

Transportation

Budget puts transportation projects on hold to offset lost revenue

In November, Washington voters approved Initiative 976, which significantly cuts funding for state and local transportation projects and operations. It lowers state car-tab fees, repeals Sound Transit car-tab taxes and eliminates a .3% sales tax on vehicle purchases and the authority for cities to charge car-tab fees.

The initiative is projected to reduce state transportation funding by about \$454 million in the current biennium and by more than \$1.9 billion over six years. In addition, total revenue losses for local governments and Sound Transit are projected at more than \$2.3 billion over six years.

In immediate response to the initiative, Gov. Inslee directed the Washington State Department of Transportation to [pause certain projects](#) that are planned but not yet underway. To offset the revenue losses, his supplemental transportation budget directs the department to continue project deferrals for seven months (from Dec. 1, 2019). [Deferred projects](#) are in WSDOT's highways, public transportation, rail and local programs. Pausing projects gives the governor and the Legislature more funding flexibility as they develop a plan for implementing the initiative and make revisions to the current two-year budget.

In implementing the governor's directive, the supplemental budget directs the department to follow guiding principles, including:

- Maintain safety in our transportation system by continuing work on preservation and other related projects.

- Mitigate impacts on people who rely on transit, such as vulnerable individuals and seniors.
- Continue meeting legal obligations such as maintaining progress on fish passage barrier removal.
- Maintain matching funds from nonstate sources, when possible.

The budget also uses some fund balances and administrative reductions, shifts costs where possible and temporarily redirects some revenue to help address the funding gap.

Meanwhile, several local governments — including Seattle and King County — and transit agencies sued to overturn the initiative as unconstitutional on several fronts. In late November, a King County Superior Court judge granted a temporary injunction, finding that the plaintiffs “are likely to prevail on the merits of their constitutional challenge.” The final decision on the initiative's constitutionality will likely rest with the Washington Supreme Court, which on Dec. 4 allowed the Superior Court injunction to remain in place.

Although the injunction places I-976 on hold, Gov. Inslee's budget reflects the fiscal impact of the initiative's passage. In accordance with the injunction, the Department of Licensing continues to collect car tab taxes and fees. The governor has directed the department to provide an accounting of the difference between actual collections and collections if the initiative were in effect as of Dec. 5, 2019.

Transportation Projects Paused in Supplemental Budget

HIGHWAYS

Projects paused for 7 months starting Dec. 1, 2019

SR 161/31st Ave SW Overpass - Improvements
SR 14/E of Bingen - Port of Klickitat Access Improvements
SR 99/S King St Vic to Roy St - Viaduct Replacement
US 12/Nine Mile Hill to Frenchtown Vic - Build New Highway
US 395/NSC Spokane River to Columbia - Shared Use Path
I-90/Barker Rd Intersection Improvements
I-90, US 97 & SR 970 Ellensburg Vic - CED Planning and Mitigation
SR 520/I-5 Interchange - Improvement
US 12/Nine Mile Hill to Frenchtown Vic - Build New Highway
SR 501/I-5 to Port of Vancouver - Intersection and Profile Improvements
US 395/Pasco - Flamingo Mobile Home Park Noise Walls
SR 509/I-5 & SR 516 I/C to 28th/24th Ave S - SR 509 Completion Stage 1
I-90/Barker to Harvard - Improve Interchanges and Local Roads
I-5/NB Seneca St to Olive Way - Mobility Improvements
US 395/Ridgeline Drive - Construct Interchange
I-90/Medical Lake I/C to Geiger Field I/C - Reconstruction - Phase 2
I-90/Canyon Rd Interchange - EB Ramp Terminal Improvements
SR 240/Richland Corridor Improvements
I-90/Raging River Bridge to Bandera Vic - Stormwater Retrofit
US 395/NSC Sprague Ave to Spokane River
I-90/Barker to Harvard - WB on-Ramp Improvement
I-90/Barker to Harvard - Add Lane Harvard Rd Bridge
I-90/Easton Hill to W Easton I/C WB - Replace Bridge and Build Detour
SR 9/SR 204 Intersection - Improvements
I-5/Northbound On-Ramp at Bakerview - Improvements
I-5/Northbound On-Ramp at Bakerview - Improvements

LOCAL PROGRAMS

Projects paused until 2021–23 biennium

Clinton to Ken's Corner Trail
Edmonds Waterfront Connector
Mill Creek-132 nd Street Mid-Block Crossing
Centennial Trail Connector -Phase 3
Columbia River Renaissance Trail Connection
Chelan - Traffic Improvements
Bingen Walnut Creek & Maple Railroad Crossing
Wilburton Trestle

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Projects paused until 2021–23 biennium

Ben Franklin Transit: West Pasco Multimodal Hub
City of Kent: Rapid Ride Facility Passenger Amenities & Access Improv.
Ben Franklin Transit: Duportail Multimodal Hub
Ben Franklin Transit: Downtown Pasco Multimodal Hub
Seattle DOT: Market/45th RapidRide
Spokane Transit Auth: Cheney HP Transit Cor. Imp. & Vehicle Acquisition
City of Burien: Ambaum Blvd and H Line Transit Pathway Improvements
City of Longview-RiverCities Transit:Lexington Connector Exp.
Spokane County CTR Office: Liberty Lake Shuttle
King County Metro - Route 40 Northgate to Downtown

RAIL

Projects paused until 2021–23 biennium

SSPR Railroad - Marshall to Oakesdale Track Rehab (2019 FRAP)
Washington Eastern - Track Rehab - MP 11-24, 37-57 (2019 FRAP)
Columbia Walla Walla Railroad - Aggregate Hopper Cars (2019 FRAP)
Tacoma Rail - Marine View Drive Track Rehab (2019 FRAP)
Puget Sound & Pacific Railroad - Hoquiam Bridge (2019 FRAP)
Statewide - Emergent Freight Rail Assistance Projects
Bridge 12 (Salmon Creek) Replacement
Chelatchie Prairie Railroad - Railroad Tunnel Emergency Repairs
Chelatchie Prairie Railroad Roadbed Rehabilitation
Connell Rail Interchange

Additional projects on [WSDOT's pause list](#) will continue to be deferred until legislative action is taken.