

Transportation

Note: Some of the items in this section also appear in the Climate breakout section of Budget Highlights.

Improve traffic safety

Like other states throughout the nation, Washington is experiencing increased traffic accidents and incidents that often result in serious injuries and fatalities. There was a 17% increase in traffic fatalities from 2020 to 2021, reaching the highest level in a decade. Pedestrian fatalities increased by over 31%. To lower these incidents, the governor's budget supports a variety of strategies, including improving infrastructure, increasing safety for those working on our roadways, and providing WSDOT with flexible funds to respond to safety needs.

- Advance and complete planned bicycle and pedestrian projects. In 2015, the governor signed the Connecting Washington package, which included a list of bicycle and pedestrian safety projects that have not yet started. The 2023-2025 budget identifies projects that have not yet begun and secures funding for those projects.

(\$15 million, Multimodal Transportation Account-State, Connecting Washington Account-State)

- Improve infrastructure as emergent safety needs arise. Currently, the department does not have flexible funds to provide infrastructure improvements that might immediately increase safety for active transportation users. The 2023-2025 budget includes funding for the department to better respond to community needs when emerging safety issues arise.

(\$5 million, Multimodal Transportation Account-State)

- Construct pedestrian signals at nine locations on State Route 7. These will specifically improve safety for bicyclists, pedestrians and other active transportation users so that they can more safely access businesses and communities in this area.

(\$3 million, Motor Vehicle Account-State)

- Fund automated traffic safety cameras in work zones to better protect roadway workers.

(\$6 million, Motor Vehicle Account-State)

Fund a variety of truck parking initiatives. These will start to address truck parking space shortages and provide safe places for those who move freight across the state and nation. Initiatives include funding for WSDOT to work on the following items:

- Identify parcels that could be adapted for truck parking.
- Identify opportunities to partner with privately-owned locations to improve truck parking options.
- Implement a truck parking work group to develop and recommend further truck parking options.

(\$2.3 million, Multimodal Transportation Account-State)

Invest in Washington's vital ferry system

Washington's ferry system — the largest in the United States and second largest in the world — provides a vital marine highway for millions of people throughout Puget Sound. Providing

the workforce and vessels that we need to continue improving service is a key priority for the governor’s 2023-25 transportation budget. Maritime professionals credentialed by the U.S. Coast Guard crew the Washington State Ferry (WSF) vessels and these professionals often need years of on-the-water experience and training before being qualified to ‘sail a vessel.’ These credentialing challenges are compounded by a global shortage of maritime workers.

In addition, the ferry fleet is aging — more than half of the vessels are over 30 years old, and three ferries are over 50 years old. Replacing aging ferry vessels with clean-fueled, hybrid-electric vessels remains a top priority along with securing funds to maintain the existing fleet.

The governor’s budget includes \$46 million in the 2023-25 biennium – and a total of \$1.12 billion over the next 10 years for the state’s hybrid-electric ferry program – to construct five hybrid-electric ferries. WSF will select a vendor and begin constructing the first vessel in 2023-25. The budget also includes \$3 million for WSF to start design work on the next clean fueled vessel procurement process. This will help prepare to replace six of an additional 11 vessels needed in the fleet.

(Capital Vessel Replacement Account-State, Carbon Emissions Reduction Account-State)

The budget includes \$74 million to convert three Jumbo-Mark II vessels to hybrid-electric propulsion and build the necessary shoreside power to support ferry electrification. Two of the three Jumbo-Mark II conversions will be completed in 2023-2025.

(Carbon Emissions Reduction Account-State)

The budget also includes \$202.4 million to help the state in preserving and maintaining vessels. As vessels age, this maintenance becomes even more crucial.

(Puget Sound Capital Construction Account-State)

Attract new employees and retain existing employees

The budget will give WSF more resources and better tools to recruit and retain qualified personnel, and to focus investments on hard-to-recruit and hard-to-retain positions. This includes licensed deck officers, engine room crews and maintenance staff at Washington State Ferries maintenance facility at Eagle Harbor. Most of the additional funding will come through the Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State.

- Fund pre-apprenticeships and workforce development in the maritime industry. These funds will support those interested in working for ferries by funding Coast Guard certification costs, for example.

(\$3 million, Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State)

- Support an able-bodied sailor (AB) to the Mate Pathway program. This funding will streamline and improve the process for unlicensed deckhands to receive their mate’s license. This funding will support future licensing for up to 30 deck officers. This is critical to improve ferry service.

(\$12 million Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

- Provide scholarships for mate candidates and fund necessary education for successful licensing. This along with other investments will provide a pipeline for future WSF captains.

(\$756,000, Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

- Support an additional five staff to work in engine rooms. This funds the necessary state and Coast Guard-required training, as well as education and instruction that workers need to serve as an engine room wiper.

(\$1.2 million, Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

- Fund six additional apprenticeship positions at Washington State Ferries maintenance facility at Eagle Harbor. These positions will help meet the demand for additional workforce so the state can better maintain the fleet of ferry vessels.

(\$1 million, Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

- \$3.5 million will go toward hiring, orientation and training new ferry employees.

(Puget Sound Ferry Operations Account-State)

Support clean transportation

As part of the state's effort to address climate change, in addition to electrifying the ferry system, the governor's transportation budget includes \$827 million to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the transportation sector. For more information on the governor's clean transportation proposals, see the budget and policy climate section.

Support diversity, equity and inclusion in the transportation sector

Office of Minority and Women Owned Business Enterprise (OMWBE)

Continue OMWBE's work to increase the number of certified minority- and women-owned business in the transportation sector. This will happen through training, technical assistance, networking opportunities and other support services.

(\$2 million, Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State)

Department of Licensing (DOL)

Expand a program that supports foster youth as they get driver's licenses.

(\$1.1 million Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State, \$1.1 million Highway Safety Account-State)

Support ongoing work at the Department of Licensing to provide free 'identcards' or ID cards to individuals experiencing homelessness.

(\$398,000, Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State)

Fund a new initiative for two mobile licensing units, one serving Eastern Washington and one serving Western Washington. These will provide licensing services to individuals who have difficulty accessing a DOL licensing service office such as refugees, those experiencing homelessness, and those impacted by natural disasters.

(\$3.8 million Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State)

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT)

Continue the Pre-Apprenticeship Support Services (PASS) program. This program works to increase diversity in the highway construction workforce by helping women, minorities and disadvantaged individuals in pre-apprenticeship training classes pay for work clothing, car repairs, tools, testing fees, driver's license fees, gas cards, bus fare, initiation fees, housing and tutoring assistance.

(\$2.4 million Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State, \$2.0 million Motor Vehicle Account-State)

Fund three initiatives to provide minority and women's business enterprise support services. First, WSDOT will use a consultant to provide firms with free business counseling and technical assistance. Second, WSDOT will establish a trucking consortium/rotation, which allows smaller certified trucking companies to pool their resources to compete with larger-scale trucking operations. Finally,

WSDOT will enhance its Capacity Building Mentorship program, which pairs contractors and consultants as mentees with mentors who are OMWBE certified or registered as a small or veteran's business. This funding is provided on an ongoing basis.

(\$1 million, Move Ahead Washington Flexible Account-State)

Washington State Patrol

Funding to staff the diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) program at Washington State Patrol as well as for DEI training opportunities and implementation of a Pro-Equity Anti-Racist Plan. Funding is also provided to develop and deploy a community engagement program that provides community liaisons to build ongoing relationships with diverse communities across the state.

(\$2.3 million, General Fund-State, State Patrol Highway Account)