

# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Background

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The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) is undertaking a Corridor Planning Study (CPS) of U.S. Highway 395 (US 395) through the urban areas of Pasco and Kennewick in southeastern Washington State. The study segment is seven and one-half miles long. In the CPS area, US 395 is an urban limited access controlled facility owned, managed and operated by the State of Washington (WSDOT).

Existing congestion and a large area of open land being developed in the southern part of the corridor is creating the need to address mobility on this highway. Forecasted growth for the area will add more vehicles to the roadway, exacerbating the current safety and congestion issues. Through this plan, WSDOT will identify and analyze these problems and recommend potential solutions, incorporating the *Results WSDOT* philosophy.

This study is divided into six chapters described below.

### ***Chapter 1 – Introduction and Background***

Description, designations, and purpose of the route are described here, as well as the goals and vision of the study and local issues.

### ***Chapter 2 – Existing Network and Inventory***

Brief history of the corridor, roadway inventory, mobility and safety measurements, highway classifications and designations, alternative transportation services, and local system review

### ***Chapter 3 – Population, Land Use, and Comprehensive Plan Review***

Population characteristics, current and planned land use, and review of Pasco and Kennewick Comprehensive Plans as well as BFCG's Regional & Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

### ***Chapter 4 – Environmental Resources***

Significant natural environmental factors and existing built environment features.

### ***Chapter 5 – Future Operations without Improvements***

Projected highway operations in a no-build condition including brief summaries of current and projected traffic volumes.

### ***Chapter 6 – Proposed Improvements, Planning Level Cost Estimates, and Benefit/Cost Analyses***

Review of considered solutions, including benefit/cost analyses, to address deficiencies and increase mobility through the 20-year study horizon.

### ***Chapter 7 – Plan Implementation***

Recommended list of prioritized solutions.

## **The US 395 Study Corridor**

### **Description**

The US 395 corridor travels through the Kennewick and Pasco urban areas and is one of two major Columbia River crossings in the region / metropolitan area. Within these cities, the corridor is characterized by both established urban areas and new developing ones. There is a mix of residential, retail, and general commercial land uses.

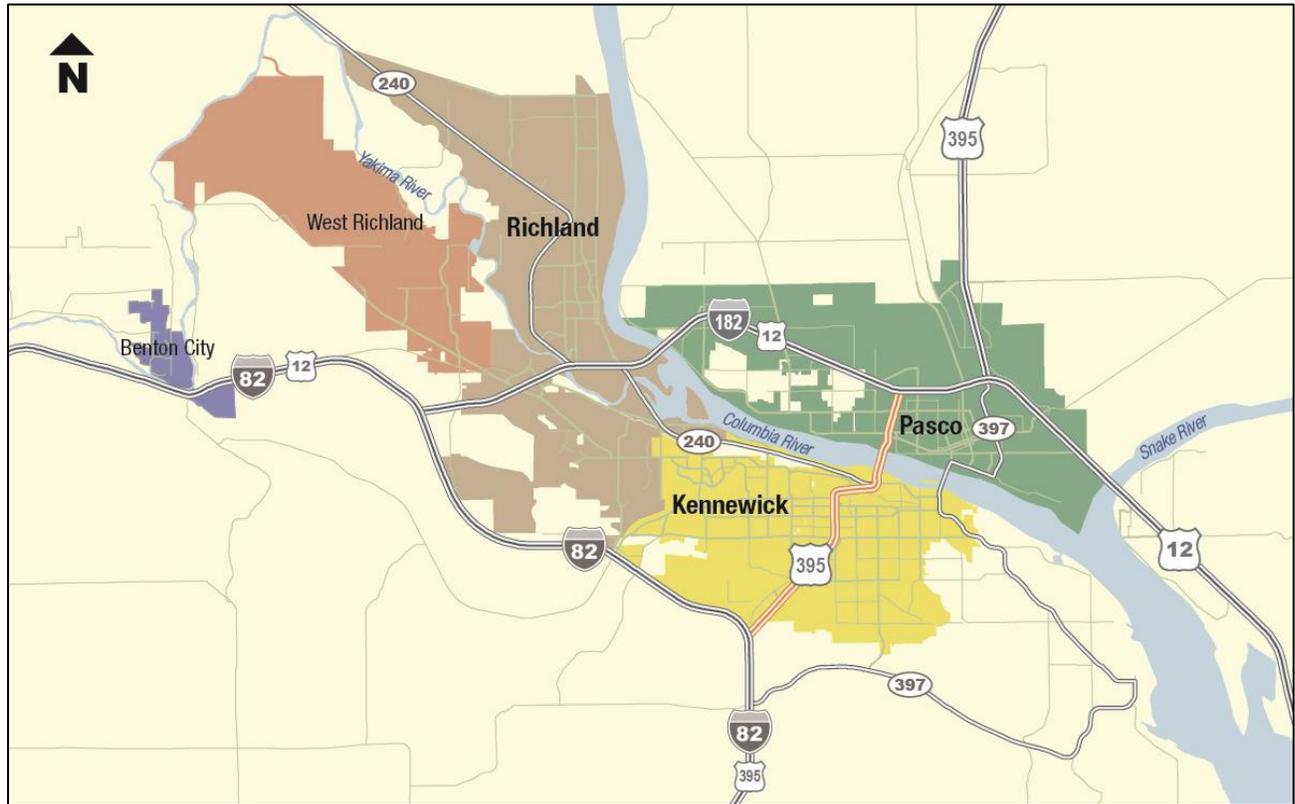


Figure 1-1 – Tri-Cities metropolitan area

The study corridor begins at the junction of US 395 and Interstate 82 (I-82). From this point, US 395 runs north through Kennewick and connects to State Route 240 (SR 240). Then, the highway crosses the Columbia River and enters Pasco. The study corridor continues north and ends at the Interstate 182 (I-182) interchange. Outside the study limits US 395 runs concurrent (same roadway) with I-82 to the south and I-182 to the north. From I-82 to SR 240, US 395 is a four-lane expressway with at-grade intersections, most having traffic signals. From SR 240 to I-182, US 395 is a four-lane freeway with interchanges. The corridor has relatively flat terrain, except for a long steep grade for the first mile. The route transitions to a relatively steady and less severe grade for two miles before flattening out. Continuing north, the highway traverses another steep, yet shorter, grade between the Canal Drive Bridge and the SR 240 interchange.

With US 395 being one of the major corridors through / into the Tri-Cities forecasted growth will present challenges for the efficient performance of the corridor. From I-82 to 10<sup>th</sup> Ave, US 395 is bordered by wide open land that is being developed transitioning to older commercial and residential areas. This section of US 395 has partial limited access control, so access is by local at-grade city street connections. Commercial businesses are concentrated close to the intersections with residential areas behind them. Forecasted business and housing growth south of 27<sup>th</sup> Ave. will present the greatest challenge for mobility on the corridor. From 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. to SR 240, US 395 is bordered by one of Kennewick's older business districts with older residential areas. A short section of modified limited access control exists in the corridor from 10<sup>th</sup> Ave to Ely St. There are many business driveways in this section, which are restricted to right-in / Right-out, as well as at-grade city street connections. From SR 240 to I-182, US 395 is a fully controlled limited access facility serving city streets with interchanges. The interchanges in Pasco connect to three major city streets serving a variety of older commercial and

residential areas. Growth is expected to be moderate in this area. Currently, the I-182 area north of Pasco is experiencing the majority of growth and development in the city.

Within the study limits, US 395 is functionally classified as an Urban Principal Arterial (U1). It is on the National Highway System (NHS) and is identified as a Highway of Statewide Significance (HSS). Further, US 395 as a whole is the only route in Washington State designated as a Congressional High-Priority Corridor per the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.

## Purpose of US 395

### *Local and Regional*

Washington State has several major water bodies that divide regions and communities, the Columbia River being one. In Washington the crossings of the Columbia River are few and far between, so all crossing are critical to the State's transportation needs. In the Tri-Cities<sup>1</sup> Metropolitan area the river divides the community, as well as the region. The Tri-Cities has three Columbia River crossings, I-182 / US 12 (northern), US 395 (middle) and SR 397 (southern). I-182 / US 12 and US 395 have both local and regional significance (both carrying of over 55,000 vehicles per day each). SR 397 is mainly a local crossing (carrying fewer than 20,000 vehicles per day) due to indirect connections to the regional system. These crossings are so important that the Metropolitan area is studying / planning for added capacity across the Columbia River.

I-182 / US 12 is the main east-west regional corridor connecting I-82 from Yakima to US 12 that goes through Walla Walla. US 395 is the main north-south regional corridor connecting Oregon to Spokane (and points farther north). Both of these corridors serve a role as higher speed expressways for traffic traveling through as well as within the greater metropolitan area. The State in recent years has invested significant resources on these two corridors (four laning; US 395 north of Pasco in the 1990's and US 12 east of Pasco in the 2010's) to preserve mobility and provide for safe movement people and goods through the region. The State has planned improvements in the future to preserve the vitality of these regional corridors.

The US 395 corridor (old SR 14) through Kennewick is an older historic corridor that has less restrictive access control than the new Interstate I-182 corridor or US 395 through Pasco (old US 12). This has allowed for greater access to the corridor from the local network over time. This greater access has allowed Kennewick to make US 395 corridor the main north-south arterial in their community and not develop their own north-south corridors.



Figure 1-2 - US 395

<sup>1</sup> The Tri-Cities refers to the greater metropolitan area formed by the cities of Richland, Pasco and Kennewick

US 395 is one of the most important freight corridors in the state. It is classified as a T-1 on the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS), the highest freight class and carries over 19 million tons per year. The highway is designated as a Primary Freight Corridor on the Strategic Highway Freight Corridors for Washington State. There are no segments on US 395 specifically signed as truck routes, or that have trucks re-directed off of US 395 onto other routes.

### **National**

US 395 is a key component in the national highway system. As shown in Figure 1-2, it parallels Interstate 5 and is the major north-south highway interior to the Cascade and Sierra Nevada mountain ranges. US 395 begins at Interstate 15 in southern California and ends at Canada Highway 3, a core route on Canada's National Highway System in British Columbia. In Washington State, US 395 connects Oregon to Canada.

## **Vision for the Corridor**

US 395 serves as a medium to high-speed urban expressway connecting I-82 with I-182 through Kennewick and Pasco, to provide safe, efficient travel for freight, commerce, and general traffic for local, regional, and national users.

The expressway section from I-82 to SR 240 (*in the 20-year horizon*) will remain an at-grade highway with signalized intersections and sustained speeds of 45 mph or greater. Investment in US 395 will preserve its national and state function, while balancing the need for local access to commercial, business and residential land uses at select city arterials or streets. It will continue to serve business access between 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Yelm Street, while increasing travel speeds within this highway segment. Improve local north-south arterials to reduce congestion, improve capacity, and reduce travel times on US 395 by serving some of the shorter-distance local trips.

The freeway (fully controlled limited access) section from SR 240 to I-182 will continue to function as a high-speed highway. Additional capacity is needed crossing the Columbia River to accommodate existing and future movement of people and goods. Implement changes at several interchanges to improve traffic flow on the highway.

US 395 will continue as a vital Columbia River crossing connecting the community and the region. Implement changes at the crossing to preserve mobility and safety of the crossing. US 395 will continue serving as a major highway for freight, commercial, and general traffic. US 395 is a major freight route and it is important to maintain reliable travel speed for regional and local freight movement.

## **Goals for the Corridor**

- Maintain or improve the safe and efficient operation of US 395 through Pasco and Kennewick
- Provide good freight mobility through the corridor
- Preserve the public investment in US 395 by retaining or strengthening the limited access rights throughout the corridor (RCW 47.52.001 (1))
- Preserve the continuity of the US 395 corridor by retaining its direct connection between I-82 and I-182
- Maintain a 45 mph speed limit or higher from I-82 to SR 240
- Retain the high-speed nature of US 395 from SR 240 to I-182 (minimum 55 mph speed limit)

- Coordinate improvements with local communities including considerations for non-motorized travel and aesthetics within the US 395 rights-of-way

## Key Issues Expressed by Jurisdictions and the Public

The local jurisdictions expressed a number issues regarding the US 395 corridor. These include:

- There is a need for additional lanes on US 395 crossing the Columbia River.
- There needs to be a second through-lane northbound on US 395 through the US 395/SR 240 interchange. *(Currently, northbound drivers who want to cross the Columbia River are reluctant to use the second northbound lane on US 395 between Yelm Street and the SR 240 interchange because they will eventually have to merge over into the other lane. Adding a second lane will provide better lane utilization.)*
- The City of Kennewick has expressed interest in restricting or re-routing trucks off of US 395 between I-82 and SR 240. *(The classification of this highway does not permit restricting truck traffic from US 395, and most of the freight trips have their destination within the city.)*
- Kennewick would like to improve the aesthetics of US 395 through their community. This would include landscaped medians or additional landscaping along the edge of the US 395 right-of-way. They would also like to improve the appearance of the limited access fencing adjacent to US 395. One suggestion was to replace wire or chain-link fencing with masonry fencing. In addition, Kennewick has interest in adding welcoming signs when entering the City.
- The community expressed interest in adding sidewalks or a pathway along the corridor and improving the bicycle access on the Columbia River Bridge.
- The City of Pasco indicated there is a need for a sidewalk on the Sylvester Street bridge across US 395 similar to what was done for Court Street.
- There is a need to improve the operation of the I-182/US 395 interchange. Northbound US 395 to eastbound I-182 or the 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue off-ramp stacks up. The eastbound collector-distributor lane along I-182 between US 395 and 20<sup>th</sup> Avenue may need to be improved. Also, westbound I-182 to southbound US 395 has congestion during peak times.