

# 2020 Congestion Management Process Summary Report



## Introduction

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council's (RTC's) federally required Congestion Management Process (CMP) is a regional program that analyzes travel delay characteristics and provides system performance information on major streets and state highways. Monitoring of congestion is a planning tool that provides reliable data to identify traffic problems, to support wise investment decisions, and to enhance the movement of people and goods.

## Background

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization officially announced a world pandemic associated with COVID-19. In order to fight this highly contagious virus, authorities imposed various restrictions to limit the spread of the virus. These restrictions included limits on business and social activities.

The pandemic significantly impacted statewide travel. According to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) COVID-19 Multimodal Transportation System Performance Dashboard, the State initially experienced approximately 48% decrease in highway traffic, 70% decrease in transit ridership, 30% decrease in truck volumes, 100% decrease of bicyclists, 30% decrease of pedestrians, and 18% drop in traffic collision rates.

After a couple months of sharp decline, statewide travel began to return as people and business returned to a new normal. By October 2020 the state highway traffic was down 10%, transit ridership was down 60%, truck volumes were down 11%, bicycle traffic was down 80%, pedestrian traffic was down 15%, and traffic collisions rates were down 14%. While overall traffic collision rates were down in year 2020, Washington State experienced a 3% increase in fatalities and a 9% increase in serious injury accidents likely due to increased speeds.

## Future of Travel Behavior (Post COVID-19)

The COVID-19 pandemic and associated government limits on business and social activity created an acute and sudden drop in overall regional travel (by all modes). A key long-term planning question is: How much, if any, will the change in personal and business travel behavior induced by the pandemic carry forward and become permanent? History provides the most reasonable outlook and likely response to that inquiry. During previous economic downturns—including the 1974 oil embargo, the 1980-1982 recession, and the 2007-2009 great recession—the regional traffic volumes decreased for a few years but rebounded fully within 5-6 years. Given the region's continued increase in population and expected growth in employment, the region is likely to see travel surpass year 2019 levels by year 2025. This will likely occur despite some shift in travel behavior.

## Regional Summary

### Clark County Population

2015: 451,820  
vs.  
2020: 499,200  
*OFM Populations*



### Portland/Vancouver Employment

2015: 1.19  
vs.  
2020: 1.27  
*Millions of Jobs, BLS*



### Unemployment Rate

2015: 5.8%  
vs.  
2020: 6.3%  
*Percent of Labor force*



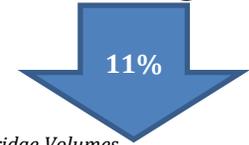
### Bistate C-TRAN Ridership

2015: 1,683  
vs.  
2020: 736  
*Daily Evening Peak Riders*



### Columbia River Crossings

2015: 294,100  
vs.  
2020: 260,500  
*Daily I-5 and I-205 Bridge Volumes*



### Evening Bistate Speed

2019: 29.3 mph  
vs.  
2020: 35.6 mph  
*I-5 & I-205 Speeds*



## Key Findings-Clark County Region

This year’s congestion monitoring report reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic created an unusual impact on regional travel, which is expected to continue into 2021. All key congestion indicators showed improvements as pandemic restrictions reduced overall travel.

Overall congestion was significantly reduced within Clark County, with only minor congestion issues. Although the duration and severity of congestion has significantly improved, the region continues to see daily congestion in the I-5 corridor between Portland, Oregon, and Vancouver, Washington, during the evening peak period.

## 2020 Dashboard (Clark County Data)

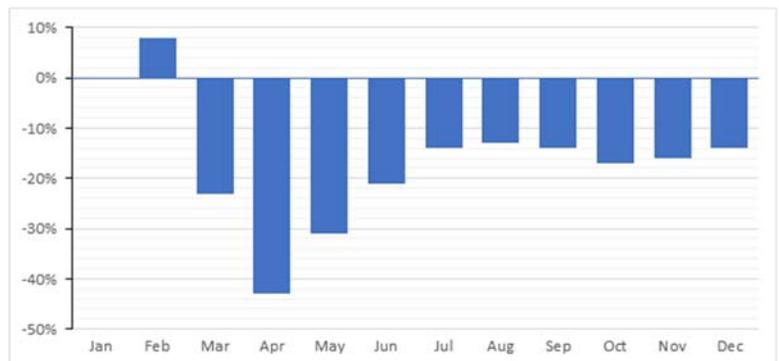
The 2020 Congestion Management Process Report will display Clark County transportation data in a dashboard format. The dashboard format is intended to show the impacts of the pandemic for each month for key metrics. The Dashboard is a comparison between 2019 and 2020 Clark County data by month.

### Highway Volumes

Data from Four Stations  
 I-5/Columbia River  
 I-5/SR-502  
 I-205/Columbia River  
 SR-14/E. of I-205

**-15%**

*Annual Change*

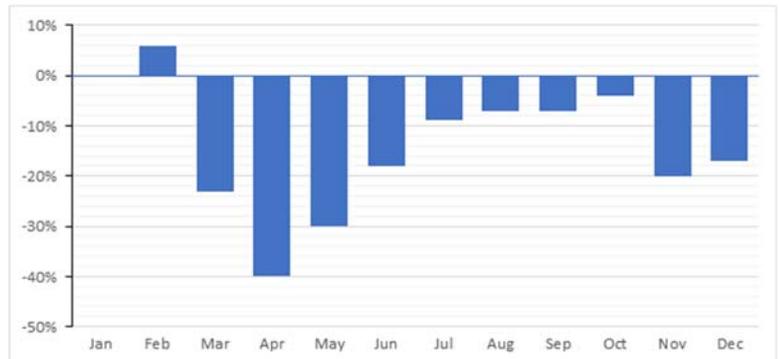


### Arterial Volumes

Data from Four Stations  
 NE 99<sup>th</sup> St./NE 7<sup>th</sup> Av.  
 NE 78<sup>th</sup> St./NE 30<sup>th</sup> Av.  
 NE 139<sup>th</sup> St./NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Ct.  
 NE Padden Pkwy./NE 94<sup>th</sup> Av.

**-14%**

*Annual Change*

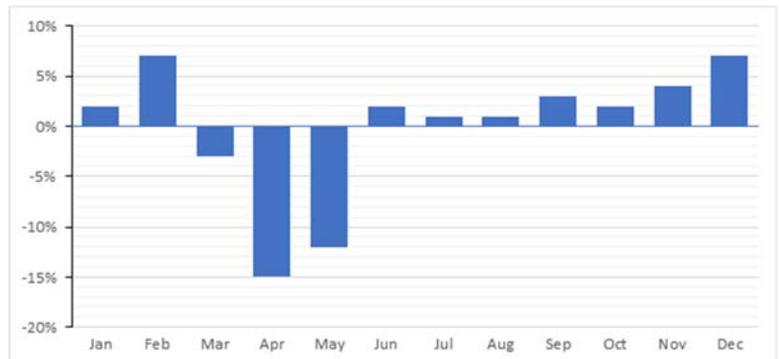


### Truck Volumes

Data from Six Stations  
 I-5/35<sup>th</sup> St.  
 I-5/SR 502  
 I-5/Woodland  
 I-205/Mill Plain Blvd.  
 SR 14/Alpine St.  
 SR 14/32<sup>nd</sup> St.

**-1%**

*Annual Change*

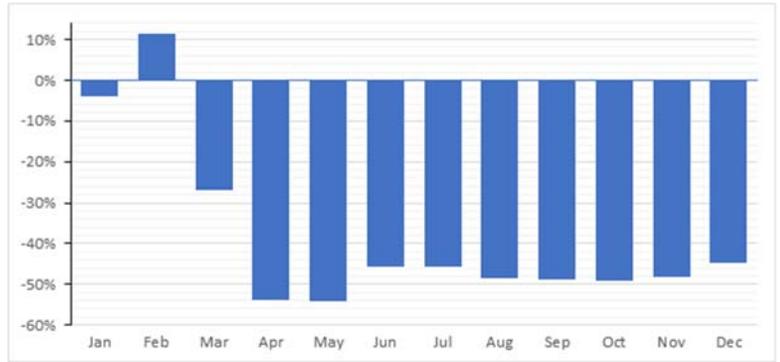


## Transit Ridership

C-TRAN Ridership Counts  
All Routes and Services

**-39%**

*Annual Change*

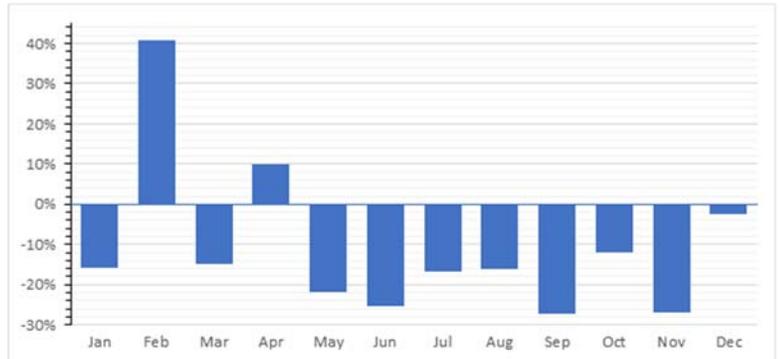


## Bike Volumes

Data from Two Stations  
I-5/Columbia River  
I-205/Columbia River

**-15%**

*Annual Change*

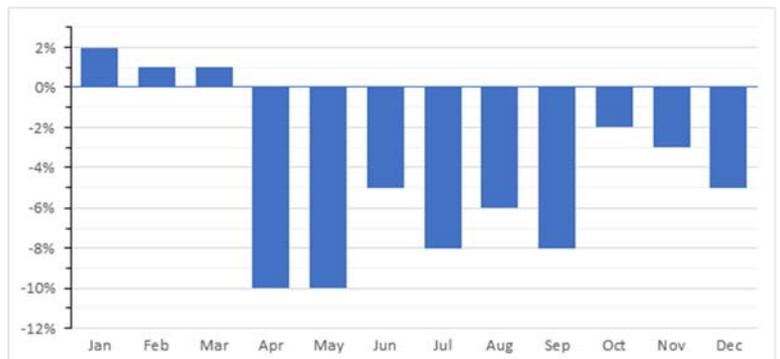


## Employment

US BEA Data  
Portland/Vancouver Area

**-5%**

*Annual Change*

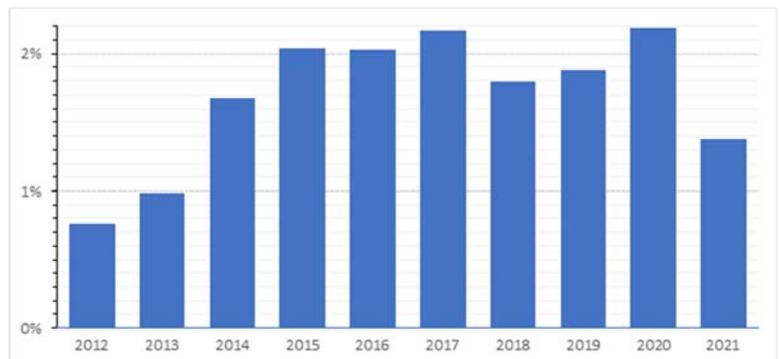


## Clark County Population

OFM Data  
Years 2012 to 2021

**1.7%**

*Annual Average*



## Projects and Strategies

### Trunnion Repair

The I-5 Columbia River Bridge includes two parallel bridge structures, each carrying opposite direction traffic. In September 2020, the northbound bridge of the Interstate Bridge between Vancouver and Portland closed for almost two weeks as crews replaced a cracked trunnion and other parts that help lift and lower the bridge. The southbound bridge provided two-way traffic during closure, and a single southbound lane closure occurred for one week after opening the northbound bridge. Due to COVID-19 pandemic traffic conditions and commuters listening to warnings, the daily traffic backups never reached feared conditions.

In September 2020, C-TRAN, WSDOT, and ODOT jointly began a one-year Bus on Shoulder Pilot Project on the Glenn Jackson Bridge, first initiated to mitigate trunnion repair impacts.

### I-5 Southbound Active Traffic Management

In September 2020, WSDOT implemented a new active traffic management system along southbound I-5 through the Vancouver area in an effort to ease congestion and improve traffic safety during the morning rush hour.

The system includes traffic cameras, sensors, adaptive ramp meters, and electronic signage to monitor and provide real-time data to WSDOT's traffic management center, which can relay information to drivers.

### Interstate Bridge Replacement

In 2020 the states of Oregon and Washington reengaged their partner agencies and restarted planning work to replace the I-5 Interstate Bridge that crosses the Columbia River.

The goal is to replace the Interstate Bridge with a modern, seismically resilient, multimodal structure that provides improved mobility for people, goods, and services.

### I-5 Southbound Bus on Shoulders

In the summer of 2020, C-TRAN and WSDOT added Bus on Shoulder lanes along southbound I-5 from 99<sup>th</sup> Street to the I-5 Bridge. If the left-side shoulder is not being used by disabled vehicles or emergency services and freeway speeds drop below 35 miles per hour, buses are allowed to use the shoulder to bypass traffic backups.

### Key Regional Strategies

Key Regional Strategies remain unchanged in the 2020 Congestion Management Process. Despite the temporary easing of congestion due to COVID-19, the Region will need to implement the following strategies to get the most out of the transportation system as traffic returns to prepandemic levels.

The Congestion Management Process supports the following congestion management strategies:

- Local and state agencies need a robust program to analyze and invest in corridor signal timing to get the most out of the existing transportation system.
- Implement Transportation System Management and Operations (TSMO) and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies, including major corridor transit expansion.
- Support widening of major arterials within the Urban Growth Areas to Comprehensive Plan standards, including multimodal accommodations.
- Identify and implement innovative high-volume intersection concepts to resolve acute bottlenecks. In particular, the SR 500/Fourth Plain intersection needs to implement regionally identified improvements.
- Advance implementation of an I-5 bridge replacement project.

#### **For More Information**

You can get more information on the Congestion Management Process by visiting the project website at <https://www.rtc.wa.gov/programs/cmp>.