



**Whatcom Transportation Authority
Bellingham, WA**

PLANNING DIRECTOR

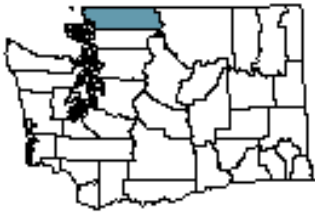
\$94,080 - \$126,060

(2018 COMPENSATION)
Plus Excellent Benefits

Apply by
November 18, 2018
(First Review, Open Until Filled)



WHY APPLY?



Whatcom Transportation Authority (WTA) is a financially sound transit agency with a dedicated team of employees and a supportive Board of Directors. The agency is highly regarded in the community for its organizational integrity and the quality of services provided.

WTA is fiscally sustainable with healthy cash and reserve balances. The new Planning Director will have the opportunity to positively shape the future of WTA in one of the most vibrant, beautiful areas in the Pacific Northwest.



THE REGION

Whatcom County is located in the northwest corner of Washington State. With its proximity to Mt. Baker, beautiful Puget Sound and the world-renown San Juan Islands, it is an extremely desirable place to live and work.

Situated just south of the Canadian Border, Whatcom County (population 213,000) is made up of several rural communities and smaller towns, as well as Bellingham (population 85,000), the county seat. Bellingham—home to WTA’s headquarters—is located about 90 miles north of Seattle and 51 miles south of Vancouver, British Columbia.

With nearly 15,000 students, Western Washington University (WWU) is the largest employer in Bellingham, as well as a major contributor to Bellingham’s liveliness and culture. WTA enjoys a strong

partnership with WWU, and their students account for 40% of WTA ridership. In addition to WWU, Bellingham is home to a community college, a technical college and Northwest Indian College.

The county’s largest employers are educational, health care and government organizations. However, its robust economy also supports a mix of small and medium sized business, including firms specializing in engineering and technology.

Whatcom County is a recreational haven. Skiers, hikers, kayakers, cyclists, boaters and other adventurers enjoy unparalleled access to the outdoors. The county also supports a thriving cultural community, with a lively theater and music scene and an eclectic mix of museums and annual festivals.

Bellingham has been ranked:

- One of the happiest, healthiest small communities in the U.S. by Gallop Poll (2014).
- Number one for clean air by the American Lung Association (2013-2017).
- Best Places to Retire by Wall Street Journal’s SmartMoney.com (2012).
- Best Place to Play Year-Round by Sunset Magazine (2011).

Bellingham’s climate is typical for the Pacific Northwest. While cloudy and rainy days are not uncommon, Bellingham receives less annual precipitation (36 inches) than Miami, New York City or Boston. A typical winter may bring one to five days of snowfall. More commonly, however, winter highs are in the 40s and 50s. Summer days are often warm, sunny and temperate with highs in the 70s and 80s and cooler temperatures at night.





THE ORGANIZATION

WTA's mission is to enhance our community by:

- Delivering safe, reliable, efficient and friendly service.
- Offering environmentally sound transportation choices.
- Providing leadership in creating innovative transportation solutions.
- Partnering with our community to improve transportation systems.

WTA provides public transportation services throughout Whatcom County. Services include fixed routes, paratransit service and a vanpool program. WTA serves the City of Bellingham, as well as the smaller towns and communities of Ferndale, Lynden, Blaine and Birch Bay, Lummi Nation, Sudden Valley, Kendall, Everson, Nooksack and Sumas. WTA also cooperates with Skagit Transit in neighboring Skagit County to provide service between Bellingham and Mount Vernon.

WTA is composed of seven divisions overseen by the Executive Department: Finance, Fleet and Facilities, Human Resources, Information Technology, Marketing and Community Relations, Operations and Planning. WTA has an operating budget of \$32.2 million and employs about 270 FTEs, including bus operators, mechanics, customer service representatives, route maintenance workers and administrative personnel. Of those 270 employees, 173 are transit operators.

Most of WTA's funding is from a 0.6 percent sales tax which is collected within its Public Transportation Benefit Area (most of Whatcom County). WTA properties include agency headquarters in north Bellingham, downtown's Bellingham Station, Cordata Station, Ferndale Station and Lynden Station, as well as approximately 1,000 bus stops and 140 bus shelters. WTA's fleet is comprised of 61 full-size buses, including eight hybrid electric buses, 44 Paratransit minibuses and 39 vanpool vans. WTA's fixed route service features 30 routes, including a network of four high-frequency corridors within Bellingham. Service runs seven days a week.

In 2017, WTA provided 4.6 million fixed route boarding's, or 16,000 per weekday. Between 2003 and 2017, ridership increased 65%. In 2008, WTA was recognized by the Federal Transit Administration for achieving the highest annual ridership increase in the nation.

Currently, Service Development staff are comprised of 4.7 FTE. Under the leadership of a new Director, WTA anticipates Division staffing levels will be evaluated as new responsibilities are added over the next several years.



WTA is governed by a 10-member Board of Directors. The Board is composed of nine elected officials from jurisdictions throughout Whatcom County, plus one non-voting member representing labor. Board relations are positive and productive, with Board Members expressing strong support for the work of the General Manager, staff, and the service provided to the community. Pete Stark has been the General Manager since 2014 after serving as Director of Fleet and Facilities for over 18 years.



THE POSITION

Working under the direction of the General Manager, the Planning Director provides overall leadership to the Planning Division including short and long-range service planning, capital/facilities planning for the agency, grant oversight and property acquisition/disposal. The Planning Director also works extensively with the Board of Directors to discuss, receive approval for, and then implement fixed route service changes.

The Director supervises all Division personnel and is a member of the agency's Executive Staff providing input on decisions with organization-wide impact.

Other responsibilities include:

- Analyzes route and system performance to develop proposals for service additions, curtailment and/or modifications to transit routes, schedules, fares and operating policies.
- In partnership with other divisions, oversees grant applications including identification of opportunities, prioritization and submittal.

- Oversees the agency's vanpool and other rideshare programs.
- Organizes and conducts planning studies and programs to identify short and long-range public transportation needs. Oversees agency's periodic strategic planning initiatives.
- Assures transit statistics are gathered and analyzed to formulate strategic recommendations.
- Chairs the committee that establishes WTA's fare structure and rates.
- Coordinates and maintains effective working relationships with other public agencies (cities throughout Whatcom County, WSDOT, WWU, WCC, WCOG), large employers, developers and other groups seeking public transportation solutions to mobility problems within the benefit area.
- Assures the agency participates in the review of proposed residential, commercial and retail projects and plans within the community to help ensure compatibility with current and potential transit services.
- Monitors and evaluates legislation and other developments that potentially impact local planning and public transit.
- Oversees and uses a variety of transit planning software for statistical projections and analysis as well as route design and modelling.
- Oversees WTA's website, including assuring the content is up-to-date and accurate. Works with IT to insure functionality of web pages and links. Works with the Community Relations and Marketing Manager to insure design standards are current and consistent.
- Serves as the agency's American with Disabilities Act compliance officer, overseeing ADA compliance and arbitrating appeals.
- Makes staff and Board presentations. Informs and works with elected officials on a variety of sensitive matters such as customer complaints, safety concerns and strategic initiatives. Participates in community outreach including representing WTA at community meetings or events.

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Increased Division Mission

The Planning Division has historically focused on short-term service planning. We anticipate the new Director will oversee an effort to implement a more robust long-term planning focus.

Transitioning Leadership

WTA concluded a Strategic Planning process in the spring of 2017. The plan establishes a short-term 2-year planning cycle for new/modified service and a more robust long-term planning cycle. The new Planning Director will have a critical part in continuing to implement the plan.

Implementing a Robust Long-Range Planning Cycle

In partnership with other divisions, the Planning Director will take over responsibility for the agency's Capital Improvement Process (CIP) in order to anticipate and plan for medium to long term capital needs. A key duty will be to help assure the financial viability of the CIP, in partnership with the Finance Division. In addition, the Planning Director will establish and monitor long-range planning for the agency with either in-house staff or assistance of consultant(s).

Growth Management

The Planning Director will help the division staff adjust to a broader spectrum of duties, while assuring the division and agency maintains its collaborative, respectful, productive work environment.



IDEAL CANDIDATE

Education and Experience:

A bachelor's degree in planning, public administration or a related field, and five years of experience applying the principals and practices of transportation planning is required. AICP (American Institute of Certified Planners) certification, three years of project-management experience, and three years of staff-supervision experience is preferred. Absent a bachelor's degree, a combination of education and experience that would provide the applicant with the desired qualifications required to perform the job may be considered.

Necessary Knowledge, Skills & Abilities:

- Ability to read, analyze, and interpret very complex documents including legislation, laws, manuals, and contracts.
- Strong project management skills, and an understanding of capital facility budgeting.
- Comfortable interacting with the public, including riders and stakeholder groups. The Director must have strong written and oral communication skills, including excellent business writing skills.
- Ability to make effective presentations on complex or controversial topics to the Executive leadership team, public groups, the Board of Directors and front-line employees.
- Ability to respond effectively to the most sensitive inquiries or complaints.
- Work effectively with co-workers at all levels of the organization, as well as people affiliated with other organizations including Western Washington University, City of Bellingham, Washington State Department of Transportation and smaller communities to inject transit needs into each of their planning studies.
- Ability to work with mathematical concepts such as probability and statistics, including modelling and analyzing data.
- Ability to apply concepts such as fractions, percentages, ratios, exponents and proportions to practical situations.
- Proven critical thinking skills. Ability to define problems, research and collect data, establish facts, determine options and draw valid conclusions.
- Ability to obtain, organize and analyze large amounts of data, including data relating to service planning. Requires strong analytical skills.
- Experience implementing and interpreting contracts.
- Ability to solve practical or conceptual problems, and deal with a variety of concrete variables in situations where only limited standardization exists.
- Ability to interpret an extensive variety of information furnished in written, oral, diagram or schedule form.
- Ability to conduct long range planning, with confidence in the plans developed to be achievable over time. The Director will be able to make decisions with an understanding of the "big picture" of the organization.
- The Director must be willing to "ride the bus" for some level of personal transportation, for work, recreation or chores.

- The ideal candidate must be "down to earth" and able to interact in a relaxed environment, but also able to make formal responses and able to stand up to criticism.
- Strong leadership and management skills with ability to build teams and respect the professional and personal aspects of staff. The Director is expected to be a macro manager who creates a collaborative team environment.
- Experience explaining the "why" on decisions made, allowing for discussion and debate on issues.
- The ideal candidate must be level headed, taking a common-sense approach to issues and challenges, and displaying honesty, transparency, and excellent listening skills. The Director is expected to encourage and celebrate the successes of staff.



COMPENSATION & BENEFITS

- **\$94,080- \$126,060 DOQ (2018 compensation)**
- Medical insurance with full family coverage. Employee contributions range from \$37.50 - \$150 per month (2018 rates).
- Employer paid family dental and vision insurance.
- Life insurance at two times annual salary.
- Long-term disability insurance.
- PERS State Retirement System.
- 12 paid holidays (6 floating and 6 scheduled) per year.
- 18-31 vacation days per year based on length of service.
- 12 days of sick leave accrual per year.
- WTA bus passes for family members.

Please visit:
www.ridewta.com

Whatcom Transportation Authority is an Equal Opportunity Employer. All qualified candidates are strongly encouraged to apply by **November 18, 2018** (first review, open until filled). Applications, supplemental questions, resumes and cover letters will only be accepted electronically. To apply online, go to www.prothman.com and click on "submit your application" and follow the directions provided. Resumes, cover letters and supplemental questions can be uploaded once you have logged in.



www.prothman.com

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