

## TRACK CHANGE EDITS TO THE FREIGHT STORY MAP



# Freight Transportation

Draft 2026 Regional Transportation Plan

Puget Sound Regional Council

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## Introduction

Why does the freight transportation system matter?

The regional freight system is integral to the movement of goods throughout the state of Washington.<sup>1</sup> In 2022, over 500 million tons of goods moved through the state, with a total value of almost \$681 billion. The region's share was approximately 160 millions of tons of goods valued at more than \$314 billion that moved into, out of, and through the region. These figures are forecast to continue to grow more each year.

The regional freight system is comprised of a wide array of components that include dedicated freight infrastructure like marine ports and intermodal terminals in addition to facilities like airports, streets and highways that need to be able to accommodate the movement of both people and goods.

Continue scrolling or select a header to learn more about how each of these elements contribute to the region's freight transportation system.

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## Major Freight Corridors

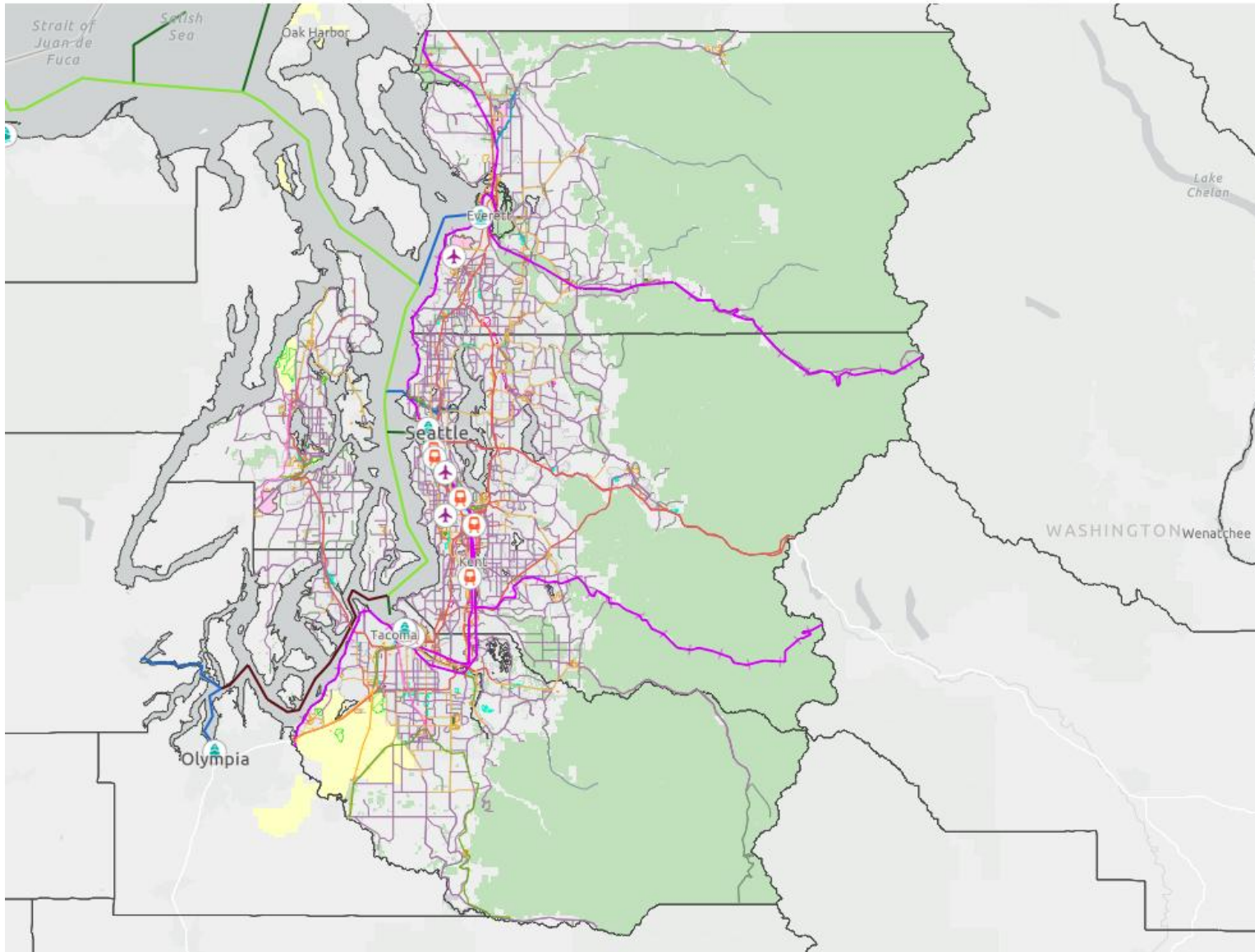
In Washington State, freight corridors for truck, rail and waterways are identified in different categories based on annual freight tonnage moved. Each type of freight corridor is classified into five tiers, with those designated as "1" (e.g. T-1 for truck corridors, R-1 for rail corridors) moving the largest amounts of goods, summarized in Table 1. This system is known as the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS). The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) updates the FGTS designations every two years to meet state legislative requirements, support transportation planning processes, and inform freight investment decisions.

Table 1: WSDOT Freight and Goods Transportation System Classifications

Truck Freight Corridors		Rail Freight Corridors		Waterway Freight Corridors	
FGTS Designation	Annual Freight Tonnage	FGTS Designation	Annual Freight Tonnage	FGTS Designation	Annual Freight Tonnage
T-1	>10 million	R-1	>5 million	W-1	>25 million
T-2	4 to 10 million	R-2	1 to 5 million	W-2	10 to 25 million
T-3	300,000 to 4 million	R-3	500,000 to 1 million	W-3	5 to 10 million
T-4	100,000 – 300,000	R-4	100,000 to 500,000	W-4	2.5 to 5 million
T-5	At least 20,000 in 60 days	R-5	<500,000	W-5	0.9 to 2.5 million

Source: WSDOT, [Washington State Freight System Plan](#), 2022

The map below shows the major FGTS corridors in the region, which are comprised of railroads, waterways, streets, and highways that move the most freight. These corridors connect the region’s ports, intermodal facilities, industrial areas, warehouses, and distribution centers to the freight network that allows goods to move within the region and beyond to the rest of the world.

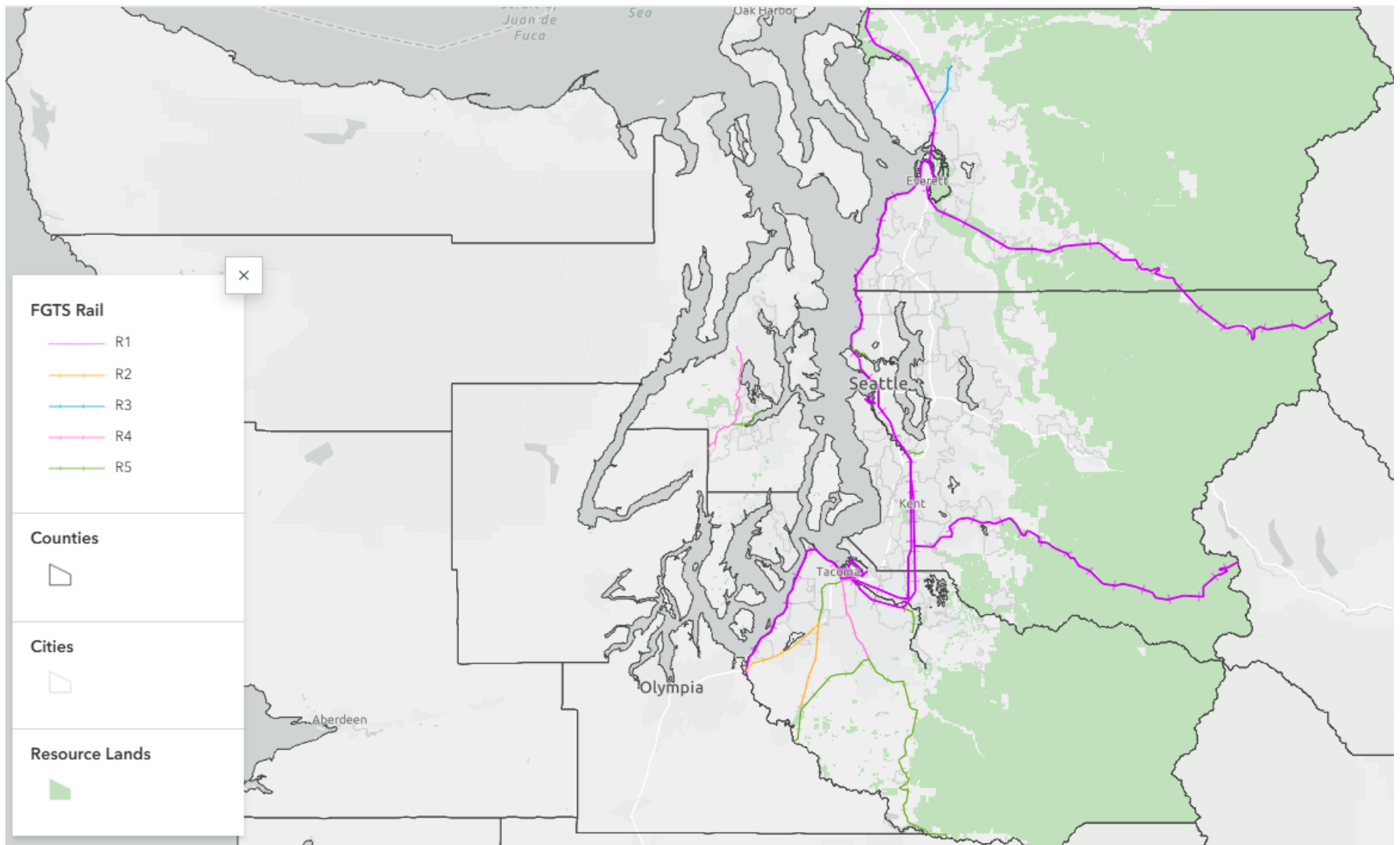


Map 1 – FGTS Corridors and freight land uses in the central Puget Sound Region

## Rail Corridors



Rail corridors in the region are primarily operated by the privately-owned BNSF and Union Pacific railway companies. These lines are key components of the FGTS and are designated by the state of Washington as Rail Freight Economic Corridors due to their importance of moving products that are vital to the state's economy, particularly wheat and forestry products. The publicly owned Tacoma Rail operates three divisions within Pierce County on 43 miles of track, including the Tideland Division within the Port of Tacoma.



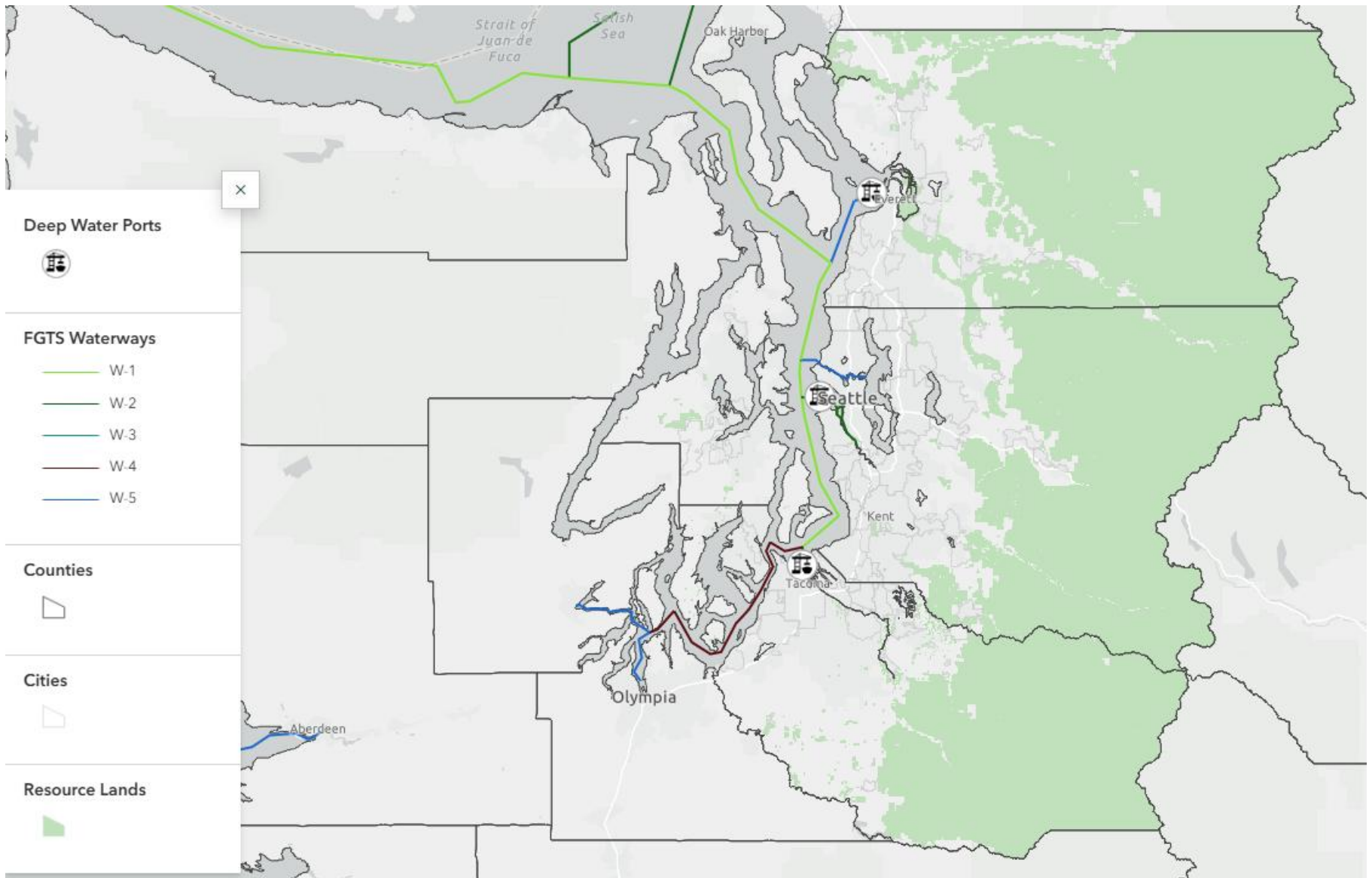
Map 2 – FGTS Rail Corridors in the central Puget Sound Region

## Waterway Corridors

The Puget Sound functions as the region's FGTS waterway corridor that enables the region to be a major international trade gateway for the United States, connecting the region's ports to markets in North America and across the globe. The ports handle all varieties of both bulk and containerized goods, including fruit and grains that are exported to Asia, oil products refined in Washington that are sold in other western states, and consumer goods that are sold throughout the country. More information about the region's ports is provided under the "Deepwater Ports" header.

Travel times via waterway are typically slower compared to other modes, but it is oftentimes the least expensive and most efficient way to move goods.<sup>2</sup>





Map 3 – FGTS Waterway Corridors and Deep Water Ports in the central Puget Sound Region

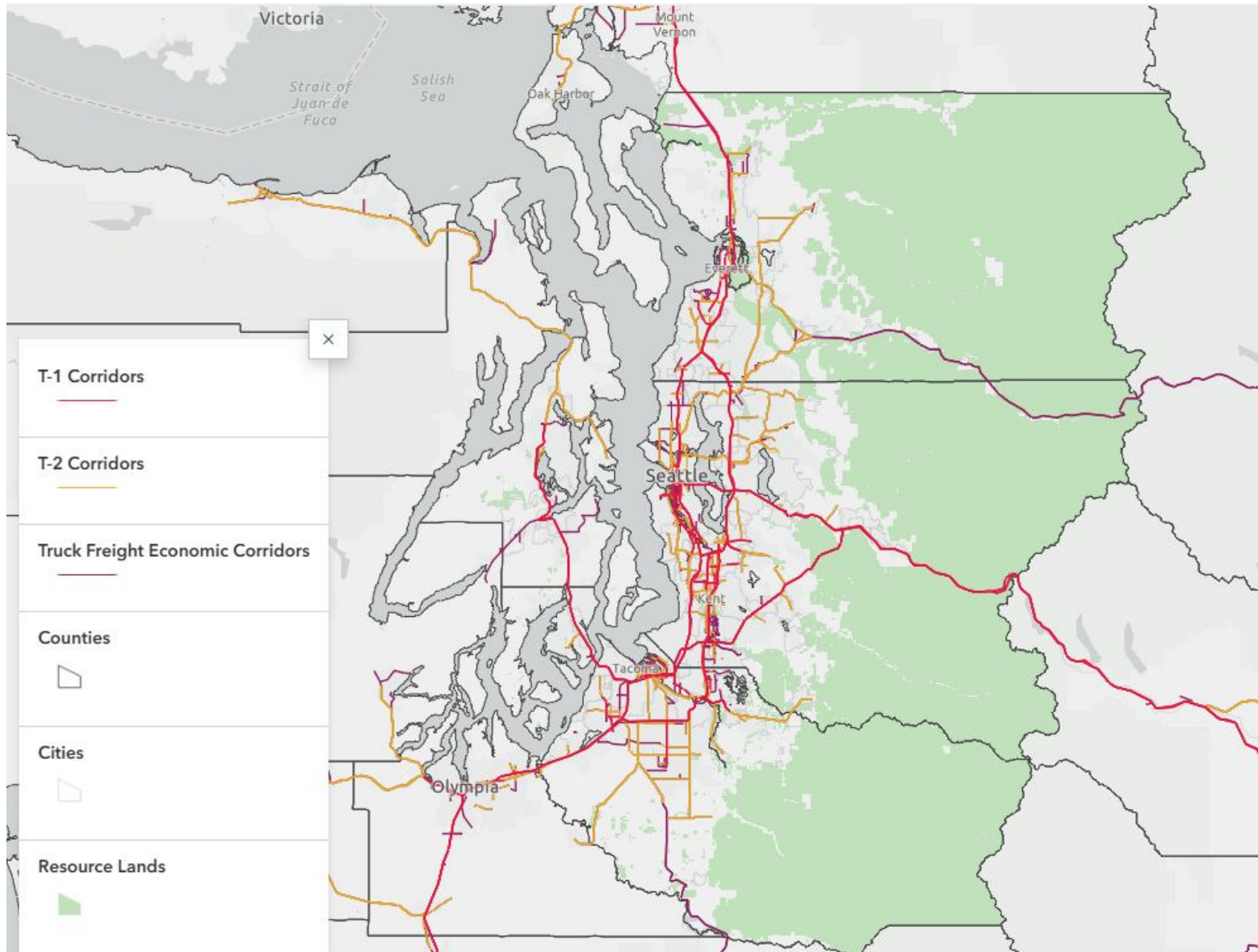
## Truck Corridors

Truck corridors included in the FGTS serve a wide variety of goods movement, from heavy duty trucks transporting goods over long distances, to small and medium size trucks delivering goods from warehouses and fulfillment centers to homes and businesses throughout the region. There are over 5,000 miles of FGTS designated truck corridors within the region. The major truck corridors (T-1 and T-2) move the highest volumes of goods, though they also move around half of the region's general-purpose motor vehicle traffic.

WSDOT also designates certain roadways as Truck Freight Economic Corridors that are critical to the movement of goods. These corridors include the highest volume T-1 and T-2 designated FGTS corridors, as well as alternative routes that increase freight system resiliency during severe weather and other disruptions, and first/last mile connector routes that link freight corridors to major freight generators including ports and other intermodal facilities, warehouses, and distribution centers. Truck Freight Economic Corridors are expected to be designed and operated with freight movement in mind and include context-appropriate features (e.g., mountable curbs) that enable heavy-duty truck drivers to move to their destinations as safely and efficiently as possible.

Different types of roadways serve different purposes for freight, which need to be balanced with the purposes each facility serves for other modes as well. Most other streets and highways also move goods to varying degrees, primarily commercial and residential deliveries using medium-duty trucks as well as smaller delivery vehicles ranging from vans to cargo e-bikes.





Map 4 – FGTS T-1 and T-2 Truck Corridors and Truck Freight Economic Corridors in the central Puget Sound Region

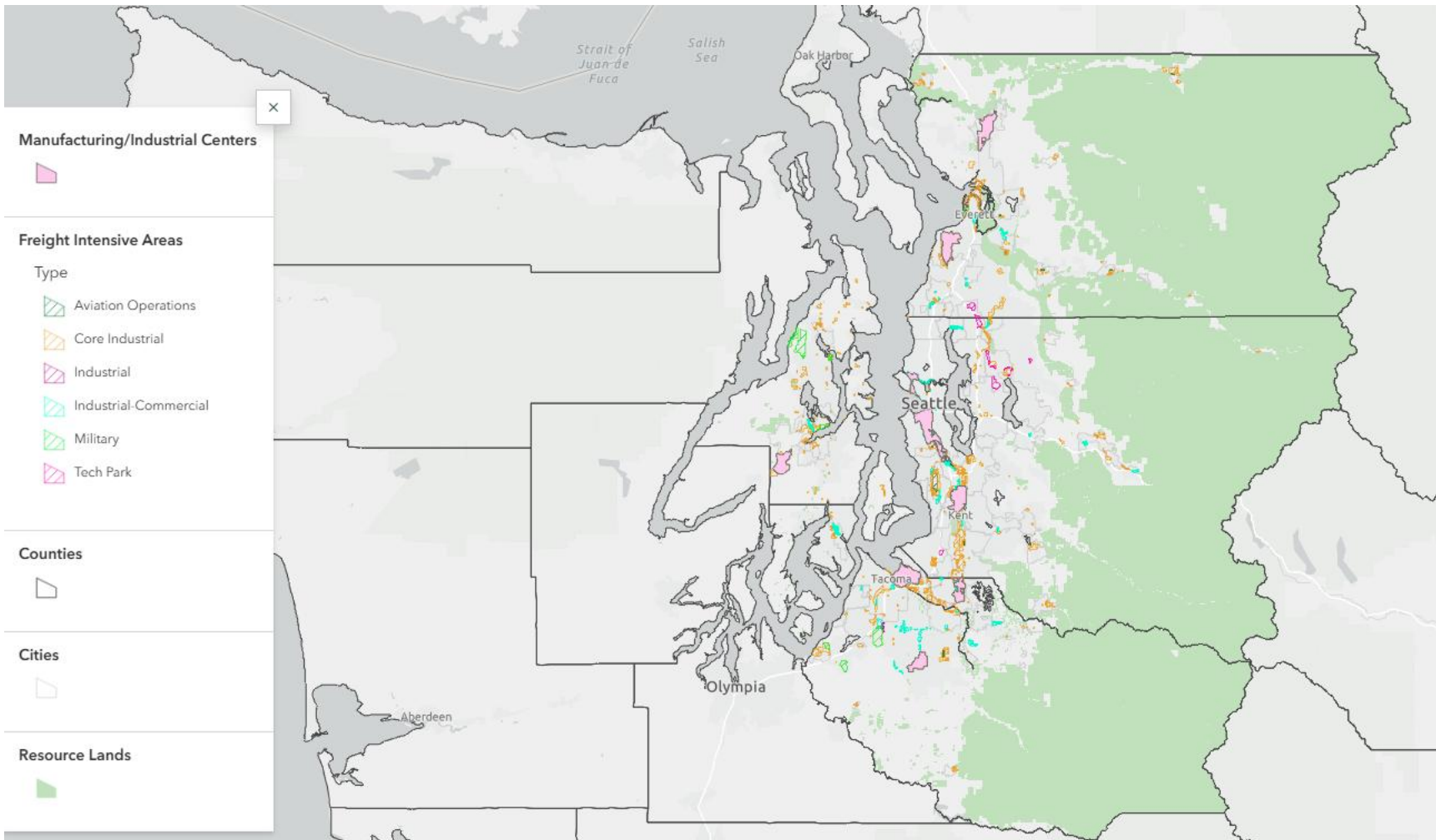
## MICs and Other Industrial Lands

Manufacturing/industrial centers (MICs) are designated employment areas in the region with intensive, concentrated manufacturing and industrial land uses that cannot be easily mixed with other activities. These areas form a critical regional resource that provides economic diversity, supports national and international trade, generates substantial revenue for local governments, and offers higher-than-average wages. There are currently 10 designated MICs in the central Puget Sound region, as shown in the map below.

In addition to the MICs, there are other core industrial lands as classified in [PSRC's 2024 Industrial Lands Analysis](#). These areas are home to many of the region's manufacturing facilities, warehouses, and commercial distribution centers.



Cascade MIC. Source - City of Marysville



Map 5 – Manufacturing/Industrial Centers and Freight Intensive Areas in the central Puget Sound Region

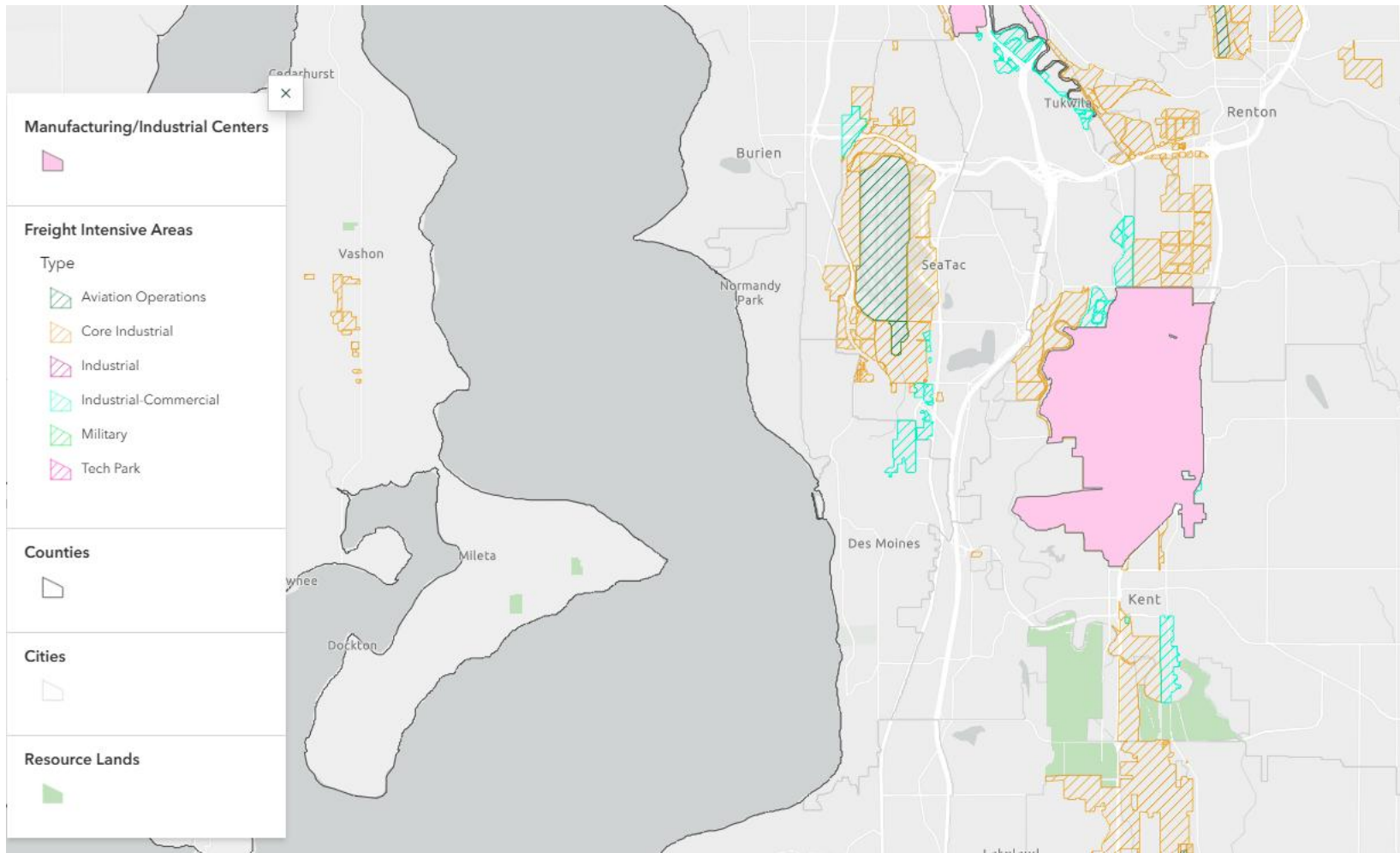
The **Kent Valley** is the largest hub of freight activity in the region. It has grown into the second-largest distribution center on the West Coast due to its unique position between the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma and proximity to SeaTac Airport (SEA). E-commerce firms have opened fulfillment centers in the Kent Valley to take advantage of its strategic location near major freight corridors and the region's substantial customer base. ~~With its strategic location near the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma,~~

The Kent Valley is home to more than 10,000 businesses with over 250,000 employees, generating \$6.7 billion in annual revenue.

Approximately 20% of jobs in ~~The Kent~~the vValley are in the manufacturing sector, with companies specializing in advanced manufacturing, particularly aerospace manufacturing. ~~aerospace manufacturing as a primary specialization.~~<sup>3</sup>



Kent Valley Industrial Center



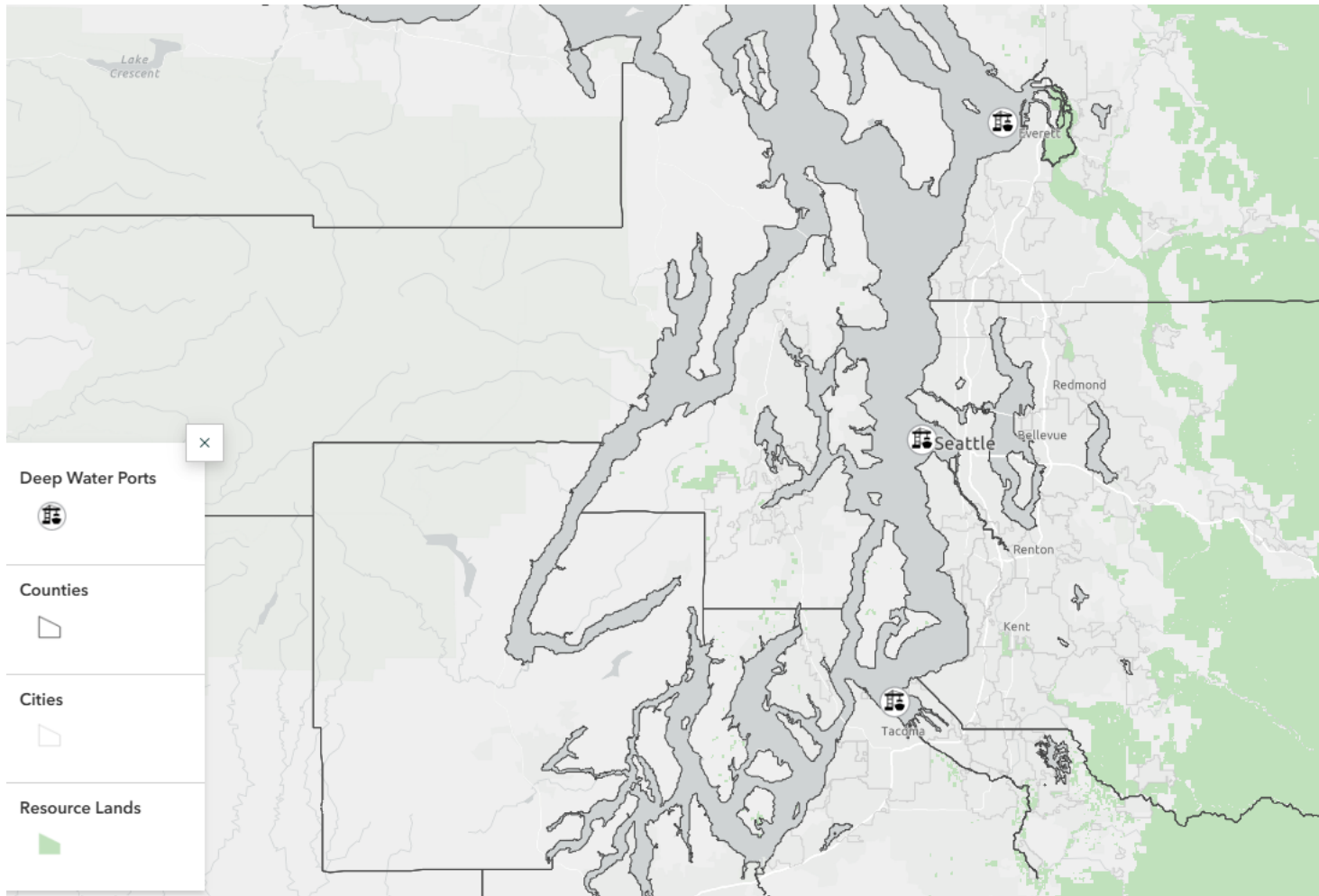
Map 6 – Kent Manufacturing/Industrial Center and Freight Intensive Areas in the Kent Valley

## Deepwater Ports

The Ports of Seattle, Tacoma, and Everett are the three deep water ports in the region that move cargo between ships, trains, and trucks.

The Ports of Seattle and Tacoma are both natural deep-water ports and require minimal dredging relative to other ports in the United States.

Other advantages of the regional ports are that they are closer to major North Pacific trading partners and have good connections to the upper Midwest. This makes the region's ports particularly competitive for the bulk movement of agricultural products.



Map 7 – Deep Water Ports in the central Puget Sound Region

## Northwest Seaport Alliance

Established in 2015, the Northwest Seaport Alliance is a marine cargo operating partnership between the Port of Seattle and the Port of Tacoma.

Today, the Northwest Seaport Alliance ranks as the ~~sixth-busiest~~ seventh-largest container gateway ~~cargo port~~ in the country ~~based on container volume. It supports over 58,000 jobs and in 2024 handled over 25 million tons of cargo, plus automobiles,~~ handling over million Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) in 2024.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to connecting to ports throughout Asia, direct service is also provided to Alaska, Australia, Europe, the Middle East, and South America. Cargo moving through NWSA's ports includes bulk commodities like soybeans, wheat, corn, raw wood, and oil. Containerized goods include machinery of all kinds, toys, sports equipment, furniture and apparel. The Port of Tacoma also handles military cargo in collaboration with Joint Base Lewis-McChord.



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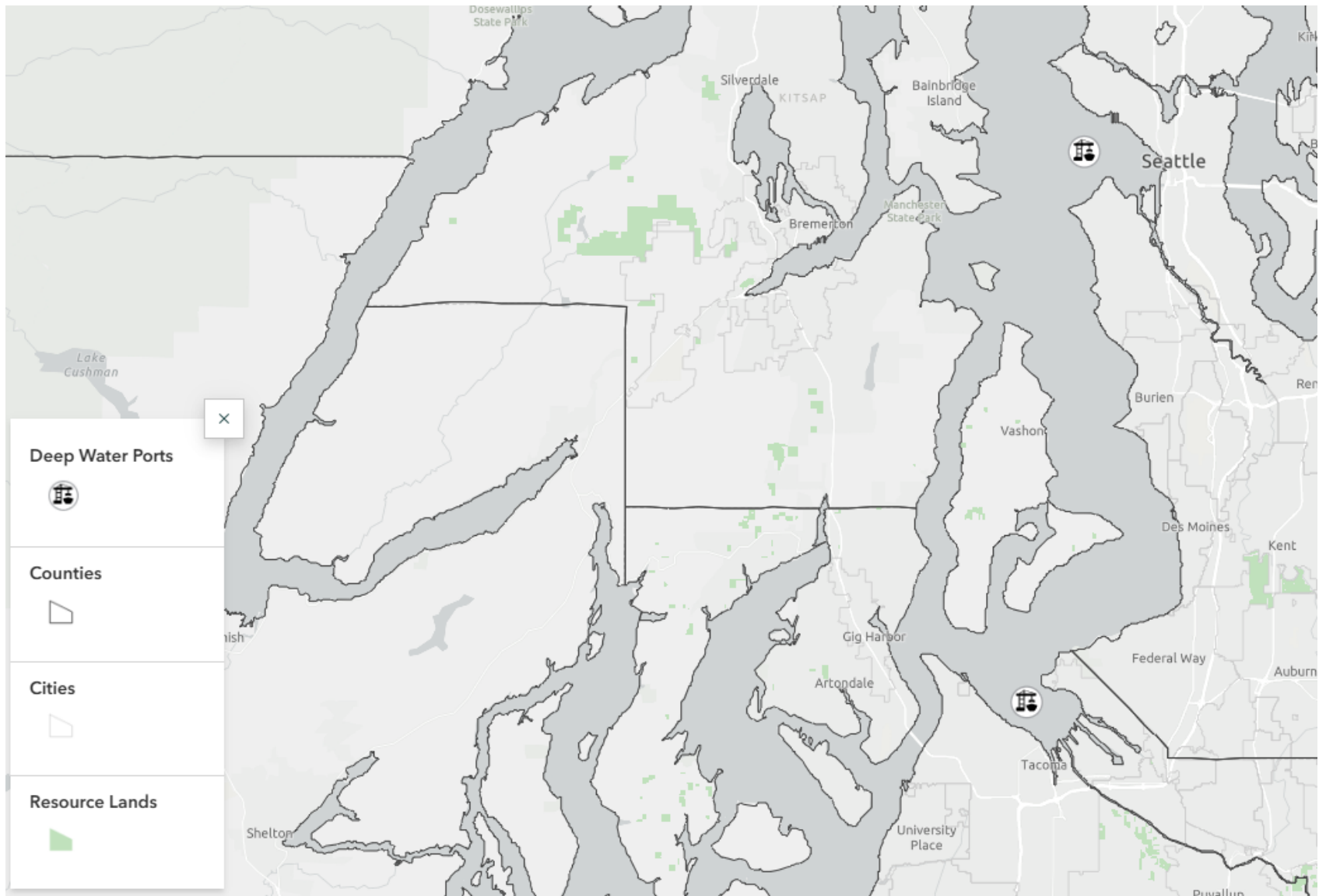
The Port of Tacoma is also identified as a recovery port to provide resiliency within the region in the event of a man-made or natural disaster.



Port of Tacoma



Port of Seattle



Map 8 – Ports of Seattle and Tacoma

## Port of Everett

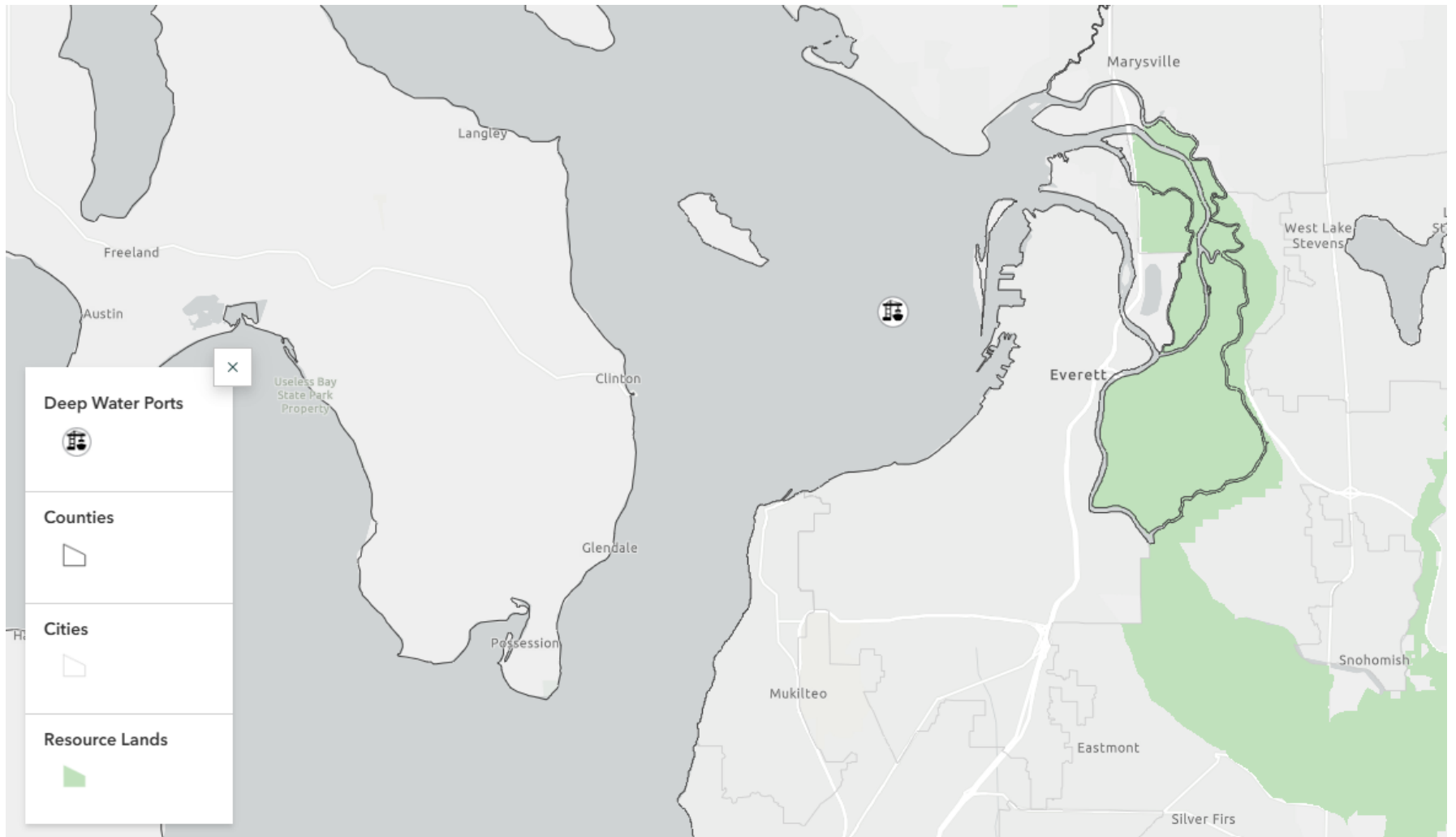
The Port of Everett specializes in high value, over-dimensional cargo such as airplane and aerospace parts.

With nearly **\$21 billion** in exports yearly, the Port of Everett is the fifth largest port by value on the U.S. West Coast.<sup>5</sup>

It is also identified as a recovery port to provide resiliency within the region in the event of a man-made or natural disaster.



Port of Everett

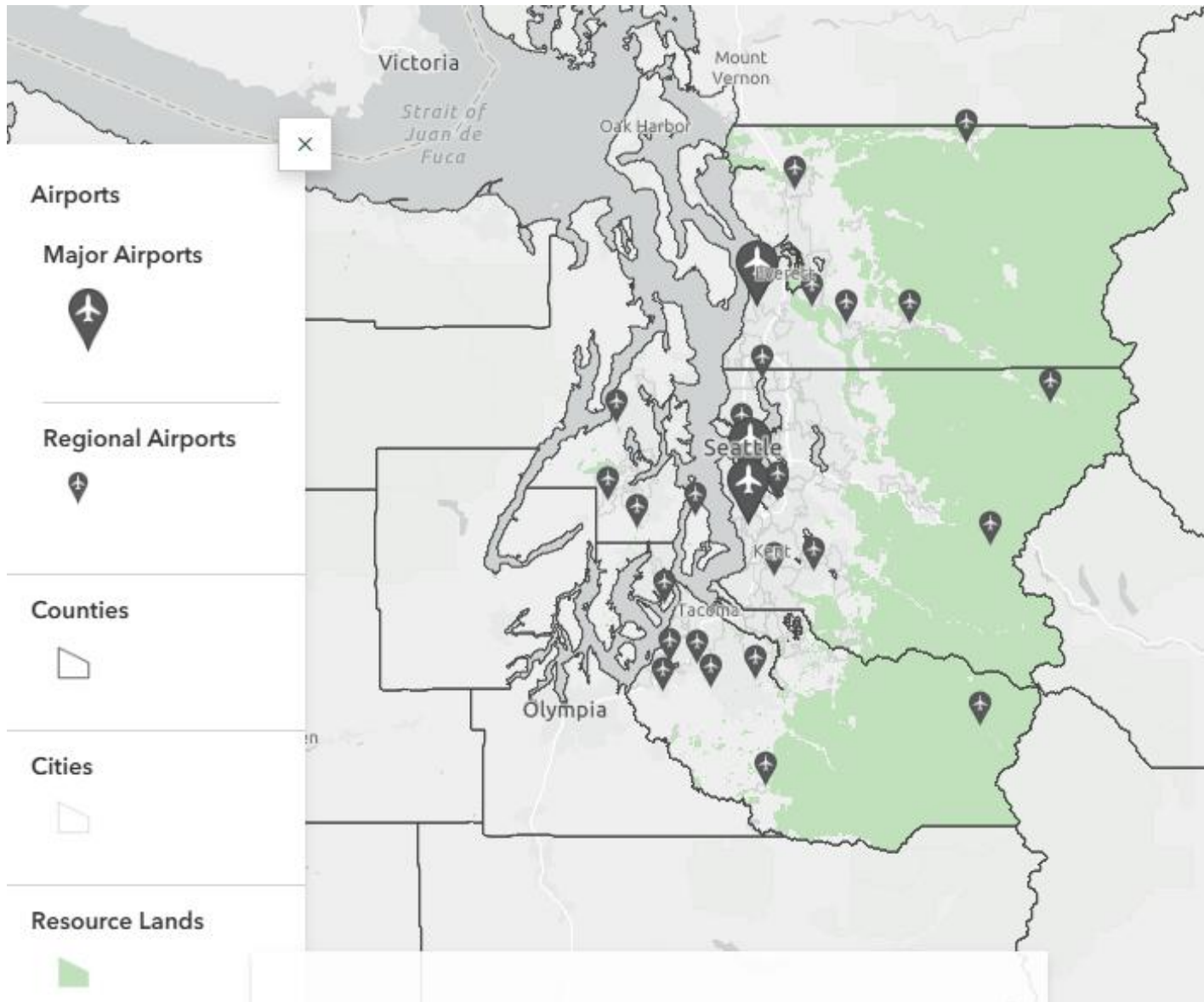


Map 9 – Port of Everett

## Airports

In 2023, Airports in the state shipped nearly **2 million tons** of air cargo, moving high-value, time-sensitive, perishable products. The regional airport system consists of 28 airports: 26 public use facilities and 2 military airfields.

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport and Boeing Field (King County International Airport) combined have an **85%** share of the total Washington state air cargo market.



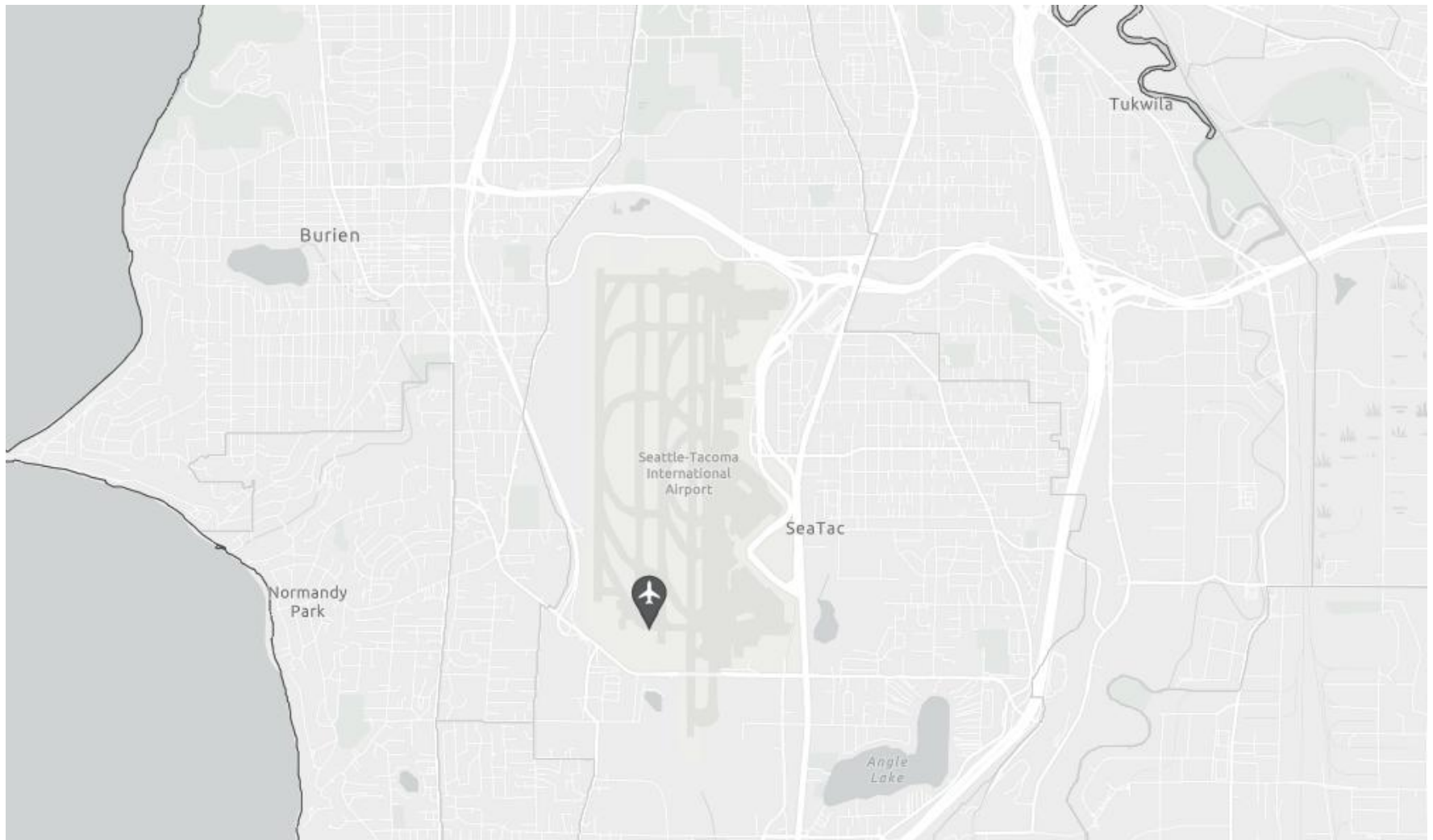
Map 10 – Airports in the central Puget Sound Region

Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) [air carriers offer a mix of domestic and international belly cargo, domestic and international freighter cargo, as well as integrator/express cargo generated by FedEx, DHL & Amazon Air.](#) ~~has the greatest variety of cargo offerings and acts as the primary gateway for international cargo.~~<sup>6</sup>

Typical products handled include high-value agriculture (e.g. cherries, blueberries), fresh seafood, products supporting just-in-time manufacturing, and medical devices.

Additionally, Boeing located one of its few global spare parts warehouses adjacent to the airport to meet the demands of just-in-time manufacturing process for its variety of aircraft.

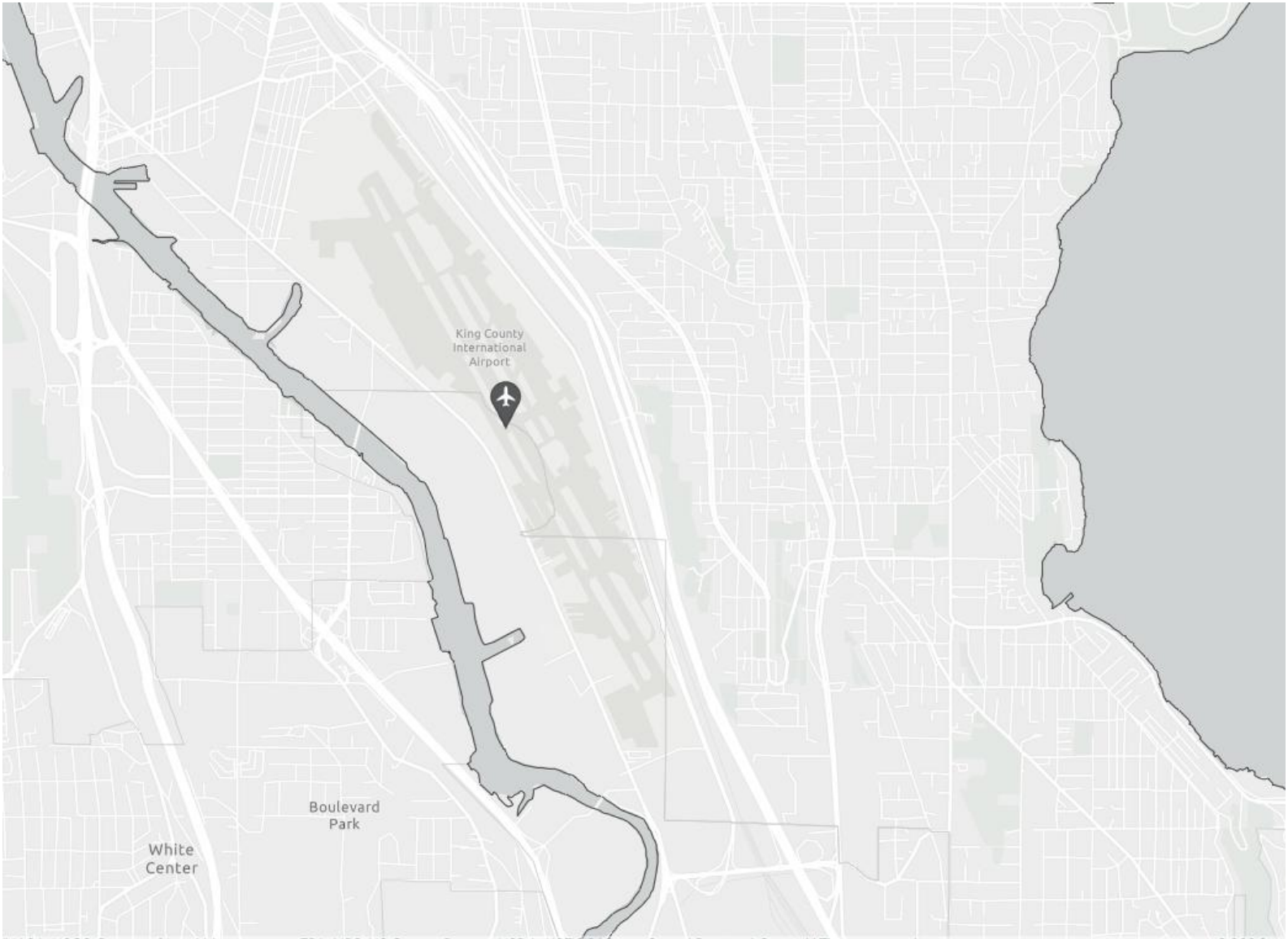




Map 11 – Seattle-Tacoma International Airport

**King County International Airport – Boeing Field** is one of the busiest non-hub airports in the nation.<sup>7</sup> As a center for business aviation, the airport acts as an important regional gateway for air cargo companies, particularly United Parcel Service (UPS).



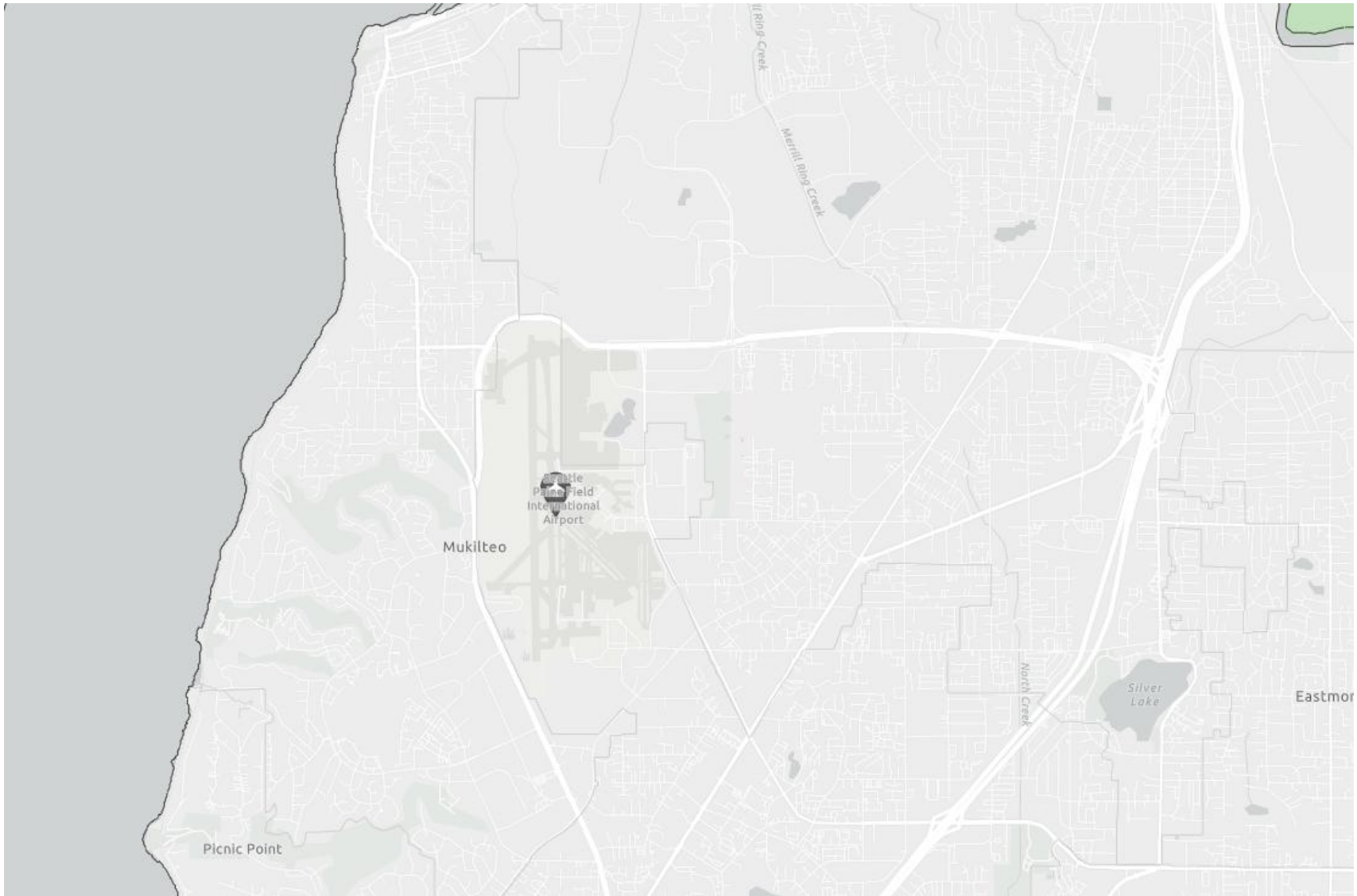


Map 12 – King County International Airport – Boeing Field

**Paine Field** primarily handles specialized aviation and airplane parts.

While there is no general air cargo service currently provided at the airport, it is part of Boeing's 777X manufacturing and assembly program.





Map 13 – Paine Field

## Truck Travel in the Region

Trucks are a major component of the freight transportation system that share the highway and street system with other modes of transportation. The majority of goods are transported by truck for at least a portion of each journey from supplier to consumer.

### Current and Future Truck Performance

Trucks move around the clock throughout the region. Heavy truck travel is most concentrated in the vicinity of the region's major freight generators, including the ports, intermodal facilities, Manufacturing / Industrial Centers, and other freight-intensive areas. More than one in three heavy truck trips move through the Kent Valley, where many of the region's manufacturing and warehousing jobs/businesses are concentrated. Truck traffic is also relatively high around the gateways to the region, including North Bend and southern Pierce County near Joint Base Lewis McChord. In these places, drivers position themselves to arrive at their destinations at specified times, take breaks, and refuel as they prepare for the next stage of their trip.

Trucks will continue to move the most goods in 2050, though advancements in technology may lead to shifts in how they are powered and operated. Based on current assumptions, truck vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is anticipated to grow more than 20% by 2050.

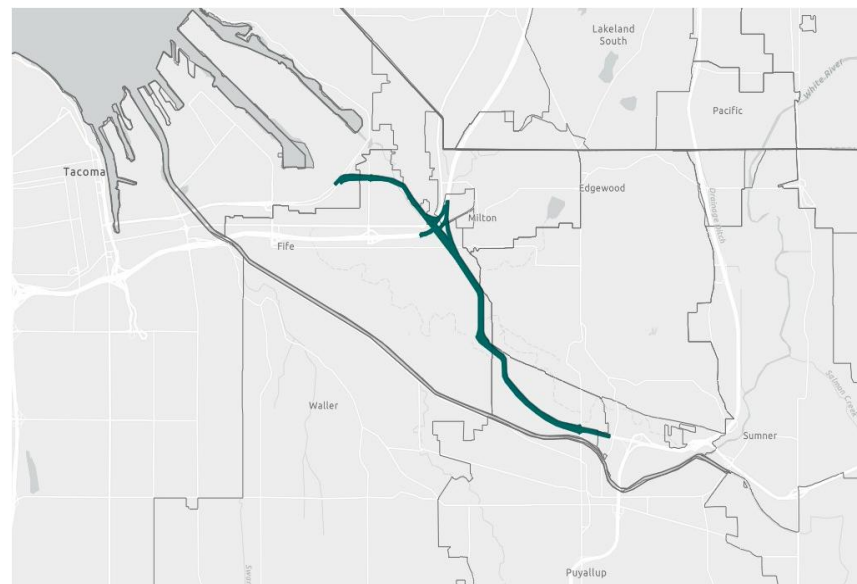


Many of the Regional Capacity Projects contained in the draft Regional Transportation Plan will directly improve the regional freight network. Over one hundred (40%) of the projects are located on designated freight routes, and over forty (16%) are located within the region's Manufacturing / Industrial Centers. These projects will enhance freight movement in a variety of ways, ranging from projects that facilitate truck movement to safety improvements that will reduce conflicts between modes.

One of the most significant changes to freight movement in the region will be the opening of the new SR 167 alignment between Puyallup and the Port of Tacoma. The project will extend the freeway to the Port and allow trucks to bypass local streets that are currently used. Coupled with related projects like the I-5 / Port of Tacoma Road Interchange and the I-5/ 54th Avenue East Interchange, there will be significant improvements in how trucks move in and out of the Port of Tacoma vicinity.

[The SR 509 Completion Project will also bring major benefits for regional freight movement by completing a missing link in the highway network. It will establish a new connection to SEA that will increase access for both passengers and cargo.](#)

[Both the SR 167 and SR 509 projects will enhance freight movement by making new connections between the region's industrial lands and ports; they are also expected to reduce congestion on local streets and I-5 by providing alternate routes. The projects will also benefit pedestrians and bicyclists through the construction of over 13 miles of new shared-use paths and over 4 miles of new sidewalks.](#)



Additional freight-focused infrastructure improvements that are on the Regional Capacity Projects list include two railway grade separation projects that will improve freight movement and reduce modal conflicts. Fife's 70th Avenue East Railroad Crossing and Seattle's SODO Rail Corridor Grade Separations will bring benefits to all modes travelling through these areas.

Many of the other projects currently planned in the region that will benefit freight movement will not change the overall capacity of the transportation system. These investments, such as maintenance and preservation of freight facilities, separation of pedestrians and bicycles from the roadway, and operational efficiencies, are considered programmatic and are not captured in the Regional Capacity Projects list.

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## [Freight Issues and Needs](#)

### Truck Parking

There are operational and maintenance impacts of heavy truck use that are beyond the responsibility of any single jurisdiction or agency. As a prime example, there is an inadequate supply of truck parking in the United States, including within the central Puget Sound region. It is essential for drivers to have safe and hygienic places to rest in order to meet federal hours-of-service regulations, take care of basic needs, and prepare for the next stage of their trips. This is a critical need to keep freight moving safely and reduce roadway congestion, yet drivers report difficulty finding adequate truck parking, particularly along I-5, I-405, and I-90.<sup>8</sup> [The vast majority \(80%\) of the current inventory of truck parking is provided by the private sector.](#)<sup>9</sup>



In December 2024, the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board and WSDOT submitted a jointly developed [Truck Parking Implementation Plan](#) to the Washington State Legislature that recommends six specific actions to address truck parking shortages statewide. The plan builds off previous truck parking studies by identifying the root cause of truck parking issues and recommending some of the specific actions identified in prior studies completed by WSDOT and the Joint Transportation Committee.

The recommendations include completing the development of a Truck Parking Information Management System along I-5 to provide drivers with real-time information about the availability of truck parking at safety rest areas and weigh stations and pursuing federal funding to add truck parking stalls at the I-5 Fort Lewis weigh station.

While the above recommendations are focused primarily on parking for long haul trucks, the City of Seattle has recently focused efforts on increasing truck parking supply for drayage trucks in the Port of Seattle terminal area on Harbor Island and the intermodal rail terminal in the Industrial District.

## Safety Issues

Collisions involving heavy trucks have higher risks of crashes resulting in deaths and serious injuries, particularly when vulnerable users are involved.<sup>9</sup> Around 14% of the region's FGTS Truck Corridors are on the High-Injury Network identified through PSRC's 2025 [\*Regional Safety Action Plan\*](#).

Incorporating safety features is a key element in Regional Capacity Projects and is included in the plan consistency framework by which every project is evaluated. As not all countermeasures are appropriate for freight intensive areas, it is crucial that these improvements are designed to avoid disruptions to freight movement while also reducing opportunities for conflicts between freight traffic and other users of the transportation system. Consideration of local context and the core purpose and function of roadways will be paramount in determining which countermeasures may be appropriate for a given corridor, particularly as designated freight corridors have unique heavy-duty transportation needs with few alternative routes.



As an example, Seattle's East Marginal Way Multimodal Improvements Project is expected to include operational elements that improve conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists such as enhanced crossings, in addition to freight features like ITS and freight-only lanes.

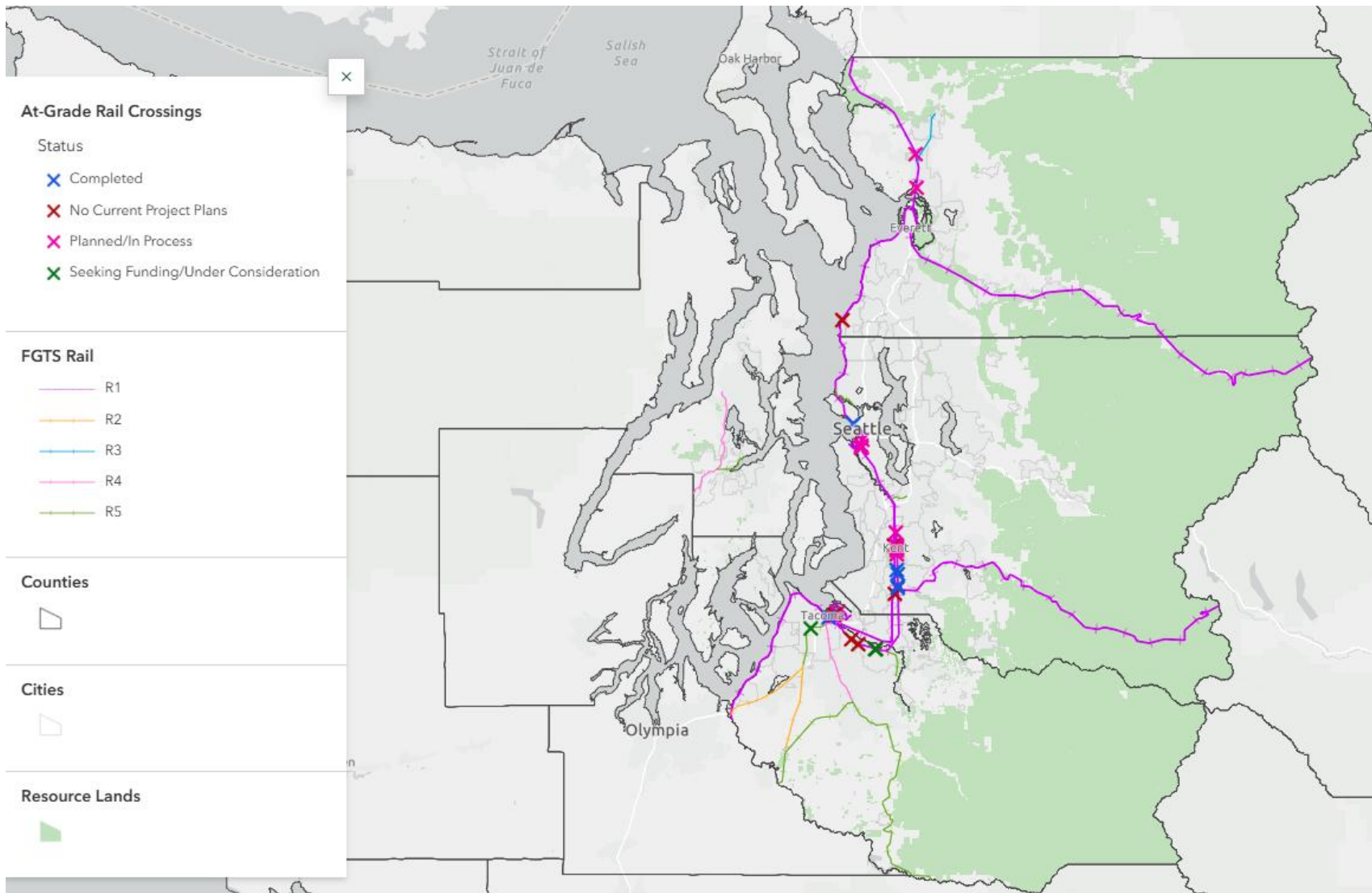
Source: University of Washington Urban Freight Lab

## At-grade Rail Crossings

An important multimodal consideration for freight is the presence of at-grade rail intersections with roadways, where trains must occupy the same spaces used by motor vehicles and people riding bikes, walking, and rolling. These intersections are typically under the jurisdiction of multiple authorities – the railroad companies like Union Pacific and BNSF and the city/county in which it is located.

The Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission developed the [Washington State Action Plan](#) in 2022 to identify the high-risk crossings throughout the state and rank them based on factors including the number of daily trains and average annual daily traffic. The analysis generated a list of the top 58 high-risk crossings, 27 of which are located in the region.

In 2024, the Commission published its [second progress report](#). Six of the 27 crossings initially identified in the region have had projects completed; 13 additional crossings have projects either planned or in progress. The Commission will continue to provide annual updates on the status of the State Action Plan.



Map 13 – At-Grade Rail Crossings and FGTS Rail Corridors in the central Puget Sound Region

## Maintenance and Preservation



While all modes using the region's infrastructure rely on maintenance and preservation to keep moving, the backlog of roadway maintenance and preservation projects is a significant issue for trucks. The major truck corridors are the foundation of the region's economy, yet they are also the roads that are most likely to deteriorate due to the size and volumes of vehicles they move each day. Bridges, given their weight limits, are especially weak links in the freight system – a single new weight restriction or unexpected closure on a major freight corridor has serious implications for the ability of trucks to efficiently get to their destinations. Proactive investments in these corridors is vital to ensuring that freight

can move efficiently; [keeping pavement in good condition saves 7 to 16 times the cost of rehabilitation or reconstruction when pavements are in worse condition.](#)<sup>11</sup>

In addition to roadway projects, ports also need to maintain and preserve their assets including bulkheads, seawalls, runways, and terminal infrastructure. More information on maintenance and preservation needs is addressed in the draft Regional Transportation Plan.

## Summary

Moving freight is an essential function of the regional transportation system. Its importance for the economy will only continue to increase in the future, as will the need to maintain and improve how goods are transported into, out of, and through the central Puget Sound Region. Planning for and investing in the region's freight infrastructure is critical to ensuring the anticipated growth in people and jobs by 2050 can be accommodated.

## Citations

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3 - Kent Valley Economic Development

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4 - ~~Northwest Seaport Alliance~~

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7 - King County

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