



WSDOT Web Site Monetizing Feasibility Study



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Report prepared for
**Washington State Department of Transportation
Public-Private Partnerships Office** by:



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In today's digitally obsessed world, traditional media is being replaced by online blogs, brick-and-mortar stores by online retailers, and the Yellow Pages and 411 by Google and Bing. Advertisers understand the value of the internet as a marketplace where audiences can be targeted with precision by relevant messages and direct, "click here" access to the advertiser's products and services.

With this environment in mind, forward-thinking legislators began to contemplate the value of monetizing the state's online assets. The WSDOT Web site, known to attract high volumes of site visitors, seems a likely place to start. It commands a large and loyal user base of visitors who trust the content and functionality enough to return to the site again and again. This is an enviable asset for a state agency.

Home to some of the world's leading technology companies and the nation's most wired city as ranked by *Forbes Magazine*, Washington's tech savvy population may be a unique target for online advertisers.

WSDOT already stands out as a very progressive state agency. It established its innovative and award-winning Web site a decade ago. In fact, WSDOT already established a precedent for selling advertising on its Web site 10 years ago, when it allowed REI to sponsor traveler information on the Web site. The agency was an early adopter of social media and is using technology and social media tools aggressively and effectively. WSDOT's work in this arena has earned the agency a reputation as a savvy and sophisticated organization not only among government agencies in Washington state but across the nation.

Monetization of the WSDOT Web site presents an opportunity to build on the agency's progressive reputation and to generate new sources of revenue that will help WSDOT better serve the citizens of Washington state.

The following report, funded in the 2009-2011 Transportation Appropriations bill, outlines the opportunities, challenges, and potential revenues associated with monetizing the WSDOT Web site.

Purpose and Scope of Work

ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5352, the 2009-2011 Transportation Appropriations bill, included a budget proviso urging the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to "investigate the potential to generate revenue from Web site sponsorships and similar ventures and, if feasible, pursue partnership opportunities." Members and staff of the House and Senate Transportation Committees wanted to learn whether selling advertising on the agency's high-traffic web pages might have the potential to bring in new sources of revenue for the department.

WSDOT sought to understand whether advertisers might be interested in the Web site, what type of business model the agency might use to monetize its Web site, what range of revenue might ad sales generate, how much might an advertising sales program cost and any legal obstacles that might prohibit or restrict an advertising sales program. This report provides WSDOT with answers to those questions.

Research Approach

The research effort included the following elements:

- A search for government agencies around the nation that are currently engaged in selling advertising on their Web sites
- Interviews with a number of those agencies
- Visitor traffic and volumes on WSDOT's Web site
- Types of advertising WSDOT could potentially offer on its Web site
- Categories of advertisers that might be interested in WSDOT's Web site
- Potential advertising sales revenue
- Options for managing ad sales and the costs associated with those options
- Laws and guidelines governing ".gov" Web sites.

Key Findings

1. There is Precedent for Monetizing Government Web Sites.

Only a handful of government entities across the U.S. are currently engaging in advertising sales on their Web sites. Most are state-operated tourism Web sites. Of the five government entities interviewed for this report and engaged in some level of Web site monetization, only one, the Cook County, Illinois Assessor's office is not a tourism-related site.

One government site in Washington is currently selling web advertising: ExperienceWA.com, a Department of Commerce-owned and operated Web site designed to provide information to travelers and tourists on attractions in Washington.

Research found government entities selling web advertising are doing so with varying degrees of success. Some of the agencies are selling traditional banner ads while others are selling business listings or sponsorships. All are generating some amount of revenue.

Every agency interviewed is contracting ad sales out to a partner organization. There appears to be consensus among the agencies that contracting out ad sales is more cost effective than staffing an ad sales function internally.

2. Web Advertising on Government Web Sites Appears to be Legal

There do not appear to be any major legal impediments to monetization of the WSDOT Web site. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) guidelines prohibit government agencies from selling any type of advertising or sponsorships on Web sites in the ".gov" domain; however, WSDOT can redirect the viewers to either ".com" or ".org" domain. The research for this report found some federal guidelines from the GSA applicable to all ".gov" Web sites.

Standards adopted by the Washington State Information Services Board prohibit the use of ".com" names in the state Domain Name System (DNS.) WSDOT may need to negotiate an exception to this standard.

All government entities interviewed are using either a ".com" or ".org" domain in order to operate within federal guidelines governing ".gov" Web sites, including ExperienceWa.com.

3. WSDOT's Web Site has Significant Potential to Attract Advertisers

With 410 million annual page views, the agency's Web site might be very attractive to advertisers. The WSDOT site has a higher number of annual page views than any of the other government entities interviewed. Traffic and ferry pages attract the majority of page views on WSDOT's site. Advertisers who may be interested include those targeting motorists, commuters, travelers and tourists in Washington state and particularly in the Puget Sound region.

As the region's population grows and as technology becomes more pervasive and accessible, more and more people may be attracted to WSDOT's web page. Using applications that allow people to access the site via mobile phones and location-based devices such as in-car GPS systems, people will be able to view the Web site no matter where they are. As such technologies advance, the Web site's annual page views will likely increase considerably.

The more traffic to the WSDOT site grows, the more attractive the site will be to potential advertisers.

4. Several Different Web Advertising Options Could Generate Revenue for WSDOT

WSDOT has a number of options in both the type of advertisements sold on the web page and in the management model it employs to sell the advertising. While a mix of different types of advertising seems a reasonable course of action, the research and analysis completed for this report clearly shows that choosing the right management model is critical to success in generating revenue. One management model stands out as the best way for WSDOT to sell advertising: ad sales and delivery through a partner organization. This arrangement offers the best opportunity to keep costs and risks low, while maintaining a decent opportunity for revenue generation.

Under this arrangement, the partner would sell the ad space, coordinate ad requirements and delivery from advertisers and serve the ads from its existing ad serving technology. WSDOT would not need to build a sales force, create market awareness or license any ad serving technology. There would be an initial configuration period where WSDOT would need to "connect" its ad slots to the partner's ad server. Beyond that configuration, there would be little for WSDOT to do in terms of execution.

A. Types of Advertising. From traditional display or banner ads to sponsorships to business listings, there are different types of web advertisements that can be sold, each with its own price range.

- Traditional display or banner ads run across the top or down the right side of a web page. These ads are priced in terms of cost per 1000 impressions (CPM) or the number of times an ad is viewed.
- Sponsorships are short descriptions of an advertiser's offerings with links to the advertiser's Web site that can take many different forms on the web page. They are sold at a certain price for a period of time such as \$5,000 for a one-year sponsorship.
- Business listings are lists of businesses in certain categories, such as hotels or restaurants, displayed on a Web site. They are usually sold at a set price for a year.

All of these types of advertisements include links to the advertiser's Web site where goods and services might be purchased online.

B. Sales Management Models. There are also different models for managing ad sales. Each model has advantages, disadvantages and costs.

- **Direct sales** – In this model, WSDOT would sell ads on its Web site directly, using or hiring its own staff to do the sales, accounting and technology work and purchasing and housing the necessary hardware and software. WSDOT would net the full price of every ad sold. However, direct sales would also be the most expensive of the three models to manage.

WSDOT would likely need to hire at least six Full Time Equivalent employees (FTEs) including four sales staff, one manager, and one information technology staff person. The agency would also have additional expenditures for ad serving technology. Ad serving doesn't necessarily require a significant amount of additional IT infrastructure, given that the major ad serving vendors (Double Click and Atlas) both offer hosted solutions, where they own and manage the infrastructure. The major ad serving vendors do not list pricing but negotiate with each customer. Therefore, the cost estimates used in the Direct Sales model are based on limited knowledge yielded from interviews with other organizations.

- **Ad network** – In this model, WSDOT would contract with a company that sells ad space for several different Web sites, connecting Web sites with advertisers and paying royalties to the owners of the Web sites. Ad networks generally demand a large percentage of the gross revenue from ad sales.

The costs associated with selling through an ad network are minimal, but the returns are also small as the ad network retains most of the profit. WSDOT would likely need to devote one person half time or 0.5 FTE to manage the agency's relationship with the ad network and internal agency processes. This assumption is based on similar staffing in the organizations interviewed.

Sales through an ad network would not require additional infrastructure or a sales and implementation staff, because the ad network provides that service in return for a percent of the revenue. WSDOT would only need its web development team to configure the site to call the ad network's server to display the ads it is hosting. This is a one-time effort that requires little additional maintenance.

- **Partner organization** – In this model, WSDOT would sell advertising space on its Web site through a partner organization. Partner organizations also sell ads on their own Web sites and possibly others. Potential partners for this model might include organizations like The Seattle Times or KOMO 4 News.

The costs for this model are minimal, and the share of revenue WSDOT might negotiate is higher than in the ad network model. As in the ad network model, WSDOT would only need to devote one person half time or 0.5 FTE to manage the relationship with the partner organization and internal WSDOT processes. This assumption is based on similar staffing in the other organizations interviewed. WSDOT would only need its web development team to configure the site to call the ad network's server to display the ads it is hosting. This is a one-time effort that requires little additional maintenance.

5. *If Managed Well, Monetization of the WSDOT Web Site Could Generate Revenue*

The following exhibits summarize the findings of the research and analysis conducted for this report. They outline potential cost and revenue ranges for several different options WSDOT has for selling advertisements on its Web site. The data clearly shows a wide range of potential revenue. **In some scenarios, WSDOT might actually lose money, while in others it might generate a significant amount of revenue.**

All of the organizations interviewed use a partnership sales model where a separate contracted agency provides the sales and technology staff. The exhibits below show cost and revenue estimates for all three management models WSDOT might choose to sell traditional display advertising. These estimates provide a view of the significant costs associated with direct advertising sales. The table also includes cost and revenue estimates for sales through a partner organization for sponsorships and business listings.

Exhibit ES-1 below shows the estimated range of potential revenues and costs for each type of advertisement and management model. For all models other than WSDOT direct sales, we have estimated the cost of dedicating 0.5 or 1.0 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) WSDOT employee to manage the relationship with the outside organization:

Exhibit ES- 1

Range of Potential Annual Revenues and Costs for WSDOT Advertising Options

	Low	High	Likely
DISPLAY ADVERTISING			
WSDOT DIRECT AD SALES			
Gross Revenues	\$ 530,000	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 1,050,000
Costs	\$ 600,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 800,000
Net Revenues	\$ (70,000)	\$ 1,900,000	\$ 250,000
AD NETWORK			
Gross Revenues	\$ 60,000	\$ 320,000	\$ 150,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenues	\$ 10,000	\$ 270,000	\$ 100,000
PARTNER AD SALES			
Gross Revenues	\$ 160,000	\$ 1,680,000	\$ 490,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenues	\$ 110,000	\$ 1,630,000	\$ 440,000
SPONSORSHIPS			
Gross Revenues	\$ 20,000	\$ 520,000	\$ 310,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Net Revenues	\$ (30,000)	\$ 420,000	\$ 210,000
BUSINESS LISTINGS			
Gross Revenues	\$ 10,000	\$ 240,000	\$ 60,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenues	\$ (40,000)	\$ 140,000	\$ 10,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Exhibit ES-2 below shows the benefits and challenges of each business model.

Exhibit ES- 2
Benefits and Challenges of WSDOT Advertising Management Models

	Benefits	Challenges	Estimated Annual Net Revenues
Traditional Banner Advertising			
A. Direct Sales			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSDOT would sell and execute the display advertising program Includes hiring all staff and purchasing the necessary infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largest revenue generating potential WSDOT has complete control over advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most risk given high fixed costs and wide variation in potential revenue, with the possibility of a net loss Requires significant resources upfront, necessitating the creation of an entirely new function within WSDOT 	(\$70,000) to \$1.9M
B. Ad Network			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSDOT would contract with an advertising network, which would serve ads from its server 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of an advertising program with minimal effort or investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least amount of control over the advertisements displayed on the Web site The least profitable option 	\$10,000 to \$270,000
C. Partnership			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSDOT would partner with an organization that sells ad inventory for its own web properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More profit to WSDOT than ad network More control over advertisements Low investment costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires some profit sharing, albeit substantially less than the ad network model 	\$110,000 to \$1.6 M
Sponsorships			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks to create a synergistic relationship between WSDOT and advertisers by providing a brand awareness and enhancement opportunity through the advertisers' "support" of the WSDOT site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need less advertising space than banners Potential for revenue levels similar to those of display ads More control over the content and appearance of ads Can be established under a revenue sharing model to limit risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot be automated by an ad server, requiring more manual implementation Requires more effort to design, place and code ads to the Web site More management of sponsorship contracts is required 	(\$10,000) to \$420,000
Business Listings			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lists of businesses in topical categories such as lodging services or restaurants with links to the advertisers' Web sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business listings can be established under a revenue sharing model with a sales partner to limit risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot be automated by an ad server, requiring more manual implementation Not as easily recognized as traditional ads, listings might be perceived as endorsements Generate a relatively low level of revenue 	(\$40,000) to \$140,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Opportunities and Recommended Next Steps

Monetization of WSDOT's Web site merits further consideration. Given the high level of traffic to the WSDOT site and the nature of the site's content that lends itself to certain categories of advertisers, there is significant potential for the agency to generate revenue.

While all options should be carefully considered, handling sales through a partner organization appears to be the most appropriate management model. The partnership model would allow WSDOT to validate the opportunity for an ad sales program, using the partner's well-established team of advertising sales experts with very low start up costs. This model would also provide WSDOT the benefit of exposure to a broad array of advertisers who might not otherwise know that WSDOT was selling ad space.

Before beginning a monetization effort, WSDOT should first conduct further research. This report recommends the following as next steps in the process:

- **Conduct a thorough analysis of Web site visitor demographics, psychographics and visit intent.** Audience intelligence such as age, gender, education level, income level, geographic location, etc. is important to have on hand when marketing the opportunity to advertise on the WSDOT Web site to potential advertisers.
- To comply with General Services Administration (GSA) guidelines, it will be necessary for WSDOT to **redirect the web traffic to ".com" or ".org" web address.** Fortunately, WSDOT has already secured several ".com" and ".org" web addresses similar to WSDOT.gov to protect its brand image. WSDOT could use one of the web addresses it already owns and redirect the traffic. Under such a redirect, a person typing in www.wsdot.wa.gov would be automatically forwarded to www.wsdot.com, for example. GSA guidelines suggest a notification "splash message" to alert visitors that they are leaving the official government Web site. WSDOT Information Technology (IT) staff would simply need to maintain the redirects for all pages on the Web site.
- WSDOT may have to **negotiate an exemption from state Information Services Board standards** prohibiting the use of ".com" domain names.
- **Poll prospective partners and advertisers to assess interest.** Only then will the agency have a clear picture of the type of ads it might sell, the categories of advertisers who might be interested in the Web site and the price advertisements on the site might merit.
- **Consider implementing a small pilot project** to test the potential opportunity for revenue generation and costs of web advertising sales. WSDOT might explore advertising on select pages such as the mountain passes traffic page or the ferries schedule page. Such a pilot project, limited to a page or small section of the Web site, will provide WSDOT with data and insight into the potential costs and revenue of Web site monetization.

In any case, WSDOT may consider issuing a Request for Information (RFI), or even Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine interest from the advertising industry, potential revenue sharing arrangements and more precisely identify costs to WSDOT of implementing a pilot project. Issuing an RFP does not necessarily mean the department has to make an award, depending on the cost and level of effort the proposal will entail.

Overall, the research and analysis in this report indicates that WSDOT has an opportunity to generate new revenue through the monetization of its Web site.

Monetizing the WSDOT Web Site: An Analysis of the Potential Opportunity

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Monetizing the WSDOT Web Site: An Analysis of the Potential Opportunity

1.0 INTRODUCTION

ENGROSSED SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5352, the 2009-2011 Transportation Appropriations bill, included a small budget proviso for the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to “investigate the potential to generate revenue from Web site sponsorships and similar ventures and, if feasible, pursue partnership opportunities.” Members and staff of the House and Senate Transportation Committees wanted to learn whether selling advertising on the agency’s high-traffic web pages might have the potential to bring in new sources of revenue for the department.

This report outlines the findings of a detailed study of the opportunities, risks and costs of monetizing WSDOT’s Web site.

The research effort included the following elements:

- A search for government agencies around the nation that are currently engaged in selling advertising on their Web sites
- Interviews with a number of those agencies
- Visitor traffic and volumes on WSDOT’s Web site
- Types of advertising WSDOT could potentially offer on its Web site
- Categories of advertisers that might be interested in WSDOT’s Web site
- Potential advertising sales revenue
- Options for managing ad sales and the costs associated with those options
- Laws and guidelines governing “.gov” Web sites

2.0 COMPARATIVE PRACTICES ASSESSMENT

This section of the report outlines the findings of research into other government agencies selling advertising on their Web sites, how they are selling advertising and, where possible, the level of revenue they are receiving from those ad sales.

2.1 Precedence

While not unprecedented, WSDOT would be venturing into fairly new territory should the agency launch a program to monetize its Web site. Research found five government entities currently selling advertising space on their Web sites to varying degrees of success.

Online research discovered that the following government entities have monetized their Web sites to some extent:

- Cook County, Illinois Assessor’s Office – CookCountyAssessor.com
- Washington State Department of Commerce – ExperienceWA.com
- Oregon Department of Transportation – TripCheck.com
- The California Travel and Tourism Commission – VisitCalifornia.com
- The United Kingdom’s weather Web site - MetOffice.gov.uk

Research found one government entity that plans to begin selling advertising in 2010: the Oregon Tourism Commission - TravelOregon.com.

Interviews were conducted with five of these government entities or with the private companies that manage their advertising sales. The interviews provide a snapshot of current government Web site monetizing practices.

2.2 Key Findings

The following table provides a high-level summary of findings from the comparative practices assessment. More detailed information on the interviews can be found in **Appendix A**.

Organization	Type of advertising	Management	Annual Page Views	Approximate net annual revenues
Cook County Assessor's Office	Traditional display	Partnership	44 million	\$200,000
Experience WA	Business listings, links and banner ads	Partnership	10 million	\$100,000
Trip Check	Business listings, links	Partnership	340 million	\$20,000
Visit California	Traditional display and sponsorships	Partnership	12 million	Less than \$100,000
Travel Oregon	Traditional display	Partnership	8 million	TBD

Some of the organizations interviewed use the revenue from web advertising to support their Information Technology teams, since the organization's Web site and the advertising program are invariably linked.

3.0 WEB ADVERTISING OVERVIEW

This section of the report provides background information on the types of web advertising, the various management models available for managing web advertising sales and the different methods for tracking Web site traffic and pricing web advertisements.

3.1 Types of Advertising

There are many types of advertising sold on Web sites today. The research shows that government agencies currently monetizing their Web sites are using three types of advertising: traditional display advertising, sponsorships/partnerships and business listings. Government agencies are using one of these three types of ads or a combination of more than one type. Each type of advertising has unique characteristics and revenue potential.

Traditional Display Advertising

As depicted in Exhibit 1 below, some government agencies sell display advertising on their Web sites. Display advertising (frequently called banner advertising) is a standard form of web advertising which has a relatively consistent form, placement and pricing. Display ads can consist of static or animated images, as well as interactive media that may include audio and video elements. Display ads nearly always provide a link to the advertiser's site.

Key terms to note with regard to the practice of display advertising are:

- **Publishers** – any Web site that sells advertising space
- **Advertisers** – any company that buys available advertisement slots on Publisher's sites
- **Inventory** – the total available advertising space on a Publisher's Web site
- **CPM** – cost per 1000 impressions

Display ad pricing is highly variable depending on the size, demographics and psychographics of the audience, the location on the site, the content on the page, the size of the ad and the number of competing ads on the page. Display advertising can consistently generate between \$3 and \$7 per CPM.

Exhibit 1

Traditional Advertising on Cook County Illinois Assessor's office site



Source: CookCountyAssessor.com

Sponsorships

As depicted in **Exhibit 2** below, some government agencies are displaying short descriptions of business offerings from their sponsors and partners with links to partner's Web sites.

Sponsorships are another form of advertising that WSDOT can offer to advertisers. This arrangement seeks to create a more synergistic relationship between WSDOT and the advertisers, by providing both a brand awareness opportunity and a brand enhancement opportunity through the advertisers' "support" of the WSDOT site.

Sponsorships are typically customized to fit the needs of both the advertiser and publisher (in terms of layout), and therefore do not fit into a standardized set of sizes in the same way that display advertising does. Following are some of the unique aspects of sponsorships versus traditional display advertising:

- Sponsorships tend to be more integrated with Web site content, and therefore don't live in typical display ad corridors. For this reason Sponsorships are often more visually prominent, and can command a higher price per CPM.
- Because of their custom nature and placement, sponsorships are not easily swapped in and out by ad serving technologies and are placed on the site in a more manual method, through manipulation of the html code.
- Because of the manual nature of implementing sponsorships, they are often purchased for blocks of time (CPT) rather than a number of impressions (CPM).

Sponsorship pricing is also highly variable for many of the same reasons that display advertising is variable. The duration of the sponsorship also impacts the negotiated price. Sponsorships can generate anywhere between \$5,000 and \$20,000 per location.

Exhibit 2

Sponsorship Example from Department of Commerce: Experience WA

The screenshot displays a grid of four sponsored packages on the Experience WA website. Each package includes a small icon, a title, and a brief description of the offer.

- Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort:** Winter Packages – Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort. The breathtaking beauty of Washington's Cascade Mountains, superb cuisine and accommodations in harmony with nature create a destination like no other.
- Shop Like a Rockstar:** Hotel and shopping packages in Seattle Southside. Get the Rockstar treatment you deserve, book your next shopping getaway in Seattle Southside.
- Pheasant Hill Golf Getaway Package:** Golf & Stay in Spokane. Golf Getaway Package—your opportunity to enjoy great golfing, natural beauty of the Inland Empire, outstanding accommodations, and breakfast each day.
- Seattle Attractions Discounts:** Go Seattle Card: Save up to 45%. Go Seattle Card is your ticket to the best things to do in Seattle.

At the bottom of the page, there is a navigation bar with links for Sitemap, Contact us, Copyright, Media room, Conditions of use, Privacy Policy, Advertise on ExperienceWA.com, and DiscoverAmerica.com. Logos for the Department of Commerce, Washington State, and Access Washington are also present.

Source: ExperienceWA.com

Business Listings/Links

As depicted in **Exhibit 3** below, some agencies display lists of businesses in topical, categories such as lodging services or restaurants. The listings typically include links to the advertisers' Web sites.

Business Listings are an index of businesses typically organized by a topical category similar to Yellow Pages listings. They usually include links to the advertiser's Web site. These listings relate to the content of the Web site and the purpose behind a person's visit to the site. The most commonly found business listings were on travel and tourism sites such as ExperienceWa.com. The site serves as a logical vehicle for matching people planning or contemplating a visit to Washington with the businesses that provide services of interest to tourists such as lodging, dining and entertainment.

The opportunity for the WSDOT Web site to provide business listings is not as clear as it is for sites that serve as a tourism resource. A large percentage of visitors to the WSDOT site appear to be seeking traffic related information and the targeted nature of this task does not lend itself to the exploratory element that characterizes business listings. Even the WSDOT Ferry content, which is more closely related to the tourism sites, has a very task-oriented nature and many of the visitors to the site are simply looking for a sailing schedule.

Research found that business listings typically generate between \$100 and \$300 per listing on government Web sites.

Exhibit 3
Business Listing Example from Oregon's Trip Check Web site

				Sort listing by: Highway ▾
				Page 1 <u>2</u> of 2 Next >
Lodging/Camping/RV Services	Highway	City	Name	
	US26	Seaside	Saddle Mountain State Natural Area Camping	Detail
	US101	Astoria	Best Western Lincoln Inn Hotel	Detail
	US101	Astoria	Cannery Pier Hotel	Detail
	US101	Astoria	Fort Stevens State Park Camping	Detail
	US101	Cannon Beach	Hallmark Resort	Detail
	US101	Cannon Beach	Inn At Cannon Beach Hotel	Detail



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Source: TripCheck.com

3.2 Advertising Sales Management Models

Just as there are several different types of web advertisements, there are different ways to manage advertising sales. All government agencies interviewed contract out the management of advertising sales to a partner organization. The following section summarizes the different management models for web advertising sales.

Direct Sales Model

In the Direct Sales model, the publisher's internal resources, including sales, technical and accounting staff oversee the entire advertising sales process and manage the delivery infrastructure.

Advertising Network Model

An advertising network is a company that connects publishers with advertisers. Ad networks sell ad space for several different Web sites, connecting Web sites with advertisers and paying royalties to the owners of the Web sites. Ad networks generally demand a large percentage of the gross revenue from ad sales.

Partner Organization Model

This option is similar to an ad network in that ads are sold and delivered via a partner's online ad sales infrastructure. The primary difference is that the partner is an organization that sells ad inventory for its own web properties and only a handful of partners. Examples of potential partners might include The Seattle Times or KOMO 4 News.

3.3 Web Traffic and Pricing Models

Pricing for Web site advertising is generally based on the amount of traffic to the site or the number of times an ad is viewed. The more traffic a Web site receives, the more attractive it is to advertisers and often, the higher the price of an ad on the site.

Web Traffic

Web site traffic can be tracked using the following metrics:

- **Number of Unique Visitors** – A unique visitor is defined as an individual's initial visit to the Web site. A Unique Visitor may view multiple pages during his/her visit and even return to the site within a given time period.
- **Number of Visits** – A visit is defined as a sequence of consecutive page views by a Visitor, without a 30 minute break. A unique visitor always performs at least one, but possibly more, visits.
- **Number of Page Views** - A page view is counted every time someone visiting the Web site loads a page in his or her browser. Page Views are synonymous with Impressions, a term which indicates the number of times an ad is seen.

Pricing Models

There are a variety of pricing models for internet advertising, including the following:

- **CPM** – cost per 1,000 impressions. CPM is the model used when the advertiser is paying for an ad to be displayed a certain number of times.
- **CPT** – cost per time. CPT is the pricing model used when the advertiser pays for an advertisement to be placed on a Web site for a set amount of time. Cost for time permits the ad to be displayed unlimited times over the term of the contract.
- **CPC** – cost per click is an internet advertising model where advertisers pay publishers only when users click on their ad. The most commonly known example of this model is Google's Search Engine which uses a pay-per-click arrangement whereby advertisers are charged on a cost per click basis. (We do not consider this model appropriate for the WSDOT Web site as it exists today, and therefore, our estimates are not based on CPC).

4.0 OPPORTUNITY ANALYSIS

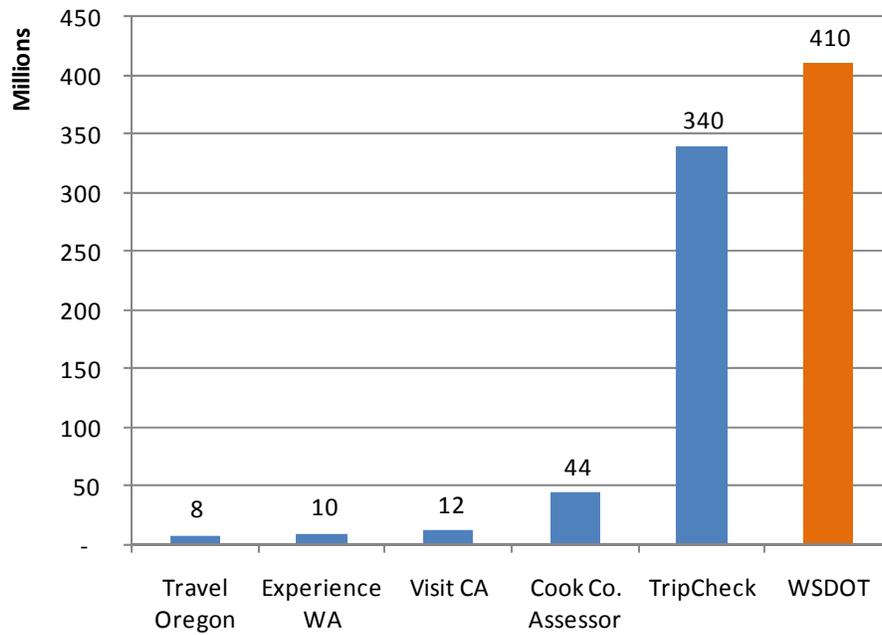
This section of the report analyzes data available on traffic to WSDOT's Web site, the types of advertising WSDOT might sell on its Web site, the different management models available to WSDOT and the prices at which WSDOT might be able to sell advertisements. The analysis provides a picture of the opportunity WSDOT has to profitably monetize its Web site with detailed projections on possible costs and revenues associated with each type of advertisement and each advertising sales management model.

4.1 WSDOT Site Traffic

WSDOT has tracked traffic to its Web site for five years, using a number of web analytics tools. Since July 2008, WSDOT has used Omniture's Site Catalyst software. This software enables WSDOT to track several different metrics including unique visitors, visits and page views. The following analysis of the site traffic focuses on page views -- the most widely used metric to price online advertising.

The total annual page views for www.wsdot.gov from September 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009 were 410 million. This is higher than all of the government organizations identified and interviewed for this report. **Exhibit 4** below shows the annual average page views of the government agency Web sites interviewed.

Exhibit 4
Annual Page Views (Millions)

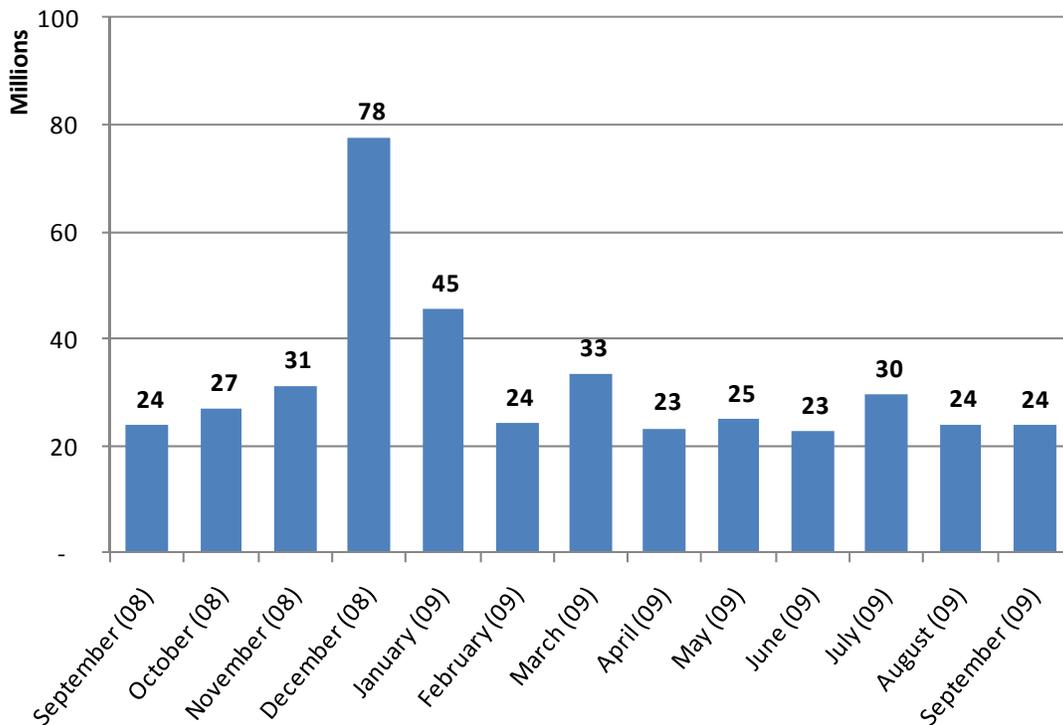


Source: Berk & Associates, 2009

It is important to note that December 2008 page views were higher than typical for the WSDOT and TripCheck Web sites due to unusually inclement weather conditions. In addition, page view data is gathered separately by each organization using different technology and methodology. Page views may therefore not be exactly comparable, but do demonstrate the relative size of each site's viewing population.

Exhibit 5 below shows that traffic to the WSDOT Web site varies month to month throughout the year, with a significant spike associated with extreme weather events in December and January.

Exhibit 5
WSDOT Page Views per Month, September 2008 – September 2009



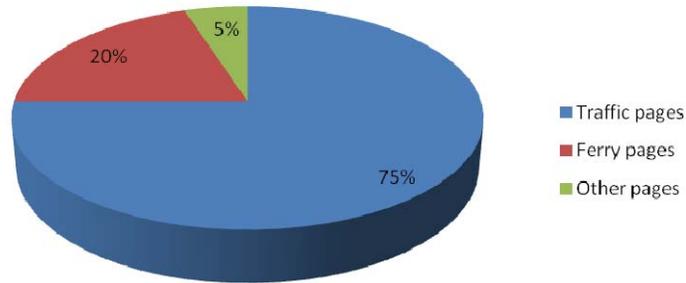
Source: ZAAZ, 2009

Because it is impossible to predict such weather-related spikes in traffic, it is difficult to capitalize on spikes from a revenue perspective. Therefore, the revenue forecasts in this report utilize an average of the 12 months shown, excluding December 2008. The resulting average of 312 million is a conservative estimate of potential traffic volumes in a given year. The average monthly page views during this time were 31.5 million. This number includes the significant spike in traffic during the major snowstorm of December 2008.

4.2 Content Opportunity Analysis

Certain content on WSDOT's Web site attracts many more page views than other content. The pages with the highest traffic are those that offer the best opportunity for ad sales. **Exhibit 6** below shows the type of content on the Web site with the most page views.

Exhibit 6
Percent of Total WSDOT Page Views by Category



Source: ZAAZ, 2009

The traffic and maps content garners the lion’s share of page views, 75 percent, on the WSDOT Web site. Commuters are the most likely viewers of the traffic and maps content. Ferry content receives approximately 20 percent of the total page views, making it the other primary advertising opportunity.

“Other” pages include content such as employment and contact information. This content receives approximately 5 percent of total page views and seems an unlikely candidate for advertising.

The following is a list of the Top 10 pages for the past 6 months (by page views):

1. Seattle Area Traffic	34,164,642
2. Seattle Area Flow Map Bridges	15,987,804
3. Seattle Area Travel Times	5,179,989
4. Tacoma Area Traffic	3,941,596
5. Ferries Vessel Watch	3,488,785
6. Statewide Mountain Pass Map	2,706,888
7. Ferries Schedule Information	2,310,600
8. Seattle Area Incidents	2,169,860
9. Weather Forecast	1,593,158
10. Ferries Schedule Detail	1,450,124

Because the Traffic pages yield the highest volume of site visitors, they represent the largest opportunity for advertisers to reach a large audience. However, CPM and CPT pricing is not simply a function of volume. Advertisers also consider visitor demographics and visitor purpose, related to the site and/or page content. For example, a page that allows a visitor to update his/her address might be an attractive place for moving companies or cable operators to advertise. They might then be willing to pay a higher price for that opportunity. Or, for example, a site geared toward expectant mothers could gain a higher average ad price from Babies R Us, than a general news site.

The ability to communicate demographic details about WSDOT’s audience and the value they may bring to potential advertisers is essential to the success of web advertising sales. WSDOT does not currently collect demographic information on visitors to its Web site.

Visitors to WSDOT's traffic pages are likely to be commuters and motorists representing targeted geographic areas depending on the cameras they view. Viewers of ferry content may be commuters or tourists. But there may be other characteristics about this audience which could be important to advertisers. Identifying these valuable details is an important step in maximizing potential ad revenue and making decisions about which pages will include advertising and which will not.

4.3 Growth Potential

From 2003 to December 2007, WSDOT used an analytics tool called Revenue Science to track page views. During this time period WSDOT also tracked the views to camera images, greatly inflating the number of page views. In January 2008, WSDOT moved to a new web analytics vendor, Visual Sciences, which was purchased by Omniture in July of 2008. At that time, two significant changes occurred:

- WSDOT stopped counting page views for camera images, significantly decreasing the total page view count, but making it more accurate, and
- WSDOT began using cookies to track web traffic, instead of log files.

There is no way to make a relevant comparison of the two sets of data, making it difficult to use the data to identify and predict any long-term trends in site traffic. From an anecdotal perspective, one would expect a conservative level of growth in visits, visitors and page views to the WSDOT site given the following:

- Population growth in the region
- Ongoing internet adoption
- Addition of valuable tools on the Web site
- Additional traffic cameras
- Future ferry reservation tools
- New, mobile traffic applications
- Increased use of social media tools

On the other hand, there are a number of factors that could lead to the decline of WSDOT site traffic. Some potential causes of declining traffic might include the following:

- Increased competition from private party Web sites providing an alternative source of traffic information
- New in-vehicle technology such as GPS that provides traffic data
- Increases in mobile sites or smart phone applications that reduce dependence on standard Web sites

WSDOT will likely be able to address these potential causes of Web site traffic. As indicated by total annual page views, the department is a trusted source of traffic data and ferry information and is well positioned to maintain that status. By increasing the sophistication of wsdot.gov and expanding the delivery mechanisms (mobile site, smart phone, etc) WSDOT can likely expect to retain and grow traffic while improving the service it provides to the public.

4.4 Advertiser Categories

There are several different categories of advertisers that may be interested in advertising on the WSDOT Web site, including geography-based and topical.

Geographic

From a total volume perspective, the WSDOT Web site provides an appealing opportunity for advertisers wishing to reach a relatively large audience living and working in Washington while taking advantage of the relatively low cost of online advertising. Examples of advertisers who would conceivably be interested in this opportunity are local businesses and businesses targeting local consumers.

Topical

It is also likely the WSDOT site will appeal to a number of advertisers who offer products or services that are related to the content on the Web site. Examples of visitor categories that advertisers might want to target include the following:

- **Motorists and Commuters.** Motorists are defined as those site visitors who are looking for general driving information that isn't necessarily related to traffic cameras. They might have concerns related to pass conditions, construction projects, etc. Commuters are site visitors who are going to the site to view traffic information on the routes they travel frequently. They are likely to have a different mindset than motorists, and may be receptive to other messages. Examples of advertisers who may be interested in motorists and commuters include the following:
 - Auto Dealers
 - Auto Mechanics
 - Auto Body Shops
 - Tire Retailers
 - Car Audio Retailers
 - Mobile Accessories
 - GPS Retailers
 - Real Estate
 - Gas Stations
- **Travelers and Tourists.** Travelers are defined as those site visitors who may be traveling for business or pleasure and are looking for information on available services in cities or towns where they are traveling. Tourists are defined as those site visitors traveling within or to the state purely for pleasure and may be interested in both services and entertainment options available at their destination. Examples of advertisers who may be interested in travelers and tourists include the following:
 - Hotels, bed & breakfasts
 - Restaurants
 - Zoos, aquaria, museums
 - Golf courses, bike rentals, cruises, kayak tours, ski rentals, etc.

5.0 WSDOT OPTIONS

This section of the report outlines the potential options available to WSDOT in selling advertising on its Web site and includes cost and revenue range estimates for each option. The revenue forecasts in this report utilize the 2008 annual page view data, excluding December 2008 because of a spike in page views due to unusually inclement weather. The resulting average of 312 million is a conservative estimate of potential traffic volumes in a given year.

In order to show the sustainability of each program investigated, cost and revenue estimates shown in this analysis are annual averages once the program is up and running (in 2009 dollars). Initial costs will likely be higher and initial revenue levels lower as an advertising program is established and marketing efforts to potential advertisers begin.

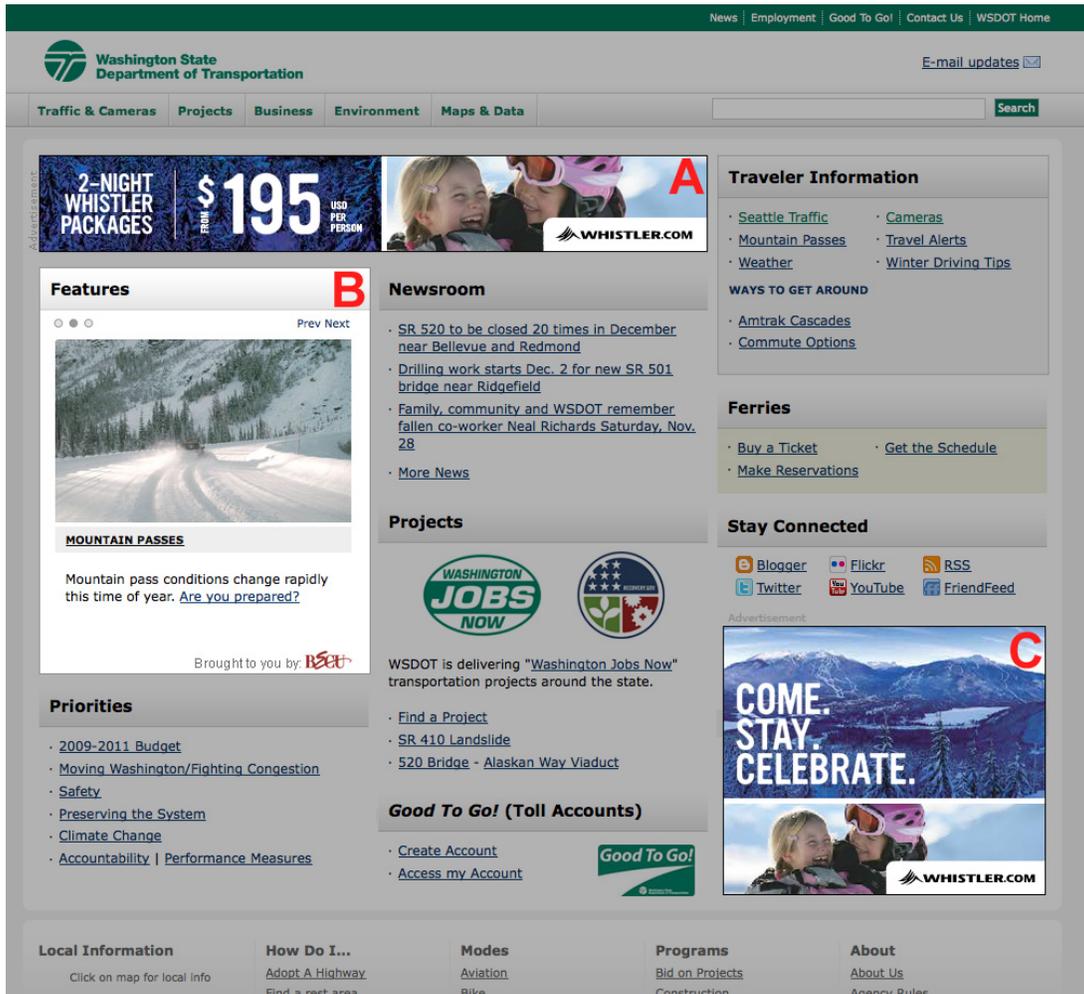
5.1 WSDOT Web Site Mock Ups

In order to sell advertising, WSDOT would need to configure its web pages to allow for display advertising, sponsorships and/or business listings. Following is a rough sample of how banners and sponsorships might fit into the existing site structure and how existing content might look once advertising is added.

In **Exhibit 7** below, the WSDOT home page is mocked up to depict both traditional display ads (A and C) and a sponsorship (B). (Existing WSDOT Web site content has been grayed-out in order to emphasize the hypothetical advertisements.)

Exhibit 7

Mock Up of Traditional Display and Sponsorship Ads on WSDOT Home Page



Source: ZAAZ, 2009

In **Exhibit 8** below, a WSDOT traffic page is mocked up to depict a sponsorship (A) and a traditional display ad (B).

Exhibit 8

Mock Up of Traditional Display and Sponsorship Ads on WSDOT Traffic Page

The screenshot shows the WSDOT Traffic Page with several key elements:

- Navigation:** News, Search, Contact WSDOT, WSDOT Home. Main menu: TRAFFIC & ROADS, PROJECTS, BUSINESS, ENVIRONMENTAL, MAPS & DATA.
- Section Header:** STATEWIDE TRAVELER INFORMATION
- Left Sidebar:**
 - TRAFFIC & CAMERAS:** State View (home), Seattle Area, Ferry Cameras, Tacoma, Hood Canal, Olympia, Centralia/Chehalis, Vancouver, Mount Vernon, Bellingham, Stanwood, Monroe, Canadian Border, Spokane, Wenatchee.
 - STATE TRAVEL INFO:** Travel Alerts, Mountain Passes, Weather, Construction, Cross-state Travel Routes, Winter Driving Tips, Safety Rest Areas, State Highway Map, Interstate Exits, Featured Services.
 - ADDITIONAL INFO:** Bordering State Travel, Driver & Vehicle Licensing, Washington State Tourism, Contact Us, Disclaimer.
 - 511 Travel Info** logo.
- Main Content:**
 - Map:** Statewide map with camera icons. Text: "Click on a camera icon for camera view or click on an area to zoom in".
 - Weather/Alerts:** Check the Weather, Check for Travel Alerts (road conditions), Check the Mountain Passes.
 - Ways to Get Around:** Accessible Transportation | Aviation | Bicycle | Bus | Carpool | Compressed Work Week | Ferry Traffic & Roads | Train | Vanpool | Walk | Work from Home | Ways to get around Homepage.
 - Advertisement (B):** WASHINGTON'S LOTTERY Play Scratch! FIND YOUR HOLIDAY BONUS NOW!
- Right Sidebar:**
 - Are you prepared For winter driving?**
 - Click on a camera icon on the map at left or select a route number from the list below.**
 - Interstate:** I-5 I-205 I-405 I-90 I-82
 - US:** US 395 NSC US 2 US 12 US 97
 - Highways:** US 97A US 101 US 195 US 395
 - State Highways:** SR 3 SR 4 SR 8 SR 9 SR 14 SR 16 SR 17 SR 18 SR 20 SR 24 SR 27 SR 28 SR 31 SR 99 SR 104 SR 109 SR 161 SR 163 SR 167 SR 169 SR 172 SR 202 SR 204 SR 221 SR 240 SR 285 SR 290 SR 291 SR 302 SR 410 SR 433 SR 500 SR 502 SR 504 SR 512 SR 516 SR 518 SR 520 SR 522 SR 524 SR 525 SR 526 SR 527 SR 532 SR 539 SR 543 SR 599 SR 900 SR 902 SR 904
 - Other:** US - Canadian Border Ferries
 - Cameras:** City & County Cams Airports
 - Not sure which route number you need? View our [route description list](#).

Source: ZAAZ, 2009

Implementation Considerations

In order for WSDOT to sell any display advertising space on its Web site, the department will need to define specific page real estate where advertisers can place their ads. In doing so, the primary decisions to be made include the following:

- Which pages will allow for advertising?
- How many ads will be displayed per page?
- What size and type of ads will be displayed?
- What type of advertising should and should not be allowed?

WSDOT should also consider clearly marking the ads as “advertisements” and posting a disclaimer on the Web site denying responsibility for content of other sites linked to the WSDOT site (for instance, Cook County Illinois Assessor’s site both marks the ads as “advertisements” and includes a disclaimer).

5.2 Traditional Display Advertising

In order to understand the opportunity and the best way to maximize revenue, three options were examined for selling display ad inventory: direct sales by WSDOT, advertising sales through an ad network and partnering with another entity. Each option is described in detail below and potential revenues, costs, benefits and challenges are detailed for each option.

A. Direct Sales by WSDOT

Revenue and Cost Estimates

A direct sales program presents significant revenue generation potential, approaching \$2 million annually. However, it is also possible for WSDOT to experience no or little revenue generation, at least in the short term. The most likely revenue generation potential is in the range of \$250,000 annually.

Exhibit 9 below shows revenue and cost estimates, as well as assumptions used in the analysis.

Exhibit 9

Assumptions and Annual Revenue Estimates for Direct Sales of Traditional Display Advertising

	Low	High	Likely
Assumptions			
Average rate (CPM)	\$ 4.00	\$ 7.00	\$ 5.00
Average Page Views	312 M	312 M	312 M
Content with Advertising	85%	95%	90%
Inventory Sold	50%	90%	60%
Estimates			
Feasible Ad Content	265 M	296 M	281 M
Average Ads per Page View	1.0	1.5	1.25
Total Inventory (in impressions)	265 M	445 M	351 M
Total Inventory Sold	133 M	400 M	211 M
Revenue	\$ 530,000	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 1,050,000
Cost of Sales	\$ 600,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 800,000
Net Revenue	\$ (70,000)	\$ 1,900,000	\$ 250,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

If executed successfully, gross revenues from a direct sales program could reach \$1 million (total inventory sold multiplied by average rate per ad) per year, while costs are likely to total approximately \$800,000. This cost estimate assumes six FTEs including four sales staff, one manager and one information technology staff person and additional expenditures for ad serving technology.

Building a sales and service team from scratch is the largest cost associated with the initiative and the biggest risk to profitability. Assembling a team that understands the industry and ad serving technology and has the skills to successfully market to advertisers and establish critical processes and workflow to make the effort successful is not a simple task. Some version of this team would need to be in place long before the first ad is sold, so a pilot for the direct sales model would include significant up-front costs.

Ad serving technology doesn't necessarily require a significant amount of additional IT infrastructure, given that the major ad serving vendors (Double Click and Atlas) both offer hosted solutions, where they own and manage the infrastructure. At bare minimum there is a cost to license the ad serving technology. This price would best be identified by issuing an RFP to ad serving technology providers. The major ad serving vendors do not list pricing because they negotiate this during the RFP phase with their customers.

Because research did not yield adequate data on the costs of supporting direct sales, cost estimates are based on limited knowledge yielded from interviews with other organizations. All of the organizations interviewed use a partnership sales model where a separate contracted agency provides the sales and technology staff.

Two of the contracted organizations were interviewed (Municipal Media Solutions for Cook County Assessor's Office, and Sunset Publishing for Visit California). However, those companies also provide this service for other organizations and other types of advertising such as print publications. They were not able to break out the cost of supporting just one organization and/or the cost of supporting just web advertising. In addition, the cost component does not vary significantly between the low, high, and likely scenarios, as it is reasonable to assume that a large portion of the cost will be fixed, especially in the short-term as the sales function is established.

Benefits

Over time, the direct sales option has the largest revenue generating potential, given that WSDOT would collect the entire CPM price, as opposed to revenue sharing options. The direct sales model also provides WSDOT complete control over who advertises on the site.

Direct sales may also provide WSDOT the opportunity to offer additional creative services to advertisers. WSDOT has a strong interactive communications office with talented graphic designers and web staff. This team could utilize spare capacity to offer content design services to small business advertisers, generating additional revenue and easing the process for the client.

Challenges

The direct sales option carries the most risk for WSDOT given the high level of fixed costs and the wide variation in potential revenue, with the possibility of a net loss, particularly in the short term.

This option would also require significantly more resources upfront, necessitating the creation of an entirely new function within the department. This would include the hiring of all new staff, establishment of a physical location to house them, development of policies and protocols, training to get new staff fully functional and necessary technology purchases, maintenance and operation.

Given that WSDOT isn't currently in the business of selling online advertising, there is an inherent risk in building the skill-set from within. There is likely to be a significant learning curve which could dramatically reduce the revenue opportunity and potentially result in a net loss.

B. Traditional Display Advertising Sales through an Ad Network

Revenue and Cost Estimates

The revenue opportunity with an ad network sales model is much smaller than direct sales, because the ad network retains a significant portion of the CPM for its services. The opportunity to negotiate a higher CPM with an ad network is also less likely, because the largest ad networks, those most likely to work with WSDOT, supply ads to thousands of sites.

The direct costs to WSDOT are significantly lower than in the direct sales model. The analysis assumes one person devoted half time or 0.5 FTE could manage the ad network relationship and internal WSDOT processes for ad sales. This assumption is based on similar staffing seen in other organizations. This scenario doesn't require additional infrastructure or a sales and implementation staff because the ad network provides that service in return for a percent of the fee. WSDOT would only need its web development team to configure the site to call the ad network's server to display the ads it is hosting. This is a one-time effort that requires little additional maintenance.

Exhibit 10 below shows annual revenue and cost estimates, as well as assumptions used in the analysis.

Exhibit 10
Assumptions and Annual Revenue Estimates for Ad Network Sales of
Traditional Display Advertising

	Low	High	Likely
Assumptions			
Average rate per ad	\$ 0.30	\$ 0.80	\$ 0.50
Average Page Views	312 M	312 M	312 M
Content with Advertising	85%	95%	90%
Inventory sold	75%	90%	85%
Estimates			
Feasible Ad Content	265 M	296 M	281 M
Average Ads per Page View	1.0	1.5	1.25
Total Inventory (in impressions)	265 M	445 M	351 M
Total Inventory Sold	199 M	400 M	298 M
Gross Revenue	\$ 60,000	\$ 320,000	\$ 150,000
Cost of Sales	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenue	\$ 10,000	\$ 270,000	100,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Benefits

The ad network option would allow WSDOT to implement an advertising program with minimal effort or investment.

Challenges

This option offers the least amount of control over the advertisements displayed on the Web site, as the ad network chooses how to fill up the ad slots. While certain ad networks offer greater control over the advertising that a publisher allows, the publisher typically provides these preferences at a topical level (i.e. no prescription drug advertisements) rather than at a specific advertiser level.

Utilizing an ad network is also the least profitable option. The vast majority of revenue is collected by the ad network that brokers the arrangement between advertiser and publisher.

C. Traditional Display Advertising Sales through a Partner Organization

Revenue Estimates

The revenue opportunity with a partnership arrangement is lower than that of direct sales but higher than that of the ad network option. Revenue sharing can be negotiated and allows the publisher a higher percentage of the CPM. Costs are likely to be low, requiring minimal internal staff (devoting one person half time or 0.5 FTE) to manage the partnership and internal WSDOT processes for ad sales, based on limited information available through the research and interviews conducted for this report.

Gross revenue from ad sales through a partnership could approach \$1.2 million annually, while WSDOT could expect to receive \$490,000 of that with the partner keeping the rest. **Exhibit 11** below shows revenue and cost estimates, as well as assumptions used in the analysis.

Exhibit 11
Assumptions and Annual Revenue Estimates for Partner Sales of
Traditional Display Advertising

	Low	High	Likely
Assumptions			
Average rate per ad	\$ 4.00	\$ 7.00	\$ 5.00
Average Page Views	312 M	312 M	312 M
Content with Advertising	85%	95%	90%
Inventory sold	50%	90%	70%
Revenue share % (WSDOT portion)	30%	60%	40%
Estimates			
Feasible Ad Content	265 M	296 M	281 M
Average Ads per Page View	1.0	1.5	1.3
Total Inventory (in impressions)	265 M	445 M	351 M
Total Inventory Sold	133 M	400 M	246 M
Total Revenue	\$ 530,000	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 1,230,000
WSDOT Portion of Revenue	\$ 160,000	\$ 1,680,000	\$ 490,000
Cost of Sales	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenue	\$ 110,000	\$ 1,630,000	\$ 440,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Benefits

The partnership model is typically superior to an ad network in that it provides more profit to the publisher. The partnership model would allow WSDOT to use the partner's well-established team of advertising sales experts with very low initial costs. This model would also provide WSDOT the benefit of exposure to a broad array of advertisers who may not otherwise know that WSDOT was selling ad space.

This model also can offer significantly more control over the advertisers and advertisements, than WSDOT would have with an ad network that was serving hundreds of publishers. WSDOT could work directly with the partner to define approved advertisers and ad content. The partner model also provides other revenue options given that the partner can sell sponsorships or even arrange public/private partnerships. Ad networks deal only in traditional display advertising.

The partnership model has very low investment costs (as low as the ad network model), but with more benefits.

Challenges

This option requires some profit sharing, albeit substantially less than the ad network model.

5.3 Sponsorships

Sponsorships can be sold either directly by WSDOT or by a partner sales organization, but not by an ad network because they are not easily delivered through ad serving technology.

Because the research did not yield adequate data on the costs of supporting direct sales, this report only includes a revenue estimate for sponsorships sold through a partnership.

Revenue and Cost Estimates

Revenue potential from sponsorship sales through a partnership is significant. Total annual revenue from sponsorship sales could likely be in the range of \$500,000, with approximately \$310,000 going to WSDOT.

Costs in this option are likely to be minimal, assuming 0.5 to 1.0 FTE could manage the partner relationship. This assumption is similar to those in the previous partnership models, but allows for more effort if needed, given the more customized nature of a sponsorship. There may be more need for discussions and negotiations regarding the nature of the revenue/cost agreements and advertising layouts. **Exhibit 12** below shows revenue and cost estimates, as well as assumptions used in the analysis.

Exhibit 12

Assumptions and Annual Revenue Estimates for Partner Sales of Sponsorship Advertising

	Low	High	Likely
Assumptions			
Number of sponsorship slots	5	10	8
Number of slot rotations	2	4	4
Average rate per sponsorship	\$ 5,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 18,000
Inventory sold	75%	100%	90%
Revenue share % to WSDOT	50%	65%	60%
Estimates			
Total Number of Sponsorships	10	40	32
Total Inventory Sold	8	40	29
Revenue	\$ 40,000	\$ 800,000	\$ 520,000
Portion of Revenue to WSDOT	\$ 20,000	\$ 520,000	\$ 310,000
Cost of sales	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Net Revenue	\$ (30,000)	\$ 420,000	\$ 210,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Benefits

Sponsorships take up less advertising space on the department’s Web site when compared with traditional display advertising. But sponsorships have the potential for revenue levels similar to those of display ads. Because sponsorships are highly customized, there is more control over the content and appearance of ads.

Sponsorship advertisement can be established under a revenue sharing model with a sales partner to limit risk.

Challenges

Sponsorships require more effort to design, place and code ads to the Web site. In addition, more management of sponsorship contracts is required.

5.4 Business Listings

Business listings can be sold either directly by WSDOT or by a partner sales organization, but not by an ad network because they are not easily delivered through ad serving technology.

Because the research did not yield adequate data on the costs of supporting direct sales, this report only includes a revenue estimate for business listings sold through a partnership.

Revenue and Cost Estimates

The annual revenue potential for business listings is fairly low, likely to be approximately \$60,000. At the same time, the cost of sales is relatively high, likely to be approximately \$50,000. Therefore, total likely annual revenue to WSDOT is only \$10,000.

Costs in this option are likely to be minimal, assuming 0.5 to 1.0 FTE could manage the partner relationship and WSDOT internal process. This assumption is similar to those in previous partnership models.

Exhibit 13 below shows revenue and cost estimates, as well as assumptions used in the analysis.

**Exhibit 13
Assumptions and Annual Revenue Estimates for Partner Sales of Business Listings**

	Low	High	Likely
Assumptions			
Average rate per ad	\$ 100	\$ 400	\$ 300
Number of Ads	400	1,000	500
Revenue share % to WSDOT	30%	60%	40%
Estimates			
Revenue	\$ 40,000	\$ 400,000	\$ 150,000
Portion of Revenue to WSDOT	\$ 10,000	\$ 240,000	\$ 60,000
Cost of sales	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenue	\$ (40,000)	\$ 140,000	\$ 10,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Benefits

Business listings can be established under a revenue sharing model with a sales partner to limit risk.

Challenges

Business listings cannot be automated by an ad server and therefore require a more manual implementation process.

Unlike banner ads and sponsorships, business listings are not as easily recognized as advertising, and therefore have a higher risk of being perceived as an endorsement by the state.

Business listings generate a relatively low level of revenue.

6.0 GOVERNMENT GUIDELINES AND LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

If WSDOT chooses to move forward with a plan to monetize its Web site, it must consider certain federal laws and guidelines governing all “.gov” Web sites. This section of the report describes the laws and guidelines currently in place, as well as considerations for additional advertising policies.

6.1 Legal Restrictions

There do not appear to be any major legal impediments to monetization of the WSDOT Web site. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) guidelines prohibit government agencies from selling any type of advertising or sponsorships on Web sites in the “.gov” domain; however, WSDOT could redirect the viewers to either a “.com” or “.org” domain with an exemption from the Information Services Board. The research for this report found some federal guidelines from the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) applicable to all “.gov” Web sites.

There are no Washington state laws restricting or regulating the monetization of state-run Web sites. However, standards adopted by the Washington State Information Services Board prohibit the use of “.com” names in the state Domain Name System (DNS.) WSDOT may need to negotiate an exception to this standard.

All government entities interviewed are using either a “.com” or “.org” domain in order to operate within federal guidelines governing “.gov” Web sites, including ExperienceWa.com.

6.2 U.S. General Guidance

WebContent.gov (part of usa.gov, the official US Government Web site) suggests the following points as general guidance when considering advertising on federal public Web sites. By extension, the State may want to consider these guidelines for advertising on its Web site as well:

- **A “.gov” domain may not be used to advertise** for private individuals, firms, or corporations, or imply in any manner that the government endorses or favors any specific commercial product, commodity, or service.
- **Consult your agency's legal staff** to determine what might be considered advertising, BEFORE you act.
- **Carefully consider the implications** of advertising before you do it. Advertising for private individuals, firms, or corporations can imply that the government endorses or favors a specific commercial product, commodity, or service. Citizens expect their government to be impartial. Businesses and for-profit entities expect to be treated fairly by the government. Endorsing some commercial products and services, while excluding others, constitutes preferential treatment.
- Some agencies have been given **specific authority** to advertise on their Web sites. A good practice to follow is this: if you don't have specific authority to use your Web site for advertising, then check with your legal counsel before you do it.
- Be sure to **review your links routinely** to make sure they still work, that they still go where you think they're going, and that they adhere to the practices your agency is using regarding advertising.

Examples of actions that could be viewed as "advertising" and may not be appropriate:

- **Displaying the name, logo, product, or service** of a non-government entity in exchange for money, services, or other special consideration, including reduced cost for a product or service. For example, "Powered by Company X" or "Web design by Company X."
- **Linking to external sites** that provide a particular commercial product or service. Ensure that all links to non-government Web sites further the agency's mission and comply with your agency's linking policy. See [OMB requirements regarding external links](#).

Examples of actions that may be appropriate:

- Providing information about an organization or individual if your agency has a **formal partnership** with the organization or individual. (For example, HUD's partnership with FHA lenders and EPA's partnership with companies that meet "Energy Star" product requirements).
- **Linking to all commercial partners** without giving preferential treatment to one partner over another (for example, linking to all HUD-approved FHA lenders).
- **Posting a disclaimer** when linking to Web sites of private individuals, firms, or corporations or including a general disclaimer in your linking policy. For example: "This link does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. government or the U.S. Department of X."
- Mentioning and linking to **free reader software** like Adobe or MS Word Readers, since those links are required under Section 508 accessibility requirements. We recommend that these be text links - not the logo of the software.

6.3 WSDOT Advertising Policies

If WSDOT decides to pursue advertising on its Web site, the department should consider developing its own advertising content policies and guidelines that may restrict certain types of ads (for example, for alcohol or tobacco products). In the direct sales model, WSDOT would have complete control over the ads displayed on its Web site, while in the partnership model, WSDOT would have significant control over the content of advertisements.

Most private entities and public organizations (including several transit systems) have established similar guidelines. These restrictions could reduce potential advertising revenue; however, these policies are necessary for WSDOT to retain some control over the ads.

The Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transit System, for example, has established the following restrictions and content guidelines for advertisements:

- Advertising of all alcohol and tobacco products is prohibited
- Advertising may not be displayed if it's content:
 - Promotes or relates to an illegal activity;
 - Contains language which is obscene, vulgar, profane or scatological;
 - Contains images, copy or concepts that actively denigrate a specific ethnic or gender group;
 - Contains images, copy or concepts that actively denigrate public transportation; or
 - Contains obscene matter as defined in the Los Angeles County Code.

7.0 CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to legal restrictions, there are a number of other considerations that WSDOT should evaluate prior to monetizing the Web site.

Internal Considerations

- Currently, web pages on the WSDOT site are maintained by different divisions within the agency: Interactive Communications, Traffic and Information Technology. Implementation of the advertising program would require additional coordination among the divisions.
- WSDOT would need to establish internal quality control and standards for its Web site configuration and content, as the quality and stability of its Web site may impact potential contract terms with advertisers. In addition, when considering a contracting or partnership opportunity, WSDOT should address the question of potential liability if the Web site is disrupted or goes down.
- WSDOT should consider the potential impact of web advertising on the user experience as well as public perception of the department. These considerations will be particularly important when determining the number of ads per page, the size and placement of ads and advertising content policies.
- The department should determine where revenue generated from an advertising program would be directed. Some of the organizations interviewed use this revenue to support their Information Technology teams, since the organization's Web site and the advertising program are invariably linked.
- WSDOT should investigate the potential for other revenue-generating opportunities, such as:
 - Increasing the number of traffic and travel pages to provide more local travel information, road conditions, traffic cameras, etc., in order to create more page opportunities for advertisers.
 - Developing opportunities for sponsorships and advertising revenue through social media channels such as YouTube, Flickr, Twitter, Facebook, Blogs and others.

Other Considerations

- WSDOT should explore the question of whether the advertisements need to be ADA accessible to meet the same guidelines as web content.
- The agency currently provides its travel and traffic information for free to other parties (such as news outlets), who repackage it and provide the information on their own Web sites. It is unclear if and how this practice might compete with WSDOT's Web site and advertising potential.
- WSDOT may have opportunities to arrange public/private partnerships where the private party agrees to provide a service or product that enhances www.wsdot.gov in exchange for an advertising or sponsorship opportunity. For example, WSDOT might arrange for a Blog tool vendor to waive the license fee for its software in exchange for labeling the WSDOT blog with "Blog technology provided by Vendor Name." Such opportunities would need to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

8.0 RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS

Before beginning monetization effort, WSDOT should conduct further research. This report recommends the following as next steps in the process:

- **Conduct a thorough analysis of Web site visitor demographics, psychographics and visit intent.** Audience intelligence such as age, gender, education level, income level, geographic location, etc. is important to have on hand when marketing the opportunity to advertise on the WSDOT Web site to potential advertisers.
- To comply with General Services Administration (GSA) guidelines, it will be necessary for WSDOT to **redirect the web traffic to “.com” or “.org” web address.** Fortunately, WSDOT has already secured several “.com” and “.org” web addresses similar to WSDOT.gov to protect its brand image. WSDOT could use one of the web addresses it already owns and redirect the traffic. Under such a redirect, a person typing in www.wsdot.wa.gov would be automatically redirected to www.wsdot.com, for example.

GSA guidelines suggest a notification “splash message” to alert visitors that they are leaving the official government Web site. WSDOT staff would simply need to maintain the redirects for all pages on the Web site.

- WSDOT may have to **negotiate an exemption from state Information Services Board standards** prohibiting the use of “.com” domain names.
- **Poll prospective partners and advertisers to assess interest.** Only then will the agency have a clear picture of the type of ads it might sell, the categories of advertisers who might be interested in the Web site and the price advertisements on the site might merit.
- **Consider implementing a small pilot project** to test the potential opportunity for revenue generation and costs of web advertising sales. WSDOT might explore advertising on select pages or within a current Web site project, such as the mountain passes traffic page or the ferries schedule page. Such a pilot project, limited to a page or small section of the Web site, will provide WSDOT with data and insight into the potential costs and revenue of Web site monetization.

In any case, WSDOT may consider issuing a Request for Information (RFI) or even Request for Proposals (RFP) to determine interest from the advertising industry, potential revenue sharing arrangements and more precisely identify costs to WSDOT of implementing a pilot project. Issuing an RFP does not necessarily mean the department has to make an award, depending on the cost and level of effort the proposal will entail.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Overall, the research and analysis in this report indicate that WSDOT has a real opportunity to generate new revenue through the monetization of its Web site. Given the high level of traffic to the WSDOT site and the nature of the site's content that lends itself to certain categories of advertisers, there is significant potential for the agency to generate revenue.

The WSDOT Web site commands a large and loyal user base of visitors who trust the content and functionality enough to return to the site again and again. This is an enviable asset for a state agency. It is easy to imagine how WSDOT might convert this asset into a revenue generating engine.

As home to some of the world's leading technology companies and the nation's most wired city as ranked by *Forbes Magazine*, Washington's tech savvy population may be a unique target for online advertisers.

WSDOT already stands out as a very progressive state agency. It was an early adopter of social media and is using technology and social media tools aggressively and effectively. WSDOT's work in this arena has earned the agency a reputation as a savvy and sophisticated organization not only among government agencies in Washington state, but across the nation.

Monetization of the WSDOT Web site presents an opportunity to build on the agency's progressive reputation and to generate new sources of revenue that will help WSDOT better serve the citizens of Washington state. **Exhibit 14** below summarizes estimated revenues and costs for different business models:

Exhibit 14

Range of Potential Annual Revenues and Costs for WSDOT Advertising Options

	Low	High	Likely
DISPLAY ADVERTISING			
WSDOT DIRECT AD SALES			
Gross Revenues	\$ 530,000	\$ 2,800,000	\$ 1,050,000
Costs	\$ 600,000	\$ 900,000	\$ 800,000
Net Revenues	\$ (70,000)	\$ 1,900,000	\$ 250,000
AD NETWORK			
Gross Revenues	\$ 60,000	\$ 320,000	\$ 150,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenues	\$ 10,000	\$ 270,000	\$ 100,000
PARTNER AD SALES			
Gross Revenues	\$ 160,000	\$ 1,680,000	\$ 490,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenues	\$ 110,000	\$ 1,630,000	\$ 440,000
SPONSORSHIPS			
Gross Revenues	\$ 20,000	\$ 520,000	\$ 310,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 100,000
Net Revenues	\$ (30,000)	\$ 420,000	\$ 210,000
BUSINESS LISTINGS			
Gross Revenues	\$ 10,000	\$ 240,000	\$ 60,000
Costs	\$ 50,000	\$ 100,000	\$ 50,000
Net Revenues	\$ (40,000)	\$ 140,000	\$ 10,000

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

Exhibit 15 below summarizes the report's findings and lays out the options WSDOT has to consider in deciding whether to move forward with a monetization program.

Exhibit 15

Benefits and Challenges of WSDOT Advertising Management Models

	Benefits	Challenges	Estimated Annual Net Revenues
Traditional Banner Advertising			
D. Direct Sales			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSDOT would sell and execute the display advertising program Includes hiring all staff and purchasing the necessary infrastructure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Largest revenue generating potential WSDOT has complete control over advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most risk given high fixed costs and wide variation in potential revenue, with the possibility of a net loss Requires significant resources upfront, necessitating the creation of an entirely new function within WSDOT 	(\$70,000) to \$1.9M
E. Ad Network			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSDOT would contract with an advertising network, which would serve ads from its server 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of an advertising program with minimal effort or investment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Least amount of control over the advertisements displayed on the Web site The least profitable option 	\$10,000 to \$270,000
F. Partnership			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WSDOT would partner with an organization that sells ad inventory for its own web properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More profit to WSDOT than ad network More control over advertisements Low investment costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires some profit sharing, albeit substantially less than the ad network model 	\$110,000 to \$1.6 M
Sponsorships			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seeks to create a synergistic relationship between WSDOT and advertisers by providing a brand awareness and enhancement opportunity through the advertisers' "support" of the WSDOT site 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need less advertising space than banners Potential for revenue levels similar to those of display ads More control over the content and appearance of ads Can be established under a revenue sharing model to limit risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires more effort to design, place and code ads to the Web site More management of sponsorship contracts is required 	(\$10,000) to \$420,000
Business Listings			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lists of businesses in topical categories such as lodging services or restaurants with links to the advertisers' Web sites 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business listings can be established under a revenue sharing model with a sales partner to limit risk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cannot be automated by an ad server, requiring more manual implementation Not as easily recognized as traditional ads, listings might be perceived as endorsements Generate a relatively low level of revenue 	(\$40,000) to \$140,00

Source: ZAAZ and Berk & Associates, 2009

**Monetizing the WSDOT Web Site:
An Analysis of the Potential Opportunity**

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW NOTES FROM WEB SITES SURVEYED

<p>Municipal Media Solutions – Private company managing web advertising for CookCountyAssessor.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling advertising for one year • Traditional display advertising: banners and boxes • Ads hosted by an ad server – ads in constant rotation • 3 to 4.5 million page views per month • Contracts with MMS to provide the sales and management of the advertising service • Revenue sharing agreement - Assessor’s Office receives 60 percent of total advertising sales revenue • Expected net revenue: \$200,000 in first year
<p>Travel Oregon – Oregon Tourism Commission</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans to begin Web site advertising program in February 2010 • Does not want advertising to obscure other site content • Offering banner ads and text ads • Ads must align with the agency’s mission to maintain Web site integrity and appearance • Agency employees are building necessary infrastructure • Plans to contract ad sales with a private publisher and establish a revenue sharing agreement • One agency employee will manage the publisher
<p>Experience WA – Washington State Department of Commerce</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling advertising for three to four years • Offers free business links for every tourism-related business in the state • Businesses may pay to upgrade their listings. Options include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Upgrading the business link to include “point of interest” text with a photo and web and email links -Posting a banner ad • Experimenting with paid advertising content on editorial pages • Contracts with a small firm for sales and management of the advertising program • The contractor uses ad server technology, but for some areas of the Web site must rely on the Experience WA web developer • Revenue sharing agreement - the agency’s share of revenue increases as revenue increases • Currently averaging \$100,000 per year in total revenue:

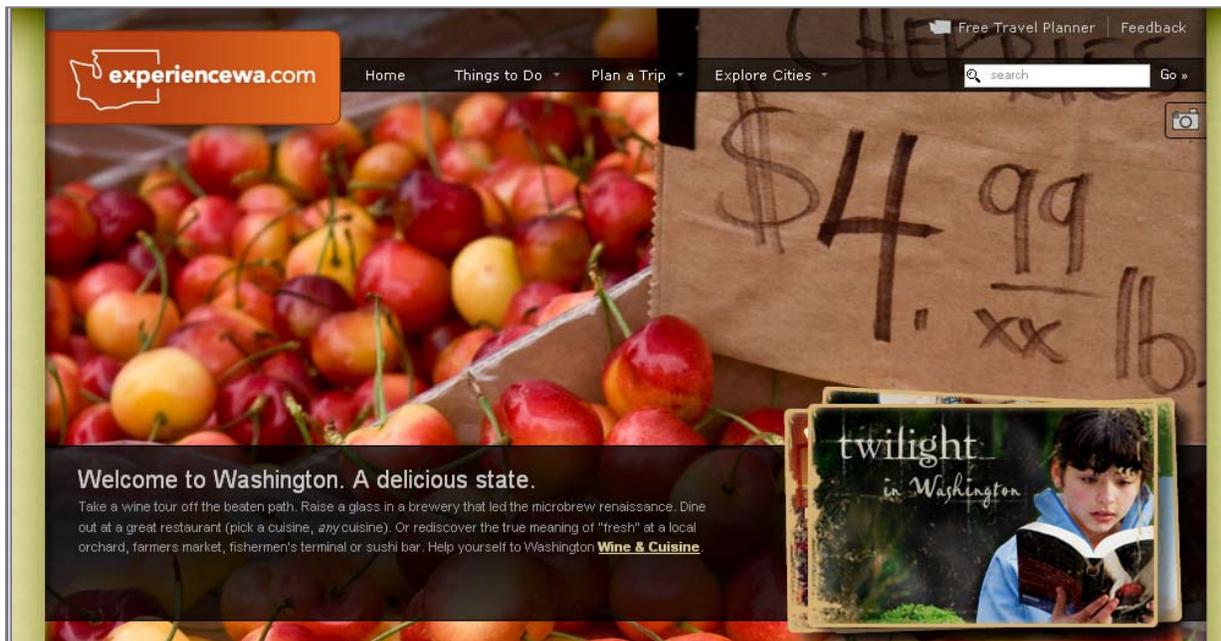
	<p>Experience WA share is 10 percent or \$10,000 per year</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considering a “pay-by-click” revenue model, which could generate \$300,000 per year, or \$60,000 net revenue to Experience WA • Web tracking software maintained off-site to enable access by non-state employees • Advertising sales depend on page views – agency working to drive more traffic to the site
<p>Trip Check – Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling advertising for two years • Business links for travel-related services displayed on the “Travel Services” portal • Only allows advertisers offering those types of services listed on the blue signs on the roadside to advertise: restaurants, lodging, attractions, and fuel • Advertising managed by the Oregon Travel Information Council (OTIC,) a semi-independent state agency • The 2008 annual page views were 340 million • Net ODOT revenue is \$20,000 per year
<p>Sunset Publishing – private company managing advertising for VisitCalifornia.com</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selling advertising since 2006 • Advertisements are limited to small squares and have an “advertisement” marker • For small ads, the standard CPM is \$30 but they negotiate down, usually to \$20 or \$25 • Restrictions on who may advertise on the site - generally limited to tourism industry • The site has a “deals” page, which functions more like a partnership • The deals page is arranged through the State of California and the ads stay up for months at a time • Sunset Publishing manages all of the print and online advertising for Visit California and contact customers to sell print and online ads at the same time • Revenue-share model • Could not reveal the revenue but said it is less than \$100,000

APPENDIX B: WEB SITE MONETIZING RESEARCH

ExperienceWA.com

ExperienceWA is the "official Web site of Washington State Tourism." There are a variety of links to outside sources for tourism and travel within the state, including hotels, motels, activities and destinations. Depending on the information you are looking for, different types of advertising for services are shown.

For example, if you select the Deals & Packages tab, you are provided with a list of various packages from different vendors across the state. If you click on one, it keeps you in the ExperienceWA site, and gives you information and links for the deal. There are no obvious ad banners or link to outside sites or services, but as you click around within the site it is obvious that there goods for sale on the site.



TripCheck.com

This is a travel-oriented Web site designed for people traveling in and around the state of Oregon. The most obvious reason for this site is the information provided for road work, closures, accident information, pass information, etc. The site also provides travel accommodations, food, and activities around the state.

The user navigates the map to the location where they are intending to travel. There is then a list populated of available activities, hotels, restaurants etc. listed for that area. Each item has a page which then includes contact information and a link to their Web site (if applicable). There are no obvious banners or pop-up ads, just links and information to external sites.

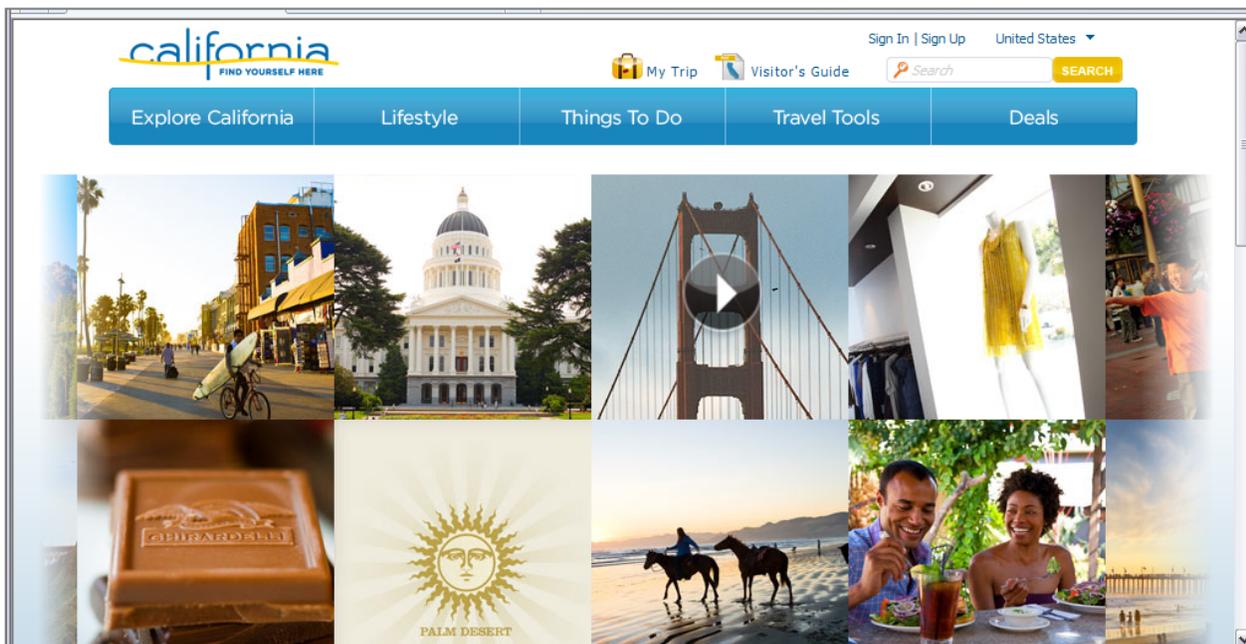


VisitCalifornia.com

VisitCalifornia.com is the California Visitor’s Bureau’s Web site. There are a variety of links to different activities, including shopping and dining throughout the site. Depending on what you want to do, there are different types of advertising present on the site.

For example, if you want to find out about winter activities, it immediately takes you to a page with pictures of Mammoth mountain and links to Tamarack Center. These are the only listings for an area that has a variety of options around it. The links to other activities in that area are listed below, without pictures or contact information.

There are also obvious ads such as the one shown above, that are highlighted by a box or caption saying “advertisement”.



PO Box 69
Mammoth Lakes, CA 93546-0069
<http://www.tamaracklodge.com>

Print E-mail
+ Add to My Trip

There's no better place to get close to the stars than Mammoth Lakes. This popular, yet pristine area is home to some of the greatest views in California, as well as some of the best winter recreation options. Head down the slopes at Mammoth Mountain, with over 3,500 skiable acres, then bundle up for a naturalist-guided full-moon tour at [Tamarack Cross Country Ski \(and snowshoe\) Center](#), with 19 miles of groomed trails. You can also cruise around on a snowmobile or take a Snowcat tour, snap photos from the scenic gondola, take

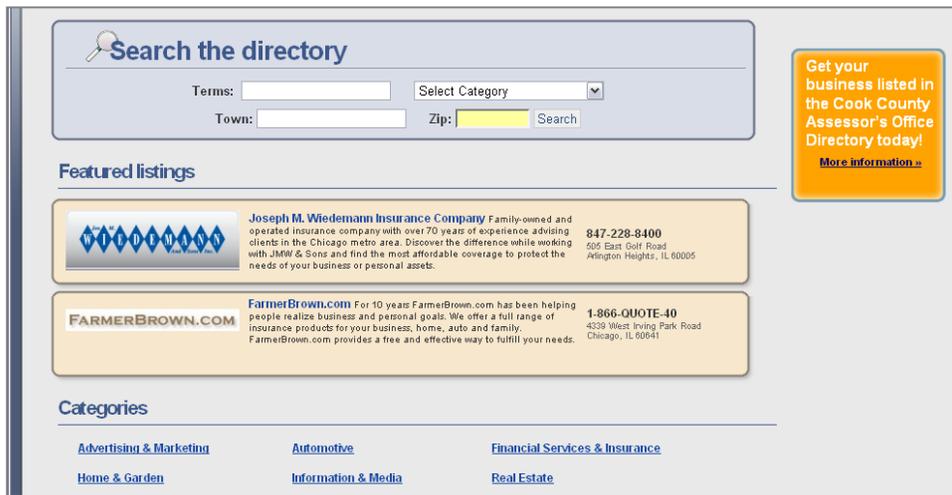
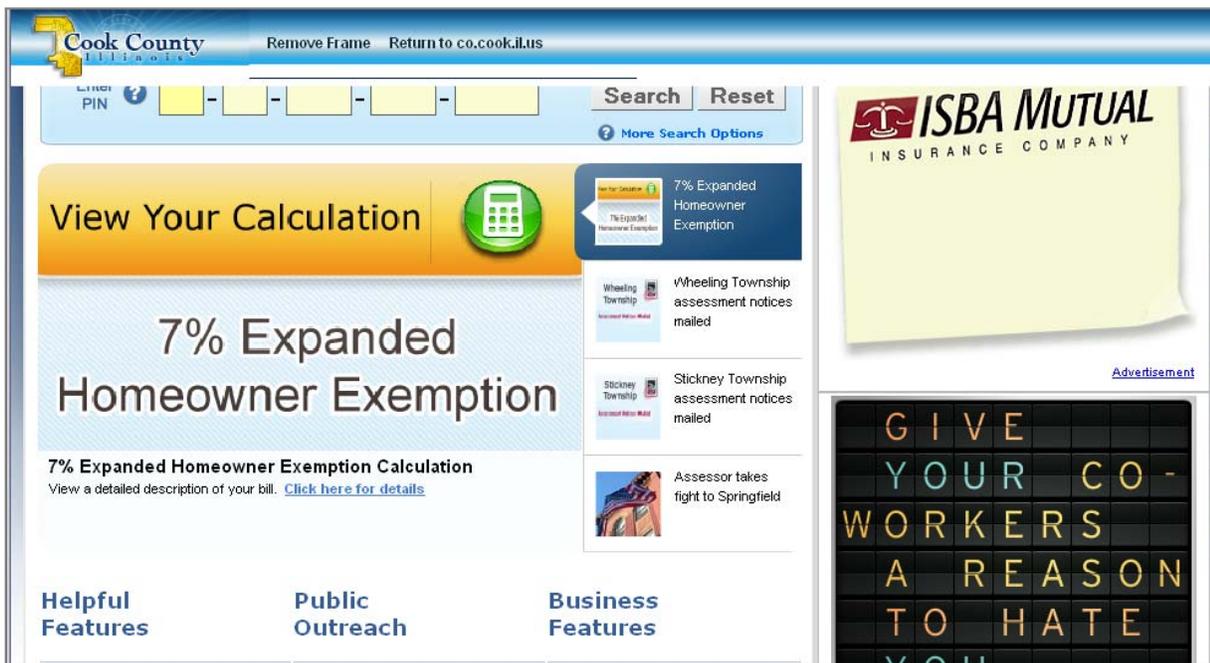
CLICK HERE FOR EVENT & FESTIVAL LISTINGS
ADVERTISEMENT

CookCountyAssessor.com

This site has obvious traditional advertising, as shown above. The Cook County site itself is not listed on a .gov domain, instead it is on CookCountygov.com which allows advertising.

The site is split out into separate domains for each government agency, and the advertising opportunities vary on each site. For example, the Assessor page has traditional advertising (things that are representative of the viewer, not the page) as well as advertising related to the agency you are viewing.

There is a directory of advertisements available on the agency page that allows users to search for services based on categories, as well as showing “featured” advertisements.



Other Web sites reviewed:

- **All 50** State DOTs
- Alaska Marine Highway System
- Arizona Highways
- Arkansas.com
- British Columbia Ferries (Canada)
- Buffalo Mayor's Page
- City of Houston
- Colorado.com
- Cook County, Illinois
- El Paso Tourism Site
- Forest Preserve District of Cook County
- Go Hawaii
- Houston Fire Department
- Idaho Department of Labor
- Maricopa County
- MetOffice.gov.uk (United Kingdom)
- North Carolina Ferry System
- New York City Ferry System
- Nashville Transit Authority
- Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles
- Ohio Department of Development
- Pure Michigan
- Rochester, New York Arts and Cultural Council
- Richmond, Virginia Transit authority
- Travel Nevada
- Virginia.org
- Visit Connecticut (ctvisit.com)
- Visit Florida
- Visit Idaho
- Visit Montana
- Visit New England

- All Ohio State county Web sites – we reviewed all Ohio county Web sites based on an article from the Associated Press dated June 19, 2009 that stated that a law had been inserted into the pending State budget that would allow counties within Ohio to sell advertising on their Web sites (<http://www.ohio.com/news/ohiocentric/48617447.html>). It appears that either the law did not pass the State Legislature, or no counties are yet taking advantage of the opportunity, as none of the following sites displayed advertising.
 - Adams County
 - Allen County
 - Ashland County
 - Ashtabula County
 - Athens County
 - Auglaize County
 - Belmont County
 - Brown County
 - Butler County
 - Carroll County
 - Champaign County
 - Clark County
 - Clermont County
 - Clinton County
 - Columbiana County
 - Coshocton County
 - Crawford County
 - Cuyahoga County
 - Darke County
 - Defiance County
 - Delaware County
 - Erie County
 - Fairfield County
 - Fayette County
 - Franklin County
 - Fulton County
 - Callia County
 - Geauga County
 - Greene County
 - Guernsey County
 - Hamilton County
 - Hancock County
 - Hardin County
 - Harrison County
 - Henry County
 - Highland County
 - Hocking County
 - Holmes County
 - Huron County
 - Jackson County
 - Jefferson County
 - Knox County
 - Lake County
 - Lawrence County
 - Licking County
 - Logan County
 - Lorain County
 - Lucas County
 - Madison County
 - Mahoning County
 - Marion County
 - Medina County
 - Meigs County
 - Mercer County
 - Miami County
 - Monroe County
 - Montgomery County
 - Morgan County
 - Morrow County
 - Muskingum County
 - Noble County
 - Ottawa County
 - Paulding County
 - Perry County

- Pickaway County
 - Pike County
 - Portage County
 - Preble County
 - Putnam County
 - Richland County
 - Ross County
 - Sandusky County
 - Scioto County
 - Seneca County
 - Shelby County
 - Stark County
 - Summit County
 - Trumbull County
 - Tuscarawas County
 - Union County
 - Van Wert County
 - Vinton County
 - Warren County
 - Washington County
 - Wayne County
 - Williams County
 - Wood County
 - Wyandot County
- The following Web sites from Ohio displayed some county information and also contained some type of fee advertising. It is not known if the first two sites are affiliated with the Counties, or not. The third site is privately run and not associated with the County in any way.
 - Adamscountyohio.com
 - Highlandcountyohio.com
 - Loraincounty.com – Not affiliated with the County. Refused to speak with us citing concerns about any information appearing in a report, even given strong reassurance that no information would be used without their consent.