gateways, each of which has regional and statewide significance.

- Each gateway has unique constraints over which jurisdictions in the Island Region have no authority. Whidbey Island access is via ferries or an historic bridge, all of which are owned and operated by WSDOT. Two of those gateways – Coupeville Ferry Terminal and Deception Pass Bridge - are on lands owned by Washington State Parks. Camano Island access is via a single bridge built and maintained by WSDOT.
- Each gateway has unique characteristics, from tide and weather dependent ferries to single-lane highways. A breach of any one gateway would have significant consequences throughout the region, and in some cases would disrupt the statewide transportation system.
- Gateways require on-going interregional and interdisciplinary coordination and collaboration. The IRTPO has a different set of interregional partners at each of its four gateways.
- Well-functioning gateways are critical to the economic well-being of the region and have a strong influence on the attractiveness of the Island Region for business recruitment and retention. Reliable access to I-5 and other statewide facilities is a powerful factor in business location and investment decisions.
- Potential future gateways could include private airports and passenger ferry docks.

The 2022 Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) at each gateway is shown in Table 8 below:

Table 8. *Island Region Gateway AADT*

Clinton Ferry Terminal		Coupeville Ferry Terminal	
Location ID	CS13015	Location ID	CS11304
Located On	SR525 End Ferry Zone	Located On	SR20 End Ferry Zone
Direction	2-Way	Direction	2-Way
Count	5,370	Count	851
Date	2022	Date	2022

Deception/Canoe Pass - SR 20		Davis Slough/Stamwood - SR 532	
Location ID	SC05285	Location ID	CS00147
Located On	SR20, SW/O Rosario Rd intersection	Located On	SR532 E/O 270th St. NW intersection
Direction	2-Way	Direction	2-Way
Count	18,339	Count	22,583
Date	2022	Date	2022

Source: Washington State DOT Traffic Count Database System (TCDS)



## 5.1 Island Circulation

The region's island geography, access points, and land uses contribute to predictable, recurring congestion in specific locations and creates challenges to access and circulation rather than actual capacity deficits.

- While most of the transportation system works well most of the time, recurring congestion in some locations may indicate that state highway and local Regional Transportation networks are not working together as efficiently as they might. This creates system impacts over wide areas that are felt by all modes of travel. The ability of the highway network to function efficiently depends on a well-functioning regional roadway network, and vice-versa. This requires on-going coordination and collaboration between local and state agencies and consideration of evolving factors related to land use, economic development, synchronized Comprehensive Plans and changing mobility preferences.
- Natural features and terrain, environmentally and historically sensitive lands, and established military and agricultural land uses limit opportunities for a traditional roadway “grid” and increase pressure for other system management strategies that reduce friction at inevitable chokepoints.
- Factors like inadequate circulation, intersection control, or driveway access will exacerbate congestion at friction points. Other contributing factors are associated with the “ferry pulse” and visitors to the Deception Pass Bridge, both of which generate traffic that is distinctly un-rural in character at specific times.
- Driver frustration and lack of good alternate routes can contribute to risky driver behaviors in passing and turning. A mix of system users that includes locals and tourists, passenger traffic and agricultural equipment, local and “through” commercial traffic, and motorized and non-motorized travelers creates the need for top-notch traveler information and innovative programs to manage differing expectations and driver behavior.
- Local agencies are implementing coordinated transportation and land use strategies identified in their adopted Comprehensive Plans. Transitioning from a highly suburban land use pattern to more transportation-efficient, walkable places such as Oak Harbor, Freeland, and Clinton takes time. Transition brings with it new challenges in terms of managing multimodal access and circulation but also new opportunities to rethink how transportation and land use interact.
- Practical solutions to improve overall system performance may entail improvements on one part of the multimodal system that enhance operations elsewhere on the system.

## 5.2 Travel Behavior Origin and Destination Overview

Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate traveler behavior. These maps were created as part of the data acquired digital data from a company called Streetlight.

This data is collected from cell phones and transponders in vehicles. The digital origin/destination data only shows the first extended stop. If travelers stop in one area for gas or lunch, then move on to other areas, those trip continuations would not be reflected on these maps.

Figure 3 identifies initial destinations of trips that begin in Island County. The 2022 Report shows the largest number of Island County travelers stopped in Stanwood and Mount Vernon as their initial destinations. Each of these destinations represent more than 2,200 travelers per day. In addition, areas such as Burlington, Anacortes, and the Swinomish Reservation are all showing more than 1,000 Island County travelers per day.

Figure 4 identifies in-county destinations of trips that begin outside of Island County. According to this data, most trips into Island County stop at either Whidbey Island's NASWI or somewhere on Camano Island. The trips onto Camano are fairly evenly disbursed, with most traffic stopping near Terry's Corner or somewhere along the shoreline.



*Photo Credit: David Evans and Associates, Inc.*

Figure 3. *Destinations Outside of Island County*

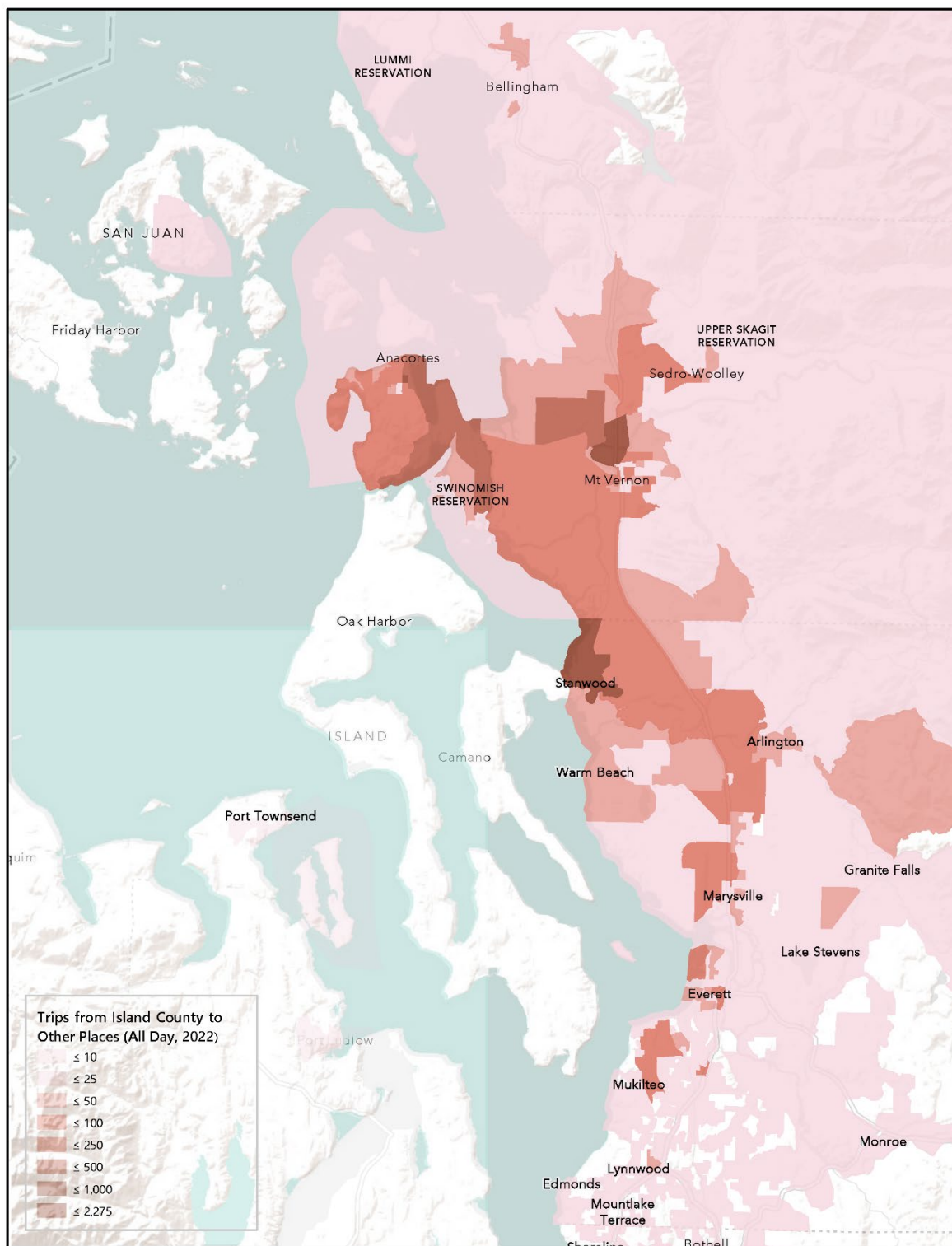
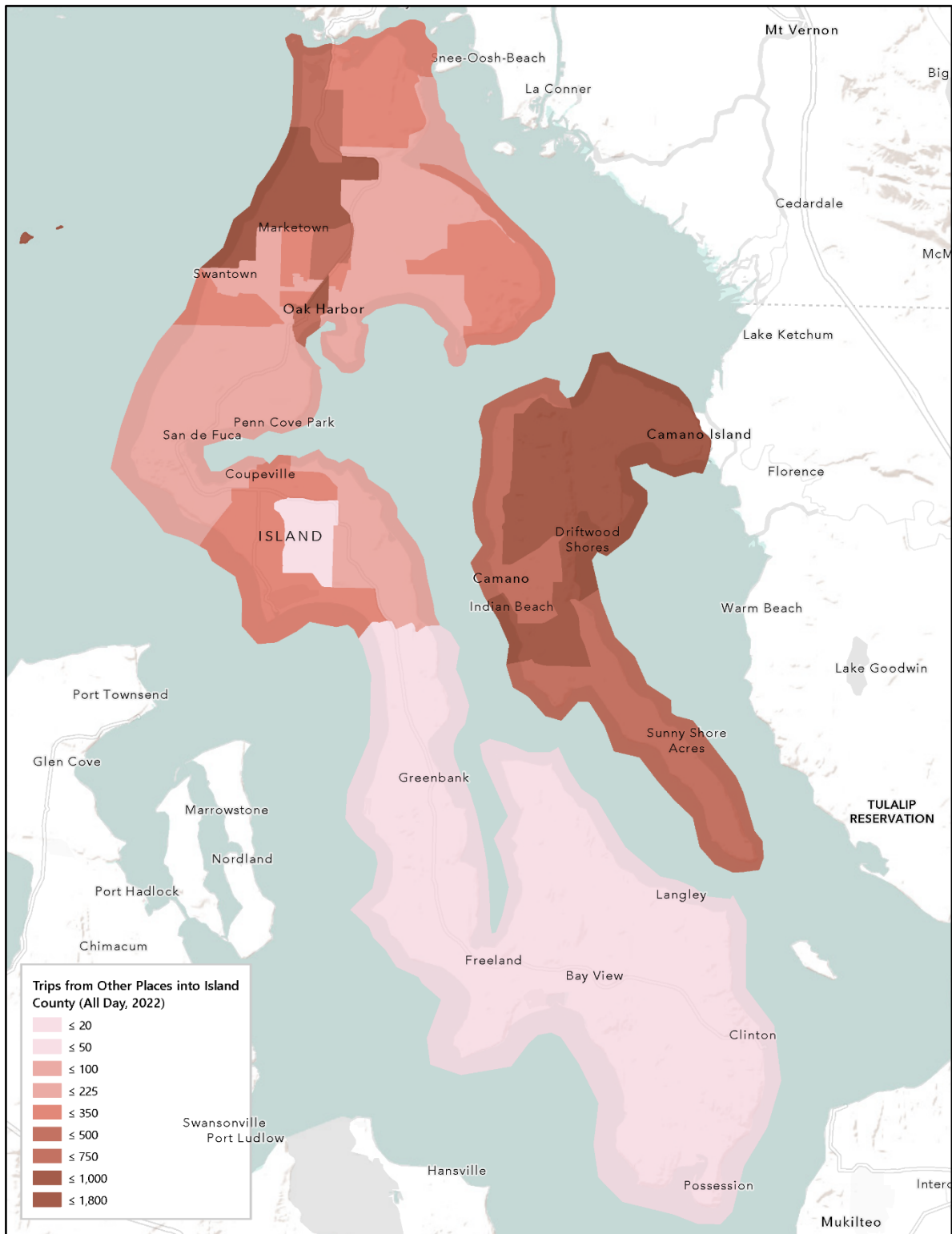




Figure 4. *Destinations Inside of Island County*





## 5.3 Local Regional Transportation Network

While state highways (Section 4.4) and ferries (Section 4.5) provide access to the islands and serve as the regional transportation network backbone in the Island Region, the local roadway network is crucial for internal traffic circulation and connectivity. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) classifies roadways by significance. These classifications are important identifiers for local agencies applying for federal transportation funds.

The Federal Functionally Classified (FFC) roadways are identified on Figures 5-8. The larger FFC map can be viewed at: <https://www.wsdot.wa.gov/data/tools/geoportal/?config=functionalclass>.

For this document, it is also vital to recognize local roads that have regional significance or are otherwise important routes for local communities. Local Regional Transportation Network and state facilities are included together in Figures 5-8 to illustrate their interdependence. For instance, Coupeville's Parker Road becomes NE 9th Street in the downtown area, where it meets Main Street. On the other side of Main, NW Coveland Street travels west to become NW Madrona Way, which circles around Penn Cove and connects to SR 20. This network provides an alternate route to and through Coupeville, avoiding highway traffic.



NE 9th Street at Coupeville's Captain Coupe Park and Boat Launch. Photo credit: David Evans and Associates, Inc.

Figure 5. Local Regional Transportation Network – Camano

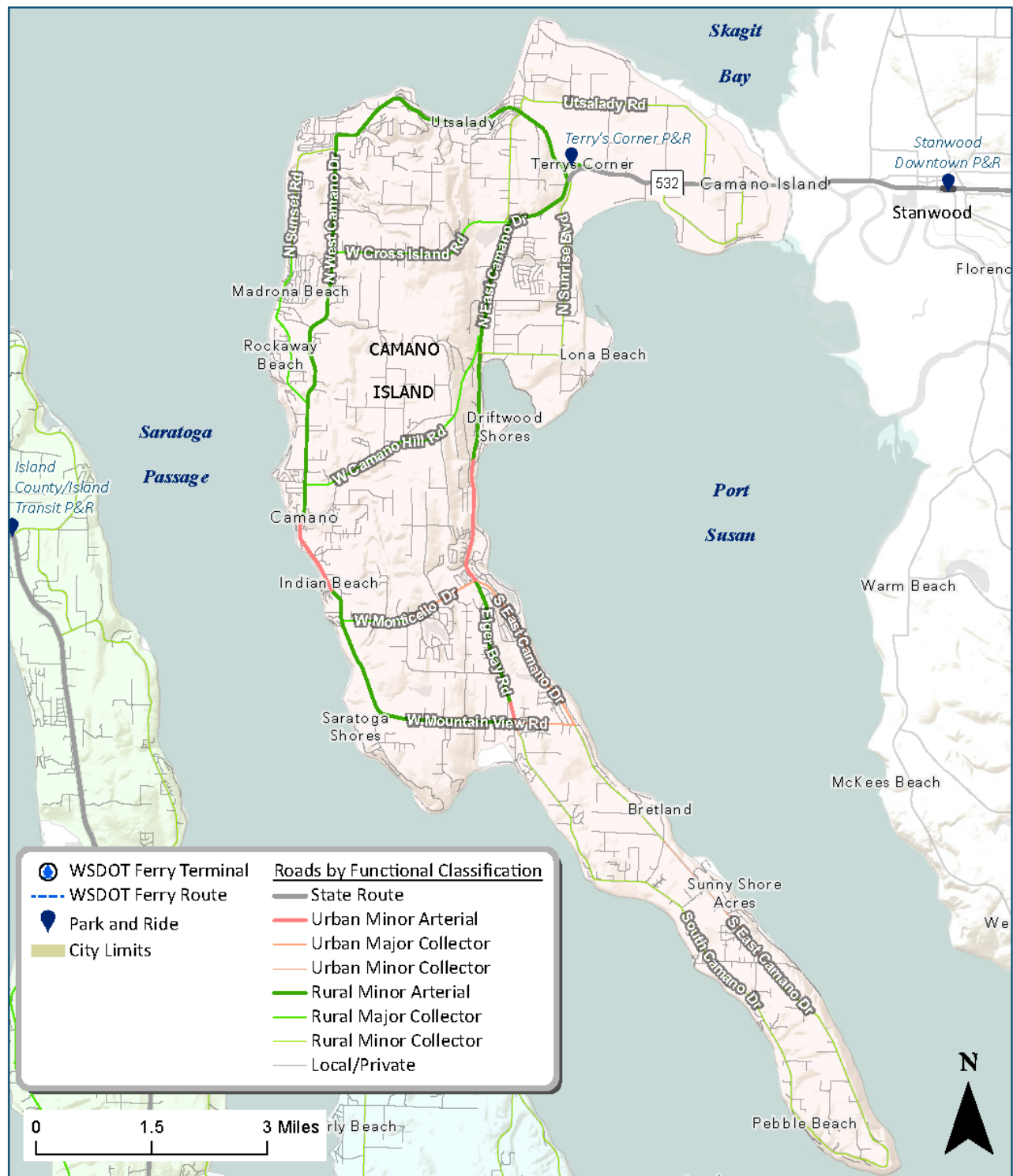


Figure 6. Local Regional Transportation Network – North Whidbey

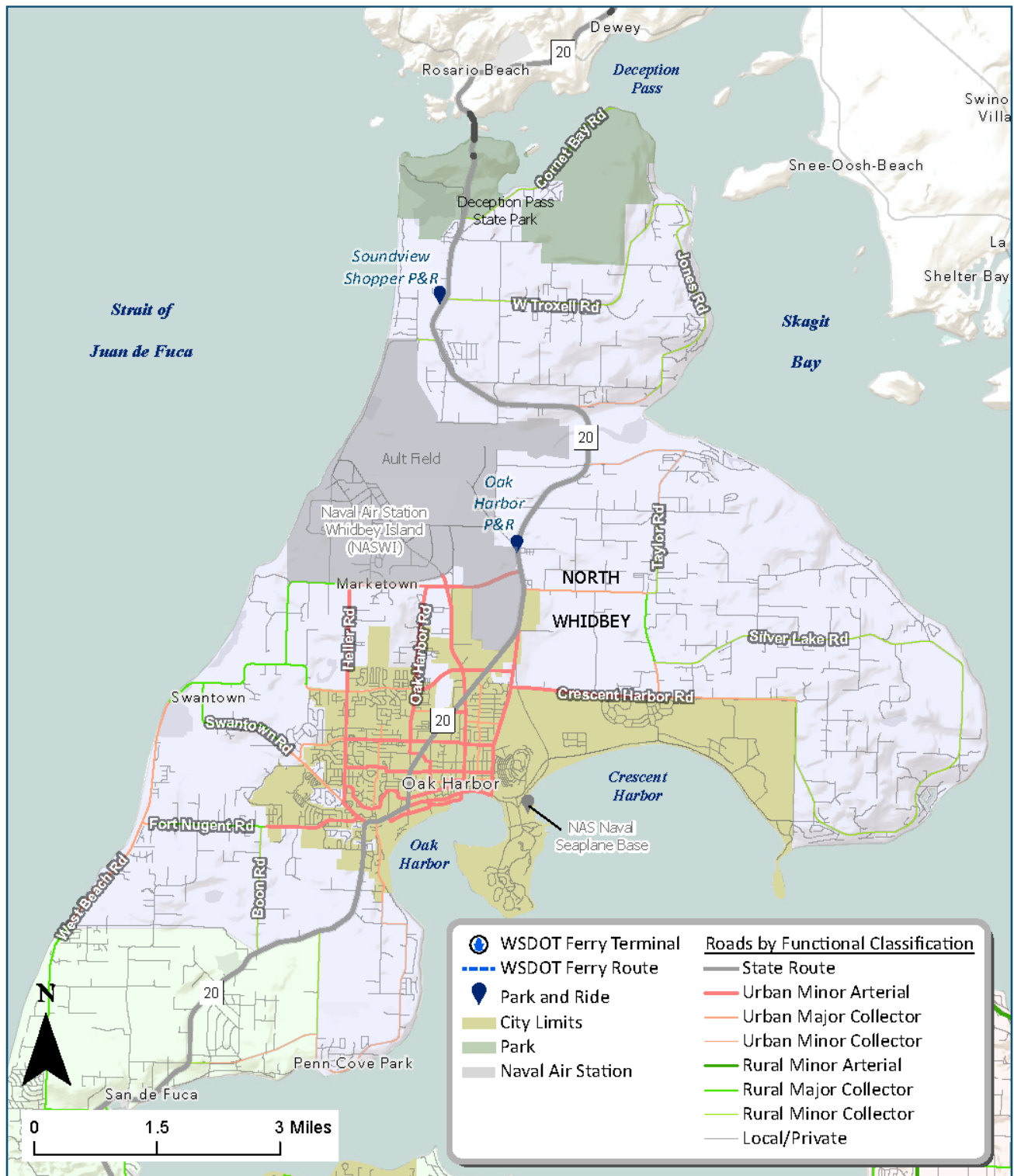




Figure 7. Local Regional Transportation Network – Central Whidbey

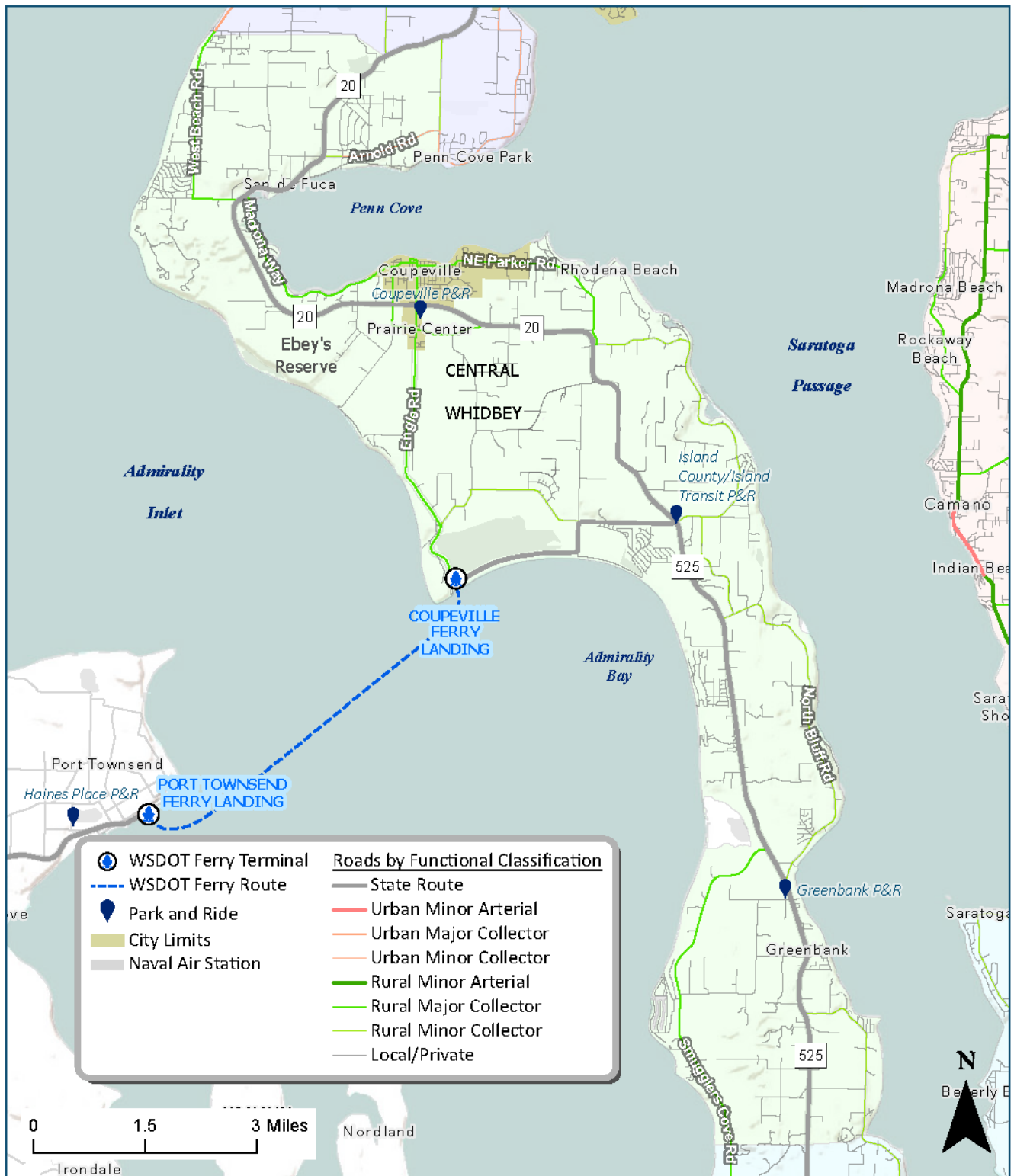
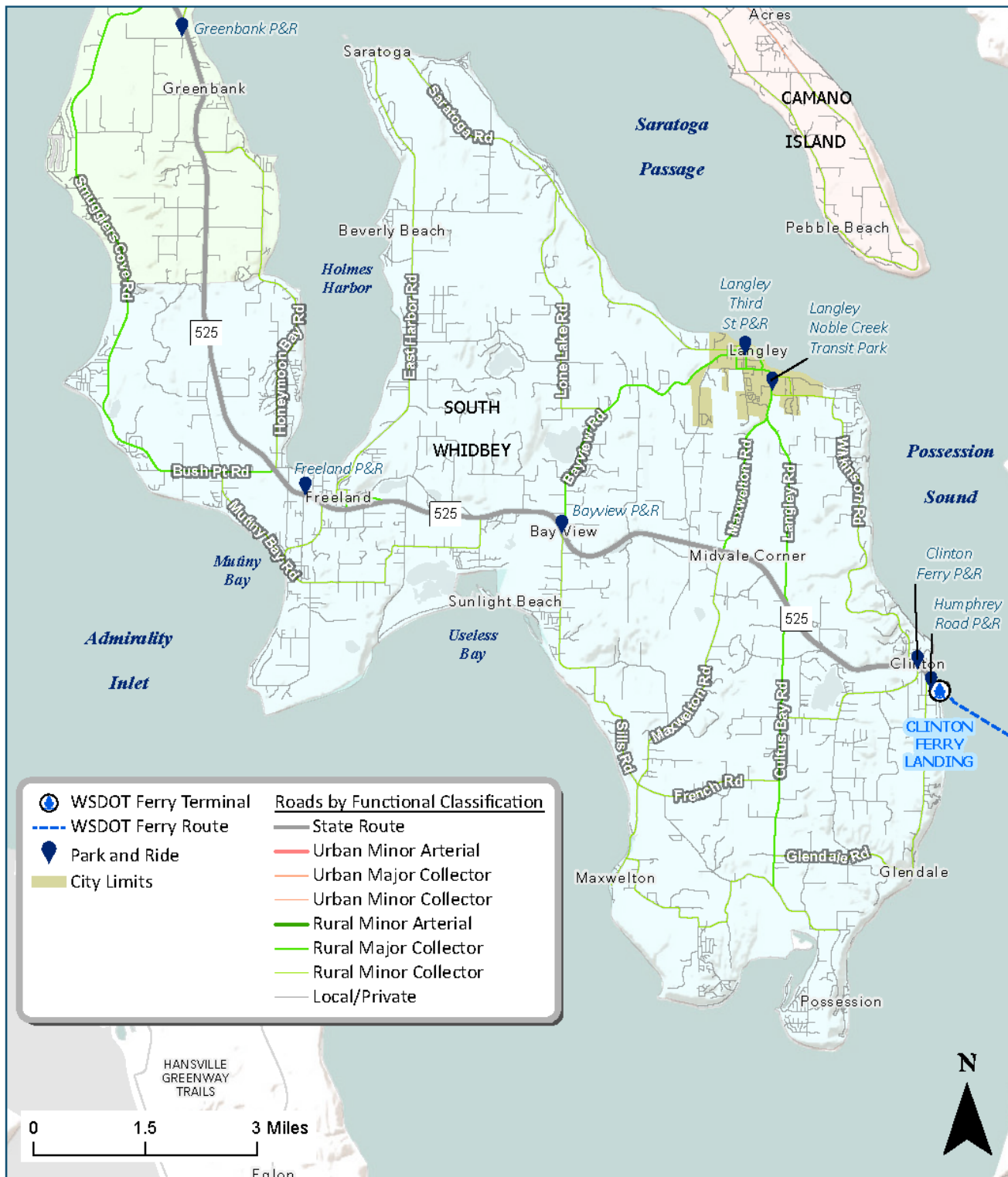


Figure 8. Local Regional Transportation Network – South Whidbey



## 5.4 State Highways

Three state highways traverse Island County. Our state highways are the backbone of our regional transportation network. They support all modes of transportation in Island County, just as the other modes support our highway network and increase the carrying capacity of the state highway network.

For Camano Island, State Route (SR) 532 is the one access point to the mainland via a bridge to the City of Stanwood, in Snohomish County. Because this is the only way on or off the island (except by private boat or plane) it is critical that SR 532 be regularly maintained, and upgraded as needed, to ensure access and mobility traffic flow to and through the City of Stanwood. WSDOT and the City of Stanwood have been actively studying this route and planning for improvements. (SR 532 Success Story in Chapter 6.)

State Routes 525 and 20 are Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS) that function as primary arterials from the northernmost to the southernmost points on Whidbey Island. The north end of SR 20 provides access to Skagit county via the Deception Pass and Canoe Pass Bridges. This segment of the route is used by workers commuting on and off the island, including NASWI personnel. As a gateway, it is also a major tourist attraction that draws thousands of visitors each year. SR 20 continues through Oak Harbor and Coupeville to Race Road, where it turns west toward the Coupeville/Port Townsend ferry terminal.



*Photo Credit: David Evans and Associates, Inc.*



SR 525 connects to SR 20 at Race Road and continues south through Freeland and Clinton to the Clinton/Mukilteo ferry terminal. SR 20 and SR 525 through Whidbey Island are identified as the Whidbey Scenic Isle Way, part of the Cascade Loop National Scenic Byway.

Traveler safety is a major concern on state highways. The majority of vehicle crashes in the Island Region happen on state highways. The tables shown at right illustrate traffic fatalities and accidents involving vehicles with bicyclists and pedestrians.

State facilities (highways, ferry terminals, and park & rides) are identified on Figures 3-6. The Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) on State Routes 20, 525, and 532 are shown in Table 8, within the gateway discussion.

Table 9. *Ten-Year Traffic Fatality Data for Island County*

Roadway/Owner	Number of Deaths
SR 20/WSDOT	17
SR 525/WSDOT	8
SR 532/WSDOT	2
County Roads	24
Oak Harbor Street	1
<b>Total Fatalities</b>	<b>52</b>

*WSDOT 10-Year Collision Data 2012-2021*

Table 10. *Ten-Year Bicycle and Pedestrian Incidents for Island County*

	Number of Incidents
Bicyclists	61
Pedestrians	77
<b>Total Bicycle/Pedestrian Collisions</b>	<b>138</b>

*WSDOT 10-Year Collision Data 2012-2021*

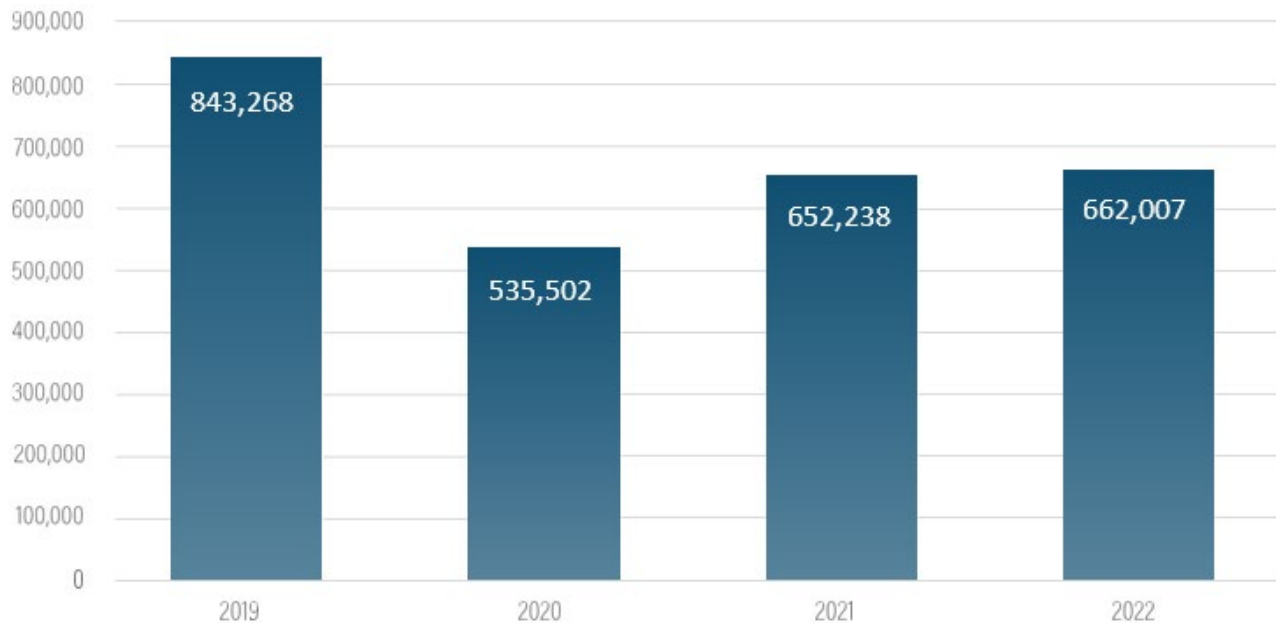
## 5.5 State Ferries

Two Washington State Ferries serve Whidbey Island, the Clinton/Mukilteo ferry, and the Coupeville/ Port Townsend ferry at Keystone Harbor.

According to the WSF Traffic Statistics Rider Segment Report ferry ridership overall has been inconsistent since 2019. Systemwide, ferry ridership in 2022 was still down 27% from 2019 numbers. It is assumed the initial drop in 2020 was related to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated social distancing restrictions. Additionally, in Island County, US Census data (see Chapter 2) showed that more than 3/4 of the Island County workforce remained in county (presumably working from home) for much of 2021 and 2021. This assumption accounts for reduced commuter and visitor travel but does not apply to freight traffic.

For the Coupeville/Port Townsend ferry, total riders (passenger vehicles, foot passengers, freight, and all other vehicles) dropped from 843,268 in 2019, to 535,502 in 2020. In 2021 total ridership jumped up to 652,238. The upward trend continued in 2022, with a total ridership of 662,007, but numbers are still more than 20% less than 2019.

Figure 9. Coupeville-Port Townsend Total Ferry Ridership Trends

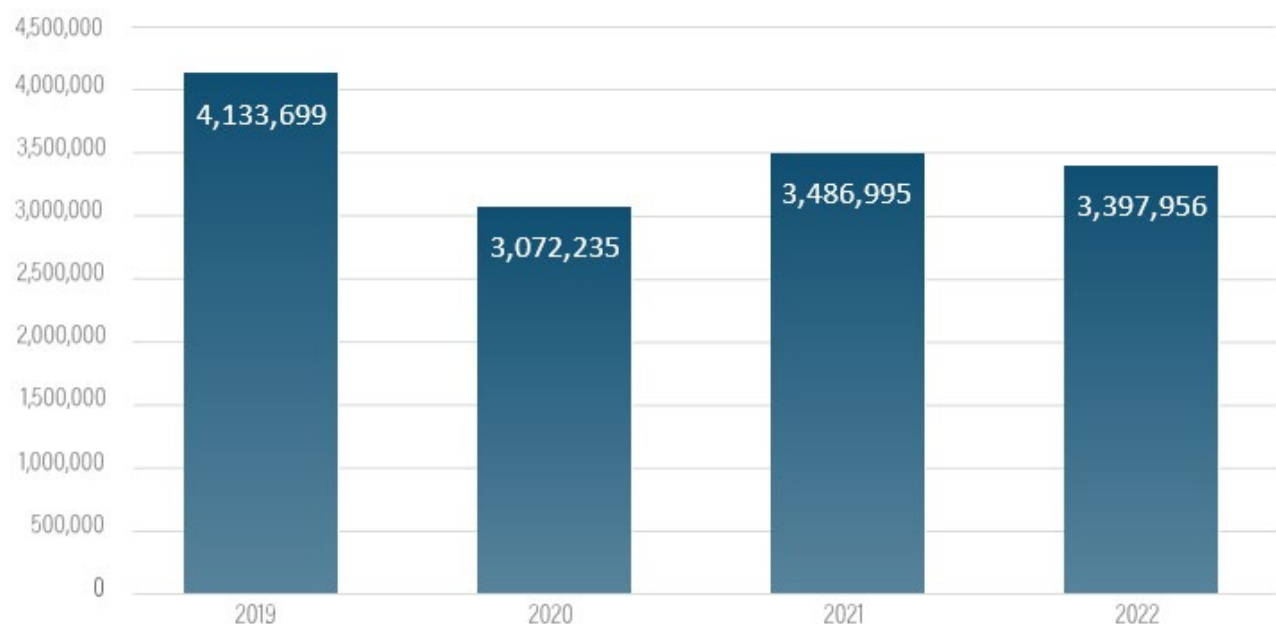



Walk-on or bike-on passengers dropped by more than half, from 132,165 in 2019 to 62,814 in 2020. This ridership improved to 92,260 in 2021, with another slight increase to 98,584 in 2022, but was still 25% less than 2019 ridership.

Total vehicles over 50-feet were reported at 7,722 in 2019. These volumes dipped slightly to 6,551 in 2020, but have returned to a volume of 7,470 in 2022, nearly back to 2019 levels. Additional data tables are available in Appendix C. Additional Charts and Data.

For the Clinton/Mukilteo ferry, total riders dropped from 4,133,699 in 2019 to 3,072,235 in 2020. In 2021 total ridership increased slightly, to 3,486,995. However, in 2022, ridership again dropped to 3,397,956.

Figure 10. Clinton-Mukilteo Total Ferry Ridership Trends





Walk-on or bike-on passengers dropped drastically from 382,870 in 2019 to 174,296 in 2020. Those numbers decreased slightly in 2021 to 172,258, before beginning to recover in 2022 with 204,386 total. However, this number is still only 53% of previous ridership.

Freight traffic on the Clinton/Mukilteo ferry has been in a steady decline. Total vehicles over 50-feet in 2019 were 8,604, dropping to 8,503 in 2020, 8,377 in 2021, and 7,991 in 2022. Assumption: if the ridership decline in the paragraph above is related to ferry availability, it is likely that freight traffic has been diverting to more reliable routes.

The WSF-COVID19-Service Restoration Plan (See Appendix C) identifies challenges to maintaining and improving Level of Service (LOS). In addition to pandemic ridership decline, the plan discusses vessel availability, staffing shortages, and funding issues.

## Waterways

Ferries and the marine highway system are fundamental to the region's security and economic prosperity.

- Island Region priorities would accelerate the timeline for overhead boarding and terminal improvements at Clinton, extended service on the Coupeville-Port Townsend Ferry in the spring and fall shoulder seasons would begin sooner and end later, and there would be more consideration of the role of landside facilities like park-and-ride lots and non-motorized access in reducing demand for drive-on ferry travel.
- Forecasted demand for ferry service is constrained by ferry service capacity and by existing routes.
- In 2020, the Washington State Legislature funded a study to determine interest in passenger only ferries. One of the top potential routes requested by survey data was between South Whidbey and Everett.
- Currently, Washington State Ferries does not plan for or provide passenger-only ferry service. However, the Port of South Whidbey has plans to repair and re-open a passenger-only ferry dock in Clinton, in anticipation of future need.

## Managing the Ferry Pulse

The ferry pulse is a heartbeat of the region's economy as well as a vexing mobility challenge.

- Relatively rural roadway conditions are punctuated by regular periods of un-rural traffic conditions.
- Surveys of business owners, property owners, and residents by the Port of South Whidbey for the 2017 Clinton Market Study identified ferry-related speeding and congestion issues, difficult local business ingress and egress, and problems related to queuing.
- Inadequate non-motorized access discourages more walk-on and bike-on ferry. WSF, WSDOT, and Island County are working on improving walk-on and bike-on access at the Clinton terminal. Projects include the Kiss & Ride on S. Ferry Dock Road; improvements to the SR 525 park & ride and associated sidewalk and crossing areas; and the Clinton to Ken's Corner Trail.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests that large numbers of trucks and passenger vehicles leaving Keystone Harbor commonly turn left and travel north through Fort Casey on Engle Road, generating traffic that is out of character with the area and other uses at the intersection of Main Street and Terry Road. The designated route via SR 20 is 8.8 miles northbound with an unprotected left turn at SR 525 making the Engle Road route more attractive to drivers. The designated southbound route via SR 20 is 10.8 miles due to the required U-turn one mile past the ferry terminal.

- Unmitigated effects of the ferry pulse conflict with regional objectives for multimodal access, safety, and operational efficiency, and undermine place-making efforts in rural communities and economic hubs.
- Education, enforcement, and design elements are all strategies that can mitigate unwanted driver behaviors.

## 5.6 Transit

Two transit providers serve Island County: Island Transit and Snow Goose.

*Island Transit* serves Whidbey and Camano Islands with fixed-route, scheduled bus service as well as paratransit, Rideshare (formerly called vanpool), and a new on-demand pilot program launched in 2023. The agency's bus service is provided fare free, making it easier to use transit in Island County. Island Transit provides connections to all four of the County's gateways, including into Skagit and Snohomish Counties. Island Transit routes are located on Figures 11-14.

There are several factors that impact Island Transit's operations. These factors are best summarized as follows:

- As a result of the County's geography, Island Transit operates two related, but unconnected service areas. The Whidbey Island service area is managed out of Coupeville, with a major transit center in Oak Harbor, at Harbor Station. The Camano Island service area is operated out of a small base on Camano Island, with its major transit center at Terry's Corner, at the north end of the island.
- The geography of Whidbey Island and the nature of traffic on the region's roadways and at its gateways can create delays that impact transit service operations and schedule reliability.
- Maintaining timed schedule connections with the two ferry terminals is a challenge, when ferry runs are behind schedule. This can have an impact on service and on-time schedule performance reliability.
- These operating realities, combined with the rural environment (including several long routes) in which the agency operates, causes overall increases in Island Transit's operating costs.
- Funding for the essential Intercounty Connector service is dependent on receiving operating grants for on-going service operations and support.
- The attractiveness of ferry routes for transit-supported walk-on or bike-on passengers is dependent upon the availability of public transit services operating on both sides of the ferry route crossings. This includes park-and-ride facilities, longer-term parking, coordinated transit connections, safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle access, overhead passenger boarding, and dedicated non-motorized facilities that provide safe and efficient boarding and de-boarding for bicyclists and pedestrians.



*Photo Credit: Joe A Kunzler*



Figure 11. Transit Routes & Facilities – Camano

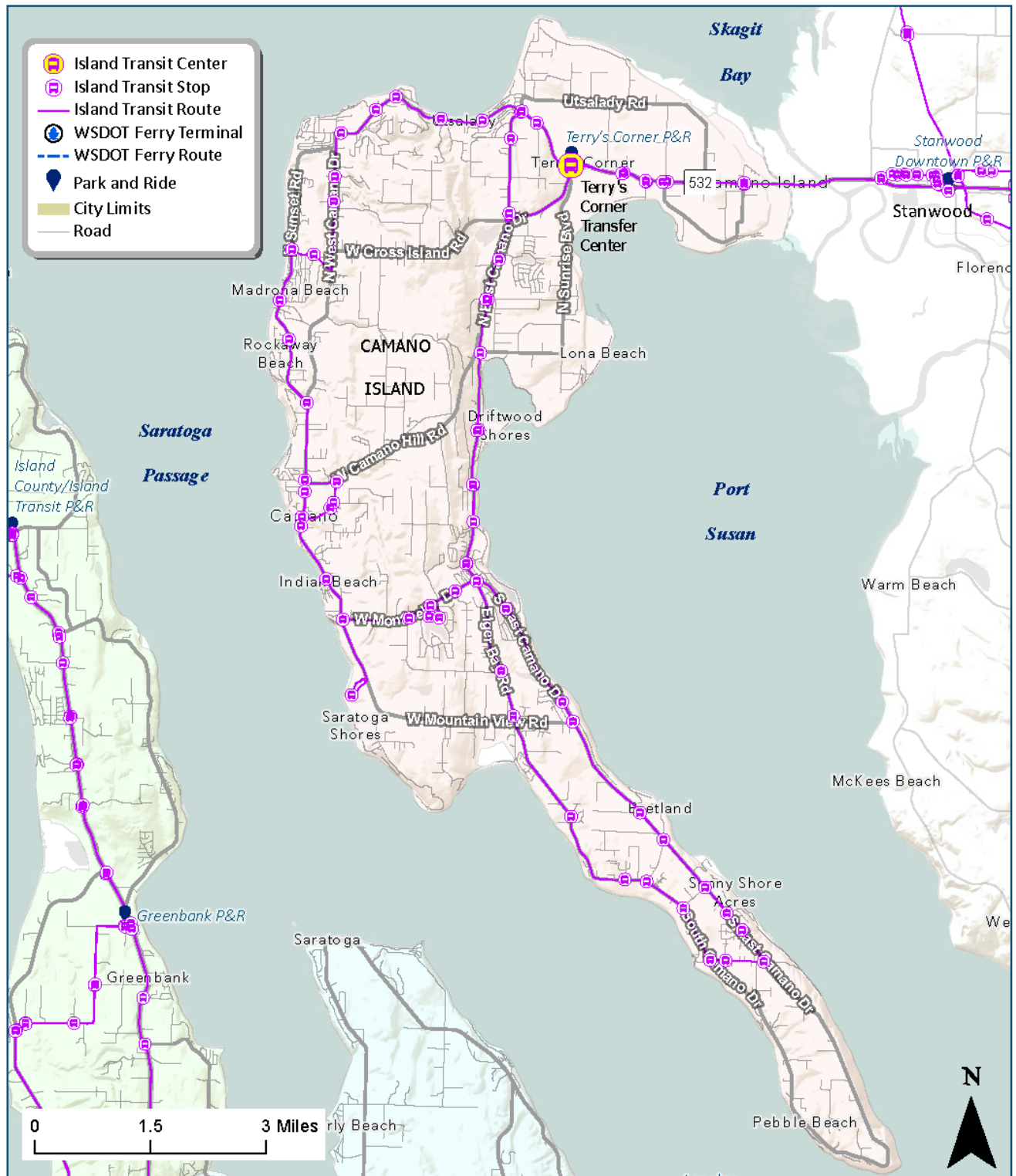


Figure 12. Transit Routes & Facilities – North Whidbey

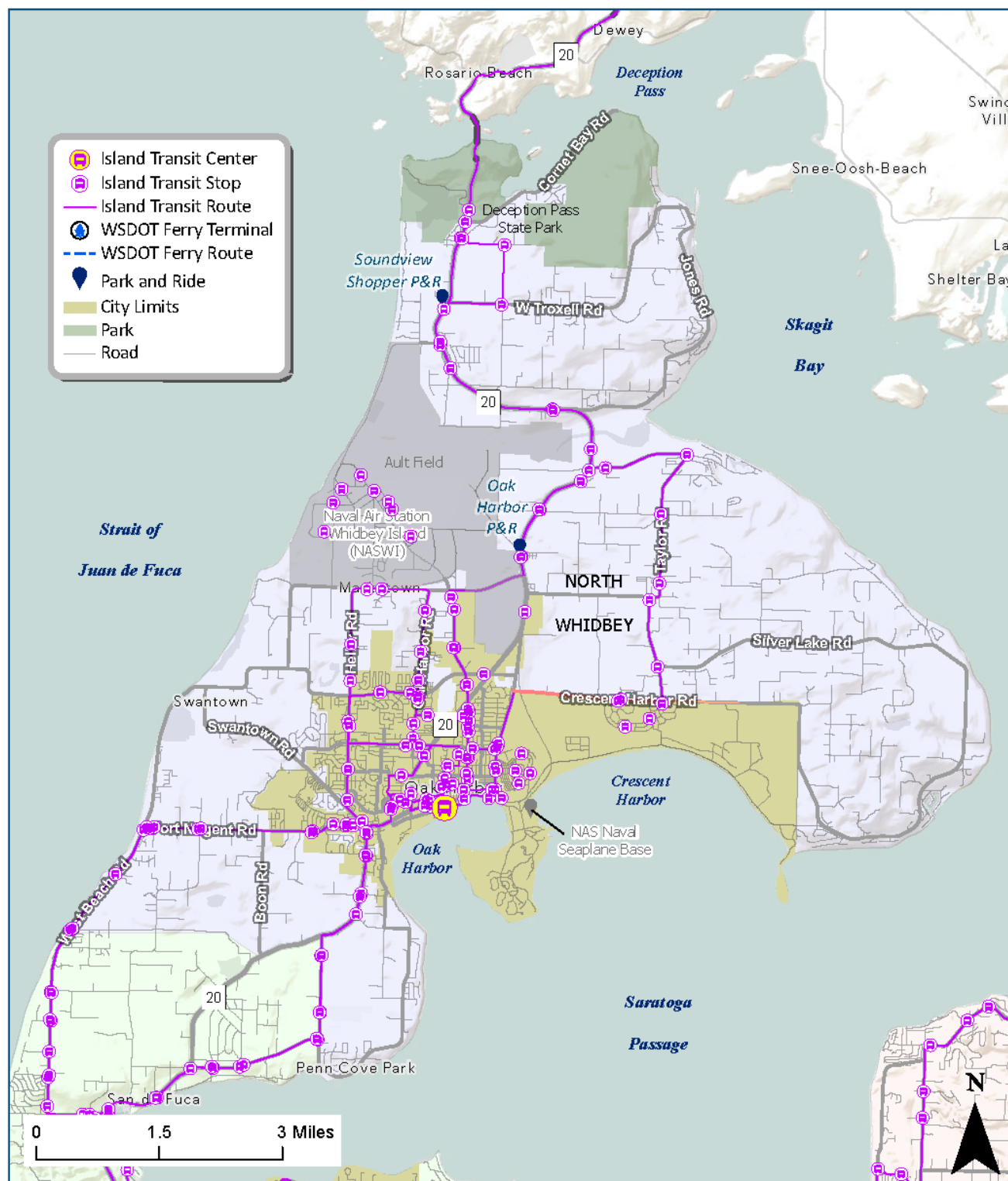


Figure 13. Transit Routes & Facilities – Central Whidbey

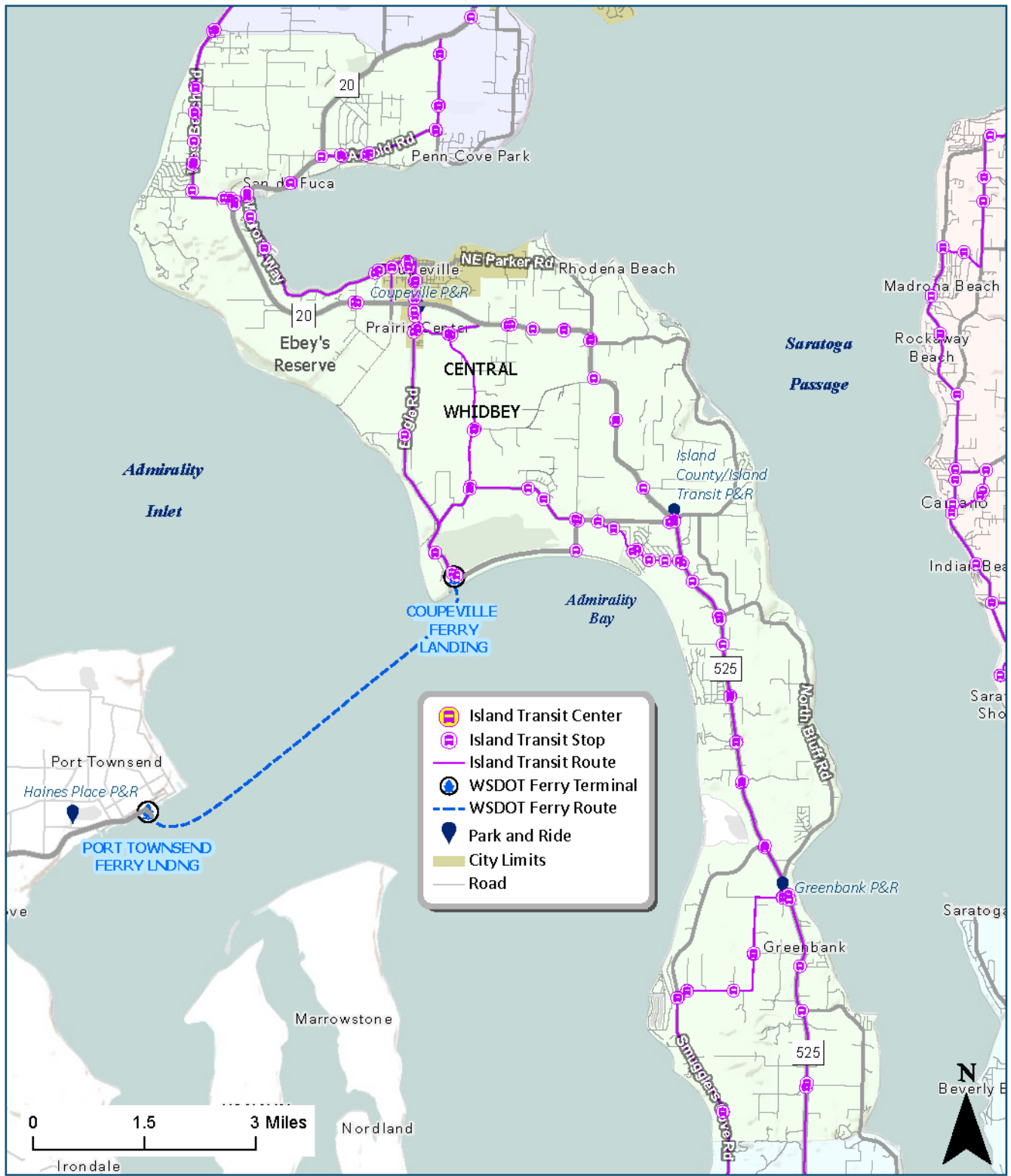
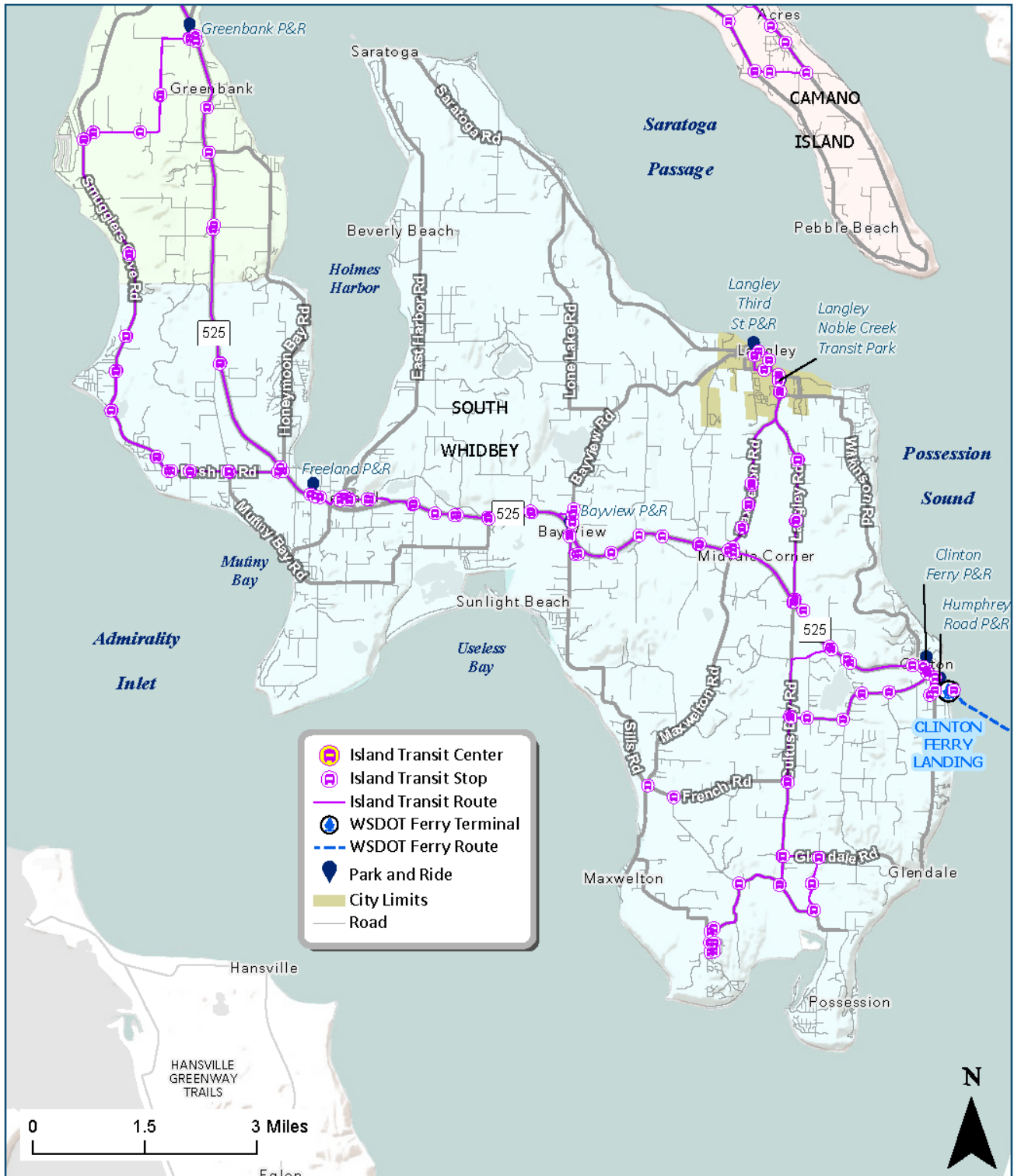


Figure 14. Transit Routes & Facilities – South Whidbey



The COVID-19 pandemic substantially impacted transit services and ridership. Transit services across the country reduced capacity and restricted services, partially due to staffing issues and partially to maintain social distancing. Island Transit's staff responded quickly and efficiently, installing protective safety equipment in buses and providing masks for drivers and riders. Still, Island Transit's fixed route and paratransit ridership dropped off significantly in 2020 and has not fully recovered. Table 11 shows the year-by-year comparison of total ridership for both fixed route and paratransit. Detailed data tables of ridership by month from 2019 through May of 2023 are located in Appendix C. Additional Charts and Data.

Table 11. *Island Transit Ridership Comparison 2019-2023 (Weekdays and Saturdays)*

Fixed Route					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
System Total	550,929	235,709	243,179	287,268	127,476
Paratransit					
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023*
System Total	65,168	30,590	30,973	36,227	16,442

\* 2023 totals are January through May only.

Island Transit is in the midst of a significant expansion of service, part of Island Transit Maximized. The agency is implementing service improvements over an eighteen-month period. Those service improvements include:

- First-ever Sunday service, beginning on June 4, 2023.
- Five new on-demand service zones that will more efficiently connect riders to transit while expanding the service area footprint of the agency in some areas.
- A new seasonal bus service (from Memorial Day to Labor Day) that connects for the first-time central Whidbey Island State Parks (Fort Casey and Fort Ebey) with Ebey's Landing, the Coupeville ferry, and the Town of Coupeville.
- New bus routes in Oak Harbor and an expanded bus route providing better connections between Langley and Freeland.
- Later weekday operating service on key bus routes serving both islands.

Island Transit has also begun transitioning to a zero-emission fleet. Approved by the Island Transit Board of Directors on March 3, 2023, the agency has a plan to replace its fixed route service with zero emission vehicles by 2035, and the rest of its fleet by 2040. The agency will operate a mixture of battery electric and hydrogen fuel cell vehicles. This transition will require the agency to make changes to its facilities to accommodate battery charging and hydrogen fueling. The agency has already purchased five battery electric Rideshare vehicles and begun the procurement of 11 battery electric on-demand/paratransit vehicles. Additionally, the agency has installed solar panels at its two operating bases to cover a portion of its facility power needs.

Island Transit has two major capital projects underway to support its service expansion and decarbonization. On Whidbey Island, a transit center is being designed to serve as the hub and safe transfer point for its service on the south end of the island. On Camano Island, the agency is building a staff support facility at its Terry's Corner Transit Center.



## Snow Goose Transit

A new non-profit public transportation service was formed in 2022 to serve the Camano Island, Stanwood, Smokey Point, and Arlington areas. It focuses on people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income families. The goal is to help community members obtain needed transportation to work, medical appointments, or grocery stores. Snow Goose utilizes three, thirteen-passenger mini-buses (wheelchair accessible lift available) and operates on a flex-route. Door-to-door pick-ups and drop-offs can be scheduled in advance.

## 5.7 Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Multi-modal connectivity for the Island region means facilities exist that allow bicyclists, pedestrians, and users of all abilities, to safely access transit and ferry connections, shopping, jobs, schools, and recreational activities.

Facilities specifically designed for bicycles, pedestrians, wheelchairs, strollers, and other non-motorized uses are generally available in urbanized areas such as cities, towns, and RAIDs. Off-road trails for hiking, mountain biking, and horseback riding are generally available in rural areas and public park lands. However, the Island region has a diverse mix of paths, trails, and non-motorized facilities throughout the region, some belonging to local agencies, some to state agencies, and some to non-profits or private entities.

Figures 15-18 identify existing non-motorized facilities (other than sidewalks).



*Photo Credit: Island County Public Works*

Figure 15. *Non-motorized Facilities – Camano*





Figure 16. *Non-motorized Facilities – North Whidbey*

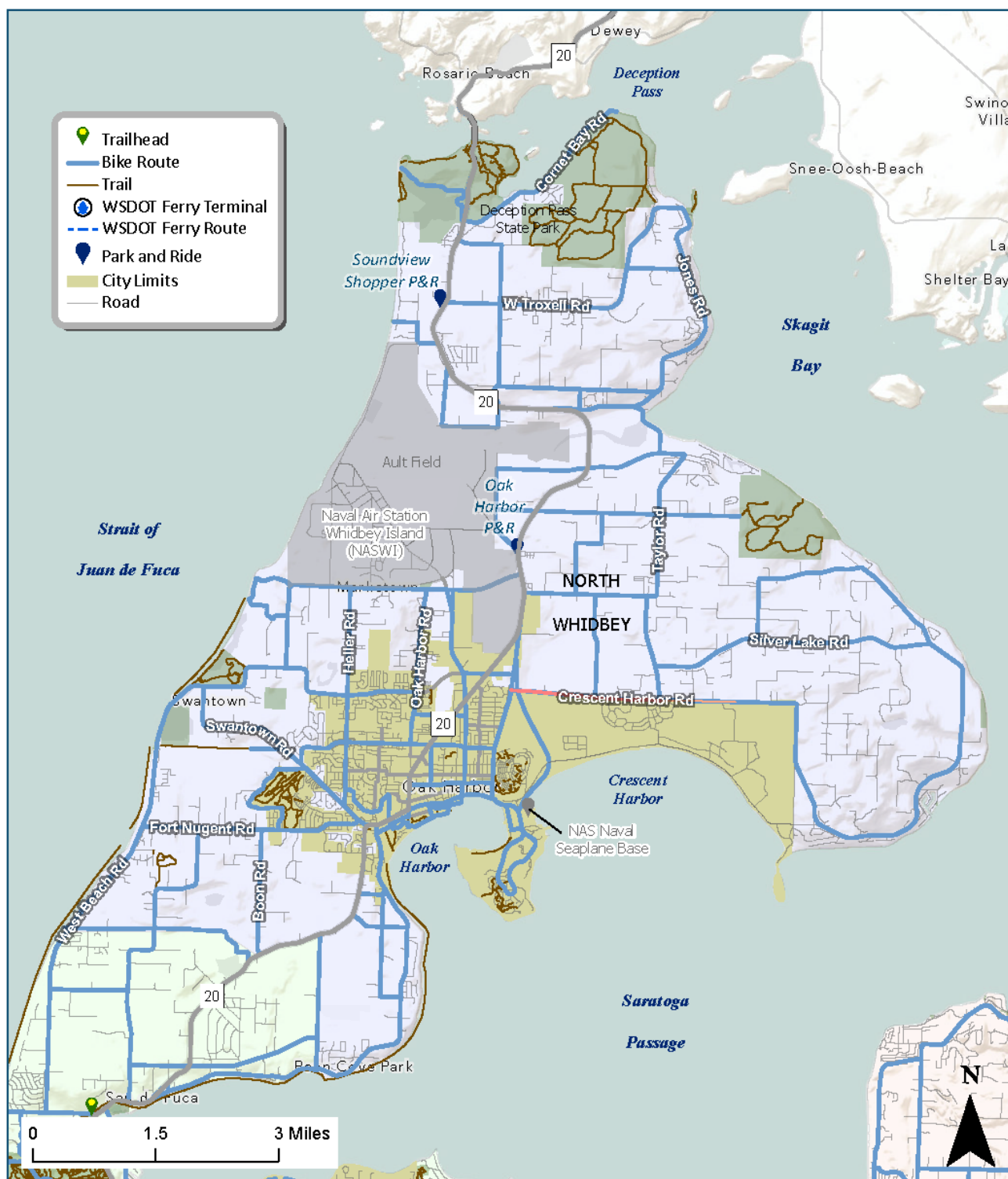
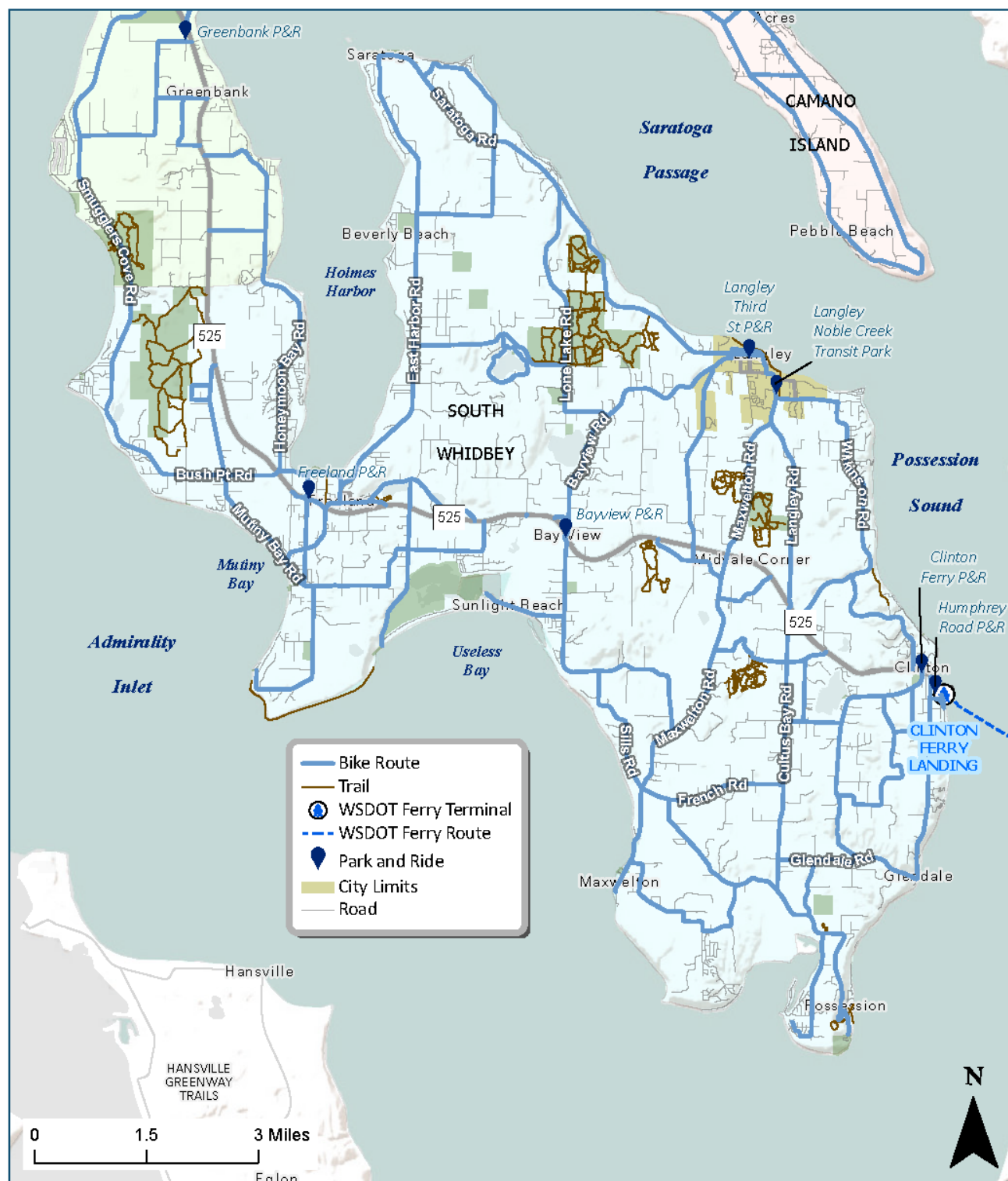


Figure 17. *Non-motorized Facilities – Central Whidbey*



Figure 18. *Non-motorized Facilities – South Whidbey*



Additionally, Comprehensive Plans, Sub-area Plans, and Active Transportation Plans of the IRTPO's member agencies identify gaps in bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Some identify proposed projects or solutions. Many other planning documents, codes, and maps address bicycle and pedestrian facilities in the Island Region. Those include, but are not limited to:

- Island County Non-Motorized Trails Plan <https://islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2581/Island-County-Non-Motorized-Trails-pdf>
- Island County Biking Map <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3166/Island-County-Biking-Map-pdf?bidId=>
- Island County Trails Maps <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/655/Trail-Maps>
- 2016 Freeland Sub-Area Plan, Transportation Section <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/263/2016-Freeland-Subarea-Plan-PDF>
- City of Oak Harbor Active Transportation Plan (to be adopted Winter 2023)
- City of Langley Complete Streets Ordinance [https://cms4files1.revize.com/langleywashington/document\\_center/Complete\\_Streets\\_Ordinance\\_1st\\_reading.pdf](https://cms4files1.revize.com/langleywashington/document_center/Complete_Streets_Ordinance_1st_reading.pdf)
- US Bicycle Route Maps <https://wsdot.wa.gov/travel/bicycling-walking/bicycling-washington/us-bike-routes>

## 5.8 Airports and Airways

Washington State's Airport Classification System identifies the roles and service levels of Washington's public use airports. State airport classifications do not supersede FAA classifications, but supplement them by accounting for airports that may not be significant on a national level, but are important to the state aviation system. The State's six airport classifications are:

- COMMERCIAL SERVICE AIRPORTS AND REGIONAL SERVICE AIRPORTS. These are in the largest service areas and accommodate high levels of activity.
- COMMUNITY SERVICE AIRPORTS. These serve medium-sized communities and accommodate a wide range of general aviation aircraft.
- LOCAL SERVICE AIRPORTS. These typically serve small communities with populations less than 6,000. Airports in this classification accommodate a narrower range of general aviation activities and aircraft.
- RURAL ESSENTIAL AIRPORTS AND SEAPLANE BASES. These serve the narrowest scopes of general aviation. Airports in these two classifications typically develop due to geographic circumstances rather than demand from the population within their service areas. Examples might be recreational destinations, emergency landing areas, or residential airparks.



Whidbey Airpark. Photo Credit: WSDOT.



Island County has three public use/private-owned airports and two Navy airfields.

## *Public Use Airports*

Airports like these are economic generators for their communities creating both direct economic benefits and indirect benefits. WSDOT Aviation Divisions airport calculator suggests that the three airports could generate in excess of \$12 million per year in economic benefit for the Region. Additionally, small rural airports can be pressed into service to help with a wide range of important needs such as disaster relief, agricultural uses, and civil air patrol. The three private-owned / public use airports are located two on Whidbey Island and one on Camano Island:

- DELAURENTIS AIRPORT (OKH), near Oak Harbor, is classified as a Local Services Airport.
- WHIDBEY AIRPARK, on South Whidbey, is classified as a Rural Essential Airport.
- CAMANO ISLAND AIRFIELD is classified as a Rural Essential Airport.

Providing quality mobility for the People of the Island is always a balance among: 1) land use needs and goals, 2) transportation needs and goals, and 3) maintaining our rural quality of life. Presently three modes of transportation exist in Island County: airports, surface roads and bridges, and our waterways. The airspace accessible through aviation is marginally used for civil transportation. Towards that, we are prioritizing the development of a Regional Aviation System Plan so that the emerging Advanced Air Mobility governance and technology will support making use of the third dimension to the benefit of all the People of the Island Region. In addition to leveraging advancing governance and technology, a coherent aviation strategy will ensure integration with the other elements of the multi-modal transportation system. Development of this strategy, not only for the visible benefits that can be gained, but for the less visible effect of reduced pressure on our surface transportation systems.

## *Navy Airfields*

NASWI has multiple military air facilities on Whidbey Island. This base is home to all Navy tactical electronic squadrons flying the EA-18G Growler. The station also includes P-8 Poseidon maritime patrol squadrons and a fleet air reconnaissance squadron flying EP-3E Aries.

Ault Field, the main base at NASWI is located on the western shore of Whidbey Island, north of Oak Harbor. The seaplane base is located five miles to the southeast, on the eastern edge of Oak Harbor.

The outlying field (OLF) is another NASWI facility where training and military operations take place. It is located near the center of Whidbey Island, southwest of the Town of Coupeville. Navy facilities are not open for public use. The countywide emergency management plans identify cooperation and roles of local, state, and federal government agencies during an emergency. (Island County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, 2018, <https://wa-islandcounty.civicplus.com/507/Comprehensive-Emergency-Management-Plan>). On page four of the Transportation chapter, the plan clearly states: “Air assets from state organizations, the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) and the Navy may be available for surveillance and damage assessment flights. Neither of these organizations is equipped to evacuate large groups of people or move cargo.”



# 6

## Island Access Strategic Action Plan

Island Region's transportation plan focuses on issues and opportunities to be addressed through regional collaboration and initiative. The Strategic Action Plan is a long-range program of planning activities that will assess identified issues in depth and determine appropriate, practical solutions that advance regional objectives. It is tailored toward those actions that the IRTPO can pursue in its capacity as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization or support through the work of others.

Concepts were developed in collaboration with IRTPO members and stakeholders during system evaluation workshops and in plan development. Implementation of the Strategic Action Plan lays the groundwork for subsequent development of practical solutions at the local and state levels. Those solutions and the resulting project development process will rely on the analysis, data, process, coordination, and other products associated with completion of these actions. The IRTPO's Strategic Action Plan plays a vital role in ensuring coordination and consistency among all of the different transportation agencies, and between the Island Region and surrounding areas. It provides the foundation for streamlined plans and projects that will result in the right solution in the right place.

### 6.1 Success Stories

Before discussing plans and projects to address current and future challenges, it is important to look back at the work of the IRTPO and its member agencies and celebrate the success stories of studies and projects completed or underway. These projects have multiple lead agencies and partners, but all address regionally significant transportation challenges within and beyond Island County.

#### SR 532 Analysis

Safety and mobility issues on SR 532 were identified in *Island Access 2040* and the Stanwood Comprehensive Plan. Mobility, congestion and safety are key factors identified on SR 532.

In 2021 and 2022, WSDOT, the City of Stanwood, and multiple partners engaged in a baseline study of the SR 532 corridor. The two identified purposes of the study were to determine:

- 1) whether the corridor was meeting regional mobility and safety performance expectations, and
- 2) what steps or measures should be taken to address identified problems and needs if performance was not being met.

To aid in the evaluation the following four study objectives were identified:

- Identify and determine the type and rate of congestion and crashes within the corridor.
- Measure the travel time on the corridor and between key destination areas.

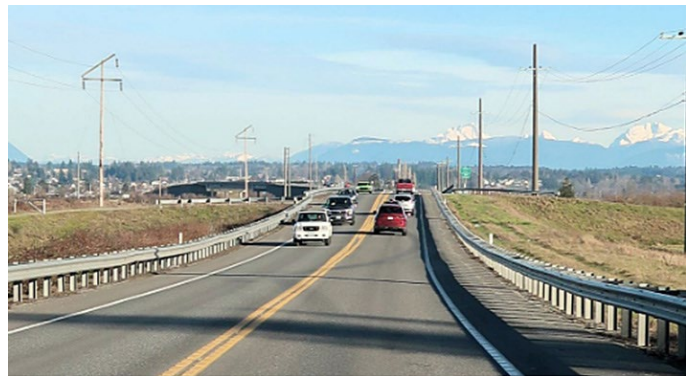


Photo Credit: WSDOT



- Identify existing conditions of other transportation modes such as public transit, pedestrians, bicycles, and other rolling modes using the corridor.
- Engage the public to inform them about the technical analysis and gather information on areas of concern. The SR 532 Existing Conditions Analysis draft report and associated background data can be viewed at <https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/search-studies/sr-532-existing-conditions-analysis>.

## Oakes Road

Installation of a 1.5-mile new road segment linking Race Road and Houston Road on Whidbey Island. Before the completion of Oakes Rd, this area was the only transportation gap on Whidbey Island that had no alternative to the State Highway. Concerns among transportation and safety officials focused on the possibility that a large accident, or even a smaller one involving a fatality, or other event could result in shutting down SR 525.

This action would completely isolate vehicle transportation including freight, transit, passenger vehicles, and ambulances serving the Whidbey General Hospital, Fire Stations, as well as other emergency services. The project created a secondary route that can avoid otherwise serious and costly impacts from even a short-term closure of SR 525.



Photo Credit: Island County Public Works

## Snow Goose Transit

In partnership with IRTPO, the North Counties Transportation Coalition (NCTC) solicited and received Consolidated Grants to study and plan for an additional transportation option for those with special transportation needs. In 2022, the Lincoln Hill Retirement Community launched Snow Goose Transit, which serves the Camano, Stanwood, Smokey Point, and Arlington areas. Snow Goose Transit's mission is to provide safe and reliable transportation for the local community. It focuses on people with disabilities, older adults, and low-income families, helping community members obtain needed transportation to work, medical appointments, or grocery stores.



Photo Credit: Susan Driver

## Island Transit Successes:

### Fare Free Island Transit Bus Service

Island Transit continues to operate its services without charging a fare, removing the inability to pay a fare as a barrier to riding the bus in Island County. The agency is committed to increasing access and mobility to opportunities —equity for all.

### Improving Bus Service in Island County

As a part of Island Transit Maximized, Island Transit is nearing final implementation of major service improvements. The last installment will be in place by early 2024. The new on-demand service utilizes a phone application to schedule pick-ups. All these improvements are designed to make it easier for residents and visitors to rely on bus and transit service in Island County. These improvements include:

- First-ever Sunday bus service.
- Five new on-demand service zones.
- New seasonal service connecting central Whidbey Island state parks (Fort Casey and Fort Ebey) with Ebey's Landing, the Coupeville ferry, and the Town of Coupeville.
- New routes in Oak Harbor and an expanded route between Langley and Freeland.
- Later operating weekday service hours.

### Staff Support Facility at Terry's Corner (Camano Island) Transit Center

Island Transit is at nearly 100% design for a 'comfort station' at the Terry's Corner Transit Center. The 'comfort station' improvements include a restroom and break room for operating staff. Island Transit has been awarded a capital grant to cover the construction costs in the state's Move Ahead Washington investment program.

### Island Vehicle Electrification

In late 2020 and early 2021, the IRTPO studied the future of vehicle electrification in the Island Region. The study included a public survey that asked if respondents owned EVs and what barriers they saw to owning EVs in the Island Region.



Photo Credit: Island Transit



Photo Credit: Island Transit



The majority of respondents (both current EV owners and non-EV owners) identified the lack of available public charging, range anxiety, and upfront vehicle costs as challenges to owning an EV in the Island region. The next series of questions in the survey asked respondents where they wanted to see charging stations on Whidbey and Camano Islands. The overwhelming response was grocery stores and shopping areas, followed by parks, libraries, restaurants, public buildings, and park & rides.

Additionally, our consultants collected existing fleet and charging station data from fleet managers of local government agencies, school districts, State Parks, NASWI, and other entities in the Island Region. A high-level analysis of fleet vehicles that would be optimal for conversion to EVs in the near-term, mid-term, and long-term was developed for the consideration of the IRTPO member agencies. Relevant information on life-cycle costs, battery technology, charging infrastructure, and electro-mobility trends was included in the consultant's presentation to the IRTPO member agencies.



*Photo Credit: EV Charging Station at Whidbey Telecom*

In tying the public and fleet EV discussion together, the team created a Charging Station Design Guidance Toolbox to help potential charging station hosts and fleet managers understand the station types and infrastructure needs. The team also reviewed and analyzed EV-ready building codes related to charging infrastructure development. After researching federal, state, and local codes, they determined that the Town of Coupeville already had a viable code for EV infrastructure development. This code, with a few added suggestions from the consultants and the Mayor of Coupeville, has been recommended for adoption by the other member agencies.

Finally, the consultant drafted a policy document for the IRTPO and (if desired) member agencies, to adopt in support of EVs and EV infrastructure. Alternately, elements of this policy document could be incorporated into the Greenhouse Gas Emissions policies of member agencies.

In the 2024/2025 biennium, the IRTPO is planning to apply for EV grants to help install charging stations in rural communities and accessible locations. Member agencies have suggested developing an overlay of the Puget Sound Energy (PSE) power grid to support the EV infrastructure roll out.

## *Minimizing Environmental Impacts*

Island Transit continues to promote that the most significant way individuals can reduce their carbon footprints are to not travel in single occupant vehicles. Through the latest transit service improvements, Island Transit is expanding regional access and mobility options for walking, biking and using transit for trips. Island Transit continues to promote Rideshare and is committed to decarbonizing its vehicle fleet no later than 2040 through investing in zero emissions vehicles and renewable energy at its facilities.

## Libbey to Kettles Multi-Use Trail Connector Designated Parking Area

This project is located on the SW corner of Libbey Road and SR 20 on WSDOT right-of way. It provides parking and access to the Kettle Trails and the adjacent Allito Trails. Development of the site was funded by Island County Public works, which has a maintenance agreement with WSDOT. The trail systems are maintained by the Island County Public Works Department, Parks Division, with volunteer assistance from the Island County Chapter of the Back Country Horsemen, the Whidbey Island Bicycle Club, and the Island County Trails Council.



Photo Credit: Island County Public Works

## North Whidbey Traffic Circulation Enhancements (Roundabouts)

Two roundabouts were constructed, to improve traffic flow along Ault Field Road at the intersection of Heller Road and Clover Valley Road, and a second roundabout along SR-20 at Northgate Drive and Banta Road.

The SR-20 roundabout provides continued flow of traffic on SR-20, while simultaneously affording traffic departing the highly populated Northgate sub-division or NASWI to merge onto SR-20, thus preventing traffic backup awaiting left turns.

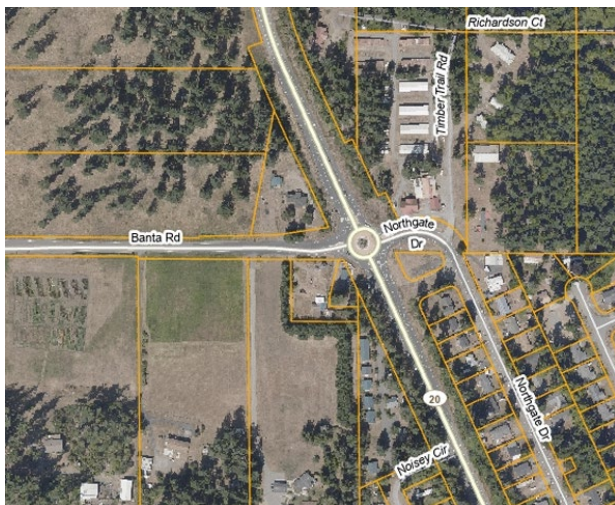


Image Credit: Island County Public Works

The Ault Field Road roundabout maintains a steady flow of traffic entering/exiting NASWI and provides commuters an alternate and efficient route to by-pass the city of Oak Harbor (also reducing some of the city's congestion).



## 6.2 Strategic Action Items

Following the establishment of policies, and continuing to build upon successes as previously noted, Action Items identify how taskings align with this plan's context and policies. Description, Intent, Lead Agency, Cost Estimate, Timeframe, and listing in RTIP are essential items to be described for each Action Item.

The 2045 RTP identifies eight key Action Items to be prioritized, evaluated, and thrust forward with collaborated efforts to better serve the Island RTPO.



## **ACTION ITEM 1. EXPLORE POTENTIAL FOR ACTIVE RECREATION TOURISM**

### **POLICY 2. STRATEGIC DECISIONS.**

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

### **POLICY 3. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Advocate for increased multimodal connectivity for the Island Region.

### **POLICY 4. VISIONARY DIRECTION.**

Promote the Island Region and its unique character through strategic transportation decisions.

### **POLICY 6. EFFICIENT RELIABILITY.**

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

### **POLICY 8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.**

Support the economic health and vitality of the Island Region.

### **POLICY 9. ECONOMIC VITALITY.**

Facilitate a healthier environment for current and future generations.

### **POLICY 10. SOCIAL EQUITY.**

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

**INTENT:** Leverage investments in trails, bike routes, and non-motorized facilities to support local economic opportunities.

**NEED:** While the transportation system gets tourists to and from the region, some aspects of it can be the attraction itself. IRTPO members have invested in infrastructure that makes biking the region's roadways and hiking its trails a uniquely beautiful experience unlike that found anywhere else, matched only by kayaking experiences on the region's segments of the Cascadia Marine Trail system. Cycling, hiking, and paddling conditions are good most of the year due to rain shadow effects and a temperate climate. Investments in the region's non-motorized facilities coupled with other strategies can support low-impact active recreation in the tourism economy.

**DESCRIPTION:** Engage with regional tourism and economic development partners in exploring ways to leverage the region's top notch non-motorized facilities, US Bike Route and Scenic Isle Way designations, Cascadia Marine Trail, temperate climate, and superb terrain and vistas to stimulate year-round interest in active recreation tourism with a light environmental impact. Identify areas for greater coordination or collaboration.

**LEAD AGENCY:** Island Transit

**PARTNERS:** All IRTPO Member Agencies

**COST ESTIMATE:**

**TIMEFRAME:** Near-term

**LISTED IN RTIP:** Yes \_\_\_\_ No X





## **ACTION ITEM 2.** SR 20 Oak Harbor Baseline Conditions Assessment

### POLICY 2. STRATEGIC DECISIONS.

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

### POLICY 6. EFFICIENT RELIABILITY.

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

### POLICY 8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.

Support the economic health and vitality of the Island Region.

### POLICY 9. ECONOMIC VITALITY.

Facilitate a healthier environment for current and future generations.

### POLICY 10. SOCIAL EQUITY.

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

**INTENT:** Conduct an existing conditions assessment on SR 20 through Oak Harbor to determine if the state highway in the urban area of Oak Harbor is meeting multimodal regional transportation performance objectives for congestion and safety. The analysis would help support methods to enhance all modes of transportation.

**NEED:** SR 20 is the primary access through the City of Oak Harbor and is forecast to experience increases in traffic congestion and safety issues in the future. The current highway through the city has about 20,575 average daily trips. Freight accounts for an estimated 4 to 5 percent of the traffic profile. Most of the highway is improved with two lanes in each direction with a center turn lane and 10 signalized intersections. Sidewalks also exist on both sides with very limited bicycle improvements along the highway.

**DESCRIPTION:** The assessment will include an analysis of transportation and safety conditions to determine if the highway is meeting regional transportation performance expectations for all modes of transportation. The assessment would be conducted in partnership with the City of Oak Harbor, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO).

**LEAD AGENCY:** IRTPO, Oak Harbor and WSDOT

**PARTNERS:** All IRTPO members and associate members

**COST ESTIMATE:**

**TIMEFRAME:** Near-term

**LISTED IN RTIP:** Yes \_\_\_\_ No X



### **ACTION ITEM 3. SR 20 DECEPTION BRIDGE TRANSPORTATION EVALUATION**

#### **POLICY 2. STRATEGIC DECISIONS.**

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

#### **POLICY 3. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Advocate for increased multimodal connectivity for the Island Region.

#### **POLICY 4. VISIONARY DIRECTION.**

Promote the Island Region and its unique character through strategic transportation decisions.

#### **POLICY 6. EFFICIENT RELIABILITY.**

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

#### **POLICY 8. ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH.**

Support the economic health and vitality of the Island Region.

#### **POLICY 9. ECONOMIC VITALITY.**

Facilitate a healthier environment for current and future generations.

#### **POLICY 10. SOCIAL EQUITY.**

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

**INTENT:** Conduct an alternatives access and mobility evaluation of the SR 20 Deception Pass Bridge to determine and address future forecast transportation needs for Whidbey Island.

**NEED:** The historic bridge has heavy recreation and commuter traffic across the bridge creating reoccurring congestions and safety issues for all modes of transportation including automobile, freight, transit, pedestrian, and bicycles. No alternative access is currently available to the north end of Whidbey Island.

**DESCRIPTION:** The SR 20 Deception Pass Bridge are the only land connection between Whidbey Island and the mainland (Skagit County). It has commuter traffic in the AM and PM and serves recreational users year around. Additionally, the highway is designated a Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET) because it provides the only highway access to Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI). It is also part of the Whidbey Island Scenic Isleway and Cascade Loop Scenic Byway. The evaluation would be conducted in partnership with the Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (IRTPO), Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and the Washington State Parks.

**LEAD AGENCY:** IRTPO, WSDOT

**PARTNERS:** All IRTPO Member Agencies, State of Washington Parks

**COST ESTIMATE:**

**TIMEFRAME:** Near-term

**LISTED IN RTIP:** Yes \_\_\_\_ No X

#### ACTION ITEM 4. SPECIFIC STUDIES ON AN AS NEEDED BASIS

- Collect Travel Data to Support Systems Analysis
- Acquire and Maintain Updated Regional GIS and Spatial Data
- Monitor and Evaluate Park-and-Ride Usage
- Additional data collection and analysis projects as identified by the TAC

##### POLICY 1. CONSISTENCY AND COORDINATION.

Advance consistency between transportation and land use plans as well as other community-based plans working to achieve adopted visions.

##### POLICY 2. STRATEGIC DECISIONS.

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

##### POLICY 6. EFFICIENT RELIABILITY.

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

**INTENT:** Ensure relevant, reliable data is available to support robust systems analysis and informed decisions by the IRTPO and its partners. Ensure that the supply and management of park-and-ride facilities is coordinated with overall regional multimodal mobility objectives.

**NEED:** To evaluate transportation system performance and deficiencies, and identify solutions that get at the underlying issues, analysts need solid data. Effective decision-making warrants robust travel data. Current GIS data is part of the foundation for robust systems analysis as well as a wide array of other activities such as emergency management planning. An economy of scale and consistency of datasets can be obtained by collecting and maintaining essential data at the regional level and making it available to IRTPO members and stakeholders. Park-and-ride facilities play a vital role in making multimodal mobility efficient. Like every other part of the transportation system, these facilities need to be monitored, maintained, and managed in a coordinated fashion to fulfill this function.

**DESCRIPTION:** Collect travel data needed to understand how and why people and goods travel as they do throughout the Island Region. Data needs could include but are not limited to origin and destination data for people and freight; gateway cordons that reveal through-traffic patterns; and household travel surveys. Effort will be made to coordinate with other data collection efforts such as the periodic WSF passenger survey, WSDOT ADT and crash data, and other publicly available data sets. Periodically update and maintain a regional GIS database to support transportation planning and analysis at the local, regional, and state levels. High value data requiring periodic updates includes but is not limited to Lidar and aerial imagery. Continue to collect park-and-ride usage data for all facilities in the region. Island Transit is collecting this information. Future analysis of this data will help understand how these facilities are being used and their overall demand.

**LEAD AGENCY:** IRTPO

**PARTNERS:** All IRTPO members and associate members

**COST ESTIMATE:** \$85,000

**TIMEFRAME:** Continuous per UPWP Element #4

**LISTED IN RTIP:** Yes \_\_\_\_ No X



## ACTION ITEM 5. SAFE STREETS 4 ALL – COMPREHENSIVE ACTION SAFETY PLAN

Sub-elements of the regional plan to include:

- Island County
  - » Camano/SR 532 Gateway
  - » Clinton/Clinton Ferry Gateway
  - » Keystone Harbor /Coupeville Ferry Gateway
  - » Freeland
  - » North Whidbey/SR 20 - Deception Pass Gateway
- City of Oak Harbor
- Town of Coupeville
- City of Langley

### POLICY 1. CONSISTENCY & COORDINATION.

Advance consistency between transportation and land use plans as well as other community-based plans working to achieve adopted visions.

### POLICY 2. STRATEGIC DECISIONS.

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

### POLICY 3. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.

Advocate for increased multimodal connectivity for the Island Region.

### POLICY 6. EFFICIENT RELIABILITY.

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

### POLICY 7. SYSTEM SAFETY.

Work toward a safer transportation system for all users.

### POLICY 10. SOCIAL EQUITY.

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

**INTENT:** Improve safety, access, and circulation for all modes of travel.

**NEED:** Traveler safety is a paramount concern for all transportation agencies. This entails planning for the safety of pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and those in personal or commercial vehicles. At the same time, freight, commuter, and tourism traffic are vital to the region's economy. Often, safety concerns arise due to conflicts between modes of travel. A coordinated multimodal assessment of system safety and accessibility will allow the region and its partners to take a proactive approach to increasing traveler safety and access and reducing conflicts.

**DESCRIPTION:** This work will evaluate system safety and accessibility and identify programmatic measures and projects to make improvements throughout the Island Region for all modes of travel. A regional plan can address opportunities related to technology, Safe Routes to School, "Complete Street" highways, walkability in rural centers, transit and park-and-ride access, and driver education, in addition to traditional vehicle safety projects. It should evaluate proven, innovative technologies in use elsewhere to improve multimodal traveler safety and accessibility in conditions like those in the Island Region. Outreach, education, enforcement, and evaluation should be emphasized in addition to traditional engineering strategies.

**LEAD AGENCY:** IRTPO coordination effort – each agency will create its own plan section.



**PARTNERS:** Local agencies responsible for individual sub-sections of the plan in coordination with IRTPO.

**COST ESTIMATE:** Will vary depending on agency.

**TIMEFRAME:** Will vary depending on agency. Completion goal is end of 2027 State Fiscal Year (June 30, 2026).

**LISTED IN RTIP:** Yes ☒ No ☐



## **ACTION ITEM 6. DEVELOP ISLAND REGION AVIATION SYSTEM PLAN**

### **POLICY 1. CONSISTENCY & COORDINATION.**

Advance consistency between transportation and land use plans as well as other community-based plans working to achieve adopted visions.

### **POLICY 2. STRATEGIC DECISIONS.**

Continue to manage the public resources in an open and cost-effective manner.

### **POLICY 3: PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Advocate for increased multimodal connectivity for the Island Region.

### **POLICY 4. VISIONARY DIRECTION.**

Promote the Island Region and its unique character through strategic transportation decisions.

### **POLICY 6: EFFICIENT RELIABILITY**

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

### **POLICY 7: SYSTEM SAFETY**

Work toward a safer transportation system for all users.

### **POLICY 8: ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH**

Facilitate a healthier environment for current and future generations.

### **POLICY 9. ECONOMIC VITALITY.**

Support the economic health and vitality of the Island Region.

### **POLICY 10. SOCIAL EQUITY.**

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

**INTENT:** Develop the first Island Region Aviation System Plan in order to:

- Fully integrate aviation transportation with IRTPO Regional Transportation Plan to improve air transportation access, mobility and economic benefit in Island County.
- Improve well-being and safety of both people on the ground and in the air.
- Protect environment and rural quality of life as aviation transportation develops.


**NEED:** The Region faces decisions regarding its aviation system on a routine basis. To make decisions bringing the benefits of the aviation system to all the people of the Island Region, and also to ensure the integration of aviation transportation within our Multimodal Transportation System, decision makers and Citizens require the information, insight and the guidelines that a documented Regional Aviation System Plan should enable.

**DESCRIPTION:** We will conduct a comprehensive study of Island aviation and airports with nearby regions and the Washington State Aviation Division to:

1) Evaluate existing aviation and airport facilities to include:

- Commercial Air Transportation for both air passenger and air cargo
- General Aviation Transportation
- Emergency services to facilitate access for firefighting and law enforcement





2) The General work plan should include the formation of a Technical Aviation Advisory Committee to support the aviation system plan. The committee should have representatives from aviation owners and pilots, airport owners and operators, the community, the military and other interest groups. The committee would be responsible for providing input on the aviation work plan to develop the aviation system strategy/plan. Some of the work plan activities would include but are not limited to:

- Development of goals and policies to support the Aviation Transportation System in Island County with inclusion of the Department of Defense, (DOD), Coast Guard, and law enforcement.
- Identify and evaluate the transportation, land use, and economic policies and ordinances to foster continued access and mobility for public use at our three existing public-use airports.
- Identify measures to address incompatible land uses and support a healthy environmental and quality of life for all Island residents.
- Evaluate Federal and State policies, objectives, rules, regulations.
- Forecast emerging aviation trends, including technology, regulations, and business models, that place a lead-time requirement on Regional Aviation planning.
- Engage the community on the development of the Aviation System Plan and increase awareness of aviation and airport benefits through aviation education and outreach opportunities.
- Identify funding sources to update airport infrastructure to meet future aviation demands in the Puget Sound Region and Categorize short, mid, and long-term improvement needs.

LEAD AGENCY: IRTPO

PARTNERS: Island County, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, City of Oak Harbor, City of Langley, Town of Coupeville

COST ESTIMATE: \$150,000

TIMEFRAME: Near-Term

LISTED IN RTIP: Yes \_\_\_\_ No X



## **ACTION ITEM 7. EVALUATE ENGLE ROAD FERRY TRAFFIC IMPACTS ON COUPEVILLE**

### **POLICY 3. PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY.**

Advocate for increased multimodal connectivity for the Island Region.

### **POLICY 6. EFFICIENT RELIABILITY.**

Promote transportation system efficiency and reliability.

### **POLICY 7. SYSTEM SAFETY.**

Work toward a safer transportation system for all users.

**INTENT:** Minimize ferry and freight traffic impacts on Coupeville’s residential, school zones, and commercial zones, and its walkability and small-town character.

**NEED:** The official route from the Coupeville Ferry Terminal to points north is via SR 20, turning right off the ferry. The official route is not the logical route, though. Freight and cars routinely turn left and go through Fort Casey State Park and up historic Engle Road into downtown Coupeville, reducing the miles traveled by more than half and avoiding a difficult left turn where SR 20 intersects SR 525. The logical route that traffic follows (West of SR 20) runs right through the town’s middle school/high school campus and small commercial uses where Main Street and Terry Street intersect.

**DESCRIPTION:** The objective of this study effort is to better understand the nature of ferry traffic impacts on Coupeville and assess a range of strategies to minimize, mitigate, or avoid those impacts. Turning movements off the ferry should be collected to inform this study effort; this data also has value to WSF. Partners include Coupeville and the Coupeville school district, WSDOT, Island County, and the IRTPO. Work may coincide with other Coupeville Ferry Terminal gateway study efforts.

**LEAD AGENCY:** WSDOT, Town of Coupeville

**PARTNERS:** IRTPO, Island County

**COST ESTIMATE:** \$30,000

**TIMEFRAME:** Near-term

**LISTED IN RTIP:** Yes \_\_\_\_ No X



## **ACTION ITEM 8. DEVELOP ISLAND REGION MARITIME SYSTEM PLAN**

### **POLICY 1. CONSISTENCY & COORDINATION.**

Advance consistency between transportation and land use plans as well as other community-based plans working to achieve adopted visions.

### **POLICY 4. VISIONARY DIRECTION.**

Promote the Island Region and its unique maritime character through strategic transportation decisions.

### **POLICY 9. ECONOMIC VITALITY.**

Support the economic health and vitality of the Island Region.

### **POLICY 10. SOCIAL EQUITY**

Promote expanded options and innovative solutions that enable all people to have access to their daily needs and maintain mobility independence.

**INTENT:** Develop an Island Region Maritime System Plan to:

- Fully integrate maritime transportation with IRTPO Regional Transportation Plan to improve maritime transportation access, mobility, and economic benefit in Island County.
- Enhance the safety and overall well-being of individuals at sea.
- Protect the environment and preserve the quality of rural life while transforming maritime transportation for the 21st century and beyond.


**NEED:** The Region must routinely evaluate and make decisions regarding how the existing maritime system is used, the feasibility of increasing its uses and the benefits of increasing cargo and people transportation methods and options. To understand the benefits for all residents and integrate maritime transportation into the Multimodal Transportation System, decision-makers and citizens require information and guidance from a comprehensive Regional Maritime System Plan.

**DESCRIPTION:** A comprehensive analysis of Island marinas, Washington State Ferry facilities, boat launches, the Cascadia Marine Trail and facilities supporting maritime cargo or people transport will include:

- Commercial marine transportation for both cargo and people.
- General marine transportation options
- Disaster/emergency services to facilitate military, emergency, and law enforcement access.

The General work plan should include the formation of a Maritime Advisory Committee to support the Maritime System Plan. The committee should have representatives that are vessel owners, marina and port managers, the community, the military and other interest groups. The committee would be responsible for providing input on the maritime work plan to develop the maritime system strategy/plan. Some of the work plan tasks may include:

- Conduct a planning study to explore the region's maritime future, assess vulnerabilities considering sea level rise and climate change, and identify some plausible scenarios for 25 or more years out.
- Develop goals and policies to support the Maritime Transportation System in Island County including the Washington State Ferry Department, Department of Defense, Coast Guard, and local law enforcement.
- Evaluate Federal and State policies, objectives, rules, and regulations regarding maritime transportation.

- 
- Engage the community on the development of the Maritime System Plan and increase awareness of maritime transportation through education and outreach opportunities.
  - Identify funding sources to update marinas, ports and boat launch infrastructure to meet future maritime demands in the Island County and categorize short, mid, and long-term improvement needs.
  - Consider the long-term potential for restoration of passenger-only ferry service and inter-island packet freighters, enhanced interconnectivity of the region's marine trail system with the Cascadia Marine Trail system, and other waterborne travel opportunities that support regional mobility.

LEAD AGENCY: IRTPO

PARTNERS: Island County, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, City of Oak Harbor, City of Langley, Town of Coupeville

COST ESTIMATE: \$145,000

TIMEFRAME: Near-Term or Mid-Term

LISTED IN RTIP: Yes \_\_\_ No X



## 6.3 Implementing the Regional Transportation Plan

This section describes the relationship between the long-range regional transportation plan and other IRTPO processes that will be involved in *Island Access* implementation efforts. In addition to the regional transportation plan, the IRTPO is required to create and adopt a UPWP that identifies the agency's funding and how it will be used to implement the RTP (every two years), a Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) that addresses transportation needs for special populations (every four years), and a Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) that identifies projects that are partially or fully funded (annually).

### *Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)*

The UPWP describes the work that IRTPO will undertake in the next two years with its state and federal planning funds and any other planning grants it may receive. It runs with the state fiscal year (July 1 – June 30). The UPWP gives IRTPO a formal occasion every two years to take stock of near-term needs and opportunities to identify what long-range actions, if any, are strategically suited for implementation. Depending on work program funding availability, IRTPO can assess where its planning efforts are most needed and focus on those actions that will have the greatest benefit. *Island Access* implementation activities will be identified in the UPWP each biennium, helping to make clear the direct and coordinated relationship between long-range and on-going regional transportation planning in the Island Region.

Some actions in *Island Access 2045* may reveal the need for additional data or analysis before they can proceed, or they may be too big to tackle without additional resources. The IRTPO may put these unfunded actions in its UPWP as Unfunded Planning Priorities to demonstrate their current regional priority while seeking grants or other opportunities. Unfunded Planning Priorities are good candidates for end-of-biennium planning funds, grants, legislative requests, and partnership opportunities with other agencies, and can be strategic assets to address quick-turnaround federal funding requirements.

### *Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP)*

The Regional Transportation Improvement Program is a list of regionally significant projects. These projects may be IRTPO efforts but are generally projects and programs of IRTPO member agencies. The list includes a four-year fiscally constrained project list (projects that are fully funded within the next four years) and may contain partially funded or unfunded projects in years five and six. While the RTP is a long-range strategic action plan, the RTIP is a near-term project budgeting database and document. Inclusion in the RTIP is necessary before projects that have secured their funding can be included in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, which is a funding requirement for many transportation grant sources. The IRTPO updates the RTIP on an annual basis and amends it periodically throughout the year to reflect changes in project revenues.

### *Project and Program Development*

The IRTPO's long-range plan informs near-term work program activities which in turn will shed necessary light on long-range issues and opportunities that the region is working to address. As *Island Access* will be maintained in the future and kept current through amendments, spin-off projects and updated descriptions can be amended into the Strategic Action Plan as warranted. When local and state agencies develop their projects or programs and seek their own implementation funding, they will be able to use the RTP and the RTIP to demonstrate a clear linkage between the coordinated long-range regional transportation planning process and the projects being presented for funding.



## Wrap Up

Regional transportation planning is an on-going process of collaboration and coordination, working with local and state partners to identify and address transportation issues and harness opportunities to improve safe, reliable, equitable mobility for all. *Island Access 2045* is a guidebook in that process, helping the IRTPO and its partners to focus their long-range planning efforts where they will have the most benefit for the region. It works in concert with local and state planning efforts, and lays the groundwork for practical, meaningful solutions.



*Photo Credit: Island Transit*



# ACRONYM LIST

AVMT	Average Vehicle Miles Traveled
EDC	Economic Development Council
EV	Electric Vehicle
GMA	Growth Management Act
HSS	Highways of Statewide Significance
HSTP	Human Services Transportation Plan (4 years)
IRTPO	Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization
LOS	Level of Service
NASWI	Naval Air Station Whidbey Island
NCTC	North Counties Transportation Coalition
OLF	Out-Lying Field
PSE	Puget Sound Energy
RAID	Rural Area of Intense Development
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
ROW	Right-of-Way
RTIP	Regional Transportation Improvement Program (annual)
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan (4 years)
SR	State Route
STBG	Surface Transportation Block Grant
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program (annual)
TA	Transportation Alternatives (funding program)
TBD	Transportation Benefit District
TDM	Travel Demand Management
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program (2 years)
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation
WSF	Washington State Ferries



# GLOSSARY

A few frequently used terms in this plan merit a brief explanation of their meaning when applied in this context.

**Capacity** refers to the maximum number of people, vehicles, or amount of goods that can be accommodated by a transportation facility or program. The term is most commonly used to describe the number of vehicles that a road or highway was designed to accommodate.

**Comprehensive Plan** (or Comp Plan) refers to the 20-year plan required of local agencies by the Growth Management Act to guide local development activity in a coordinated and efficient manner. State law governs what must be included in each Comp Plan. A transportation element and a land use element are two core components of every Comp Plan.

**Equity** in the transportation planning context refers to the fairness with which the benefits of the transportation system as well as its costs and impacts are distributed. Transportation equity focuses largely on the intersection of community design and access to transportation services and programs, transportation impacts on public health, and access to economic and social opportunities regardless of income, age, ability, race, or ethnicity.

**Ferry Pulse** is the intermittent influx of traffic into an area based on ferry boarding and disembarking.

**Fixed-Route Service** is transit service that operates on a regularly scheduled and set route.

**Growth Management Act (GMA)** is a signature Washington state law passed in 1990 that requires local and state governments to manage Washington's growth by identifying and protecting critical areas and natural resource lands, designating urban growth area, preparing comprehensive plans, and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations. Instead of centralizing planning and decision-making at the state level, GMA focuses on local control within a broad and coordinated framework of state goals. GMA establishes the primacy of the countywide planning policies and the Comprehensive Plan. The transportation element of each local Comprehensive Plan must be consistent with the regional transportation plan, which in turn must be consistent with local Comprehensive Plans, ensuring on-going coordination and collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. [RCW 36.70A]

**Highways of Statewide Significance (HSS)** are interstate highways and other principal arterials that play an important role in connecting communities across the state. SR 20 and SR 525 are designated HSS.

**Level of Service (LOS)** is a qualitative description of transportation system performance, reflecting agreed upon expectations about acceptable levels of performance. Historically LOS was measured solely in terms of vehicle congestion during peak periods. Flexibility within the Growth Management Act and other statewide policies emphasizing multimodal travel are resulting in an increasing number of communities redefining these system performance measures to be more inclusive of other modes of travel and of interrelated land use, economic, social, environmental, and other objectives. This is generating more interest in performance standards that feature operational efficiency, person and freight throughput, access to opportunity, and compatibility with other objectives like community design.

**Multimodal Transportation** refers to having more than one viable mode of travel for getting from Point A to Point B. A multimodal transportation system provides infrastructure and services that support more than just driving by car, such as transit, biking, walking, ferries, aircraft, or newer modes of travel such as ride-hailing services or taxis. A multimodal trip refers to using two or more modes to complete a trip, such as driving to a park-and-ride facility, walking on to the ferry, and then catching a carpool on the other side to the final destination. It is worth



noting that every transit trip is a multimodal trip in that transit passengers walk or bike or drive to and from the transit stop.

**Regional Transportation Network** consists of state highways and ferry services, county roads, city streets, non-motorized transportation facilities (active transportation), transit facilities, airports, marine ports and rail.

**Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO)** is a state-designated entity responsible for ensuring regional transportation planning is consistent with countywide planning policies and growth strategies for the region. They were established in 1990 in association with Growth Management legislation and are made up of all the jurisdictions within a region as well as the public transit agencies, ports, WSDOT, and other key transportation stakeholders.

**Travel Demand Management (TDM)** refers to a suite of measures that work to modify peoples' travel behavior to better manage system capacity and improve operating efficiency and safety. Examples of TDM strategies range from "incentive" type programs like employer-paid bus passes, compressed work weeks, and telework options to "market measures" like employee-paid parking and variable-rate toll roads. Even measures like land use policy fall under the realm of TDM since the way a community is built and grows over time has a direct impact on the kind of travel options it can support, which has been demonstrated to influence individual travel behavior.







# Appendix A

## IRTPO Responsibilities and Agreements



RCW 47.80 – Regional Transportation Planning Organizations,

<https://app.leg.wa.gov/RCW/default.aspx?cite=47.80>

IRTPO Bylaws,

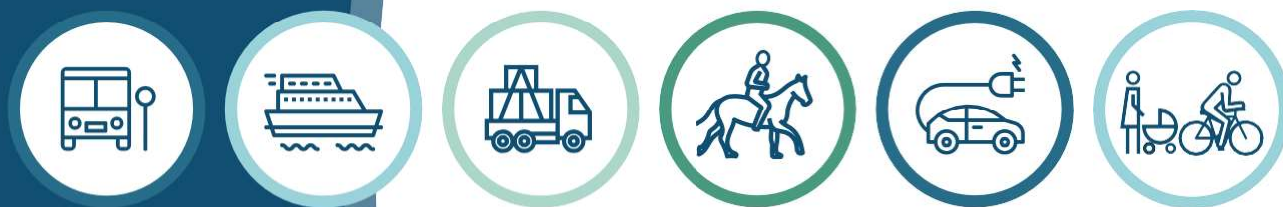
[https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2938/IRTPO\\_Bylaws\\_January\\_2022\\_Amendments\\_Adopted](https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2938/IRTPO_Bylaws_January_2022_Amendments_Adopted)

Title VI Plan and Assurances,

<https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3380/IRTPO-Title-VI-Plan-and-Assurances-2021>


2020 United States census,

<https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/decade/2020/2020-census-results.html>



# Appendix B

## Plans and Documents Incorporated by Reference



Unified Planning Work Plan (UPWP), IRTPO, <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3563/2024--2025-Unified-Planning-Work-Plan>

Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP), IRTPO, <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1970/2020-25-Illustrated-Project-Summary-pdf>

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), WSDOT, <https://wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/delivering-your-project/statewide-transportation-improvement-program-stip>

Washington State Transportation Policy Plan – 2040 and Beyond, Washington State Transportation Commission, <https://www.wtp2040andbeyond.com/>

Active Transportation Plan – 2020 and Beyond, WSDOT, <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2021-12/ATP-2020-and-Beyond.pdf>

Washington State Ferries COVID-19 Service Restoration Plan, WSDOT, <https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2022-03/WSF-COVID19-ServiceRestorationPlan.pdf>


Coordinated Public Transit – Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP), IRTPO, <https://www.islandcountywa.gov/DocumentCenter/View/3448/2022-Human-Services-Transportation-Plan-pdf>



# Appendix C

## 20-Year Proposed Project List





Lead Agency	Project	Priority
WSDOT	Reliable 2 boat ferry service at both locations at normal hours	H
	WA State Ferry (WSF) Replacement	H
	WA State Ferry Staffing Improvments	H
	Wa State Ferries Clinton Dock Electrification	L
	Whidbey to Camano Pedestrian Ferry	L
	Bush Point/ SR 525 Roundabout	H
	SR 20 Shoulder Widening	L
	SR 532 / 525 Camano Gateway Improvments	M
	SR 20 pavement maintenance program	H
	Deception Pass Bridge Lifespan	L
	Deception Pass congestion / guardrails / safety / taller vehicles	L
	Clinton place make / pedestrian improvements - speed / perceived safety	M
Cities and Towns	Coupeville Safety Improvements	H
	Oak Harbor improvements - Congestion	H
	Fort Nugent shoulder gap	H
Island	Road funds - state maintenance and local CAPRON	M
	Electrical Vehicle charging - study implementation	M
	Resiliency	L
	Heavy Lift Airfield - emergency / disaster	L
	Zero emission vehicle transition	H