

WSDOT's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a collaborative planning process with agency partners to identify performance gaps and select high-level strategies to address them on the 304 corridors statewide. This Corridor Sketch Summary acts as an executive summary for one corridor. Please review the User Guide for Corridor Sketch Summaries prior to using information on this corridor:

I-5: Cook Rd Jct (Burlington) to SR 11 Jct (Bellingham)

This 17-mile long segment of Interstate 5 in northwestern Washington primarily covers the stretch between Bellingham and Mount Vernon. Land use around this segment of I-5 is chiefly rural and features forests interspersed with residences, commercial operations, and farms. Population density is generally low. The corridor crosses the Samish River just north of the Cook Road interchange, where there is a large quarry on the river's north bank. The corridor also follows the eastern bank of Lake Sammish and crosses a number of creeks. A variety of coniferous and deciduous trees, shrubs and understory growth account for much of the non-agricultural vegetation in this corridor. The topography along the corridor has rolling hills with an overall incline going from south to north. The surrounding area in the northern half features steep approaches of Galbraith and Chuckanut mountains.



Current Function

I-5 is the major north-south route along the U.S. west coast connecting most major cities between Canada and Mexico. A significant portion of traffic is from commuters, freight carriers, and tourists that use the corridor to move through Skagit and Whatcom counties as part of this larger interstate connection. Local traffic is primarily related to regional population, commercial, and employment centers like Bellingham, Mount Vernon, and Burlington which are located along this corridor. This corridor serves as an access to many recreational destinations that draw seasonal traffic, as well as the Skagit Casino Resort, Skagit Speedway, parks, lakes and campgrounds. Skagit Transit and the Whatcom Transportation Authority serve this corridor. Transportation hubs beyond the corridor limits also generate traffic along the corridor.

Future Function

Based on the projected population, land use, and economic trends, the future function of this corridor is expected to remain the same, with increases expected in volumes of passenger and freight traffic. Freight traffic is expected to substantially increase as border, retail and distribution center uses expand.

Highlights and Performance

This section of I-5 is a four-lane, divided highway with a median. The annual average daily traffic on this corridor is highest in south Bellingham near Lake Padden Park and lowest at the Nulle Road interchange just south of Lake Samish.

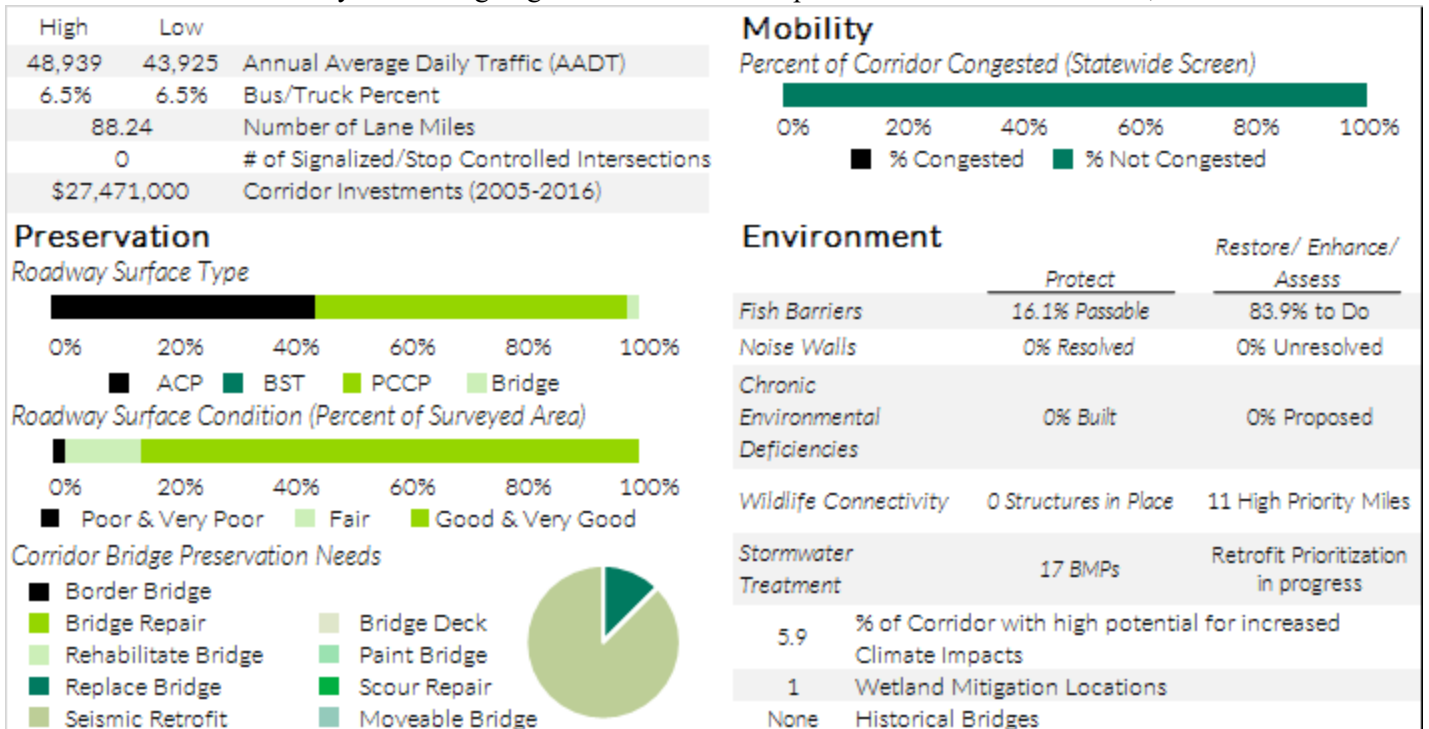
What's working well?

- About 98% of the surveyed pavement is in fair or better condition on this corridor.
- None of the corridor is regularly congested. Except for peak commute hours, traffic is generally free flowing.
- Transit use has been growing, with an inter-county connection.
- Cable barrier installation has improved safety.
- Traveler information systems are keeping drivers informed of border crossing time and travel demand information on WSDOT's website.
- The corridor has no chronic environmental deficiencies.

What needs to change?

- The Cook Road at-grade railroad crossing can cause queues that backup onto I-5.
- There is high use of the left lane to avoid slow moving trucks on the hilly terrain and merging ramp traffic resulting in slowdowns on certain sections of the corridor.
- Significant speed differential develops between right and left lanes due to slow moving vehicles.
- There are eight bridge preservation needs on the corridor including seven seismic retrofits and one bridge deck.
- There are multiple prioritized fish passage barriers on this corridor not yet funded for improvement.

WSDOT monitors the state system in ongoing efforts to track asset performance. For this corridor, WSDOT finds:



1) 2015 data unless otherwise noted. 2) For more information see the User Guide for Corridor Sketch Summaries at <http://bit.ly/WSDOTcorridorsketch>

What we heard from our partners

WSDOT collected feedback from agency partners. Key themes included:

- The at-grade railroad crossing at Cook Road can causes traffic to queue at the ramps onto the mainline.
- Local network improvements, such as capacity improvements to Cook Road and Old Highway 99 and a grade-separated railroad crossing on Cook Road is a priority.
- Congestion caused by slow-moving freight trucks moving up and down grades at Bow Hill causes travelers to stay in the left lane making inefficient use of the two lanes available.

Strategies

WSDOT identified the following strategies and associated actions to keep the corridor working well and address performance gaps. Regional partners collaborated on high-level mobility strategies. The identified strategies are not meant to be all-inclusive, nor an established list of priorities. Further evaluation is needed before any strategy can be recommended as a solution to address performance. Project funding decisions will take place at the programming phase, and are subject to statewide prioritization. For more strategy information, visit the Corridor Sketch Summary User Guide.

Policy Goals / Strategies Description and Near-Term Actions

Economic Vitality

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| Under Development | <i>WSDOT will continue to work with partners in developing strategies to address economic vitality.</i> |
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Environment

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| Protect and Maintain | <i>Protect and maintain existing assets that provide environmental function (these include WSDOT's mitigation sites, storm water systems, fish passable culverts).</i> |
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| Enhance or Restore | <i>Enhance or restore natural areas and environmental functions associated with the multimodal transportation system. WSDOT has a planned Stormwater Retrofit action on this corridor.</i> |
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| Fish Barrier Retrofit | <i>WSDOT has prioritized the removal of state-owned culverts that block habitat for salmon and steelhead. See interactive map of uncorrected fish barriers at http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/Projects/FishPassage/default.htm.</i> |
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Mobility

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| Assessment | <i>A mobility performance strategy has not been identified by WSDOT.</i> |
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Preservation

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| Maintenance | <i>Based on expenditure history, it is expected that the top three activities will continue to be maintenance on snow and ice control, rest areas, and pavement repair.</i> |
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| Structures | <i>WSDOT has identified one Structures action in the next six years at a single location on this corridor.</i> |
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| Other Facilities | <i>WSDOT has identified two Other Facilities actions in the next six years encompassing 30% of the corridor.</i> |
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Safety

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| Investment | <i>WSDOT has identified one Safety Investment action in the next six years encompassing 9% of the corridor.</i> |
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Stewardship

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| Planning | <i>Under Practical Solutions, the Corridor Sketch Initiative identifies corridor performance, and assesses alternative strategies to improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.</i> |
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For more information

To find out more information about this corridor or how to get involved, please contact:

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Washington State Department of Transportation's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a set of planning activities that engage our partners to define the context and performance information for all of the state's 304 highway corridors. The Corridor Sketch complements and supports regional planning processes in Washington. It is not intended to duplicate, substitute or compete with other planning efforts; nor is it intended to generate lists of projects.

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