



2023 Issue Paper: Transportation

Position Statement

The League of Women Voters of the United States and Washington have several policy statements related to transportation. Read together, they support a balanced, appropriately funded, multimodal transportation system with sufficient capacity to maintain the system. Additionally, the League has a multitude of environmental protection and climate change positions that support reduction in use of single-occupancy vehicles, increased use of electric vehicles, and increased opportunity to reduce travel, such as through telecommuting and transit-oriented development. The League also has positions that support redevelopment of the electrical grid, which could affect transportation.

Summary of Recent Legislation

In 2021, the Legislature passed the Climate Commitment Act, creating the state's cap & invest program intended to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other critical pollutants, particularly in communities highly impacted by air pollution. This bill, among other things, expanded use of alternatives to conventional modes of transportation to reduce emissions, including funding electrification of rail and ferries.

In 2022, the Legislature adopted a new 16-year transportation funding package that shifted the transportation paradigm from highway-focused to emphasis on strategies that would reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from transportation. While the 2022 package contained some important highway infrastructure projects, it shifted highway emphasis to maintenance and preservation and included historically high funding for transit, active transportation, alternative fuels, and electrification. A special feature of this new package is zero-fare (free) transit and rail for youth under age 18.

Upcoming 2023 Legislative Session

Because major transportation policy and budget packages are typically adopted only periodically, with minor updates in between—for the reason that the length of time it takes to implement most transportation projects is so long—major funding changes are not anticipated in 2023. However, there will be a push to pay more attention to rail this year. Rail has been largely ignored but could provide public transportation options across the state as well as offer some opportunities for improving the electric grid. Several requests for rail planning are in the works.

Additionally, there will be requests for further expanding funding for transit, which has a long way to go in most communities to be a sufficient alternative to single occupancy vehicle travel. In conjunction with growth management policies supporting increased density and transit-oriented development, additional transit funding is a very big unfilled need.

Contact: Cynthia Stewart, cstewart@lwvwa.org