

9: OTHER MODES

This chapter summarizes existing and future rail, air, water and pipeline needs in the City of Richland. While auto, transit, bicycle and pedestrian transportation modes have a more significant effect on the quality of life in Richland, other modes of transportation must be considered and addressed.

Criteria

The following goals and policies pertaining to rail, pipeline, air and water facilities have been developed as part of this Transportation Plan.

Goal 1: The City will provide an efficient transportation network including road, rail, water and air, to serve existing needs and to accommodate new development.

- Policy 3 – The City will strongly encourage the preservation of rail rights-of-way for future rail uses, and will work with appropriate agencies to ensure the availability of rail services to its industrial parks.
- Policy 4 – The City will coordinate and implement passenger and freight rail service preservation projects consistent with a regional transportation program.

Goal 4: The City will encourage public/private partnerships for financing transportation projects that foster economic growth and address the needs of growth and development.

- Policy 4 – The City will participate in regional airport planning to ensure that Richland’s needs are met.

Goal 7: The City will work to ensure efficient and effective freight transportation needed to support local and regional economic expansion and diversification.

- Policy 1 – The City will collaborate with federal, state and neighboring local governments and private business to ensure the provision of transportation infrastructure investments and services deemed necessary by the City to meet current and future demand for industrial and commercial freight movement by way of roadway and truck, rail, air and marine transport.
- Policy 2 – The City will work with the Benton-Franklin Council of Government, Port of Benton, Benton County, and other agencies to develop intermodal connectivity facilities deemed by the City to be needed to facilitate seamless freight transfer between all transport modes.

Recommended Facilities

Future needs for these modes of transportation are identified by their providers (as described in the RTP¹) and are summarized below as they are understood.

Rail

Various passenger and commodity distributing rail operations provide the regional rail service for the Richland and Tri-Cities area including Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF), AMTRAK, Union Pacific, the Tri-City and Olympia Railroad Company (TCORC) and the Blue Mountain Railroad. Currently, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe's main line between Vancouver and Spokane exports a large amount of grain from the Tri-Cities area and operates at or near maximum practical capacity. As population and jobs are expected to grow over the next 20 years, additional capacity must be considered for this line to continue its current level of service.

In addition to capacity constraints, deficiencies related to deferred maintenance on a number of lines traversing the Tri-Cities area could be remedied with an adequate maintenance program. If deferred maintenance continues, the physical infrastructure condition will fall below a safe or efficient operating level.

As the production and distribution of grain is so vitally important to the local economy, the upkeep of the rail system is essential. A study² conducted in 1993 showed that the use of 65 grain hauling railroad cars combined to remove 1,082 heavy truck loads from the freeways and the state saved roughly \$200,000 in avoided road damages, auto accidents and energy use.

Pipeline

Two interstate natural gas supply lines, the Pacific Gas & Transmission Company and Northwest Pipeline Company, traverse the region. Demand often exceeds supply for refined petroleum products like diesel in the winter and gasoline in the summer.

In order to relieve this shortage of supply during the peak demand months, a proposed pipeline has been identified in the Richland area. This proposed pipeline would help supply refined petroleum products at a level that will meet demand. The proposed pipeline is not scheduled to traverse the study area. However, the alignment of this pipeline should be considered when developing any new regional transportation projects.

Air

The Richland Airport is a general aviation facility that is comprised of two paved runways and uses a localizer instrument system. Currently, approximately 85 single and twin-engine aircraft are based in at the Richland Airport. No improvements were identified in the Regional Transportation Plan.

¹ *Regional Transportation Plan for the Tri-Cities Metropolitan Area and the Benton-Franklin-Walla Walla RTPO, 2001-2020*, Benton-Franklin Council of Governments.

² Casavant, Lenzi. *An Economic Evaluation of a Multimodal Transportation System: Grain Transportation in Eastern Washington*, 1993.

Water

Grain barges provide an alternative to rail/truck freight movement. The Columbia-Snake River system provides a water highway for the goods traveling into and out of the Tri-Cities area. One tug and barge can move the equivalent of 116 trucks or 35 rail cars. The barge lines must be connected and served with either truck and/or rail in order to effectively move goods at the origin/destination points. Consequently, the following challenges are key to increasing utilization and providing effective future development of the marine transportation system at the Port of Benton:

- Dependable rail service and additional improvements to the highway system are key to capitalizing on barge movement of goods.
- There is limited availability of fully serviced commercial and industrial sites and developable industrial property.

Greater cooperation and coordination between business owners is necessary to achieve the long term development of the port.