



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Dean Lookingbill, Transportation Director
DATE: April 30, 2013
SUBJECT: **Metropolitan Transportation Plan Regulatory Process**

AT A GLANCE – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide the Board with an overview of the federal and state regulations that guide the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan as well as the process for developing and amending the plan.

BACKGROUND

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Clark County is the region’s principal transportation planning document. The current [MTP](#) was adopted by the RTC Board, on December 6, 2011, Resolution 12-11-23. It represents a coordinated planning process between local and state jurisdictions to develop regional solutions to transportation needs. The 2011 update has 2035 as the Plan’s horizon year and is compliant with the requirements of the Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). Since the last plan adoption, a new federal transportation act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) has been passed. To be in compliance with the new federal transportation bill, the MTP will need to be updated in 2015.

FEDERAL AND STATE TRANSPORTATION PLAN REGULATIONS

RTC is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for all of Clark County and is the Vancouver portion of the bi-state Portland-Vancouver Transportation Management Area. As the MPO, RTC must meet a number of federal transportation planning requirements which result in a formal Certification of RTC’s planning process. Compliance with the federal regulations is necessary in order for the region to be eligible for the receipt of federal transportation funds. One of the planning requirements is the adoption of a federally approved Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

Titles 23 and 49 United States Code (USC) and Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) are the primary transportation planning provisions that guide RTC’s planning program and the development of a federally compliant MTP. RCW 47.80 provides the State Regional Transportation Planning Organization guidance. The source documents for these are listed below.

- Title 23 USC Section 134 Metropolitan Transportation Planning. Title 23 United States Code is the codification of the surface transportation portion of federal law (statute). Part (i) provides a listing of the requirements for developing the long range regional transportation plan.

- <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title23/html/USCODE-2011-title23-chap1-sec134.htm>
- Title 23 CFR 450.322 provides the federal regulations for the development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan. Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations is the codification of the rules published in the Federal Register by the US Department of Transportation (regulations) for the surface transportation system.
 - <http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?c=ecfr&rgn=div5&view=text&node=23:1.0.1.5.11&idno=23#23:1.0.1.5.11.3.1.12>
- Title 49 USC Section 5303 is the complimentary Title in United States Code to Title 23 and further provides federal guidance to the metropolitan transportation planning program.
 - <http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/49C53.txt>
- Chapter 47.80 RCW provides the state guidance for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations. RCW 47.80.030 is specific to the Regional Transportation Plan.
 - <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=47.80>

Overall, RTC as the MPO is required to carry out a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process that provides for the consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will address the following:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users.
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

The federal transportation planning statutes and regulations call for the development of a Metropolitan Transportation Plan in cooperation with the State and public transportation operators. In addition, the MTP must be updated every four years and for nonattainment areas must be in compliance with section 107(d) of the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7505a). The Clark County region's air quality status is "unclassifiable/attainment" for Ozone and "Maintenance Area" for Carbon Monoxide (CO).

As required, the transportation plan at a minimum must contain the following elements.

- Transportation Plan - An identification of transportation facilities (including major roadways, transit, multimodal and intermodal facilities, and intermodal connectors) that should function

as an integrated metropolitan transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions.

- Mitigation Activities - A long-range transportation plan shall include a discussion of types of potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the plan. The discussion shall be developed in consultation with Federal, State, and tribal wildlife, land management, and regulatory agencies.
- Financial Plan - A financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted transportation plan can be implemented, indicates resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be made available to carry out the plan, and recommends any additional financing strategies for needed projects and programs. The financial plan may include, for illustrative purposes, additional projects that would be included in the adopted transportation plan if reasonable additional resources beyond those identified in the financial plan were available.
- Operational and Management Strategies - Operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods.
- Capital Investment and Other Strategies - Capital investment and other strategies to preserve the existing and projected future metropolitan transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity increases based on regional priorities and needs.
- Transportation and Transit Enhancement Strategies - Proposed transportation and transit enhancement activities.

STATE TRANSPORTATION PLAN DEVELOPMENT

RCW 47.80.010 states the following: “The legislature finds that while the transportation system in Washington is owned and operated by numerous public jurisdictions, it should function as one interconnected and coordinated system. Transportation planning, at all jurisdictional levels, should be coordinated with local comprehensive plans. Further, local jurisdictions and the state should cooperate to achieve both statewide and local transportation goals. To facilitate this coordination and cooperation among state and local jurisdictions, the legislature declares it to be in the state's interest to establish a coordinated planning program for regional transportation systems and facilities throughout the state.”

RCW 47.80.030 provides the guidance for the Regional Transportation Plan content, review and use. It requires that each Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) shall develop in cooperation with the department of transportation, providers of public transportation and high capacity transportation, ports, and local governments within the region, adopt, and periodically update a regional transportation plan. The RCW requires that the plan do the following:

- Identifies the most cost-effective facilities, services and programs.
- Identifies existing or planned transportation facilities, services, and programs, including but not limited to major roadways including state highways and regional arterials, transit and nonmotorized services and facilities, multimodal and intermodal facilities, marine ports and airports, railroads, and noncapital programs including transportation demand management that

should function as an integrated regional transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities, services, and programs that exhibit one or more of the following characteristics.

- Establishes level of service standards for state highways and state ferry routes, with the exception of transportation facilities of statewide significance as defined in RCW 47.06.140. These regionally established level of service standards for state highways and state ferries shall be developed jointly with the department of transportation, to encourage consistency across jurisdictions. In establishing level of service standards for state highways and state ferries, consideration shall be given for the necessary balance between providing for the free interjurisdictional movement of people and goods and the needs of local commuters using state facilities.
- Includes a financial plan demonstrating how the regional transportation plan can be implemented, indicating resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be made available to carry out the plan, and recommending any innovative financing techniques to finance needed facilities, services, and programs.
- Assesses regional development patterns, capital investment and other measures.
- Sets forth a proposed regional transportation approach, including capital investments, service improvements, programs, and transportation demand management measures to guide the development of the integrated, multimodal regional transportation system.
- Where appropriate, sets forth the relationship of high capacity transportation providers and other public transit providers with regard to responsibility for, and the coordination between, services and facilities.

CURRENT MTP DEVELOPMENT AND ADOPTION

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan for Clark County is the long-range, regional transportation plan. The [MTP](#) was adopted by the RTC Board at their December 6, 2011 meeting, Resolution 12-11-23.

The 2011 MTP has a horizon year of 2035. In addition to the RTC Board's adoption, the MTP was approved by FHWA and FTA on January 12, 2012 and thereby represents the collective strategy for developing a regional transportation system to provide mobility and accessibility for person trips as well as freight and goods movement throughout Clark County and to the Portland metropolitan area. The transportation plan is based on the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan for Clark County and supports local land uses and the region's economic development. The MTP identifies future travel needs, recommends policies and transportation strategies, and identifies implementation programs to meet future transportation needs.

The elements of the MTP update were presented to the RTC Board for review and discussion throughout the course of 2011. The update included compliance with the federal transportation act, and focused on consistency between state, regional, and local plans with projects from state and local plans incorporated into the MTP.

The major elements of the MTP that were reviewed during 2011 are listed below:

- MTP Framework, Purpose and Goals (Chapter 1)
- 2035 Horizon Year and Demographic Forecast (Chapter 2)
- 2035 Travel Demand Forecast (Chapter 3)
- Designated Regional Transportation System (Chapter 3)

- Regional Transportation System Needs, Projects & Strategies (Chapters 3, 5 and Appendix B)
- Financial Plan (Chapter 4)
- Safety Assessment (Chapter 5)
- Modal Elements, including freight, transit, pedestrian and bicycle (Chapter 5)
- Determination of Conformity with Air Quality State Implementation Plan (SIP) (Appendix C)

The MTP was developed with technical review and input provided by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) and policy review provided by the RTC Board of Directors. The Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) reviewed the final draft 2011 Metropolitan Transportation Plan and recommended adoption by the RTC Board of Directors. The RTC Board's adoption completed the federally-required MTP update process. The adopted plan was subsequently forwarded to WSDOT, the Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration who approved the plan on January 12, 2012.

Throughout the MTP update process, opportunities for public participation were available. Public participation in regional transportation planning were built from local efforts. During 2011, public participation has included transportation meetings hosted by C-TRAN, the Columbia River Crossing project and by WSDOT on specific projects such as the SR-14 and SR-500 corridor projects. Local jurisdictions have included meetings on transportation concurrency and on Aging Readiness.

The monthly meetings of the RTC Board of Directors allowed the public to comment on regional transportation issues in a formal setting. All comments at these meetings became a part of the meeting record. The MTP update was a regular agenda item at many of the RTC Board meetings during 2011. MTP information and RTC Board materials on the MTP were made available through RTC's website at www.rtc.wa.gov. The public was also able to provide MTP comments to RTC via e-mail, phone or mail. RTC staff sent regular updates on the MTP's development to Clark County and Vancouver neighborhood coordinators and kept small cities informed through their Regional Transportation Advisory Committee representatives. Public participation opportunities included five open houses held throughout the year and a November 16 public meeting held at the Vancouver Community Library.

MTP UPDATE AND AMENDMENT PROCESS

The RTC Board of Directors adopted the initial Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) for Clark County in December 1994, and since then the MTP has been subject to annual review. From 1994 up to today, the MTP has had six major updates and eight amendments. Appendix J of the current MTP provides a history of the updates and amendments, <http://www.rtc.wa.gov/programs/mtp/>. A summary is listed below.

MTP Updates

- December 1994: First RTC Board MTP to meet requirements of federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Equity Act.
- December 1996: MTP update extended horizon year from 2015 to 2017 to be consistent with Clark County 20 Year Comprehensive Growth Management Plan.
- October 1999: MTP update to move horizon year and demographic forecast to 2020 and included several arterial improvements.

- December 2002: MTP update to extended horizon year to 2023, revised Chapter 4 Finance Plan, updated list of projects, and incorporated I-5 Partnership Governor's Task Force recommendations into the Strategic Plan element.
- December 2005: MTP update extended horizon year to 2030, goals/policies, designated regional transportation system, finance plan and list of projects.
- December 2007: MTP update to the transit system as a part of the designated regional transportation system, finance plan, incorporation of technical papers on security and environmental mitigation, and Strategic Plan element.

MTP Amendments

- December 1997: MTP amendment to include changes to the designated regional transportation system, transportation performance measures, and list of projects.
- December 1998: MTP amendment to incorporate the results of the MTP project prioritization process, a matrix of potential TDM strategies, and finance plan to show balance between estimated revenues and expenditures.
- April 1999: MTP amendment to add Phase I of the I-5/N.E. 219th Street interchange project.
- December 2000: MTP amendment to add I-5 morning peak period HOV lane project and updated base year from 1996 to 1999.
- December 2003: MTP amendment to add Port of Ridgefield rail overpass project, change Strategic Plan recommendations, and acknowledge funding for WSDOT Nickel Package projects.
- July 2008: MTP amendment to add the I-5 Columbia River Crossing project Locally Approved Alternative to the designated Regional Transportation system.
- December 2010: MTP amendment to add policy recommendations of the Clark County High Capacity Transit System Study, incorporate C-TRAN's 20 Year Transit Development Program, delete reference to Washougal SR-14 roundabouts and updated Strategic Plan element to include New Transportation Corridors Visioning Study map.
- August 2012: MTP amendment to add the locally preferred alternative for the C-TRAN Fourth Plain Transit Improvement Project.

As seen by the list above, the MTP updates and amendments have also differed in scope from narrative changes/clarifications, to demographic changes, to horizon year changes, and from minor to major project changes. The process, length of time and level of policy change have varied considerably. Any major amendment or update typically required a year or more to work through all of the analysis, impacts and provide opportunity for comment. In the case of amendments that would involve bi-state transportation facilities, RTC has formed a Bi-State Committee with JPACT. The Bi-State Committee's bylaws state that the "Bi-State Committee will review all issues of major bi-state significance for transportation". The updates and amendments approved to date have also been consistent with the comprehensive GMA land use plans, related transportation capital facility plans, as well as C-TRAN and WSDOT long range transportation plans. To date, RTC has not established a formal MTP amendment process other than to provide proper attention, time, process, and input depending on the level of the update or amendment. The sequence of MTP updates have typically been done to be consistent with changing GMA plans or federal transportation planning requirements.