



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director 
DATE: January 26, 2016
SUBJECT: **Growth Management Act – RTC Certification Process Guide and Checklist**

AT A GLANCE – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this memorandum is to recap background information provided at the January 2016 RTC Board meeting on the role of RTC in certifying local comprehensive plans as part of the Growth Management planning process. At the February meeting, the Board will have the opportunity to review a draft of RTC’s Certification Guide (attached) containing a checklist to assist jurisdictions while coordinating with RTC to complete the state-required certification process.

BACKGROUND

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the Clark, Klickitat and Skamania County region. As an RTPO, RTC has responsibility for the regional transportation planning process. One of the duties of an RTPO is to certify the transportation element of local Comprehensive Plans and any update to these Plans. The certification process reviews the transportation element within the Comprehensive Plan to assure conformance with the state’s Growth Management Act (GMA), consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and meets the requirements of Washington State’s Level of Service (LOS) Bill. The Certification Process embodies the spirit of the GMA which requires coordination between jurisdictions and transportation agencies when planning under the GMA as well as consistency between transportation plans.

HISTORY

The GMA Certification requirement was first addressed at RTC Board meetings in 1994 during development of the first Comprehensive Growth Management Plan for Clark County resulting from the State’s Growth Management Act passed in 1990. The certification requirement was again reviewed in 2003 when the RTC Board acted to endorse an updated Certification Process. Certification of local plans was ratified with subsequent updates to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Clark County, recognizing the close cooperation and coordination between the state, region and locals in developing Plans within the Clark County region.

ELEMENTS OF THE GMA CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Recapped below are key elements of the Certification Process as required by Washington State law codified in Chapter 36.70A RCW, Growth Management – Planning and in Chapter 47.80

Growth Management Act – RTC Certification Process Guide and Checklist

January 26, 2016

Page 2

RCW, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations as reviewed at the January RTC Board meeting and described in more detail in the Certification Process Guide (attached).

- **Guidelines and Principles**

Washington state law (RCW 47.80.026) calls for the RTPO to establish guidelines and principles to provide direction for development and evaluation of comprehensive plan transportation elements. RTC relies on the federal, state and RTP's Vision and Goals and Clark County's County-Wide Planning Policies to guide the certification process.

- **Conformity with the Growth Management Act (GMA)**

The RTPO is asked to certify that transportation elements of local Comprehensive Plans conform with the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) as listed in RCW 36.70A.070. The Growth Management Act prescribes what the transportation element should address.

- **Consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

Another certification requirement calls for consistency between the transportation element and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Consistency with the RTP will be determined through a comparison of the transportation elements in local plans with the transportation provisions in the RTP (e.g. projects, programs, strategies).

- **Meeting the Requirements of the Level of Service (LOS) Bill**

Washington State passed a Level of Service Bill in 1998 to enhance coordinated planning for transportation facilities. The GMA requires that Level of Service must be considered in transportation elements of Comprehensive Plans. LOS standards represent the performance level desired for transportation facilities and services within the region. They are used as a gauge to evaluate the quality of the transportation system. Level of Service (LOS) requires coordination between federal, state, regional and local agencies and jurisdictions to promote a consistent regional evaluation of transportation facilities and corridors. LOS was addressed at RTC meetings in 2003 and the agreed-to regional LOS standards were subsequently incorporated into the Regional Transportation Plan for Clark County.

PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION: RTC GUIDANCE DOCUMENT, CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE

Elements described above are described in more detail in the attached GMA Certification Process Guide developed by RTC staff in coordination with Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) members as an aid to help local jurisdictions meet RTC's certification process requirements. The certification process endorsed by the RTC Board in 2003 provided the framework and basis for the Certification Process Guide.

To expedite the certification process, local jurisdictions will be asked to complete a Certification Checklist. The checklist itself is based on current statutory GMA and LOS requirements. Clark County and local jurisdictions will need to submit a completed Certification Checklist, together with updated Comprehensive Growth Management Plans, for certification by RTC in sync with

Growth Management Act – RTC Certification Process Guide and Checklist

January 26, 2016

Page 3

submittal of the Notice of Intent to Adopt to the Department of Commerce Plan. The Department of Commerce requires a Notice of Intent to Adopt at least 60 days prior to the anticipated Comprehensive Plan adoption. RTC staff will review draft Comprehensive Plan updates prior to their adoption by local jurisdictions. If necessary, RTAC will discuss coordination issues and the RTC Board will be asked to take action to complete the certification process after the Comprehensive Plan updates are adopted by local jurisdictions.

NEXT STEPS

RTC will review a final draft of RTC's GMA Certification Process Guide with agency planning partners at the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) in February and will return to the RTC Board in March to ask for adoption of the Guide including checklist to allow for its use by jurisdictions required to update their Comprehensive Plans in 2016.

Attachment (draft Certification Guide including checklist)