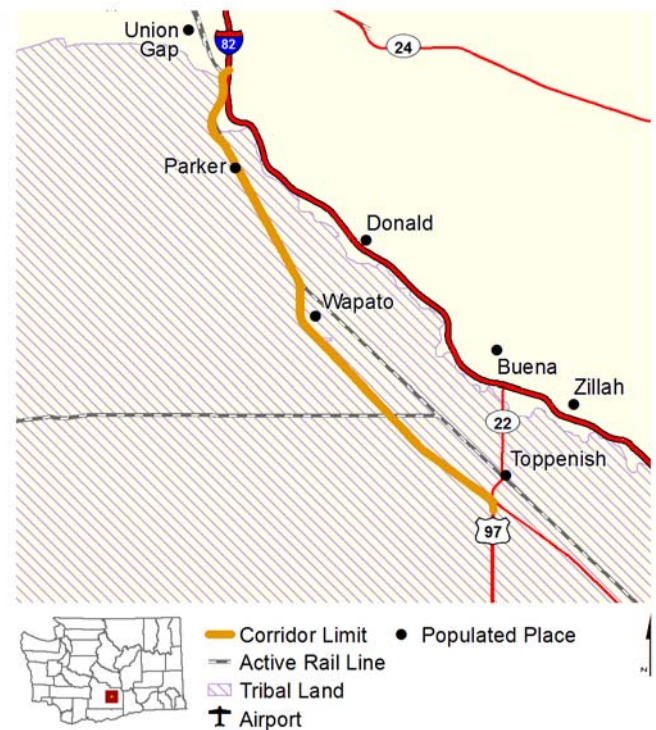


WSDOT's Corridor Sketch Initiative is a collaborative planning process with agency partners to identify performance gaps and select high-level strategies to address them on the 304 corridors statewide. This Corridor Sketch Summary acts as an executive summary for one corridor. Please review the User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

US 97: SR 22 Jct (Toppenish) to I-82 Jct (Union Gap)

This 15-mile north-south corridor parallels Interstate 82 and the Yakima River between Union Gap and the city of Toppenish in the Yakama Indian Reservation. US Route 97 merges with I-82 at the northern end of the corridor in Union Gap. The character of the corridor is primarily rural with agriculture being the predominant land use. The corridor passes through the cities of Wapato and Toppenish, and unincorporated Parker where the character becomes more urban with moderately dense residential development, commercial uses, schools, and industrial uses, notably agricultural storage and packing plants. There is also a sizable casino in Toppenish. The corridor travels through the Yakima River Valley and the terrain is very flat. The surrounding vegetation is mostly agricultural fields, orchards, and open sage scrublands with occasional larger trees. The foothills of the Cascade Mountains encompass the corridor from all sides.



Current Function

US 97 is a major north-south United States highway running from California to the Canada-U.S. border in Okanogan County. The segment of US 97 that the corridor runs along is an important farm-to-market and freight route serving part of the Lower Yakima Valley, connecting Yakima to Satus Pass, and serving as an alternate route to I-82. This corridor serves intensive agricultural lands, the Yakama Nation, and the communities of Toppenish, Wapato, Parker, and Union Gap. The corridor also sees significant recreational traffic and US 97 from Toppenish to Union Gap is designated as a scenic and recreational highway. There is a BNSF mainline rail line that runs parallel to US 97 along the corridor. While non-motorized facilities are present in some areas, particularly in Toppenish and Wapato, bicycling and walking are uncommon 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.

Highlights and Performance

This segment of US 97 is a four-lane, divided highway that is largely unsignalized. Several signals are present where the corridor passes through the cities of Toppenish and Wapato. There is an at-grade Yakima Central Railroad crossing at Branch Road located between Toppenish and Wapato. The annual average daily traffic on this corridor is highest at the I-82 junction and lowest at the SR 22 junction in Toppenish.

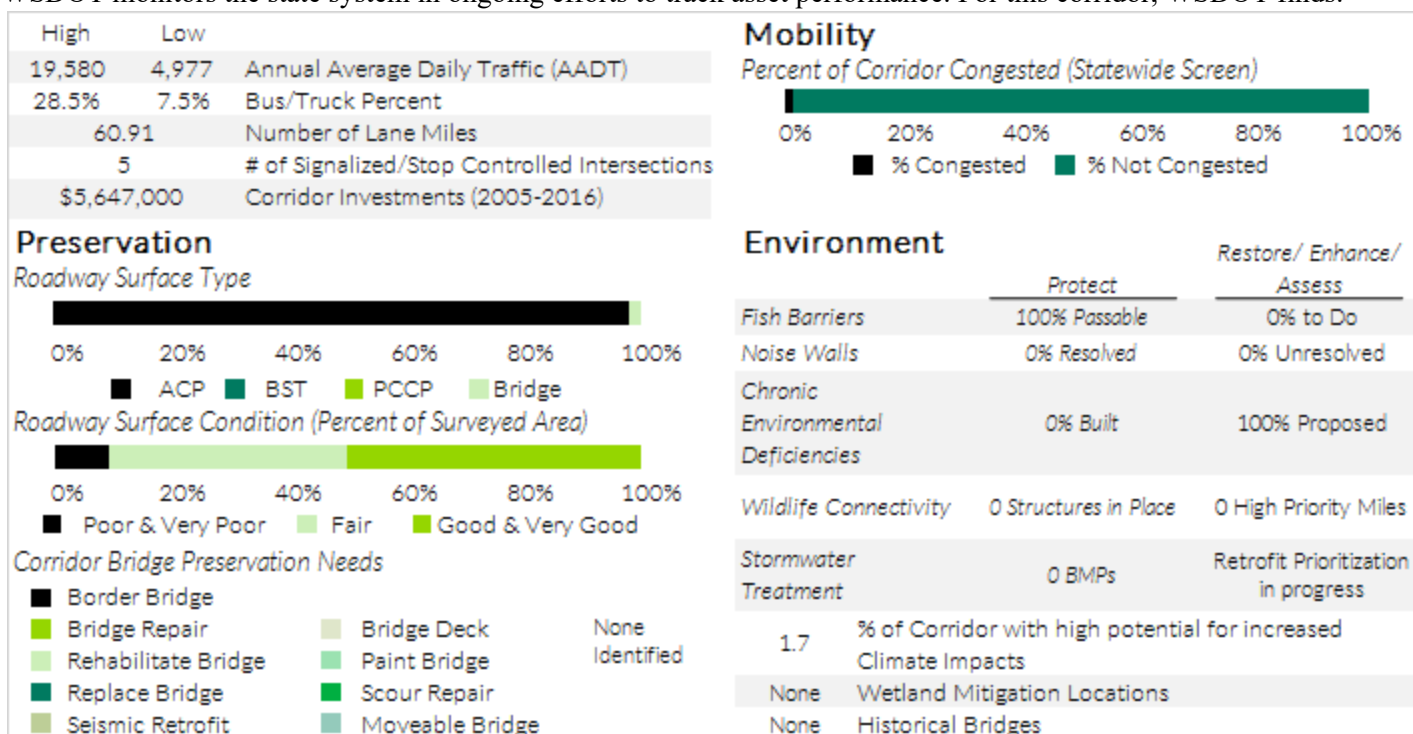
What's working well?

- Approximately 91% of surveyed pavements on the corridor are in fair or better condition.
- The railroad warning system was recently upgraded at Branch Road helping to improve safety.
- The corridor has a low climate change vulnerability rating.
- The corridor can easily handle high freight volumes at posted speeds with no significant delays.

What needs to change?

- 18% of the corridor experiences congestion on a regular basis, especially the I-82 junction.
- A corridor segment in western Union Gap currently has a habitat connectivity issue.
- The corridor has several locations in which there are noise wall deficiencies.
- There is a risk reduction slope on the corridor at Union Gap.

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:

- Desire to consider shifting freight transit from US 97 to I-82 to move freight traffic away from communities on the corridor.
- Concerns regarding the currently installed drainage system for the portion of the corridor in Union Gap.
- Desire to make improvements to the current configuration of the railroad crossing located at Branch Road in Toppenish.
- Concern about the noticeability and placement of installed signage for both tourist and safety information.
- Interest in coordinating on disaster response preparedness.
- Strong concern for emissions control as the Yakima Valley is under a limited maintenance plan for particulate matter and carbon monoxide and on the verge of exceeding fine particulate standards.
- A desire to investigate solutions for access between US 97 and Fullbright Park in Union Gap via Main Street which also serves as a southbound on-ramp to US 97.

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

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

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.</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

Assessment	<i>Further information about the proposed strategies can be found attached at the end of this document.</i>
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Preservation

Maintenance	<i>Based on expenditure history, it is expected that the top three activities will continue to be maintenance on snow and ice control, pavement repair, and rest areas.</i>
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Pavement	<i>WSDOT has identified four Pavement actions in the next six years encompassing 98% of the corridor.</i>
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Other Facilities	<i>WSDOT has identified one Other Facilities action in the next six years at a single location on this corridor.</i>
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Safety

Investment	<i>WSDOT has identified 16 Safety Investment actions in the next six years encompassing 100% of the corridor.</i>
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Stewardship

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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This corridor is a major agricultural freight corridor serving the Yakama Nation, Toppenish, Wapato, and Parker in the Lower Yakima Valley, and Union Gap in the Upper Yakima Valley. Large ridges separate the Upper and Lower Yakima valleys. US 97 is one of the few public roads connecting the Upper and Lower Yakima valleys over a 50-mile stretch.

The US 97 on-ramp to I-82 in the Union Gap area experiences congestion and heavy truck volumes. Congestion begins upstream of the identified congested mobility segment.

Corridor Segment Characteristics

- US 97 from Parker to I-82 is on the National Highway System and is designated a Highway of Statewide Significance.
- The average daily traffic on this segment ranged from 8,600 vehicles at SR 22 in Toppenish to 24,000 vehicles at I-82 in 2015.
- US 97 is a T-2 Freight Economic Corridor for Washington State, moving 7.8 million tons of freight per year, accounting for 10% of the traffic in 2015.
- The speed limit on this segment is 55 mph.
- US 97 is a four-lane, partially controlled limited access highway with a median and at-grade intersections.
- The segment shoulder is available for cyclist and pedestrian use.
- The Yakama Nation's Pahto Transit serves the Lower Valley segment of this corridor.

Contributing Factors

- The south end of Union Gap is experiencing industrial and commercial growth increasing the number of vehicles on the corridor.
- There are two ramp lanes on US 97, which head northbound. Weaving occurs on this section and right lane traffic slows to negotiate a tight loop ramp (25 mph speed). Both factors contribute to congestion ahead of the congested mobility segment.

Mobility Strategies: Demand Management

- Work with Pahto Transit to restore service to Union Gap to connect Lower Valley people with services and shopping in the Upper Valley.
- Coordinate with transit providers to develop park and ride lots in the corridor to reduce single occupancy vehicle trips.

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.

Under 23 U.S. Code § 148 and 23 U.S. Code § 409, safety data, reports, surveys, schedules, lists compiled or collected for the purpose of identifying, evaluating, or planning the safety enhancement of potential crash sites, hazardous roadway conditions, or railway-highway crossings are not subject to discovery or admitted into evidence in a Federal or State court proceeding or considered for other purposes in any action for damages arising from any occurrence at a location mentioned or addressed in such reports, surveys, schedules, lists, or data.

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