



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Dean Lookingbill, Transportation Director
DATE: October 29, 2013
SUBJECT: **RTC's Draft Public Participation Plan, Release for Public Comment Review**

AT A GLANCE – DISCUSSION AND ACTION

The RTC Board is asked to review RTC's draft Public Participation Plan update and to approve its release for a mandatory 45-day public comment period prior to adoption. Final adoption of the Public Participation Plan update will be proposed to the Board at the January 7, 2014 meeting.

BACKGROUND

Public participation is an important part of the regional transportation decision-making process carried out by RTC. Policies and guidance for public outreach and participation are outlined in RTC's Public Participation Plan. Periodic review and update of RTC's Public Participation Plan is a requirement of the federal metropolitan transportation planning process.

RTC's initial Public Involvement Plan was adopted in July 1994 and was updated in October 2001. The existing Public Participation Plan was adopted by RTC Board Resolution 08-07-15 on August 7, 2007 to comply with the federal transportation act in existence at that time, SAFETEA-LU, as well as state public outreach requirements for the Regional Transportation Planning Organization. Federal law requires that the MPO periodically evaluate the Public Participation Process and update the Public Participation Plan to reflect current practices. At RTC's last MPO Certification conducted by Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration staff, RTC was told to update the Public Participation Plan to add more specificity.

The Public Participation Memo included in the October 1, 2013 RTC Board meeting packet documented the regulatory basis for the required Public Participation Process as well as process steps and timeline for updating RTC's current Public Participation Plan. At the November 5 meeting, the RTC Board will be asked to offer comments on the draft Public Participation Plan prior to release of the draft for public review. The official public comment period will last 45 days and the RTC Board will be asked to take action to adopt RTC's Public Participation Plan update at the January 2014 meeting.

RTC'S DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The draft update to RTC's Public Participation Plan (PPP) is attached with this Memo. The updated Public Participation Plan addresses both federal and state requirements for public participation in RTC's transportation planning activities; RTC acting as both designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Clark County region and as state-designated

Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the Clark, Klickitat and Skamania County region. The PPP documents RTC's commitment toward providing opportunity for public participation and sets in place RTC Board policy to allow for public comment and input in the transportation planning process.

The key essentials for public outreach and participation, as required by federal and state transportation laws, are reflected in the updated Public Participation Plan. These essentials include the need for RTC to ensure early and continued public awareness of and access to the transportation decision-making process in the region. Development of the Public Participation Plan must involve stakeholders and the public. There must be commitment to publish, or make available for public view, transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs and to hold public meetings at convenient and accessible times and locations, to employ visualization techniques and to allow a minimum 45-day public comment period before Public Participation Plan update. The updated Plan has been drafted to better reflect current practices for public involvement, consultation with interested parties, interagency consultation, and better describes RTC's existing governance and operations.

While the Public Participation Plan requires a minimum 45-day public comment period prior to its adoption, the PPP also includes the commitment to have a minimum 30-day public review of key RTC documents including the long-range Regional Transportation Plan, major amendments, and the program of projects in the Transportation Improvement Program.

The attached draft Public Participation Plan update was reviewed by members of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee at the October 18 RTAC meeting.

RTC BOARD ACTION REQUESTED

At the November meeting, the RTC Board is asked to approve release of the Public Participation Plan for public comment. Following Board approval or public release, the draft Public Participation Plan will be posted to RTC's web-site, legal notices will be published notifying the public of its release and notifications circulated to interested parties and consultation agencies.

NEXT STEPS

Following the 45-day public comment period, any public comments received will be documented, and the RTC Board will be asked to formally adopt the Public Participation Plan at the January 7, 2014 RTC Board meeting.

Attachment: Draft Public Participation Plan