



TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT



Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO

2022 Workers' Recovery Agenda

A bold 2022 transportation investment package can meet pressing infrastructure demands while creating job and apprenticeship opportunities across the state.

Two years into the COVID-19 pandemic, employers in some industries have complained about a worker shortage. But it's more accurate to say there is a shortage of family-wage jobs with good benefits. What some have called the "Great Resignation" has been workers reassessing their work lives and seeking new opportunities at better jobs.

That's why the Washington State Legislature should take proactive steps to **create job opportunities in industries with good wages, supportive benefits, and strong labor protections.** In 2022, that effort coincides with a pressing need to meet the infrastructure needs of Washington families and businesses.

TRANSPORTATION INVESTMENT PACKAGE

One shortcoming of an otherwise productive and successful 2021 legislative session was the Legislature's failure to approve a transportation investment package. During the pandemic, gas tax and toll collections dropped significantly, putting the long-term viability of Washington's transportation infrastructure at risk. While the biennial transportation budget was buoyed by \$1 billion in federal aid, significant investments are still necessary to:

- **Finish what we've started** — In 2015, the Legislature adopted Connecting Washington, a \$16 billion 16-year transportation investment plan, multimodal investments and projects in key economic corridors. Many of those projects are underway or set to begin soon, but are experiencing increased costs. We must keep those projects on track and protect the jobs they support.
- **Address the backlog of deferred maintenance projects** — WSDOT estimates that the cost to preserve the state transportation system in a state



of good repair is \$8.1 billion over the next 10 years.

- **Meet critical needs** — There is an ongoing need for important projects such as replacements for the I-5 bridge over the Columbia River, the Highway 2 trestle, completion of improvements to I-405, and more throughout the state.

■ Restore transit and the Washington State Ferries

— The state estimates a 10-year, \$31 billion gap for public transit and active transportation, which has only been exacerbated during the pandemic. Transit underfunding disproportionately harms low-income communities and people of color. Meanwhile, the WSF has an aging fleet and has experienced unprecedented service disruptions during the pandemic. A significant investment will be needed to



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reverse course and restore WSF system reliability.

- **Prioritize environmental stewardship** — Our state has a legal obligation to address culvert replacement over the next 10 years. This effort can create jobs while we save our salmon and environment. Meanwhile, we can invest in more multimodal options, convert our ferry and public fleets to zero emission, and take other steps to incentivize the reduction of carbon use in transportation.

A bold transportation investment package in 2022 can begin to meet those pressing infrastructure demands while creating exactly the kinds of job and apprenticeship opportunities our state needs. It will ensure continued economic growth in Washington by creating good jobs in every corner of the state, by helping industries move goods more effectively and efficiently, and by ensuring usable mobility options for all.

The Legislature has funds available to support critical transportation investments, including from the American Rescue Plan Act and could implement a one-time infusion from increased state revenues due to the pandemic. Additionally, funds from the Climate Commitment Act can support transportation investments that reduce carbon emissions and air pollution.

The passage of the federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act presents a unique opportunity to leverage federal investment in some of our state's most urgent



transportation needs. But the Legislature must act urgently to fund programs and projects so we are competitive against other states.

The time to act on transportation is now.

OTHER JOB-CREATION OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to a 2022 transportation investment package, there are multiple other bills and budget provisos that would create family-wage job opportunities in Washington state. They include supporting new decarbonized aluminum jobs in Ferndale, extending job-supporting tax incentives that guarantee labor standards for good jobs at data centers and in film industry, and more.

For more information, contact the WSLC at the numbers below or visit www.wslc.org.



In addition to Creating Job Opportunities, the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO is supporting a range of issues that address economic opportunity and justice. Learn more at www.wslc.org or www.TheStand.org.

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