

Transportation Element

Background

Vision

The transportation system reflects our desire to develop at a human scale. Sidewalks, pedestrian trails and bike paths conveniently connect residents to downtown, nature trails and neighborhood destinations. An integrated system of wider, centrally located roads and narrow shared residential roadways, provide connection within and among neighborhoods, and safely accommodates all users. Public and private transportation options connect residents to regional destinations on both sides of the river.

The following information is provided primarily as inventory data to guide the reader with a general background of the transportation opportunities and constraints in the White Salmon area. This Element will have the significant impact on future development within the City and its Urban Exempt Area.

Public Transportation

Public transportation opportunities within the City and its Urban Exempt Area are very limited. The small population base does support a local taxi service. The topography, population base, and climate make other forms of transportation, such as trolleys or buses economically unfeasible. The Pioneer Center makes senior citizen and handicapped buses available by a dial-and-ride service. There is AMTRAK rail transportation available on the Burlington-Northern line, which runs along the Washington side of the river with a depot in Bingen. The nearest Greyhound Bus Terminal is located in Hood River. The nearest commuter air transportation is at Portland International Airport—approximately 60-minute drive from White Salmon. There is charter air transportation available at the Hood River Airport (10 miles south) and also at The Dalles Municipal Airport (20 miles east).

River Transportation

The Columbia River serves as a vast conduit for commodities via river barge traffic, with at least three navigation companies currently operating. The companies commonly transport logs, chips, fertilizers, gravel, wheat, fuel, garbage, containerized freight, and juvenile salmon. Bingen has a long history of log import/export, both loading of barges and rafting. There are at least five tourist boats that make Portland/Lewiston trips during the warm half of the year with the nearest day trip schedules from Cascade Locks. No stops are made at the Bingen Marina, although that facility possibly could be developed in the future.

Rail Transportation

Burlington-Northern is the rail carrier on the Washington side of the Columbia River with an AMTRAK depot facility at Bingen. The Union Pacific on the Oregon side of the river is also available for transporting commodities both east and west along the Columbia River.

Automobile Transportation

The primary means of transportation in the White Salmon and Urban Exempt Area is by private automobile. The City is served by State Route 14, a major east-west arterial along the Columbia River, by State Route 141 through White Salmon proper, and by a variety of City and county streets throughout the City and its Urban Exempt Area. The Transportation Map (see the Appendix) shows the basic

configuration of the traffic patterns in the planning area. The Hood River Bridge provides a critical connection to Interstate 84 in Oregon and between the Cities of White Salmon on the Washington side of the river and Hood River in Oregon.

Roadway Issue

There are a number of roadway issues in the City and Urban Exempt Area.

City Core Area

The downtown commercial area, during periods of heavy traffic, also is a source of traffic congestion complicated by on-street parking, unregulated intersections, and the three-way intersection at Estes and Jewett on the eastern edge of the commercial area. The congestion will surely grow as the City and the Urban Exempt Area continue to develop. Three-way traffic lights at the three downtown intersections, at Main, Estes, and Wauna, along Jewett, may be required to provide relief.

Dock Grade Road

The City of White Salmon enjoys a unique and beautiful location. In the early days of White Salmon, the primary access was through the City of Bingen and north Jewett Boulevard, (SR 141) to the top of the bluff and the main part of the City. As mentioned in the Historical Element of this Plan, it became urgent to develop an additional access from the river area. The residents built what is now called Dock Grade Road from the bluff down to the Columbia River and what was the ferry dock across to Hood River. The road is approximately three-quarters of a mile long with grades up to 15%. It is extremely narrow, approximately 22 feet wide, with a difficult intersection with State Route 14. The road is closed during inclement weather because of the steepness of the grade, narrow roadbed, and lack of guardrails.

Residential Collectors

The City has a fairly smooth transportation pattern in most residential sections of the area. A problem of note is the intersections of Estes and Green Avenues, just north of the downtown commercial area. There is a jog in Estes Avenue that creates some confusion for a visitor to the City. A smoother transition in both directions should be provided. The second area of concern is the intersection of Snohomish and Green, where a traffic advisory sign would help.

The roads of the Urban Exempt Area have evolved over time from primitive roads through the countryside, to a road and street system to accommodate today's automobiles. Consequently, these roads and streets, for the most part, do not meet City standards and are currently owned, maintained and under the control of Klickitat County. The cost to upgrade these non-conforming roads and streets in many instances involve not only design and construction costs, but also the cost to acquire rights-of-way to conform to City standards. Therefore, as these areas are annexed and made a part of the City, it will be necessary for the City to accept them as they currently exist, require new roads and street development to meet City design standards, and upgrade the existing roads and streets over an extended period of time as funds and opportunities become available.

The traffic study prepared for the White Salmon Urbanization Study, completed June 2009, recommended an improvement to traffic controls at westbound North Main, Snowden Road and eastbound Loop Road intersection. The City and Klickitat County may want to evaluate this situation. The traffic engineer recommends a stop at Snowden Road entrance at this intersection with free movement from eastbound Loop and westbound North Main or put stops at all three roads.

Private Streets

As indicated in the Public Facilities Element, in the past the City has allowed the development of private streets to serve limited residential areas. This practice has resulted in extremely narrow roadways that are not maintained to several residential homes. The situation makes it very difficult to provide police and fire protection, as there is no place for the trucks to turn around once on the private road. The City has determined to eliminate the practice of private roads under all but the most specific sets of conditions. With the exception of Planned Unit Developments or standards outlined below, all new residential developments will have access to a dedicated and improved public road which meets City Design Standards. Planned Unit Developments using cluster type development or other innovative design may use private streets, provided the streets meet city standards for roadway width, access, and turnaround capability. Private gates with electronic devices, which allow for immediate opening of the gate by emergency vehicles, may also be used. The developer may be asked to contribute to the purchase of similar equipment for the emergency vehicle. Private streets will be allowed only when there can be no possibility of further extension of the street.

Pedestrian Walkways and Bicycle Routes

The City has not had an active requirement for providing new sidewalks in residential subdivisions – either in the City or in the Urban Exempt Area. The White Salmon Valley School District, by State law, provides bus transportation two miles outside of the school area. Since this two-mile area covers most of White Salmon and the Urban Exempt Area, there needs to be an adequate walkway system for students to go to and from the schools.

There is an existing sidewalk system from the high and middle schools to the downtown area. However, students walking from outlying areas along what is known as the "Loop", Spring Street and Cochran Estates area, are in need of sidewalks. As further development occurs, new walkways will be required to provide a full system for safe pedestrian and bicycle traffic. City street standards and guidelines have been developed to provide space for more urban sidewalks and gutters or more rural pathways along street shoulders where this may be more appropriate.

Another area of significant concern for pedestrians is the Bingen Hill, or Jewett Boulevard, access road to White Salmon. There is a sidewalk from Skyline Drive west, up to White Salmon commercial area; there is no sidewalk east, but there is a shoulder on the road, downhill to Bingen.

Existing Conditions?

Goals and Policies

The following goals and policies highlight the long-term outcomes and direction for the City of White Salmon.

GOAL T-1: To provide a safe, efficient, and economic transportation network.

Policy T-1.1: Proposed routes shall be laid out in accordance with the existing transportation network and be consistent with the goals, policies, street classification standards and land use designations of the Comprehensive Plan.

The City shall consider and adopt a street classification system with urban and rural standards (see page 35 and figure 12) of the White Salmon Urbanization Study: arterials, major collectors, minor collectors and local streets and urban alleys. These standards should be reviewed with Klickitat County to reach agreement for application in the Urban Exempt Area.

Policy T-1.2: Proposed development within or along existing or proposed transportation corridors identified on the Transportation Plan map (see Appendix) or in subsequent City transportation and/or street plans shall be encouraged to incorporate provisions for the location and construction of such routes.

Policy T-1.3: Access on major arterials shall be controlled and minimized where the primary function is through traffic movement.

Policy T-1.4: Proposed transportation corridor general locations are shown on the transportation map (see Appendix). The routes shown are not intended to be precise, but rather a general guideline for future development.

Policy T-1.5: The City shall approve development only in those instances where proposed roads and streets meet minimum city specifications.

Policy T-1.6: The City shall pursue the acquisition of rights-of-way wherever the need for routing or improvements is identified in the Comprehensive Plan.

Policy T-1.7: The City shall provide adequate signage to assist visitors in their travels.

Policy T-1.8: The City shall work with the Washington Department of Transportation to develop appropriate arterial street standards and local review procedures where Highway 14 and 141 cross through the City and its Urbanization Area.

Policy T-1.9: City shall develop and maintain communication with the Port and City of Hood River regarding the significance of the Hood River Bridge in the City's transportation system. The importance of the Park and Ride immediately adjacent to the bridge and the recently improved Washington entrance onto the bridge will continue to be considered as transportation demands evolve.

GOAL T-1: To provide pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes.

Policy T-2.1: Plan provisions shall be made for an integrated network of safe pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes.

Policy T-2.2: Before establishing pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes, the following factors shall be considered:

- a) The inclusion of the proposed walkway or route on the Comprehensive Plan Map (see Appendix).*
- b) Public safety*
- c) The cost of such facilities as compared to the need for probable use.*

Policy T-2.3 Construction of pedestrian walkways and bicycle routes shall be in conformance with the uniform design standards for trails and paths as described in the Washington State Department of Transportation Design Manual, or standards developed by the City of White Salmon.

Policy T-2.4: The City shall establish parking standards to assure that parking does not interfere with commerce, pedestrian traffic, or the aesthetics of the community.

Policy T-2.5: The City shall include adequate pedestrian walkways in the design and construction of:

- a) New bridges and replacement of existing bridges.*
- b) New railroad crossings and reconstruction of existing crossings wherever feasible and appropriate.*

Policy T-2.6: The City will continue to coordinate with County Health Department and other interested agencies in planning for Safe Routes to Schools. The School Walk and Route Guide map will be reviewed and will help inform decisions on prioritization of pedestrian improvements such as sidewalks and special street crossings.

Policy T-2.7: The City recognizes the additional benefits of safe routes to schools planning in that the provision of safe, well improved, highly visible, and pleasant routes to schools also improves bicycle and pedestrian connectivity for city residents of all ages. The City Schools are located on the Loop Road Trail so improving access to schools also improves access to this valuable bicycle and pedestrian connection linking the core of the City beyond the schools to Snowden Road and Route 141 extending to Husum.