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1 INTRODUCTION

The Phase 1 Technical Report details Spokane Transit Authority’s (STA) strategic roadmap for public transportation service through 2035, presenting a clear vision supported by goals and performance measures. This plan builds on the successes of STA’s previous strategic plan, *STA Moving Forward*, to address emerging needs and continued investment in equity, sustainability, and community growth. *Connect 2035* identifies priorities for the next ten years and beyond – all while building and strengthening relationships with and within the community. In addition to this technical report document, a Strategic Foundation document is also available that includes a synopsis of the *Connect 2035* Phase 1 planning process, outcomes, and key findings.

The purpose of this report is to summarize the processes and investigations completed, including outreach and engagement conducted, throughout the Phase 1 strategic planning effort. The report summarizes key trends and validates these trends with additional research and analysis. It identifies strategic goals, strategies, and performance measures to guide the future of STA through the 2035 planning horizon. The document also provides an evaluation of the effectiveness of these goals and strategies against six potential future scenarios and highlights next steps in the strategic planning process. Phase 2, which is expected to begin in the second half of 2023, following the adoption of Phase 1, will include identifying and prioritizing specific projects, estimating associated funding requirements, and developing a full complement of performance measures.

This report is organized into the following sections:

- **Chapter 2 – Outreach and Engagement** – summarizes the public involvement activities and results conducted throughout Phase 1 of the strategic planning process. Appendix A provides specific details on survey feedback collected during outreach efforts
- **Chapter 3 – Background and Trends** – identifies and evaluates key trends that are likely to shape the future of the region, including context trends, which STA must respond and adapt to, and policy trends, which STA may actively pursue. Appendices B & C illustrate the detailed research and validation conducted on these key trends
- **Chapter 4 – Goals, Strategies, and Performance Measures** – includes a description of the process for updating STA’s Mission and Vision Statements and identifies the goals, strategies, and potential performance measures that will guide the future of STA through the 2035 planning horizon
- **Chapter 5 – Scenario Planning** – summarizes the process and results for scenario planning, in which the goals and strategies discussed in Chapter 4 are evaluated for their effectiveness in addressing several potential future outcomes. Appendix D provides a detailed discussion surrounding the process, inputs, and results of the Scenario Planning process
- **Chapter 6 – Next Steps** – identifies the next steps associated with Phase 2 of *Connect 2035*, including identifying and prioritizing key projects and developing specific performance measures
- **Appendix A – Online Survey Responses** – includes verbatim comments received during the online community survey
- **Appendix B – Trends Research and Validation** – provides detailed research and validation of the key trends that were identified in Chapter 3
- **Appendix C – Travel Pattern Analysis** – summarizes a detailed travel pattern analysis to identify how the market for travel in the Spokane region has changed following the COVID-19 pandemic, how travel varies by time of day, and how travel across the Washington-Idaho border has evolved over time
- **Appendix D – Scenario Planning** – provides detailed descriptions of the Scenario Planning process, regional factors influencing each scenario, detailed descriptions of each scenario, and an evaluation of how well each strategy identified in the plan responds to the conditions for each scenario

2 OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

As a part of the *Connect 2035* strategic planning efforts, the entire Phase 1 process emphasized public outreach and engagement. The goals for public outreach included:

- Identifying and developing deeper understanding of key trends impacting the future of the Spokane region
- Understanding challenges and opportunities facing STA over the next ten years
- Evaluating community priorities for the future of STA service over the next ten years

This chapter includes key findings, common themes, and overall input identified throughout the course of these outreach and engagement activities.

STA BOARD INVOLVEMENT

In addition to the public outreach activities discussed in this chapter, the STA Board of Directors was also engaged throughout the course of the planning process. Board involvement included:

- One-on-one interviews with all 14 Board members to better understand STA's strengths, challenges, and opportunities
- Four distinct Board workshops held between May and October 2022

During each workshop, the project team provided an update on technical work and public involvement findings and sought feedback, guidance, and validation from Board members. Specific engagement activities with the Board included:

- Discussion of public involvement findings
- Discussion and validation of policy and context trends
- Discussion and refinement of STA's Mission and Vision Statements
- Review and discussion of Goals, Strategies, and Performance Measures
- Review and discussion of Scenario Planning process and alternative scenarios to represent the region's future

Figure 2-1 shows a timeline for different project tasks and scheduled Board engagement.

Figure 2-1 Project Timeline and Board Engagement Activities



STAGE 1 PUBLIC OUTREACH

Stage 1 Public Outreach began at the outset of the project, in the early spring of 2022. Stage 1 Public Outreach focused on evaluating the existing perceptions of STA to identify strengths, challenges, and opportunities facing the agency. These efforts set the stage for future outreach activities and established connections with community organizations to serve as key partners and stakeholders throughout the planning process. In addition to the Community Organization Leader interviews described below and STA Board of Directors interviews described in the prior section, STA employees were engaged during an all staff meeting to better understand opportunities and challenges facing the agency

Community Organization Leader Outreach

In April and May 2022, a series of insight interviews were conducted with 26 community leaders and one group in the Spokane Region, including:

- The Arc of Spokane | Sima Thorpe
- Avista | Latisha Hill
- Community Colleges of Spokane (CCS) | Dr. Christine Johnson
- Downtown Spokane Partnership | Andrew Rolwes
- Eastern Washington University | Dr. David May
- Gonzaga University | John Sklut
- Greater Spokane Inc. | Alisha Benson
- Greenstone Homes | Jim Frank
- Kalispel Tribe | Sev Jones
- Latinos en Spokane | Jennyfer Mesa
- MLK Jr. Family Outreach Center | Freda Gandy
- NAACP Spokane & I Did the Time | Kurtis Robinson

- The NATIVE Project | Toni Lodge
- Spectrum Center | KJ
- Spokane International Airport | Larry Krauter
- Spokane Public Facilities District | Stephanie Curran
- Spokane Public Schools | Dr. Adam Swinyard
- Spokane Regional Transit Council | Lois Bollenback
- University District | Juliet Sinisterra
- United Way | John Dickson
- Visit Spokane | Meg Winchester
- WSDOT | Mike Gribner
- Washington State University | Dr. Daryll DeWald
- World Relief of Spokane | Patricia Castaneda
- YWCA | Jeanette Hauck
- The ZoNE | Amber Waldref
- APIC | Group Interview

Each interview included an overview of STA's strategic planning process and a series of questions surrounding key trends impacting the region, challenges facing STA, opportunities for STA to capitalize on, along with what STA's role should be in the broader Spokane region.

Key Trends Impacting the Region's Future

The following key trends emerged during the Community Organization Leader interviews:

- Access to STA, from both a schedule and route perspective, is challenging for many. This is particularly true for some lower income workers and jobs with non-traditional schedules. Looking for more service, span, and access to more places
- Familiarity with STA is universally high; however, its use by employees/clients/constituents is mixed for a variety of reasons (schedule, routes, fares, for example)
- Spokane is no longer the best kept secret. Growth, housing shortages, and urban development/sprawl are the result of this growth and key concerns to nearly everyone interviewed
- Environmentalism, sustainability, and climate change are on the mind of many, and public transportation is inextricably connected to these issues
- Interviewees believe the future requires solutions that aren't in place yet. To have the greatest impact in the community, STA will need to think differently and consider other transportation options

- While most interviewees believe access, routes, and schedules are very good for the downtown core, there's concern among many interviewees that growth and sprawl will further challenge STA to meet the needs of outlying areas
- The pandemic has forever changed work and expectations about hybrid and work from home — it's just not clear yet what the long-term implications will be
- Equity and access to traditionally underserved populations, communities and demographics is a nearly universal priority and access is viewed as integral to economic stability and growth
- Growth, politics, a culture of cars, lack of funds, and competing interests and priorities were all mentioned as either barriers or complicating factors as STA works to meet the future needs of the region

Challenges Facing STA

The following challenges and barriers were highlighted during the Community Organization Leader interviews:

- Population growth, housing shortage, and urban sprawl make it challenging to serve the region
- Culture of cars inhibits use of public transit
- What works well for the majority may underserve vulnerable populations who rely on transit most
- Ease of use for people with multiple stops (e.g., childcare and work)
- Lack of last mile connections
- More traffic

Opportunities for STA

Community Organization Leader input centered around 3 key areas of opportunities – more service, taking a leadership role, and rebranding transit:

- More service
 - Increase frequency
 - Extend hours of service for shift work outside current service window
 - More routes (including to North Idaho and more direct routes)
 - Don't limit expansion to just large capital investments
 - Identify markets transit can service best

- Opportunity for STA to take a leadership role
 - Land use planning (encourage development in areas with existing transit)
 - Address needs of people in poverty
 - Seek out partnerships
 - Aggressively bring transit to the table (don't wait for an invitation)
- "Rebrand" transit to encourage ridership
 - Especially among younger generations, and those who haven't tried it
 - Sustainability & climate change tied to public transit's importance

Key Findings

Based on these key inputs and findings from the Community Organization Leaders, the following implications and recommendations were developed to guide STA's strategic planning process.

There is an opportunity to take a leadership role in the region.

Public transportation is a hot topic, based in part on the convergence of growth and increased traffic, gas prices, and sustainability/climate change, among other factors. There's an opportunity to bring together people with different interests and needs to partner, advocate, and support STA's success. From land use conversations to where homes and apartments are built to conversations with employers, there's significant opportunity for STA to be more involved in conversations about how integral transportation is to mitigating the impacts of growth while playing a bigger role in connecting people to jobs, healthcare, education, and social services in the region.

Deeper and more visible leadership will also help build support across a wider range of organizations and constituencies. From public schools and universities to developers and non-profit leaders, there's recognition that STA is well-suited to serve as the convener and organizer — and to be part of many solutions. This may also help combat funding challenges or identify opportunities to pool resources.

Explore innovation, experimentation, and pilot projects.

Given the complexity of the challenges facing the region, including sprawl, changing work schedules, and a lack of density, there's opportunity to partner with organizations on pilot projects or to innovate around the unique needs of this region. There is a universal understanding of the complexity of the region and a culture in which organizations look to partnerships to help solve problems. STA is uniquely positioned to leverage the local culture.

Continue relationship-building with vulnerable communities.

There is an opportunity to establish a regular cadence and playbook for outreach to vulnerable (traditionally underserved) communities. This includes talking not just to leaders of these organizations, but to the people they represent, to better understand their challenges and to test or pilot ideas to address their needs, which in turn helps the broader community.

Business leaders, downtown leaders, and leaders of community-based organizations agree that addressing the needs of these communities will in turn address many of the issues facing Spokane and the greater region. By working with diverse communities and better understanding and serving their needs, STA can play a pivotal role in addressing broader regional issues.

Invest in branding and marketing to improve perceptions of transit.

Investing in branding and marketing to change the image of transit, to help communicate the benefit of transit, specifically from an environmental and sustainability perspective, and to change the culture of public transportation in the greater Spokane community represents a key opportunity. Focusing on the “target markets” most likely to be open to transit may help improve perceptions of transit generally and encourage additional ridership from groups that are not as bound to cars or are deeply concerned about environmental and sustainability issues. There is also significant opportunity to inform and educate various interests about the significant way transit can be a connector to employment, entertainment, and healthcare.

There is an opportunity to be more involved with regional planning.

In different ways, interviewees observed a “tipping point” with growth, an uptick in traffic, and increased social problems, such as homelessness. There also seems to be a desire to avoid the problems of the Seattle/I-5 corridor and other growing urban areas. STA can be more integrated into the formal planning and permitting processes of local governments and cities with land use, permitting, and employment centers, beginning now. There are many organizations and groups concerned about growth and development and jobs and access to services for low-income and traditionally underserved people. STA may be able to engage into more conversations and bring a valuable transit perspective to these conversations.

STAGE 2 PUBLIC OUTREACH

Stage 2 Public Outreach aimed to identify specific community priorities for STA over the next ten years. These outreach efforts were generally conducted between July and September 2022 and included a mix of activities that were both quantitative and qualitative to ensure the information gathered was broad and community-wide, as well as deep and focused on underserved communities. The purpose of this outreach was to better understand individuals' experience using STA services, as well as obtain feedback on draft priorities and plan elements. These outreach activities revealed clear themes for STA to consider as the agency looks to the future.

Outreach activities conducted in Stage 2 Public Outreach included:

- An online community survey
- In person pop-up outreach at community events
- A series of listening sessions targeting community groups, transit riders, and the business community

Online Community Survey

An online community survey was open from June 22, 2022 through August 29, 2022 and received 849 responses. The survey was promoted through social media posts, local press coverage, postings at STA facilities, email blasts, and the STA newsletter. The survey asked respondents to identify their level of support for various STA focus areas and to prioritize specific strategies for improving bus service, improving the rider experience, innovating, among others. While the survey was open to all members of the community, 37% of respondents indicated that they ride the bus at least once per week and 3.5% indicated they ride paratransit at least once per week.

When asked what STA should focus on in the next ten years, respondents had the highest level of support for:

- Making STA services more accessible and desirable to more people (87.8%)
- Making STA services work better for the people who need them the most (87.4%)
- Financial stewardship and responsible use of taxpayer dollars (81.0%)

When asked how STA could best improve bus service, the top two responses included adding bus routes to more places and higher frequency service. When asked to rank different ways STA could improve the bus riding experience, the top responses were to make service faster (using bus lanes and transit signal priority) and to make the experience easier through technological investments (like real time information and an improved mobile application).

Survey respondents also indicated support for STA to work with cities and county to locate more housing, employment, and services near bus routes.

Outreach at Community Events

A strategic planning activity was conducted at STA's booth at three community events in which members of the community were asked to develop a "community quilt" which visually displayed their collective priorities for future improvements and strategies. Participants placed triangles onto the quilt that correspond to their own individual priorities, with each color representing a specific type of improvement. Participants also had the opportunity to write a note on their triangle detailing why they picked it. The project team talked with participants about their priorities and answered questions.



Approximately 190 people participated in this interactive outreach activity at these three community events:

- **Cycle Celebration** – July 31 – Mirabeau Park, Spokane Valley
- **Unity in the Community** – August 20 – Riverfront Park, downtown Spokane
- **Valleyfest** – September 24-25 – Mirabeau Park, Spokane Valley

Listening Sessions

A series of listening sessions were held, asking about participants' current experience with STA, what they'd like STA to prioritize in the future, and how they would promote and build support for STA with people who don't use STA services. Each of these listening sessions is summarized below.

Rider virtual listening session – August 18

- Virtual meeting including interactive online polling activity
- 12 participants
- Recruited from online survey respondents who indicated they are frequent riders

Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center listening session – August 24

- In person session at Martin Luther King Jr. Family Outreach Center (MLK Center)
- 14 participants
- Recruited community members, including youth and older adults, who use STA services

World Relief Spokane listening session – September 6

- In person session at World Relief Spokane
- 13 participants
- Recruited newcomers to Spokane, including refugees and immigrants, who use STA services

The Arc of Spokane listening session – September 9

- In person session at The Arc of Spokane
- 13 participants
- Recruited people with disabilities who primarily use Paratransit services

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) session – September 14

- Virtual session during the regularly scheduled CAC meeting
- 8 participants
- The CAC is comprised of Board-approved volunteer citizen members

Business Community session – October 18

- Virtual session organized by Greater Spokane Incorporated (GSI) at STA's request
- 12 participants
- Members of GSI, Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce, the West Plains Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Spokane Partnership and Visit Spokane invited to join the session

Key Findings

The community considers STA essential.

For many participants in the listening sessions, STA is their only option to get around. Many of them didn't own cars, and STA was the only way they could get to school, to work, and to services. They used STA to run errands, go shopping, visit family and friends, get to health care appointments, and travel the region. People with disabilities, both in The Arc of Spokane session as well as in other sessions, noted how few transportation options they have — and how reliant they are on STA services.

Riders consider STA affordable, though many riders desire lower fares.

In every session, users of STA services talked about how affordable STA is — especially when compared to driving a car. Many riders listed the unexpected costs of driving a car: car payments, maintenance, insurance, gas, and parking. Despite this, conversation about lower fares came up in almost every session — that \$2 per trip adds up and \$60 for a month is expensive. In the survey, “zero fare” and “lower fares” were mentioned often in the open-ended question about priorities. When asked what would make it easier to ride STA, survey respondents listed “free bus passes for kids¹, easier fare system, and cheaper fares.” Participants at the MLK Center and World Relief listening sessions requested specifically that fares not increase.

Riders ranked “Frequency” as the top priority for the future of transit.

Across the survey, community quilt, and listening sessions, “Frequency (make the bus come more often)” was ranked first out of 12 priorities. Riders noted the need for more frequency to accommodate retail and hospitality workers, as well as other employees who work outside of 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. hours. The current frequency impacts riders' ability to get to their jobs at a reasonable time, and they dislike having long waits at the bus stop. Paratransit riders noted that, though they can schedule their rides, they often have long waits that make them late to work and appointments.

Riders ranked “Geography” as second priority for the future of transit.

Across the survey, community quilt and listening sessions, “Geography (add bus routes to more places)” was ranked second out of 12 priorities. The topic frequently surfaced in listening sessions and in open-ended survey answers. Discussions frequently mentioned better connectivity along I-90 into North Idaho. People see Kootenai County as a natural part

¹ Sessions occurred prior to youth zero-fare approval

of the region, and Coeur d'Alene is a popular destination. Participants listed other important locations to consider like Deer Park, Airway Heights, Costco in north Spokane, and other rural areas. They also asked for more east-west routes and more stops within certain neighborhoods with higher ridership.

Riders want STA to prioritize expanded hours all week.

Across the listening sessions, survey, and community quilt activities, participants talked about the need for expanded hours and weekend service. "More weekend bus service" was ranked third out of 12 priorities and "Expanded hours (bus service later at night/earlier in the morning)" was ranked fourth out of 12 priorities. In addition, the need for expanded hours developed organically in conversation and open-ended survey responses outside of the exercises asking people to rank their priorities, signaling this is a top-of-mind concern. Many people shared that they work on weekends and they need better weekend service, especially earlier and later service on Sundays. People need earlier hours and more evening hours to get to their jobs on time.

Riders highlighted safety as a priority.

Some riders shared they feel safer riding the bus — with a professional operator at the helm — than driving a car themselves and dealing with inclement weather, bad drivers, and traffic. "Increased security presence on STA buses/at STA facilities" was not ranked highly (it scored tenth out of 12 priorities). However, the topic of safety emerged in many listening sessions, in the community quilt, and in open-ended survey answers.

Two individuals mentioned safety concerns during the input process, including feeling uncomfortable at certain times of day and locations in the system. Participants in some sessions noted the need to enforce on-board rules, monitor what people bring on the bus, and monitor pets allowed on the bus. While some members of the rider virtual listening session wanted increased security (especially at Park and Rides), CAC members wondered if more security is the solution, suggesting perhaps security cameras or other security features would be better options.

People see opportunity for STA to help the environment, promote sustainability and mitigate climate change.

In the survey and listening sessions, transit as a way to help the environment came up multiple times. "Environmental protection/sustainability/addressing climate change" was listed several times by survey respondents in the open-ended question about priorities. Interest in electric buses, especially to help the environment, came up in a number of sessions, including in the survey and the community quilt exercise.

3 BACKGROUND AND TRENDS

Concurrent with Stage 1 Public Outreach, STA undertook a review of regional dynamics and macro factors which could impact the future of the Spokane region, and consequently transportation needs over the next decade. These dynamics and factors, generally characterized as key trends, were echoed and validated through the outreach and engagement efforts, as detailed in the Chapter 2.

These key trends were then classified into two groups:

- **Context Trends** – Factors that will influence STA to adapt or respond
- **Policy Trends** – Transit trends in which STA may influence direction in the future

This chapter summarizes the findings from the research and validation related to each of these key trends, discussed in more detail in Appendix B. This chapter summarizes the findings from the research and validation related to each of these key trends.

CONTEXT TRENDS

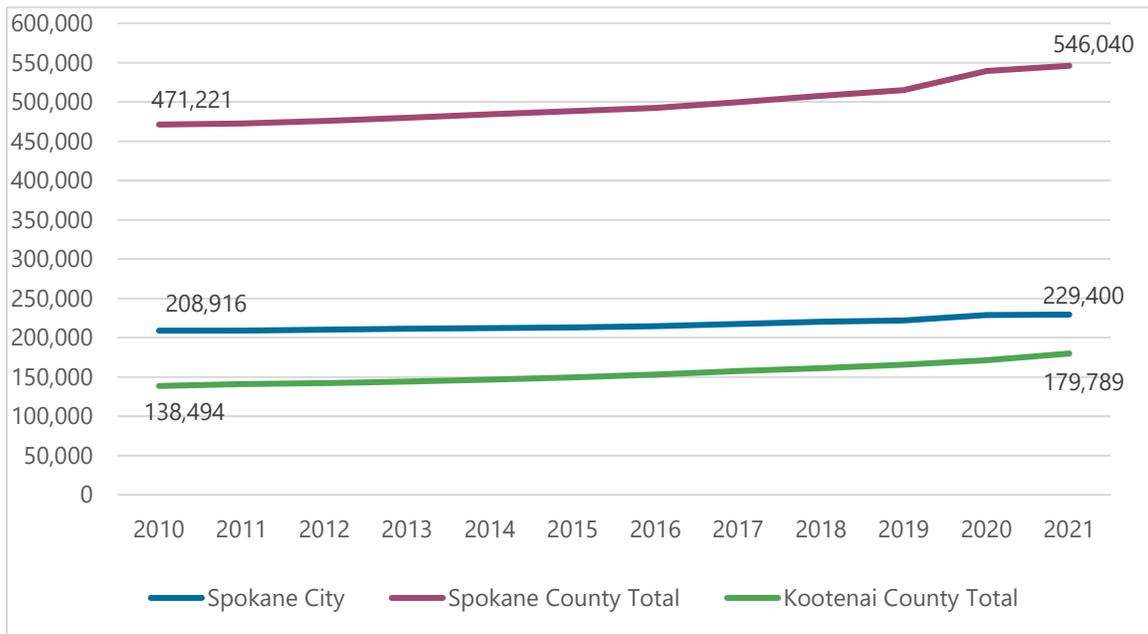
Context trends include key factors, external to STA, which may occur within the region. These are generally things that will influence the future of the agency that STA must adapt or respond to but does not have direct control over. Context trends identified through research and Phase 1 Public Outreach include:

- Population and Employment Growth
- Housing Affordability and Supply
- Regional Travel Patterns
- Demographic Shifts
- Homelessness

Population and Employment Growth

Population and employment growth were among the most commonly identified key trends impacting the region's future. Community Organization Leader interviews revealed a perception that population growth is occurring on a regional level and is not constrained only to the City of Spokane or Spokane County. Specifically, growth in Kootenai County, Idaho has become a key focus as the region continues to grow across state lines. Additional research and validation for this trend (Figure 3-1) showed significant regional growth between 2010 and 2021, including a 15.8% increase in Spokane County and a 29.8% increase in Kootenai County.

Figure 3-1 Population Growth in Spokane, Spokane County, and Kootenai County (2010-2021)



Source: US Census Bureau (2010-2021)

There has also been significant employment growth in both areas, including a 10.9% increase in jobs located in the Spokane Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) between 2010 and 2021 and a 19.9% increase in jobs located in the Coeur d’Alene MSA over the same period.

As population and employment increase, regional demand for transportation also increases with more people taking more trips to access goods, services, and employment opportunities. This represents an opportunity for STA to adapt transit service to best meet the needs of this growing demand as well as for STA to effectively adapt transit service to best meet the needs of an evolving distribution of people and jobs.

Effectively capitalizing on this opportunity requires an understanding of the geographic distribution of population and employment growth within the region. Growth occurring outside of the urbanized core is challenging to effectively serve with traditional transit service. Housing affordability and supply, another key context trend, is critical to understanding how population and employment distribution may evolve throughout the region.

Housing Affordability and Supply

The affordability and supply of housing are commonly linked with population and employment growth, both of which were common points of conversation during Community Organization Leader interviews. Continued growth in the Spokane region without adequate investment in additional housing stock has resulted in both higher demand for housing and higher costs for housing. Between 2016 and 2021, the average residential sale price increased 88% in Spokane County and 116% in Kootenai County. Over the same period, the median residential sale price also increased 88% in Spokane County and 120% in Kootenai County.

This increasing cost of housing suggests that regional population is growing faster than housing development and, as demand outpaces supply, prices have increased. The geographic distribution of new housing development is at the crux of where future population will be distributed within the region.

Regional Travel Patterns

As the population continues to grow, travel patterns throughout the region shift and evolve as a direct result of where people work and where they choose to live (or can afford to live). Understanding these travel patterns and how they have evolved over time presents an opportunity for STA to respond to shifting transportation needs and ensure transit service meets the needs of the community into the future.

Mobile Device Location Analysis

A travel pattern analysis using anonymized mobile device location data was used to evaluate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on travel patterns within the Spokane region (explored in more detail in Appendix C). Shifting travel behavior in the region is a key component of long-range planning and ensuring transit service gets people where they need to go. This evaluation can also be used to identify gaps in STA's existing network, revealing key areas of high travel demand without existing service.

Figure 3-2 shows the summary of vehicle trips that start or end within the Spokane region between Fall 2019 and Fall 2021.

Figure 3-2 Travel Trends Summary

Time of Day	Average Daily Vehicle Volumes			Average Trip Length		
	2019	2021	Percent Change	2019	2021	Percent Change
All Day (12 am – 12 am)	3,078,300	2,602,900	-15%	9.2	10.2	11%
Mid-Day (10am – 3pm)	1,013,300	849,700	-16%	8.3	9.4	14%
Peak PM (3pm – 7pm)	1,093,100	901,900	-17%	8.5	9.5	12%

Source: StreetLight Data for September – November 2019 and 2021

As of Fall 2021, vehicle trips had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels across any time of day, including a 15% decrease overall and a 17% decrease during the afternoon peak period. The ongoing decline in trips may be related to several factors, including:

- Reduced congestion, compared to 2019 levels, improves travelers' abilities to reach destinations that are further away.
- People are not completing as many of their shorter trips for a variety of reasons but are continuing to make longer trips.
- Trip-chaining, or serving multiple trip purposes in a single trip, has increased.

Traffic Counts Data

Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) traffic counts data provides a more robust, historical view of travel patterns across the region. Annual samples of this data were used to identify the annual average daily traffic at four points on highways surrounding Spokane. These locations were selected based on data availability and to identify bi-directional travel volumes in all four cardinal directions, as shown in Figure 3-3. Between 2015 and 2021, traffic volumes to the east, west, and north of Spokane all increased by at least 10%.

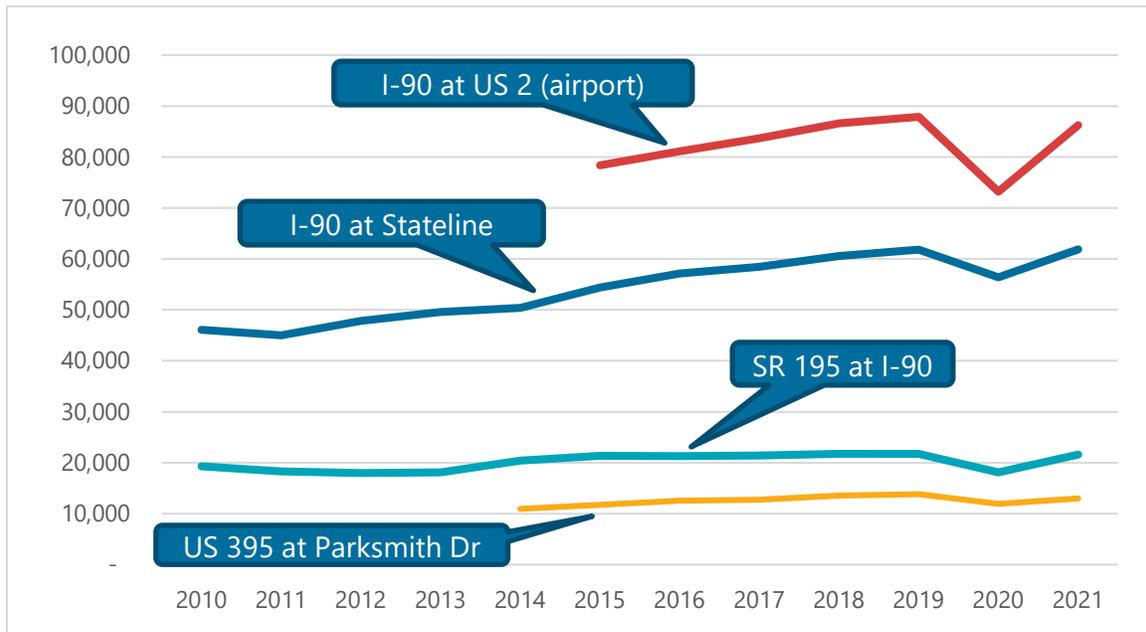
Figure 3-3 Change in Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) by Location, 2015-2021

Location	Relation to Spokane	Change in AADT	Percent Change
I-90 at Washington-Idaho Stateline	East of Spokane	+7,500	+14%
I-90 at US 2	West of Spokane	+7,800	+10%
SR 395 at Parksmith Dr	North of Spokane	+300	+11%
SR 195 at I-90	South of Spokane	+1,300	+1%

Source: WSDOT Traffic Data Reporting System (2021)

This data suggests that growth in travel to and from Spokane is highest to the east (into northern Idaho), to the north along the North Spokane Corridor, and to the west (into the West Plains). Additionally, east-west travel along I-90 is notably higher than either of the north-south corridors evaluated, as shown in Figure 3-4.

Figure 3-4 Annual Average Daily Traffic Volumes Over Time



Source: WSDOT Traffic Data Reporting System (2021)

Regional Work Travel Patterns

In response to the observed population, employment, and traffic volume growth in both Spokane and Kootenai Counties, the study of commute travel patterns was expanded to focus on changes in commute patterns across county lines.

Using the latest available Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) data from the US Census Bureau, growth in commute travel into Spokane County was shown to increase between neighboring counties. Commute travel into Spokane County was significantly higher from Kootenai County than any other location (Figure 3-5). The number of individual people traveling from Kootenai County into Spokane County for work increased by 45% over this ten-year period, compared to a 5% increase for Whitman County and a 1% increase for both Lincoln and Stevens County. The largest increase in volumes occurred for trips that both began and ended in Spokane County, increasing by approximately 18,000.

Figure 3-5 Change in Commuters traveling to Spokane County by County (2009-2019)

Spokane County workers who live in...	Spokane County	Kootenai County	Stevens County	Lincoln County	Whitman County
2009	162,530	7,862	5,415	905	896
2019	180,933	11,440	5,463	913	941
Percent Change	11%	45%	1%	1%	5%

Source: US Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics (2009, 2019)

An analysis of commute related travel for workers living in Spokane County showed similar results, with substantially higher increases in travel from Spokane County to Kootenai County than to other counties (Figure 3-6). Work related travel from Spokane County to Kootenai County increased by over 2,000 individual travelers (54% increase) between 2009 and 2019.

Figure 3-6 Change in Commuters traveling from Spokane County by County (2009-2019)

Spokane County residents who work in...	Spokane County	Kootenai County	Stevens County	Lincoln County	Whitman County
2009	162,530	3,786	1,114	447	1,158
2019	180,933	5,825	1,668	490	1,190
Percent Change	11%	54%	50%	10%	3%

Source: US Census Bureau Longitudinal Employer Household Dynamics (2009, 2019)

Demographic Shifts

While population growth in the region has been well-documented, shifting demographics also play a key role in Spokane's future. Several demographic factors were identified for evaluation, including median income and population below the federal poverty level. These demographic factors were evaluated for the two most recent Census years, 2010 and 2020. Additional demographic characteristics are explored further in Appendix B.

After an initial presentation of the evaluation results, STA Board members requested a comparison with similar peer counties to provide greater context to these numbers. Board members specifically requested demographic data for Clark and Pierce Counties for the equivalent periods be provided as reference. This data is summarized in Figure 3-7 and discussed in greater detail below.

Figure 3-7 Demographic Shifts Summary (2010-2020) for Spokane, Clark, and Pierce Counties

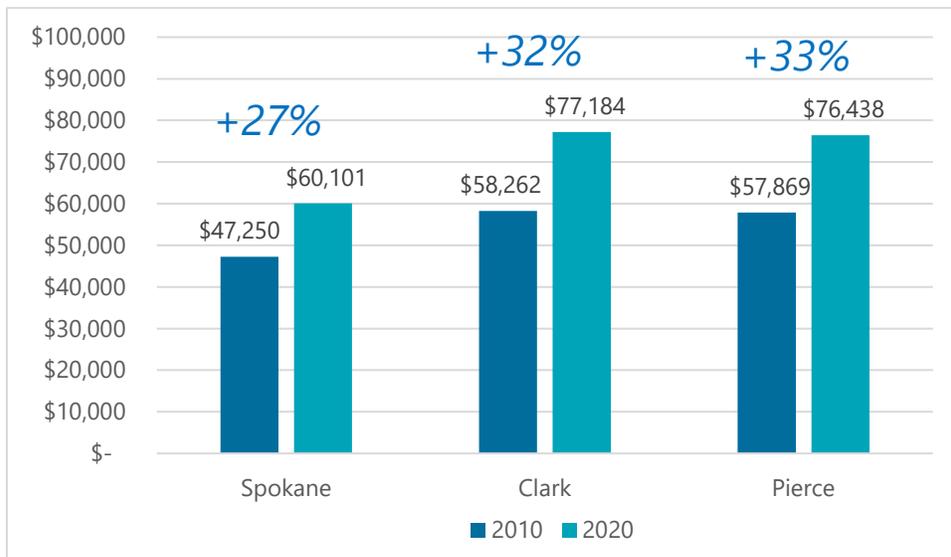
Demographic Variable	Spokane County % Change (2010-2020)	Clark County % Change (2010-2020)	Pierce County % Change (2010-2020)
Median Income	+27%	+32%	+33%
Poverty	+2%	-19%	-11%

Source: US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

Median Income

Between 2010 and 2020, median income in Spokane County increased from \$47,000 to \$60,000, a 27% increase over the ten-year period. This increase outpaces the 19% inflation reported by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics over this same time frame. When compared to Clark and Pierce Counties, median income increased in all three counties. The increase of 27% in Spokane County was slightly smaller compared to a 32% and 33% increase, respectively, in Clark and Pierce Counties (Figure 3-8).

Figure 3-8 Change in Median Income for Spokane, Clark, and Pierce Counties (2010-2020)



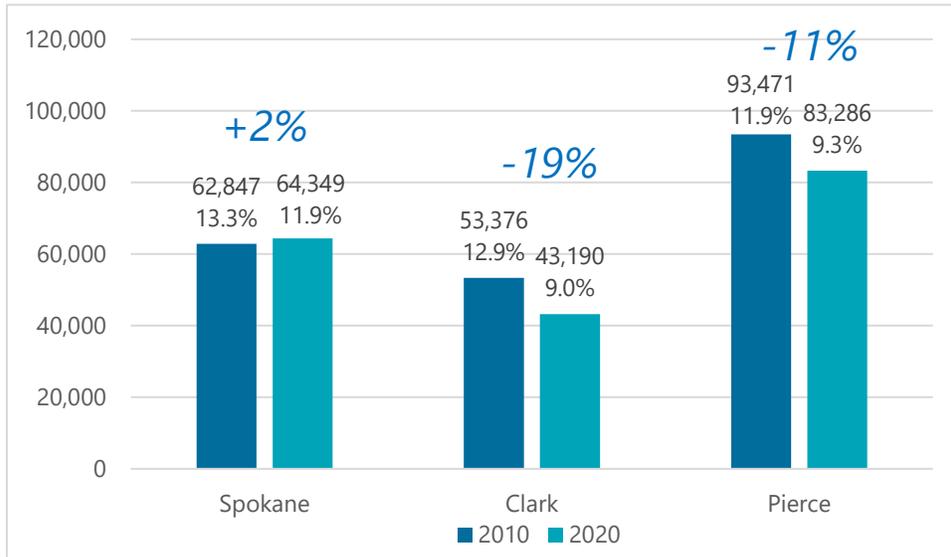
Source: US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

Poverty

Between 2010 and 2020, the total number of people in Spokane County living under the federal poverty level increased by about 2% (1,000 individuals). However, the percent of the total population under the federal poverty level decreased from 13% to 12%, as overall population grew at a faster pace. Unlike Spokane County, Clark and Pierce Counties both saw an overall decrease in population living under the federal poverty level between 2010 and 2020, of 19% and 11%, respectively (Figure 3-9). The percentage of the total population living

below the Federal Poverty Level decreased from approximately 13% to 9% in Clark County and from approximately 12% to 9% in Pierce County.

Figure 3-9 Change in Population Living under the Federal Poverty Level for Spokane, Clark, and Pierce Counties (2010-2020)



Source: US Census Bureau (2010, 2020)

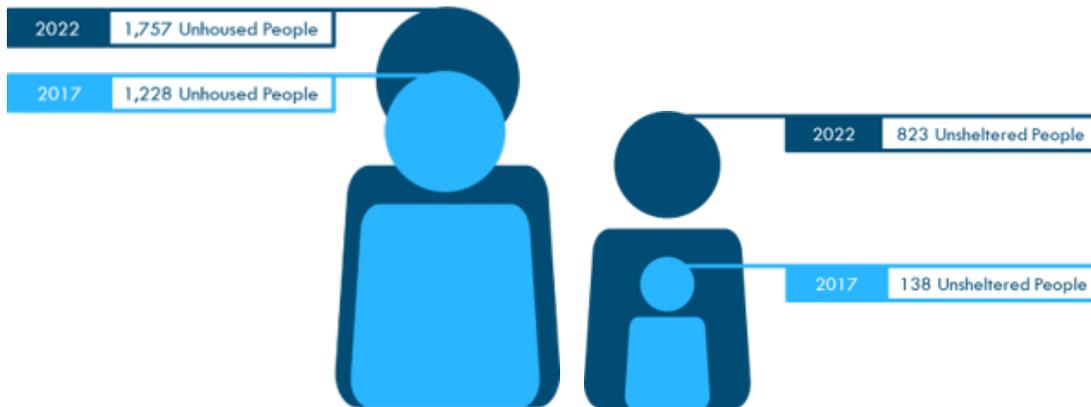
Homelessness

The prevalence and visibility of homelessness was also identified as a key trend for the region. This is a complicated, multifaceted issue with no clear answers. However, public perceptions around homelessness and changes to the observed homeless population are quantifiable metrics that can be evaluated to shed light on this trend.

Recent results from STA’s Community Perceptions Survey indicate that the issue of poverty and homelessness went from a minor community concern, with 2% of respondents identifying this as their top issue in 2013, to the number one issue in 2019, with over 40% of respondents choosing poverty and homelessness.

As public perceptions have shifted in recent years, indicating significantly more concern surrounding homelessness, point-in-time counts conducted by the City of Spokane in 2017 and 2022 were used to identify observed trends in the rates of homelessness (Figure 3-10). Over this five-year period, the total number of unhoused individuals, including both those living in formal homeless shelters and those living outside of shelters, grew from 1,228 to 1,757 (a 43% increase). The growth in unsheltered individuals was even more stark, increasing from 138 in 2017 to 823 in 2022, a 496% increase.

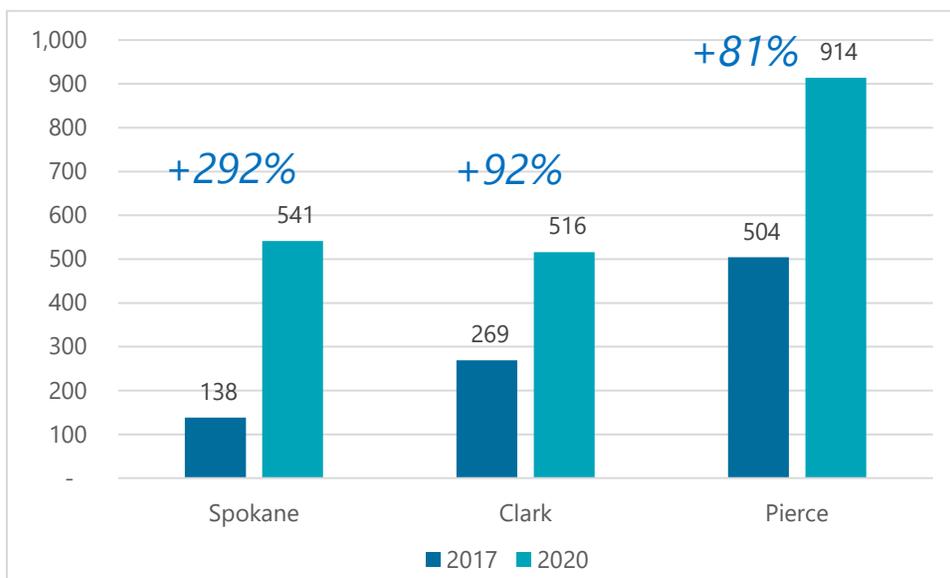
Figure 3-1010 Change in Unhoused and Unsheltered Population in Spokane (2017-2022)



Source: City of Spokane Point in Time Counts (2017 and 2022)

Similar to demographic shifts, STA Board members expressed an interest in identifying rates of homelessness for other peer counties in the state to provide context for Spokane, specifically, Clark and Pierce Counties. A review of changes in homelessness rates found that the percent increase for total unhoused population was similar. However, the percent change in unsheltered homeless populations was notably larger for Spokane County. Between 2017 and 2020 (the latest year in which a full dataset was available for all three counties), unsheltered homelessness increased by 81% in Pierce County, 92% in Clark County, and 292% in Spokane County (Figure 3-11). This suggests that the recent trend in unsheltered homelessness may be an increasingly visible phenomenon in the Spokane region compared to other areas of the state.

Figure 3-1111 Percent Change in Unsheltered Homelessness by County (2017 to 2020)



Source: Point in Time Counts (2017 and 2020)

POLICY TRENDS

Policy trends are characterized as specific initiatives, actions, or policies that are gaining momentum either locally in the Spokane region or nationally in the transit industry. These represent factors that STA has some direct influence over, including:

- Equity and Accessibility
- Frequency and Reliability
- Transit Priority and Infrastructure
- Demand-Based Services
- Workforce and Organizational Development

Additional details regarding specific examples and applications of these trends are included in Appendix B.

Equity and Accessibility

Transit usage changed significantly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, with many office workers shifting to remote work. At the same time, “essential workers” (retail, manufacturing, healthcare, etc.) did not have this option and continued to ride transit. Based on the specific travel needs of essential workers, pandemic-era transit usage has seen a greater share of trips during off-peak hours rather than traditional commuting peaks as well as lower ridership on downtown-focused regional commuter services.

In response to these changes, many transit providers have adjusted service to respond to these trip types more directly. The reduced reliance on peak-period commute trips allowed agencies to shift service toward nights and weekends, which tend to be used by marginalized groups. In response to less downtown-focused commute patterns, agencies have prioritized neighborhood-to-neighborhood access and relying less on downtown transfers to complete trips.

While service realignments in response to shifting demand has shown equity benefits, agencies have recently prioritized identifying specific metrics related to equity. These metrics primarily focus on distributional equity, or the distribution of service across all segments of a community, prioritizing those with the highest need. Note that other forms of equity may include procedural equity (representation in decision-making processes), restorative equity (reversing historical inequities), and structural equity (accountability for decision-makers). Some equity-focused metrics include prioritizing service in identified equity neighborhoods, monitoring employment accessibility by populations living in poverty, and comparing access to transit across race and ethnicity groups.

Frequency and Reliability

When asked what service improvements are most important, transit riders across the country generally mention service frequency and reliability among their top priorities.² Frequency and reliability provide a sense of trip security for transit riders. With high frequency service, passengers don't need to plan their trip around the bus schedule; they know that if they miss their bus, another one is only a few minutes away. In that vein, when service is reliable, passengers know that they'll be able to make it to their destination on time and avoid being late. Considering the importance of these two factors, many agencies are exploring opportunities for frequency and reliability improvements to bolster ridership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic recovery and encourage a return to transit use.³

On a route level, some agencies are adding transit priority measures such as bus-only lanes⁴ and transit signal priority⁵ to boost both frequency and reliability on targeted routes. Examples of these are explored at length next in the *Transit Priority and Infrastructure* trends section. In addition to transit priority measures, some agencies have taken a network-level approach to develop a frequent transit network. Generally, frequent transit networks are a network of connecting routes where riders can expect frequent, reliable service most of the time. Similar to STA's High Performance Transit Network, Portland's Tri-Met defines their designated Frequent Service Network as rail and bus routes that run every 15 minutes or better, most of the day, most days.⁶

Transit Priority and Infrastructure

Some of the most effective improvements for transit reliability are related to transit priority infrastructure. In the Spokane region, continued growth will make transit priority even more important as congestion worsens on local streets, reducing transit speed and reliability. Building infrastructure that is oriented towards transit can be costly but taking steps now can greatly reduce future costs as congestion and other stressors on the transportation network increase.

STA Moving Forward identified several High Performance Transit corridors which are targeted for transit priority investments, as well as the City Line which will feature dedicated transit

² <https://transitcenter.org/publication/whos-on-board-2019/>

³ <https://transitcenter.org/theres-a-reason-transit-ridership-is-rising-in-these-7-cities/#:~:text=Looking%20at%20the%202018%20NTD,%2C%20Detroit%2C%20and%20Las%20Vegas.>

⁴ <https://archive.curbed.com/2019/10/14/20902256/bus-lane-emissions-climate-change>

⁵ <https://nacto.org/publication/transit-street-design-guide/intersections/signals-operations/active-transit-signal-priority/>

⁶ <https://www.transitforwardri.com/pdf/Strategy%20Paper%206%20Frequent%20Transit%20Networks.pdf>

lanes and transit priority infrastructure. As Spokane continues to grow, expanding upon the existing High Performance Transit corridors will be critical to ensure people, jobs, and services are connected and to make transit a competitive option to driving.

Cities across the nation are working to make the infrastructure supporting transit work better for people as they grow. Spokane can stay ahead of growth by making transit priority improvements before greater transportation pressures and a more complex built environment add additional expense to improvements.

Demand-Based Services

Nearly all transit agencies have some locations within their service area that are difficult to serve with traditional fixed-route service. Narrow streets, challenges with ingress and egress, and low demand for service are all reasons why an agency may not provide fixed-route service to a given location. However, recent innovations in on-demand or microtransit services, enabled by technologies such as smartphones and mobile payments, have given agencies the opportunity to explore new ways to serve these traditionally hard to reach areas.

These services are typically operated using an accessible van that serves same-day trip requests within an established service boundary, while also making scheduled connections with the fixed-route transit network. On-demand services have lower ridership than fixed-route services but may be used to provide coverage in low-demand areas or connect certain neighborhoods to higher frequency transit service. This service model could be worth considering if providing service in low-demand/low-density areas at the fringe of the region becomes a priority.

Workforce and Organizational Development

While finding and retaining skilled and committed operators has always been a challenge for transit agencies,⁷ the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many of these challenges while also presenting new ones. Risk of virus exposure, as well as reduced ridership, led to widespread service cuts. As service scales back up with the pandemic subsiding, many agencies around the country (and world) are having trouble bringing staffing back to full capacity. Agencies are dealing with this in the short term by reducing service and reconfiguring routes but are also trying a variety of strategies to bring operators back.

⁷ <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2018-06-28/there-s-a-bus-driver-shortage-and-no-wonder>

Some approaches that have proven successful for agencies include:

- Offering signing bonuses
- Expediting Commercial Driver's License (CDL) training and testing
- Increasing wages
- Optimizing scheduling

With these challenges comes opportunities to prepare the organization for future demands by proactively engaging in skills assessments, strategically identifying succession plans for key positions, and emphasizing training and development within the workforce.

4 GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND PERFORMANCE MEASURES

A key component of any strategic planning effort is to identify specific goals for the organization to work towards, strategies to help achieve these goals, and performance measures to monitor progress made toward each goal. This section summarizes the process and results for:

- Updating STA's Mission and Vision statements
- Developing strategic goals to guide the direction of the agency
- Defining strategies that align with each goal
- Identifying potential performance measures for future consideration to accompany each goal

Mission and Vision Update

During two STA Board of Directors workshops in May and July 2022, staff reviewed STA's existing Mission and Vision statements to affirm whether they were still applicable as the agency looks to 2035 or whether there was an opportunity to update these statements. Through several polling exercises and discussions, Board members identified that the existing Mission Statement was generally well written, but there were opportunities to make the statement more concise and to place a larger emphasis on community, quality of life, and inclusivity. Similarly, the Board expressed interest in evolving the existing vision statement to one that was more focused on the future and expressing a more direct, specific vision for the agency.

As a result of these ongoing discussions with Board members throughout the strategic planning process, updated mission and vision statements were developed as follows:

- **Mission Statement** – We provide safe, inclusive, convenient, and efficient public transportation services to Spokane area communities. We are leaders in transportation and a valued partner in the region's social fabric, economic infrastructure, and quality of life.
- **Vision Statement** – Connecting everyone to opportunity

These updated Mission and Vision statements were used to inform the development of goals, strategies, and performance measures, as described in this chapter.

Goals, Strategies, and Performance Measures

Following the updated Mission and Vision Statements, three distinct strategic goals were developed to guide the future direction of STA. Goals were developed in response to specific priorities identified through the public outreach and engagement process and the key trend research and validation activities, both of which are explored in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report, respectively.

Each goal includes a number of strategies and potential performance measures to help the agency achieve these goals and monitor progress through the 2035 planning horizon. At this time, performance measures represent potential options for measures and are not yet fully defined or finalized. Specific performance measures and thresholds will be developed as a part of Phase 2 of the strategic plan during the project identification and prioritization process.

Goal 1: Elevate the customer experience

We exist to connect our customers to opportunity. Fostering an easy-to-use, safe, and inviting experience promotes us as a compelling transportation choice across our region.

Headline Performance Measures

1. Percent of residents with 15-minute or better all-weekday transit frequency

This measure will inform community access and future development of our service. The measure will capture residents who have access within a 10-minute walk to service, which offers 15-minute or better weekday frequency.

2. Favorable Customer Experience Index

This index will track the level of satisfaction customers have with STA's services as captured by the Net Promoter Score™ based on not less than biennial community surveys.

Strategies

1.1 Expand and adapt mobility options to attract and serve more people

Travel behaviors are constantly evolving. The pandemic accelerated some of these behavioral shifts. We will continually adapt and improve our bus, paratransit, and vanpool service to keep up with changing needs.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Further expand bus and paratransit hours of service
- Introduce service in new areas of ridership demand
- Provide more frequent service across more bus routes
- Develop on-demand service for areas and times of day not well served by bus service
- Explore creating a rider loyalty rewards program

1.2 Advance frequent, easy-to-use, fast, and reliable service

STA Moving Forward, the previous Strategic Plan, includes the improvement of signature high-frequency corridors. These corridors have been developed along the Monroe-Regal Line, Cheney Line, and the City Line and are being implemented for the Sprague Line, Division Line, and along the I-90/Valley area. Continued investment in this high-quality service will enhance the mobility of our current and future customers across the region.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Expand High Performance Transit network
- Increase service frequency on existing corridors, particularly evenings and weekends
- Identify and address bottlenecks that slow service or cause unreliable travel times
- Collaborate with local and state governments to implement solutions like transit lanes and transit signal priority
- Promote high-frequency service through education, wayfinding, amenities, and vehicles

1.3 Deliver an outstanding door-to-door experience

Our customers' experience, from door-to-door, must exceed their expectations. We are working to make every stage of the journey simple, intuitive, and accessible for everyone from planning a trip and accessing a pickup location, to boarding, paying a fare, making a transfer, and arriving at a destination.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Provide a seamless trip-planning, payment, and wayfinding experience designed for customers' ease of use
- Improve first/last-mile connections
- Enhance boarding locations with customer amenities such as shelters, real-time signage, and lighting
- Communicate in real time
- Embrace the use of technology to enhance the rider experience

1.4 Create a welcoming, comfortable, and secure environment for all customers

We work to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent people from realizing the benefits of transit service.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Develop and maintain relationships with diverse community groups to help identify and address unique needs
- Ensure fares are affordable
- Create proactive marketing tools for safe and comfortable use of transit through ongoing community engagement
- Promote ridership through education and outstanding service
- Invest in amenities which promote comfort and safety throughout our vehicles and facilities, including the Plaza

Additional potential metrics to track progress:

- Unlinked annual trips per capita
- Percent of area population that has ridden STA in the last 30 days
- Percent of residents within a 10-minute walk of any STA service
- Percent of jobs with 15-minute or better all-weekday frequency
- Percent of boardings at sheltered stops

Goal 2: Lead and collaborate with community partners to enhance the quality of life in our region

We operate in our region's ecosystem, delivering transportation options for community members. Creating strong partnerships will ensure that we make informed choices, through collaboration, that benefit everyone and contribute to the vibrancy and sustainability of this region now and in the future.

Headline Performance Measures

1. Number of new housing units by frequent transit

This will allow us to track the success of our partnerships with local jurisdictions, developers, employers, and community partners directed at enhancing quality of life for residents of our area through access and mobility. We will capture new residential units within easy access of transit service with 15-minute frequency or better.

2. Number of rides facilitated through partnerships (Universal Transit Access Plan (UTAP), Employer Sponsored, and Community Access Pass)

This will help us understand how partnerships positively impact ridership and overall regional access.

Strategies

2.1 **Collaborate to enhance access to transit**

Our ability to deliver on our mission depends on successful collaboration with others. Our service relies on the use of public rights-of-way while our customers travel to bus stops via pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure provided by private and public developers. Other entities help spread the word about available services to potential riders. And crucially, the land use and development that surrounds transit routes directly influence transit ridership. We are also called to be a helpful partner in advancing the mission of other entities serving our community.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Plan and advocate with partners for coordinated land use and transportation
- Leverage our real estate assets to create opportunities for mixed use development
- Invest in coordinated projects that promote advancement of transit use
- Coordinate with rural, tribal, and neighboring transportation providers to extend transit's regional reach
- Leverage partner relationships, including with large employers and employment sites, to promote ridership and provide access to more people
- Collaboratively preserve long-term options for rail

2.2 Support community partners to amplify community benefits

During outreach for this plan, stakeholders shared that they believe we are uniquely positioned to take a leadership role in helping the community tackle some of the greatest challenges of our times. Leadership includes listening to, engaging with, facilitating for, and following our community partners.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Improve the visibility of transit as a potential solution to community challenges
- Participate in community planning initiatives
- Regularly communicate and collaborate with stakeholders
- Actively support community activities

2.3 Proactively initiate partnerships to promote and help employers, service providers, and residential development to locate near high-frequency transit

We will make clear why transit is important—and what transit-oriented development means—to developers, employers, jurisdictions, and service providers, during the planning stages of projects.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Partner on transit-oriented development (TOD) projects
- Support and advocate for transit-oriented infrastructure development
- Encourage jurisdictional incentives for TOD
- Share best practices for TOD

Additional potential metrics to track progress:

- Percent of residents with 15-minute or better all-day transit frequency (aligned with Goal 1)
- Participation on local organization boards and in events/activities
- Rating on “STA is essential to the livability in the region” and on “STA will play an important role in meeting the region’s future” in community perception surveys
- Degree to which community members and neighborhoods feel their mobility needs are being acknowledged and considered by STA based on community perception survey

Goal 3: Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of the region

We need to grow and adapt to ever changing conditions, as recent experience continues to teach us. Having a team who is well equipped and focused on our mission, along with strong supporting infrastructure, will provide the foundation required to deliver on the goals of this plan, balanced with providing reliable daily service.

Headline Performance Measures

1. Consistently be rated as one of the best places to work in our region

We will participate in an independent employer survey measuring our status as a Best Place to Work. This will allow us to understand our success as an organization working with our team members to deliver on our strategic goals.

2. Fully funded annual budget and six-year capital improvement plan

We will ensure that our financial resources exceed our financial obligations on an annual basis so we can remain debt free. We will also look to the future as we plan long-range strategic projects to ensure they are adequately supported financially.

Strategies

3.1 *Develop, prepare, and empower our team members*

Our team members are the most essential component to deliver our strategic plan goals. Their success means our success. We must ensure they understand our goals and strategies and we must, in turn, support them with the tools they need to thrive in their roles today and into the future.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Foster an inclusive and diverse culture where all employees feel welcome, appreciated, safe, and comfortable
- Prioritize learning and development
- Adapt practices and policies to stay competitive in the evolving employment market
- Develop a succession planning program for team members to grow and progress
- Build a mindset of continuous improvement and accountability throughout our organization

3.2 Engage in proactive assessment and planning, and deliver strategic long-term investments most beneficial to our communities

Continuous evaluation of today's demands combined with keeping an eye towards the future will best position us to understand changing needs and dynamics across the region which we will be ready to meet.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Leverage analytics to make informed choices
- Develop robust facilities master planning
- Evaluate network architecture in relation to the Plaza to accommodate system growth into the future
- Acquire and expand passenger facility properties
- Continue transition to zero-emission vehicles
- Integrate cutting-edge utilities and telecommunications into facility design and retrofits

3.3 Exemplify financial stewardship to maintain public trust and organizational sustainability

Our stewardship of taxpayer, customer fare, and federal and state dollars directly impacts our ability to deliver benefits to the public. We must remain vigilant to balance our investments with our sources of funding to be a resilient organization while creating lasting value for our customers and partners across our region.

Possible actions to achieve this:

- Maintain "no debt" financial position
- Excel at project management to deliver capital investments on time and on budget
- Emphasize transparency and accountability via consistent and robust reporting practices
- Continue strong public outreach across our various endeavors

Additional potential metrics to track progress:

- Percent of employees receiving annual training
- Percent annual turnover rate
- Succession plans defined across the organization
- Percent of fleet miles driven by zero-emission vehicles
- Rating on "provides taxpayers a good value for the money" in community perception survey

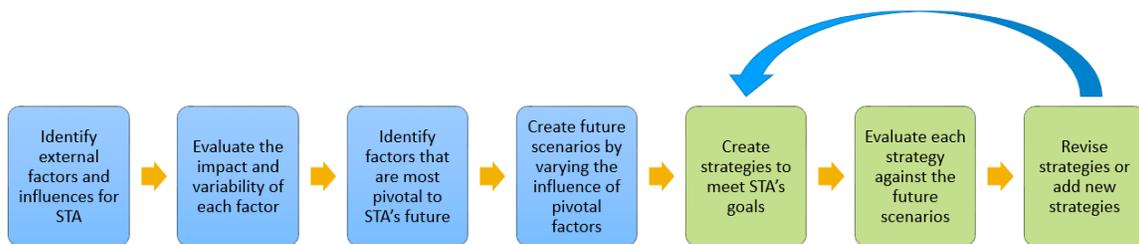
5 SCENARIO PLANNING

This chapter provides a brief description of the scenario planning work that was accomplished relative to the strategies detailed in the preceding chapter. Additional explanation and detail can be found in Appendix D.

WHAT IS SCENARIO PLANNING?

The purpose of scenario planning is to assess the robustness of a strategic plan's elements against a projected future(s). It offers the option to consider a wide range of future outcomes and essentially "tests" the strategies against those outcomes. Typically, the strongest strategies are those that remain viable under a wide variety of possible future outcomes. The scenario planning process used by STA for this plan is detailed in Figure 5-1 below.

Figure 5-1 Connect 2035 Scenario Planning Process



In the case of this strategic plan, it is important to consider that the plan is intended to cover a relatively short time span (ten years) thus making it less likely that trends already in evidence will change substantially. On the other hand, some of the resulting projects will endure well beyond the ten-year planning horizon. Therefore, consideration of trends and potentials beyond the planning horizon can help clarify the value of a project long into the future, beyond even what is covered in this plan.

REGIONAL FACTORS

Informed by input gathered in Phase 1 of the outreach and engagement efforts, 12 external factors that are likely to influence the services of STA most significantly over the next decade were identified. These factors, many of which align with the key trends, are:

- 1) Population Growth
- 2) Economy
- 3) Employment and Wages
- 4) Housing Affordability and Supply
- 5) Regional Perspective

- 6) Changes in Travel Behavior
- 7) Homelessness
- 8) Demographic Shifts
- 9) Technology
- 10) Climate Change
- 11) Inflation
- 12) Regulatory Environment

Factor Impact and Variability

The general influence of these factors and how they might be considered in strategic planning essentially have two dimensions: impact and variability.

Impact

Impact is a measure of the overall effect this factor would have on the Spokane region.

Variability

Variability is a measure of the relative degree of confidence in being able to predict change. The metric should not be confused with the magnitude of expected change. For example: there is general agreement that the population of the region will continue to expand at about 0.8% per year, which is year over year a significant growth rate. Authorities and experts agree on that projection. Therefore, the degree of confidence in projecting ongoing population growth for the region is very high, meaning the variability of this factor is low.

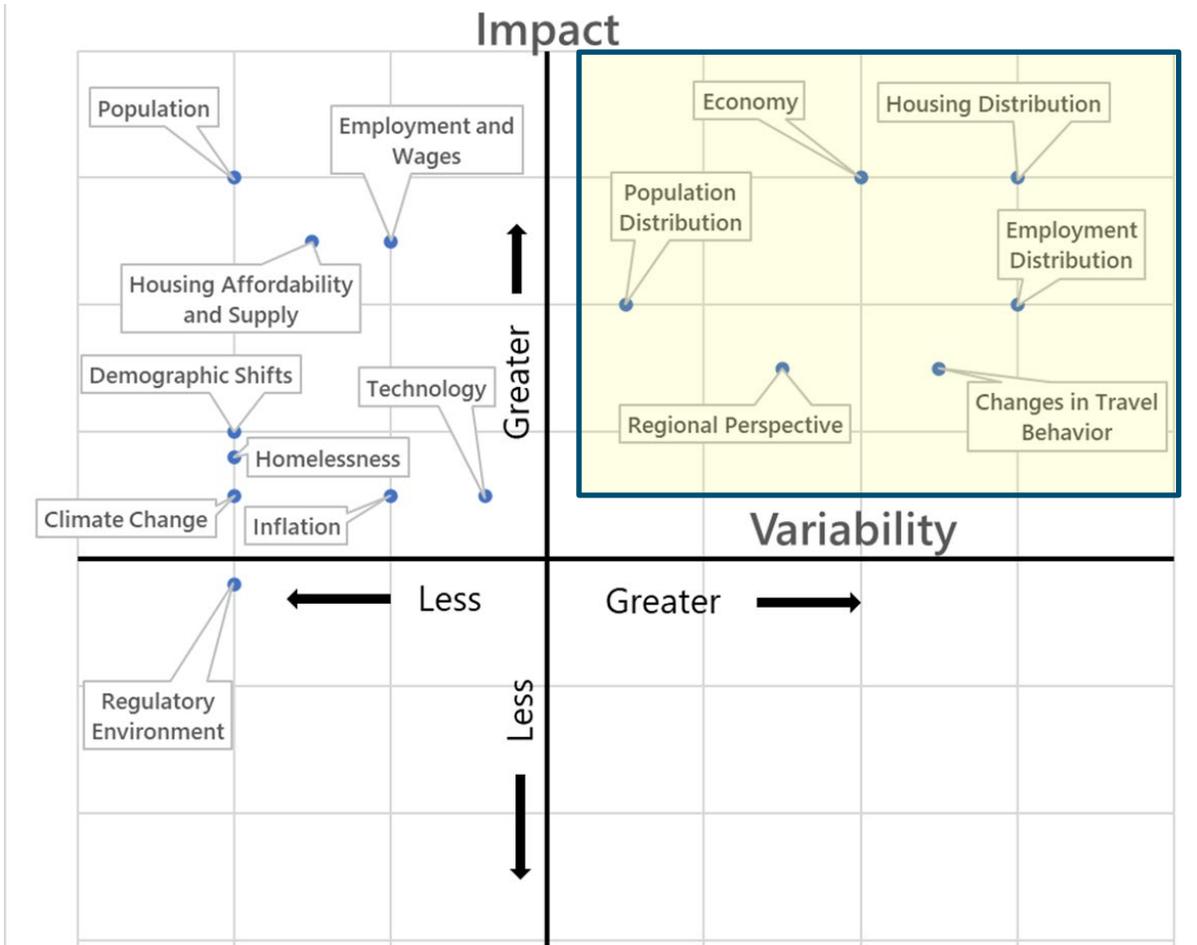
For purposes of framing scenarios that are appropriate to evaluate STA's strategies, some of the variation is important to assess in terms of the geographic distribution. Going back to the population example, if all 0.8% per year of regional population increase were to occur in a concentrated location, that has one set of implications for STA. If, on the other hand, that growth is spread over the entire region, there is another set of strategic implications for STA. To account for the geographic consideration for some factors, the "distribution" of an external factor has been split into a separate factor with independent impact and variability assessment. This is because the geographic distribution of some of the factors is a critical variable for STA and can move nearly independent of the regional change and the impact.

Impact and Variability Tradeoffs

The two dimensions for each factor are then arrayed with impact on one axis and variability on the other. Factors that are both high impact and high variability are the most pivotal factors in creating scenarios as they imply the most uncertainty and greatest influence. Other factors, such as those with high impact and more predictability, also exert significant influence, but because they are more predictable, they are essentially foundational to all futures or scenarios. Factors that have low impact and low variability are considered as background factors in future scenarios. The rare factors that have high variability but low impact can essentially be ignored in establishing scenarios or futures. There are none of those types of factors catalogued in STA's look at external factors.

Figure 5-2 shows the relative position of each factor in terms of its impact on STA's strategic future. The highlighted quadrant shows factors with the highest impact and highest variability for STA. These are ingredients for scenarios to test resiliency of goals and strategies. Each of these factors is explored in depth in Appendix D, including research citations that document the trends and their impact.

Figure 5-2 Impact and Variability Tradeoffs



SCENARIO SELECTION

Scenarios present a series of possibilities given a mix of issues that are pivotal to STA's planning. The purpose is to frame scenarios that give perspective to and test various strategies that may be included in STA's strategic plan. It is, therefore, good practice to adopt a wide range of possible futures against which to evaluate the effectiveness of each strategy.

The six scenarios outlined in Figure 5-3 below present possible future outcomes. It must be noted that none of these scenarios are predictions of a future for the Spokane region. Rather they are constructions of what could happen based on the most probable factors that have high impact and high variability. These scenarios create the ability to test the adaptability and resilience of the strategies adopted in the strategic plan. The purpose is to understand what futures present the greatest risks for STA and which strategies offer the greatest robustness against a backdrop of widely varying futures. The scenarios are not intended to be predictions of the future; they are expressions of what might be the future. Further detail on the make-up and interaction of the factors can be found in Appendix D.

Figure 5-3 Scenario Descriptions

Scenario	Overarching Theme
Scenario A - Current Trends	Current trends and indicators carry into the future
Scenario B - Resurgence of Downtown Spokane	Downtown Spokane becomes a vibrant mixed-use center and attracts regional growth and focus
Scenario C - Large Employment Centers	Employment growth is dominated by large manufacturing employers, one in the Spokane region and one in North Idaho
Scenario D - Idaho Shift	Regional growth in housing, retail, medical services, and employment shifts into North Idaho
Scenario E - North Spokane Corridor Influences	Regional growth focuses on the North Spokane Corridor with transit needs connected to all parts of the region, including Downtown Spokane
Scenario F - Regional Backtrack	Forces of employment opportunity and housing shortages cause the region to move back in time economically

EVALUATION OF STRATEGIES

The above scenarios are then coupled with the goals and strategies and evaluated based on how well each strategy performs under each scenario. Because there is no specific list of projects, the evaluation is, by necessity, a qualitative assessment of how well each strategy will advance toward STA's goals in view of the scenario.

The evaluation criteria are illustrated in Figure 5-4, below. Generally, the more adaptable strategies receive the higher scores, while those that depend more on current trends and history are somewhat less adaptable to futures where the scenario suggests there is a marked change in the region. The evaluation is a way to test the adaptability of a strategy to a range of possible future conditions. Figure 5-5 shows the results of the evaluation of the strategies.

Figure 5-4 Scenario Evaluation Criteria

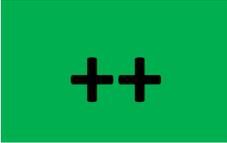
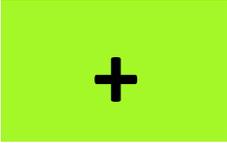
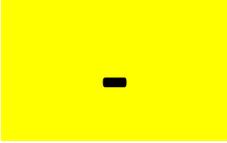
	Produces very positive results under this scenario
	Renders good results under this scenario
	Neutral under this scenario
	Detracts from, or does not move toward goal in this scenario
	Radical mis-match for this scenario

Figure 5-5 Scenario Evaluation Results

	A- Current Trends	B - Resurgence of Downtown	C - Large Employment Centers	D - Idaho Shift	E - North Spokane Corridor	F - Regional Backtrack
GOAL: Elevate the customer experience						
1.1 Expand and adapt mobility options to attract and serve more people	++	++	++	+	++	++
1.2 Advance frequent, easy-to-use, fast, and reliable service	++	++	+	-	-	++
1.3 Deliver an outstanding door-to-door experience	++	++	++	++	++	++
1.4 Create a welcoming, comfortable, and secure environment for all customers	++	++	++	+	++	++
GOAL: Lead and collaborate with community partners to enhance the quality of life in our region						
2.1 Collaborate to enhance access to transit	++	++	++	0	++	++
2.2 Support community partners to amplify community benefits	++	++	++	++	++	++
2.3 Proactively initiate partnerships to promote and help employers, service providers, and residential development to locate near high-frequency transit	++	++	++	+	++	++
GOAL: Strengthen our capacity to anticipate and respond to the demands of the region						
3.1 Develop, prepare, and empower our team members	++	++	++	++	++	++
3.2 Engage in proactive assessment and planning, and deliver strategic long-term investments most beneficial to our communities	++	++	++	+	++	++
3.3 Exemplify financial stewardship to maintain public trust and organizational sustainability	++	++	++	++	++	++

CONCLUSION

Overall, the strategic plan offers a robust and resilient path for STA under a wide spectrum of future possibilities. There are, however, two notable exceptions where the plan is not as strong with some future conditions.

Under the “Idaho Shift” scenario, the overall strategies are not as strong as when compared in the backdrop of other possible scenarios. For STA, this condition is mostly due to the fact that planning and collaboration over the state line is, at least today, minimal. STA is the only player in the region, which weakens STA's ability to plan effectively for potential expansion into Idaho. While STA could operate in Idaho, there are no existing agreements for placement of stops, or perhaps more importantly, revenue to support operations in Idaho. Strategies related to this scenario would need to capture funding, governance, and network modification to lower the risk should regional expansion into Idaho accelerate.

Strategy 1.2 indicates some weakness when the spectrum of future growth in travel moves into the periphery of the region. Emphasis on the existing network in this strategy is a weakness when the travel patterns of the region are developing in a way that is not consistent with the current network. To be clear, it is unlikely the current network will become any less valuable, or lose utility compared to today. The issue is where the growing edge of the network is focused and how new resources are deployed to address the regional growth pattern that could, under these scenarios, develop significantly at the edge of the present urbanized area. A general weakness in the strategies that will guide network development is that there is no consideration for adaptation to these possible conditions. To a lesser degree this is also true under the large employment center scenario as the service needs are more focused, but also likely to be in areas where STA does not currently provide service.

6 NEXT STEPS

Phase 1 of STA's Strategic Plan represents the beginning of the *Connect 2035* planning process. Phase 2, which is scheduled to begin in 2023, will include additional community engagement, project identification, project prioritization, and development and refinement of performance measures.

Community engagement will be a key part of Phase 2



Identify key projects that align with *Connect 2035* goals, strategies, and actions, as well as their estimated funding requirements



Prioritize projects based on community input, estimated funding requirements, and other evaluation criteria



Develop performance measures that are meaningful, accurate, and cost effective to collect—to assess the impacts of projects on our region

Community Engagement

Just as key trends, goals, and strategies in Phase 1 were informed by outreach and engagement with the public, transit riders, and community organizations, Phase 2 will remain focused on community engagement. These additional engagement efforts will be used to identify community priorities for specific projects that align with the identified goals and strategies from Phase 1. This engagement will utilize a variety of virtual and in-person options and will include following up with the various community organizations that were interviewed as a part of Phase 1 Public Outreach.

Identify Key Projects

Based on ongoing community engagement, Phase 2 will begin to identify specific projects and improvements for STA and the greater Spokane region. In addition to identifying specific projects, estimated funding requirements for implementation will also be identified. Understanding the funding requirements for each project will better inform STA's ability to prioritize and program specific improvements over the course of the 10-year planning horizon through 2035.

Prioritize Projects

After identifying key projects that align with goals, strategies, and actions, each project will be prioritized for implementation based on a series of inputs, including community feedback and estimated funding requirements, among other evaluation criteria. This aspect of Phase 2 will be used to determine a planned implementation timeline for improvements through 2035. This prioritization will move Connect 2035 from a list of goals, strategies, and actions into a fully programmed and implementable roadmap for the future.

Develop Performance Measures

The final component of Phase 2 is to determine specific performance measures and thresholds that will be used to determine how well the implemented projects are meeting the goals identified in Phase 1. These performance measures will be based on the Headline Performance Measures and Additional Potential Metrics that have been identified in Phase 1 but will be further refined and developed to provide meaningful, accurate, and cost-effective ways to monitor the success and performance of Connect 2035.