

# Transportation Element

## Introduction

The Growth Management Act has very specific requirements for comprehensive plan transportation elements. To meet these Transportation Element requirements, Skagit County has adopted the Transportation Systems Plan (TSP) which includes a transportation inventory land use assumptions, travel forecasts, Level of Service (LOS) standards, current and future transportation needs, and a transportation financial plan in addition to other GMA requirements. In this chapter, the transportation goals and policies are presented. Together with the Transportation Systems Plan, the goals and policies provide the basis for transportation infrastructure decisions pursuant to the GMA. Since transportation infrastructure and services are also provided by the state, regional government, and the cities and towns, the Skagit County Transportation Element is intended to complement those other systems and networks. The Transportation Profile elaborates further on this.

The Transportation Element is based on the following documents:

- *Skagit County Transportation Systems Plan, Adopted February, 2003, amended*



*May, 2004, to include the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan.*

- *Skagit County Comprehensive Plan Supplemental Map Portfolio (includes road inventories and transit service areas).*
- *Skagit County Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) 2000-2005, Goals and Policies, Capital Improvements and Implementation Programs, July 24, 2000. The CFP contains information and policies regarding financing, level of service and implementation of capital improvement projects.*
- *Revenue Sources for Capital Facilities 2000-2005, July 24, 2000. This report identifies and briefly describes revenue sources that are available to Skagit County for capital facilities.*



Three aspects of the Transportation Element have a direct bearing on transportation project programming and funding through the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (Six-Year TIP). These are: (1) transportation policies; (2) existing and future transportation needs (based on Level of Service ); and (3) the transportation financial plan. The transportation policies are used to give general direction for transportation improvement investments. Along with the County’s Priority Array, which prioritizes road projects primarily on physical deficiencies, the Level of Service based transportation needs are used to select potential projects. The transportation financial plan is used to produce a financially feasible six-year plan. Thus, the Transportation Element provides a framework for use in transportation investment decisions.

Pursuant to RCW 36.81.121, the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) is updated annually. The Public Works Department produces a draft TIP that includes projects retained from the previous year, plus any additions or deletions, and a short description of each project. The department holds an informational meeting for the public to comment on the draft plan, and sends the draft documents to the Planning Commission for information and comment.

Then the Board of County Commissioners holds a public hearing on the proposed TIP. Members of the public may comment in writing or in person. The Six-Year TIP is usually adopted by the Board of County Commissioners after the public hearing.

It is then sent to the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) where it is compiled with the TIPs of other municipalities in the County. SCOG sends the TIP to the Washington State Department of Transportation where it is combined into the State TIP.

## GMA Mandate

Development of this chapter was guided in particular by the following GMA Planning Goal:

- *Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with County and city Comprehensive Plans.*

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— *Washington State Growth Management Act  
Goal 3, RCW 36.70A.020*

This Goal, taken in the context of the totality of the thirteen GMA Planning Goals, led to the following CPPs that provide specific guidance to the analysis and policies developed in this chapter:

- *Multi-purpose transportation routes and facilities shall be designed to accommodate present and future traffic volumes. (CPP 3.1)*
- *Primary arterial access points shall be designed to ensure maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions. (CPP 3.2)*
- *The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social, economic and environment impacts and costs. (CPP 3.3)*

- *The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan shall be designed to do the following: facilitate the flow of people, goods and services so as to strengthen the local and regional economy; conform with the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan; be based upon an inventory of the existing Skagit County transportation network and needs; and encourage the conservation of energy. (CPP 3.4)*
- *Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies, and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan. (CPP 3.5)*
- *The development of a recreational transportation network shall be encouraged and coordinated between state and local governments and private enterprises. (CPP 3.6)*
- *The Senior Citizen and Handicapped transportation system shall be provided with an adequate budget to provide for those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves. (CPP 3.7)*
- *Level of service (LOS) standards and safety standards shall be established that coordinate and link with the urban growth and urban areas to optimize land use and traffic compatibility over the long term; new development shall mitigate transportation impacts concurrently with the development and occupancy of the project. (CWPP 3.8)*
- *An all-weather arterial road system shall be coordinated with industrial and commercial areas. (CPP 3.9)*
- *Cost effectiveness shall be a consideration in transportation expenditure decisions*



*and balanced for both safety and service improvements. (CPP 3.10)*

- *An integrated regional transportation system shall be designed to minimize air pollution by promoting the use of alternative transportation modes, reducing vehicular traffic, maintaining acceptable traffic flow, and siting of facilities. (CPP 3.11)*
- *All new and expanded transportation facilities shall be sited, constructed and maintained to minimize noise levels. (CPP 3.12)*



## ■ Regional Transportation Policies

The Skagit Council of Governments has adopted policies and goals for regional transportation planning and infrastructure coordination. The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) policies are required by federal law and direct more detailed goals. The MTPO policies are:

- a) *Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the metropolitan transportation system through a cooperative effort with its member agencies, the Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization, the public sector, and state and federal agencies.*
- b) *Provide a Metropolitan Transportation Plan that identifies significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, regional, inter-regional, state, federal, and public needs and requirements while recognizing the inter-relationships within the contiguous urban area and areas immediately adjacent to it.*
- c) *Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing transportation system by encouraging timely maintenance of the system.*
- d) *Facilitate cooperation and information exchange amongst stakeholders in the Skagit MPO.*
- e) *Maintain and execute an ongoing public involvement program and plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the citizens of the Skagit Metropolitan Planning Area in the planning process.*

The Skagit County portion of the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) has another set of policies that are required to comply with state law. They are:

- a) *Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional transportation system through a cooperative effort with its member agencies, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the public sector, and state and federal agencies.*
- b) *Provide a Sub-Regional Transportation Plan that identifies regionally significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, metropolitan, inter-regional, state, federal, and public needs and requirements.*
- c) *Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing transportation system by encouraging timely maintenance of the system.*

- d) *Facilitate cooperation and information exchange amongst stakeholders in the Skagit Sub-RTPO.*
- e) *Maintain and execute an ongoing public involvement program and plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the citizens of Skagit County in the planning process.*

For each of these policies, the MTPO/RTPO Plans have goals that are intended to direct the coordination of the agencies in coordinating their individual plans and improvement programs and financing strategies.

Within this framework, the following transportation goals and policies have been adopted by Skagit County.

## Goal A

*Plan and maintain a safe and efficient system for the movement of people and goods in partnership with the Skagit Council of Governments.*

## System Management

### Goal A-1

*Maintain and improve the County roadway system consistent with the growth management strategies of the Land Use Element, and respect the unique environmental and economic character of the area.*

## Policies

- 8A-1.1** Monitoring for Congestion Relief – Monitor the capacity of the transportation system to meet level of service standards and manage congestion.
- 8A-1.2** Right-of-Way Preservation – Anticipate and address future transportation needs through strategies for acquiring rights-of-way and limiting of encroachments or ancillary uses that could endanger future roadway improvements.
- 8A-1.3** Multi-Modal Transportation – Participate in the planning and implementation of multi-modal transportation systems to increase mobility of all users and provide alternatives to the passenger car.
- 8A-1.4** Functional Classification – Designate all county roads according to the functional classification system mandated by federal and state law based



on the character of service those roads are intended to provide in urban and rural areas. Arterials should serve as the main routes to move traffic through the county. Collectors should serve as the supplemental routes for traffic within the county.

- 8A-1.5** Skagit River – The County supports improving the flow of traffic over the Skagit River, including new bridge construction.
- 8A-1.6** Arterial access – Primary arterial access points should be designed to ensure maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions.

## ■ Level Of Service

### Goal A-2

*Establish level of service standards for the County's road system to gauge the performance of the system and determine areas where transportation improvements are required.*

### Policies

- 8A-2.1** Level of Service Standards – The Level of Service (LOS) standard for County roads is C. LOS D is acceptable for all road segments that:
- Have Annualized Average Daily Traffic (AADT) greater than 7,000 vehicles; and*
  - Are NOT federally functionally classified as an 09-Local Access Road; and*
  - Are designated as a County Freight and Goods Transportation Systems Route (FGTS).*

The LOS standard for County road intersections is LOS D.

- 8A-2.2** The Level of Service standards shall not be the overriding factor when the County is considering road improvements. Other factors such as the Priority Array and the Comprehensive Plan policies shall be given equal consideration with the LOS.
- 8A-2.3** Design Standards – Maintain urban and rural design standards for structures, roads, and utility systems constructed either by the county or other public or private sponsors. These standards shall reflect the character of the communities as defined in the Land Use, Rural, and Community Planning Elements.

## ■ Public Transportation

### Goal A-3, Coordination

*Work with other agencies and jurisdictions to coordinate a safe, accessible, and integrated system of public transportation.*

#### Policies

- 8A-3.1** Transit Support – Encourage citizens and businesses to use transit as an alternative to the single-occupant vehicle.
- 8A-3.2** Transit Schedules – Allow County employees to adopt flexible work schedules that can be coordinated with transit schedules. Encourage similar actions by private and other public employers and employees.
- 8A-3.3** Support adequate funds for senior citizen and handicapped transportation systems to provide for those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves.
- 8A-3.4** Encourage public transportation services to serve cities, towns, and Rural Villages, and to link with systems in adjoining counties, when financially feasible and supported by the public.
- 8A-3.5** Encourage private transit providers to continue to provide services that public transit cannot, including services to the County and State ferry systems, and local and regional airports.

## ■ Passenger Rail

### Goal A-4, Passenger Rail Transportation

*Support passenger rail service to and through Skagit County as an important element of a balanced transportation system.*

#### Policies

- 8A-4.1** Encourage rail agencies to implement a public education program on railroad safety.
- 8A-4.2** Work with the Washington State Department of Transportation, local jurisdictions other agencies, and the public to make safety and other improvements to the rail corridors to allow for increased speeds.



- 8A-4.3 Work with the Washington State Department of Transportation, local jurisdictions, other agencies and the public to determine the location of potential rail crossing closures.
- 8A-4.4 Road improvement decisions shall be consistent with any plans for rail crossings closures and with other aspects of rail service.
- 8A-4.5 Plan for commuter rail service to Skagit County at such time it is determined to be economically and socially acceptable.

## ■ Ferry Service

### Goal A-5, Ferry Service

*Work to maintain county and state ferry services as an important element of the transportation network.*

### Policies

- 8A-5.1 Encourage the provision of adequate street, highway, and road facilities to accommodate traffic to the ferry terminals in Anacortes.
- 8A-5.2 Work with the City of Anacortes, property owners, and residents on Guemes Island to develop and maintain adequate parking areas.
- 8A-5.3 To meet future increases in demand, increase service capacity of the Guemes Island Ferry by: (a) encouraging car-pooling and walk-on passengers; (b) increasing the frequency of ferry runs based on demand; (c) considering additional ferry capacity if the aforementioned procedures fail to accommodate demand; and (d) adding additional runs outside the current schedule.
- 8A-5.4 In making all decisions related to the Guemes Island Ferry, balance the needs of the Island residents, the non-resident property owners, and the County citizenry as a whole. Decisions that would have significant service or financial impacts should be made after providing ample opportunities for public review and comment.
- 8A-5.5 Continue to provide safe and adequate ferry service between Anacortes and Guemes Island, and a fare structure designed to recover as much operating cost as Washington State Ferries does from the users.
- 8A-5.6 Support the State's continued provision of ferry service to and from Anacortes-San Juan Islands-Vancouver Island, B.C.



## ■ Non-motorized Transportation

### Goal A-6, Network

*Provide a safe and efficient network of trails and bikeways, including both on- and off-road facilities that link populated areas of the County with important travel destinations.*

*Achieve high standards in meeting the needs of non-motorized users through appropriate planning, design, construction and maintenance of user-friendly facilities.*

*Increase education, information and traffic enforcement efforts associated with non-motorized transportation as a means of lowering collision and injury rates associated with these modes.*

### Policies

- 8A-6.1** The Skagit County non-motorized transportation system is comprised of all streets and highways to which access by bicyclists and pedestrians is permitted, separated trails and pathways which have a transportation function as defined in the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan, and any system or design accommodations meant to serve non-motorized users.
- 8A-6.2** The County's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan should identify non-motorized needs in the County. Based on those needs, the plan should then identify and prioritize potential non-motorized projects. However, the inclusion of a project in the plan does not constitute a commitment that the County will fund or construct a project.
- 8A-6.3** Like all transportation projects, non-motorized transportation projects must be added to the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (6-Year TIP) in order to be funded.
- 8A-6.4** Provide for the diverse needs of bicycle, pedestrian and equestrian modes through appropriate routing and the utilization of single-use and shared-use facilities.
- 8A-6.5** Connect all significant traffic generators (such as neighborhoods and communities) with each other as well as with a wide variety of destinations including schools, employment and commercial centers, medical and social service centers, other transportation facilities and

modes, scenic and recreational areas, and the non-motorized facilities and systems of adjoining areas.

- 8A-6.6** Coordinate system planning, funding, and development with other local, regional, state, federal and tribal jurisdictions.
- 8A-6.7** Design all non-motorized facilities in compliance with federal, state and local accessibility standards.
- 8A-6.8** Access and trailhead facilities should include adequate parking and sanitation.
- 8A-6.9** Promote non-motorized transportation as a viable, healthy, non-polluting alternative to the single-occupancy vehicle.
- 8A-6.10** Rail Corridors – Rail corridors should be preserved through the use of rail banking programs after affected property owners and their property rights are first adequately and legally addressed.

## ■ Freight And Economic Development

### Goal A-7

*Support economic development goals by providing adequate air, rail and surface freight handling routes and facilities throughout the County transportation system.*

### Policies

- 8A-7.1** Freight and Goods Transport System – Invest in road improvements to create an All-Weather Road System as part of the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS). In conjunction with the state, designate portions of the road system as truck routes.
- 8A-7.2** Provide roads structurally adequate to handle anticipated commercial traffic demand, particularly on the FGTS.
- 8A-7.3** Encourage the enhancement and expansion of freight rail service to and from economic activity centers.
- 8A-7.4** Encourage improvements to air transportation facilities consistent with the ports of Skagit County and the state Aviation System Plan. Improve road and transit linkages to airport facilities.

## ■ Tourism, Recreation, Special Events, and Scenic Highways

### Goal A-8, Tourism And Recreation

*Support the promotion of tourism, recreation, and special events through the County transportation system.*

#### Policies

- 8A-8.1** Involve affected jurisdictions in the planning and design of transportation projects that affect major tourism, park, and recreation facilities.
- 8A-8.2** Coordinate management of the transportation system during special events with the responsible program organizations, while minimizing the disruption of normal economic operations.
- 8A-8.3** Encourage the state to consider high-season traffic demand on SR 20 in East Skagit County whenever the state studies the need for improvements.

### Goal A-9, Scenic Highways

*Support the preservation and enhancement of scenic highways and historic, archeological and cultural resources within Skagit County.*

#### Policies

- 8A-9.1** Scenic Roads Program – Encourage the state and federal Scenic Highways and Scenic Byways programs to ensure the preservation of scenic resources along designated highways.
- 8A-9.2** Interpretive Sites – Develop cultural, historic and natural interpretive sites situated on public lands in a way that non-motorized travelers can enjoy them.
- 8A-9.3** Coordination – Work with the state in implementing highway heritage programs in Skagit County, which integrate scenic resource preservation with the enhancement of access to historic, archeological and cultural resources along the County's highways.



## ■ Traffic Safety

### Goal A-10, Traffic Safety

*Provide a safe travel environment for county residents and visitors in all modes of transportation.*

*Recognize public safety, education, and law enforcement as integral to the development of non-motorized transportation opportunities in Skagit County.*

### Policies

- 8A-10.1** Safety Improvements – Include safety improvements as a priority in all capital projects and maintenance decisions relating to the County road system.
- 8A-10.2** Rules of the Road – Promote the safe use of transportation facilities and conformance with “rules of the road.”
- 8A-10.3** Education – Encourage educational programs that teach or encourage transportation safety for all non-motorized users. Encourage awareness among motorists of the rights and responsibilities of motorists and cyclists and the importance of “sharing the road.”
- 8A-10.4** Minimize conflicts – Encourage planning, design and educational programs that help minimize conflicts among users.

## ■ Road Maintenance and Monitoring

### Goal A-11, Maintenance and Monitoring

*Develop a systematic approach for monitoring and maintaining the transportation system in a cost-effective manner.*

*Provide a high level of maintenance to the County transportation system.*

### Policies

- 8A-11.1** Monitor (count and assess) traffic volumes on all arterial and major collector roads, and other selected roads as needed, to assist in planning and capital facility programs.

- 8A-11.2 Coordinate monitoring efforts with other County departments as appropriate, and with other state and local jurisdictions and agencies.
- 8A-11.3 Operate a road and bridge maintenance management program to ensure that roads and bridges are adequately protected from overloading, meet County and state standards, and are programmed for maintenance and repair on a regular basis.
- 8A-11.4 Maintain a program for addressing traffic safety problems through monitoring of high incident conditions.

## ■ Demand and System Management

### Goal A-12, System Management

*Increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system before major capital expenditures are made.*

#### Policies

- 8A-12.1 Implement transportation system management techniques, such as the synchronization of traffic signals and provision of left-turn lanes, as a way to increase the efficiency and safety of the existing transportation system with a minimum of cost.
- 8A-12.2 Encourage the Skagit Council of Governments and the Metropolitan Planning Organization to implement transportation demand management strategies, such as increased transit service and flexible work schedules, to reduce the demand for travel in single-occupancy vehicles, especially at peak traffic periods.

## ■ Land Use and Development

### Goal A-13, Land Use and Development

*Incorporate transportation goals, policies, and strategies into all County land use decisions.*

#### Policies

- 8A-13.1 Impacts of Growth – Growth and development decisions shall ensure that the short- and long-term public costs and benefits of needed



transportation facilities are addressed concurrently with associated development impacts.

- 8A-13.2** Directing Growth – Mitigate transportation impacts, wherever possible, by directing new development into areas where long term capacity exists on the arterial and collector system.
- 8A-13.3** Public Transportation Accessibility – Require new development and redevelopment to provide adequate motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities within and adjacent to the development, and to provide access to public transit, where available.
- 8A-13.4** Airport Expansion – In the vicinity of the Skagit Regional Airport, review development proposals to avoid future conflicts and the foreclosure of opportunities for future airport expansion.
- 8A-13.5** Coordination with County Engineer – Following major amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the County Road Engineer shall review the Functional Classification, the Priority Array, and the road standards for consistency and compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Recommended changes shall be forwarded to the Planning Department and the Planning Commission for comments prior to their submittal to the Board of County Commissioners for action. The review shall take place within the first year after major Comprehensive Plan updates.
- 8A-13.6** Support for Existing Development – Coordinate efforts to develop infrastructure that improves the efficiency of existing major industrial and commercial areas.
- 8A-13.7** Right-of-Way Dedication – The County shall require dedication of right-of-way for needed roads in conjunction with the approval of development projects.
- 8A-13.8** Land Use Compatibility – The planning, design, location and construction of new transportation projects and facilities shall consider and be compatible with adjacent land uses, as indicated in the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, including natural resource activities and rural residential areas.
- 8A-13.9** Arterials and Collectors – When arterials and collectors traverse residential areas, appropriate traffic controls shall be employed to balance the needs of both the local residents and the traveling public.
- 8A-13.10** Transportation Facility Standards – Incorporate standards within the land development regulations to ensure that new development



and redevelopment provide adequate motorized and non-motorized transportation facilities within and adjacent to the development.

## ■ Concurrency

### Goal A-14

*Ensure that suitable mitigation measures for addressing the impacts of growth are fair and equitable, and that transportation impacts at the project and system levels are mitigated concurrently with the project.*

### Policies

- 8A-14.1** When a development project has a particular impact on the safety, structure or capacity of the County's road system, suitable mitigation shall be required in the form of improvements or through the use of adopted impact fees.
- 8A-14.2** The County may, in cooperation with a city, collect impact fees on behalf of that city or town for development within its Urban Growth Area, and may enter into cost sharing arrangements where each shares impact fees collected by the other for impacts to their respective roads.
- 8A-14.3** As an alternative, the County may agree to participate in joint planning, funding, and construction of mutually beneficial transportation improvement projects for the unincorporated portion of a city UGA and the adjacent area in the county with a city willing to enter into a Joint Transportation Planning, Funding, and Construction Agreement with the County.
- 8A-14.4** The County may consider the use of impact fees as a means to ensure that adequate facilities (including but not limited to transit, pedestrian, bikeways, or roadways) are available to accommodate the direct impacts of new growth and development.
- 8A-14.5** If an impact fee ordinance is not in place, the County may require large developments to make traffic impact contributions if the development significantly adds to a road's need for capacity improvement, to a roadway safety problem, or to the deterioration of a physically inadequate roadway. Such traffic impact contributions are in addition to transportation facility improvements required in the immediate area for access to and from the development.



- 8A-14.6** The County, in cooperation with the development community, may consider alternative means to address transportation impacts of growth, so long as such alternatives comply with the GMA and the State Environmental Policy Act, and provide a practical solution that meets the intent of Goal A14 above.

## ■ Implementation and Intergovernmental Coordination

### Goal A-15, Implementation and Intergovernmental Coordination

*To jointly plan, prioritize, and finance transportation improvements with federal, state, regional, and municipal partners for the greatest public benefit.*

#### Policies

- 8A-15.1** Future Plans – Coordinate transportation plans with local, state, and tribal jurisdictions through the Regional Transportation Planning Organization and the Metropolitan Planning Organization to identify and provide solutions for anticipated transportation challenges identified over the 20-year life of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 8A-15.2** SR 20 – Encourage the state to provide facilities for non-motorized transportation as part of improvements to SR 20.
- 8A-15.3** Joint Development – Cooperate with the cities and towns in planning for joint development of road improvements that support mutual objectives.
- 8A-15.4** State Highway Improvements – In order to ensure that local efforts to meet GMA concurrency requirements are not undermined by inadequate state highways, support efforts at the state level to adequately fund legitimate highway improvement needs.
- 8A-15.5** Public Involvement – Encourage the Washington State Department of Transportation to continue to develop closer coordination with the local jurisdictions and with the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Transportation Planning Organization in transportation planning and in the transportation project decision-making process. In support of this, the County encourages the State to continue enhancing its public involvement programs for state transportation decisions.



- 8A-15.6** Americans with Disabilities Act – The County shall comply with the “Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.”
- 8A-15.7** Traffic Impacts – In determining traffic impacts of development projects, the County should consider the impacts to all jurisdictions (county, city/town, and state) and condition such projects as necessary to mitigate the impacts.

## ■ Capital Improvement Programs

### Goal A-16, Capital Improvements

*Integrate the Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the 20-year long range transportation needs assessment with the Capital Facilities Plan consistent with the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan.*

### Policies

- 8A-16.1** Evaluation Criteria – Evaluate proposed projects according to the Comprehensive Plan goals and policies as well as engineering feasibility, costs and benefits to the public, safety, impacts to the built and natural environment, community support, opportunities for staged implementation, system benefits and maintainability.
- 8A16.2** Funding – Make transportation capital investment decisions in consideration of capacity, safety, and growth management needs.



