

Goals, Guidance and Standards For the I-90 Corridor

Mountains to Sound Greenway National Scenic Byway

A 100 mile section of Interstate 90 (I-90) between Ellensburg and the Seattle waterfront has been honored with the designation of National Scenic Byway. The State of Washington has also legislated the preservation of this corridor through the Scenic and Recreational Highway Act. The byway is called the Mountains to Sound Greenway, reflecting its connection through the Cascade mountains from the east (Ellensburg) and Puget Sound (Elliott Bay in Seattle) in the west. The byway includes a wide swath of predominantly natural or farmed landscape on each side of I-90 and is known for its scenic beauty, recreational opportunities and working farms and forests. Many people live, work and recreate within the Greenway, with an average of 27,000 vehicles crossing through the Snoqualmie Pass section of the byway each day.

The Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust (Greenway Trust) nonprofit organization coordinates efforts to bring stakeholders together to conserve and enhance the natural, ecological and scenic qualities of the Greenway and to foster conservation and public recreation access for these natural lands. The Greenway Trust works to conserve the lands, waters and wildlife of this landscape, ensure that nature and outdoor experiences are connected and accessible for all, and that the region's diverse communities value and benefit from the Greenway.

The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) operates, maintains and improves I-90 to provide mobility of the traveling public, access to recreational areas, and transport of farm goods and other products across the state. WSDOT follows established standards for most elements within the highway right of way. Occasionally a unique element is proposed within the highway ROW, and WSDOT staff works to establish unique design solutions that align with standards and goals for that location. Some design solutions require the concurrence of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), since WSDOT acts as a steward of the highway for FHWA. WSDOT has a parallel responsibility as a partner in the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, to ensure alignment of the solutions with the goals of the greenway.

Designation as a National Scenic Byway implies responsibilities on the part of all relevant stakeholders to help retain the native natural and historical character of this iconic highway through the mountains, by consulting with WSDOT and the Greenway Trust on significant design and construction projects.

Shared Goals and Objectives

(From the [Mountains to Sound Greenway Roadside Master Plan - Implementation Plan Volume 3](#))

The policies of WSDOT are compatible and supportive of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust goals. A collaborative effort between the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust, WSDOT, and various interests along the corridor, including the local community and governmental entities, can achieve these goals.

WSDOT Goals

- Provide safe, efficient, dependable and environmentally responsive transportation facilities and services.
- Promote a positive quality of life for Washington citizens.
- Enhance the economic vitality of all areas of the State.
- Protect the natural environment and improve the built environment.

Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust Objectives

- Restore preserve and enhance a Greenway along the I-90 corridor, and encourage cooperation between the relevant public agencies and private interest groups to accomplish these goals well beyond the highway right of way.

Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust Goals

- Preserve and restore scenic beauty along Interstate 90 and its byways.
- Create interconnected trails for walkers, bicyclists and equestrians.
- Help people of all ages to appreciate their place in history and understand natural systems.
- Improve access and enjoyment for families, senior citizens, and the physically challenged.
- Protect and enhance wildlife habitat and corridors.
- Preserve working farms and forests.
- Encourage communities to retain their identities and plan for sustainable employment, settlement, and natural resource use.
- Preserve and enhance the scenic and recreational character of the I-90 corridor while supporting appropriate economic development.
- Encourage cooperation between interest groups.

Guidance for Implementing/Achieving Mountains to Sound Greenway Goals

Retain/Enhance Intrinsic Qualities

Projects within the Mountains to Sound Greenway have the potential to impact the intrinsic qualities and lead to slow degradation of the qualities that make the Greenway cherished. The following standards and goals apply for the entire corridor.

Scenic quality – to retain or enhance scenic quality, a project should:

1. Retain existing vegetation to the greatest extent possible
2. Retain or restore natural landforms when grading is necessary
3. Plant native vegetation to enhance the natural character
4. Follow established highway corridor standards for architectural treatment (see below)

Visual/Architectural Design Standards

WSDOT has established the following standards for visual and architectural elements in the highway right of way of the I-90 Mountains to Sound Greenway corridor:

- I-90 Architectural Design Standards, December 1986 - 4th Ave S. (MP 0.00 to Mercer Slough)
- Visual/Architectural Design Standards for WSDOT NW Region (see below)
- Architectural Design Guidelines – I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East - Hyak vic. (MP 55) to West Easton Interchange (MP 70), February 8, 2008

Visual/Architectural Design Standards for WSDOT NW Region (MP 0.00 to MP 33.29)

The following standards apply within WSDOT's NW Region, and include information summarized from the I-90 Architectural Design Standards, along with guidance/standard practices that are not documented elsewhere. These standards align with the shared goals and objectives of the Greenway that are outlined above.

Wall Texture Facing Highway and Ramps:

Unless otherwise noted, retaining wall texture can be accomplished using MSE panels, fascia or cast-in-place installations and the background texture shall match walls facing the highway with cut-out pattern excluded.

- 4th Ave. S. (Seattle) to East Channel Bridge - I-90 Random Board with Smooth Top Band (cannot be accomplished with MSE panels)
- East Channel Bridge to Bellevue Way SE - Raised Panel (alternating vertical recessed panels (striated finish) and raised panels (smooth finish))
- Bellevue Way SE to 156th Ave SE - Raised Panel (alternating vertical recessed panels (smooth finish) and raised panels (smooth finish))
- 156th Ave SE to Sunset Way Interchange (Issaquah) – Fine River Gravel texture with leaf cut-out pattern using multiple panel layouts to provide non-repeating leaf arrangement. Panel layout details to be provided by WSDOT following coordination with Mountains to Sound Greenway, Bellevue, and Issaquah involvement.
- Sunset Interchange – Fine River Gravel texture with leaf cut-out pattern (custom gateway treatment using MSE panels with varying leaf orientations)
- Sunset Interchange to Snoqualmie Pass – Cascadian Stone and Split Face finishes to provide continuity with the "Architectural Design Guidelines, I-90 Snoqualmie Pass East"

Wall Texture Facing Community:

Unless otherwise noted, the community side of noise walls can be selected by the community from a number of different standard form liners.

- 4th Ave. S. (Seattle) to East Channel Bridge - I-90 Random Board with Smooth Top Band (standard on both sides)

Wall and Barrier Color (Noise and Retaining Walls):

Standard wall treatment includes pigmented sealer applied in the following colors (see Standard Specification 9-08.3):

- 4th Ave. S. (Seattle) to East Channel Bridge – Washington Gray
- East Channel Bridge continuing East - Mt. St. Helens Gray

Bridge Structures:

All components, including bridge, barriers, abutments and piers shall have the following colors (see Standard Specification 9-08.3):

- 4th Ave. S. (Seattle) to East Channel Bridge – Washington Gray
- East Channel Bridge continuing East - Mt. St. Helens Gray

Tunnel Portals

- Standard wall treatment includes pigmented sealer applied in the color Mt. Baker Gray (see Standard Specification 9-08.3)

Sign Bridges:

- Square monotube shape in the color AMS-STD-595™ EA-20040 (dark brown paint/powder coating) is standard

Highway Light Poles, Camera Poles and Ramp Meter Signal Poles:

In some cases, a transition into local styles and colors will be necessary, and needs to be coordinated through the NW Region LA and State Bridge and Structures Architect; otherwise the following are standard:

- Standard colors for all poles: AMS-STD-595™ EA-20040 (dark brown paint/powder coating) or AMS-STD-595™ EA-37056 (Bronze Brown anodized).
- Luminaire style:
 - Seattle to East Channel Bridge: Box-top on square pole
 - East Channel Bridge eastward: Cobra head on Type 1 pole

Cable Railing (fall restraint at top of walls):

- Metal posts AMS-STD-595™ EA-20040 (dark brown) with cable galvanized

Barrier and Guardrails:

Concrete barrier color to match wall color for every segment

- 4th Ave. S. (Seattle) to East Channel Bridge – concrete barrier (no guardrail)
- East Channel Bridge to Sunset Interchange SE – concrete barrier or aesthetically treated guardrail
- Sunset Way SE Interchange continuing east – concrete barrier or aesthetically treated guardrail on wood or aesthetically treated galvanized steel posts
- Cable Guardrail – Aesthetically treated galvanized steel posts with galvanized cables

Chain Link Fence:

- Chain link fabric PVC coated in the AMS-STD-595™ EA-20040 (dark brown)
- All other components AMS-STD-595™ EA-20040 (dark brown paint/powder coating) or AMS-STD-595™ EA-37056 (Bronze Brown anodized)
- Slats in chain link fences (if used) shall be dark brown (not green)

Cabinets

- Preferred color is to match nearby wall color, but stainless steel is acceptable.

Vegetation

- The [Roadside Policy Manual \(RPM\)](#) is the WSDOT Policy document for roadsides. It recognizes the roadside as an asset with environmental, cultural and visual value/benefits. It provides policy and guidelines for managing roadsides through design, construction and maintenance to provide high value at a low on-going cost.
- The RPM requires projects to restore the roadside to the appropriate Roadside Classification for the project area. The goals of MTSG prioritize a forested character for I-90 within the NW Region. Roadside restoration includes grading to blend into adjacent landform character, and planting consistent with the Forested character guidelines in the RPM. Plantings consist of native plants arranged in natural groupings to provide natural character.
- West of 150th Interchange in Bellevue, a higher percentage of non-natives are used to better adapt to the more urbanized and harsh planting conditions of narrow raised planting areas and reflected urban heat. When non-native plants are used, they are selected and arranged to display native character.

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Traveler Information Signs

- The MTSG Master Plan includes a goal to provide consistent signing for travelers that would identify points of interest (such as trail heads, viewpoints, etc.). When projects include revisions to signs, MTSG should be contacted to inquire about addition of signs for these types of interest points.

Guidance for Non-Highway Elements within Highway ROW

Occasionally, a project may propose to construct non-highway elements within the highway ROW (such as kiosks, shelters, light rail stations, flyer stops, water tanks, restrooms, utility buildings, etc.) Since standards do not exist for these elements, the following guidance and process apply.

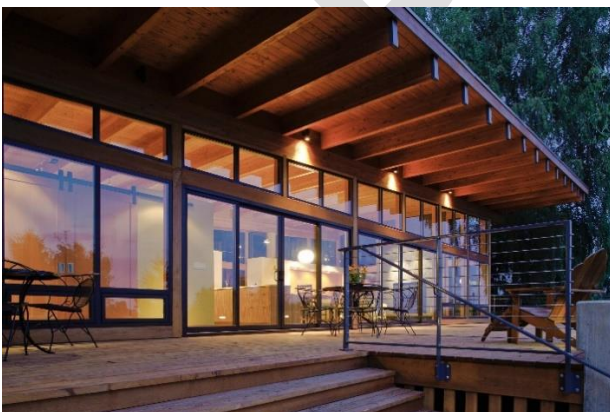
Proposals for non-highway elements within the I-90 Mountains to Sound Greenway National Scenic Byway right of way will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Prior to approval, a specialty team will review the proposal to ensure conformance with the intent and spirit of the Mountains to Sound Greenway goals to extend the forested character from the Cascade mountains to the Puget Sound. The consultation team will consist of the WSDOT Region Landscape Architect, WSDOT HQ Bridge and Structures Architect, Mountains to Sound Greenway Representative, and other expertise as necessary (structural engineer, traffic specialist, etc.). The following criteria are to be addressed and documented in the proposal that is submitted by the proponent:

Structures visible from the highway corridor must contribute to corridor continuity and align with the following aspects of character typical to the NW:

1. Simple, clean architectural style/form that supports the goal for a forested roadside character, rather than stand out or make its own statement.
2. Materials that reflect a natural character of wood, wood grain, rock, sand/gravel, tree bark, leaves, etc. This can be achieved by using these natural elements or by integrating the form or image of these elements into the material (such as concrete textures/patterns, metal in a bronze or dark brown finish, floors suggesting gravel/sand/rock, etc.)
3. Colors and finishes that recede rather than stand out:
 - a. Muted colors reflecting the natural environment of the northwest forest (brown, taupe, muted greens and muted blues) and standard WSDOT highway colors (Mt Saint Helens Gray, Mt Baker Gray, Washington Gray).
 - b. Finishes with low reflectivity (weathering steel, concrete, matte or low sheen paint, etc.)
4. Green walls and integrated landscape (green over gray)
 - a. Vegetation to screen structures, minimize visual encroachments and integrate the structure into the scenic character.
 - b. Vines used to soften the structure and integrate it into the surrounding landscape character (concrete walls with vines planted with Boston Ivy, cable structures that allow vines to float in front of walls).
5. Lighting that is minimized, not highlighted, and follows dark sky standards
 - a. Lights shielded on the top and sides to minimize glare/distraction from the highway and light pollution in the greenway.

Examples of appropriate building/structure character for Mountains to Sound Greenway:

- Clean, simple architectural style
- Materials/texture reflect natural character of wood, rock and stone
- Beams and shed roof common in Pacific NW
- Beams attached with metal brackets
- Colors and non-reflective finishes recede rather than stand out
- Metals in dark non-reflective tones (mullions, brackets, etc.)
- Buildings and other amenities integrated into surrounding landscape character





Public Art

[Chapter 950 of the WSDOT Design Manual](#) outlines requirements for art within the WSDOT right of way including submittals and approvals.

Review and Approval Process

All visual elements are coordinated for review with Mountains to Sound Greenway. When appropriate, review/input from other stakeholders is important. Final approval is provided by the NW Region Principal Landscape Architect (Dave Peterson 206-440-4500) and HQ Bridge and Structures Architect (Acting) (Mathew Rochon 360-705-6856).

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For more information: <http://www.mtsgreenway.org/>
and
<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/LocalPrograms/ScenicByways/CorridorManagementPlans.htm>

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