

# Open Data Plan

## Washington State Department of Transportation

Updated September 2020

Under its authority to “establish standards and policies to govern information technology in the state of Washington” (RCW 43.105.054), the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) adopted a policy requiring all agencies to develop and publish an open data plan annually. The intent of open data is to enable citizens, colleagues, businesses, and communities to understand and amplify the civic purposes of public agencies.

This plan supports agency efforts to openly share information with citizens, business partners, and community organizations. Open data is one of several data resources that the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) provides to the public and business partners. Open data sets and documentation that describes their content are provided for download from WSDOT’s public website. This plan will guide WSDOT in managing and expanding these offerings. The topics for open data will be chosen in consultation with business areas, to include consideration of strategic initiatives and what is most often requested and needed by business partners and citizens. Open data will be provided in a consistent, standardized way so that individual citizens, public agencies, and community organizations can independently analyze and interpret transportation data.

The publication of open data serves the following WSDOT business goals:

- Supporting community engagement
- Providing data that is regularly reported to other organizations
- Contributing to accountability in government
- Providing data resources that promote innovation by the private sector

Open data does not include sensitive and confidential data, as defined by the Washington State Chief Information Officer. ([OCIO Open Data Definitions](https://ocio.wa.gov/programs/open-data/guidance-open-data-definitions)-- <https://ocio.wa.gov/programs/open-data/guidance-open-data-definitions>)

### Open Data Coordinator

An open data coordinator is named by WSDOT’s Information Technology Division Director. The open data coordinator will maintain information on open data offerings, facilitate communication for participants in open data activities, sustain consistent procedures for open data publishing, and represent WSDOT at state-wide open data groups. The open data coordinator is responsible for the following:

- An inventory and enumeration of WSDOT data that is distributed to parties outside the [wsdot.wa.gov](https://wsdot.wa.gov) domain. These include open data, data-download sites, application program interfaces (APIs), and applications for conducting on-line business-to-business activities. Public web pages, social media communications, and printed materials are not in scope.
- Communication and coordination for the staff who are active in producing and managing open-data offerings. This will include meetings, documentation, and reports necessary for the participants to operate as an effective team. The open data coordinator organizes and maintains a team of staff in key roles to enable open data publication. This group comprises the *ad hoc* WSDOT Open Data Committee.

- Maintaining a set of procedures that enable open data publication. These procedures describe how a candidate open data set can be evaluated for risk and feasibility and who will do what to implement the publication and periodically refresh it. These procedures will be reviewed and revised as needed by the open data coordinator, with the advice and consent of the WSDOT Open Data Committee. The procedures comprise a framework of recommended practices that is versatile enough for adaptation to circumstances.
- Representing WSDOT on the topic of open data to other agencies and organizations. This involves supporting participation in the open data program of the Office of the Chief Information Officer, and participation in other open data forums as appropriate. The open data coordinator maintains the WSDOT Open Data Plan and produces the annual report on open data to the OCIO.
- Performance measurements. The WSDOT Open Data Committee will develop a system for measuring the usage of WSDOT open data resources.

### **WSDOT Open Data Committee**

The Open Data Committee is composed of staff representing key responsibilities for information management at WSDOT—

- WSDOT Open Data Coordinator (Chair)
- Communications
- Enterprise Risk Management
- IT Division, Application Development
- IT Division, Data Resource Management
- IT Division, Information Resource Management
- Knowledge Strategy
- Library Services
- Risk Management & Legal Services
- State Computer Aided Engineering (CAE) Support
- Strategic Assessment and Performance Analysis
- Transportation Data, GIS & Modeling

### **Recommended Practices for Publishing Open Data**

WSDOT publishes a variety of data for use by business partners, other public agencies, and the public. The data are published on websites in myriad formats encompassing reports, data downloads, and information tools. Consistent practices help WSDOT present information coherently for clarity, ease of use, and ease of maintenance.

“Publish” means to provide data products to visitors of public web sites. These products typically include reports containing data, data sets, and interactive web pages. The public web sites through which

WSDOT publishes data products include [wsdot.wa.gov](http://wsdot.wa.gov), [wsdot.maps.arcgis.com](http://wsdot.maps.arcgis.com), [data.wa.gov](http://data.wa.gov), and [geo.wa.gov](http://geo.wa.gov).

An inventory of currently published data sets is collected in the spreadsheet **Data Distributions List**. This is updated annually by ITD and system owners.

Publishing a data set involves processes that choose data to distribute, build the data set and its documentation, plan for its maintenance, and put it out for use. The WSDOT Open Data Committee recommends the processes outlined in the document **WSDOT Open Data Publication Manual**. These process steps can be used as is or adapted to the specific situation. Use of this process is enforced by **WSDOT Executive Order 1108**.

The information management and data science communities generally agree that open data is “machine readable,” which means the data is published as delimited-text files that can be read directly by a computer program. PDF files and Excel files (two of the most popular ways WSDOT publishes data) are not open data, strictly speaking. When WSDOT publishes data in any format for public consumption, we are supporting the intent of open data. These recommended practices can apply to any form of data publishing, whether it is a specific format for specific audiences, or plain, open data. Open data may be published in conjunction with other formats, like PDF, Excel, or images, to meet the needs of different audiences. WSDOT’s data publishers should consider the machine-readable, open-data formats when preparing their data offerings.

Documentation that guides consumers in the use of open data content will be provided along with the open data itself. The WSDOT Open Data Committee recommends providing such documentation in keeping with the schema described in the **WSDOT Metadata Schema for Open Data**.