



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Dean Lookingbill, Transportation Director
DATE: May 29, 2013
SUBJECT: **Metropolitan Transportation Plan Capital Facilities**

AT A GLANCE – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this agenda item is to provide the RTC Board with a status report on progress in reviewing the performance of the regional transportation system and the adopted Metropolitan Transportation Plan's capital facilities projects using a slower growth scenario.

BACKGROUND

At the March RTC Board meeting, RTC staff introduced the work element to review the list of twenty-year capital projects identified in the current 2035 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP, adopted December 2011) and to compare the set of transportation needs with a slower population and employment growth projection for 2035 than in the adopted Plan. At the June meeting, RTC staff will provide an update on work underway. The results of the review will provide input for scoping of the next MTP update. The MTP update is due in late 2015 but scoping for the update will begin in late 2013.

INTRODUCTION: CONCEPT, PURPOSE, SCOPE

The purpose of the MTP Capital Facilities Review is to review the adopted MTP's list of projects identified for the Regionally Designated Transportation System in light of a slower growth projection for 2035 and lower transportation revenue projections, and in light of a shift in transportation system policy and investment vision from mobility/capital capacity expansion to an emphasis on reliability, accessibility, modal choices, and priorities. The work activity will review the adopted MTP's list of projects and analyze performance of the regional transportation system using a slower growth rate to determine which projects are the most critical to have in place by year 2035 versus those that may be deferred.

The work element also provides opportunity to consider alternative policy approaches to transportation solutions as called for via "least cost" planning principles and WSDOT's Moving Washington principles "to operate efficiently, manage demand and add capacity strategically." Additionally, plan monitoring and transportation system performance evaluation are significant elements required by the new Federal Transportation Act, MAP-21. The transportation system and project evaluations as part of this study effort will move us another step toward MAP-21's performance-based transportation planning and investment decision-making.

DEMOGRAPHIC FORECAST: SLOWER GROWTH SCENARIO

At the March RTC Board meeting, the proposed “slower growth” demographic forecast was presented. Table 1 summarizes base year 2010 demographics and compares the existing MTP 2035 demographic forecast with the “slower growth” forecast.

Table 1: Clark County Demographics; Base Year and Comparative Forecasts

	Base Year Demographics 2010	RTC's MTP (Dec. 2011) 2035	Slower Growth Forecast (Apr. 2013) 2035	Difference Between MTP and Slower Growth Forecast Difference	Difference Between MTP and Slower Growth Forecast Difference %
Population	425,363	641,775	562,207	-79,568	-12.4%
Households	157,826	248,750	209,779	-38,971	-15.7%
Persons/Household	2.70	2.58	2.68		
Population Annual Average Growth Rate from 2010	N/A	1.66%	1.12%		
Employment	131,954	256,200	207,681	-48,519	-18.9%
Job/Household	0.84	1.03	0.99		
Employment Annual Average Growth Rate from 2010	N/A	2.69%	1.83%		

In comparison with the MTP’s 2035 demographic forecast, the slower growth scenario has 15.7% less households than the MTP 2035 forecast and 18.9% less employment.

REGIONAL TRAVEL FORECAST MODEL DEVELOPMENT and REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PERFORMANCE

RTC staff worked with local jurisdictions in February/March to consider the slower growth demographic forecast scenario. This slower growth forecast was allocated to Transportation Analysis Zones (TAZs) in preparation for building the “Slower Growth” regional travel forecast model to allow for transportation system analysis. Over the past few weeks, staff has completed a first round of travel forecast modeling and transportation system analysis at the regional scale to compare transportation system performance.

The following transportation system performance measures have been analyzed at the regional level:

- PM Peak Hour Lane Miles of Congestion
- PM Peak Hour % Lane Miles of Congested
- PM Peak Hour Vehicle Hours of Delay
- PM Peak Hour Average Link Speed
- PM Peak Hour Vehicle Miles Traveled

The scope of the Capital Facilities Review includes consideration of the MTP list of designated system project recommendations given a slower growth rate and the resulting lower level of travel demand. Transportation system performance analyses include comparisons of the adopted MTP level of growth in travel demand as well as the lower level of travel demand using a slower growth rate. The travel demand is assigned to both the full 2035 MTP transportation system and the 6-year committed system. Region-wide transportation system performance measures, listed on the previous page, have been analyzed for each of the model scenarios summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Description of Transportation System Performance Scenarios			
Scenario Descriptions		Demographic Forecasts	Regional Travel Forecast Model Transportation Networks
1.	2005 Base	2005 Demographics	2005 Transportation Network
2.	2035 MTP	RTC 2035 MTP Demographic Forecast (Dec. 2011)	2035 MTP Transportation Network (projects in Dec. 2011 MTP, Appendix B)
3.	Slower Growth; Committed	Slower Growth Scenario (Apr. 2013)	Committed, 6 year Transportation Improvement Program Network
4.	Slower Growth; MTP	Slower Growth Scenario (Apr. 2013)	2035 MTP Transportation Network (projects in Dec. 2011 MTP, Appendix B)

The Committed highway network in Clark County includes projects in the 6-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) such as completion of SR-14 improvements through Camas, widening of SR-502, first phase of the Salmon Creek Interchange Project, 18th Street from I-205 to Four Seasons, 88th Street from Highway 99 to St. John's, 119th Street intersection improvement at 50th Avenue and improvements on 119th Street from 72nd to 87th Avenue, 136th/137th Avenue improvements from 28th to 49th Street, the Fourth Plain Bus Rapid Transit project and the Columbia River Crossing Project. The 2035 MTP Transportation Network includes the full list of transportation projects in MTP Appendix B (Dec. 2011) and was attached with the March RTC Board packet.

RTC staff will review the regional transportation system performance measures analysis at the June 4 meeting. An example of the analysis; lane miles of congestion in the P.M. peak hour are decreased by 69% in Scenario #5 (Slower Growth, MTP) when compared with Scenario # 3. (2035 MTP).

Further analysis in the upcoming weeks will look to identify where critical bottlenecks occur that may still require a capacity solution versus where accessibility, reliability, safety, and improved modal choices may be options. If there are reduced revenues available for transportation investment, we need to be more focused on the top priorities of the region.

A CHANGING PARADIGM FOR TRANSPORTATION

Regional transportation system analysis carried out to date has focused on “traditional” travel performance measures largely focused on mobility. However, changes in demographic, lifestyle, and financial trends, discussed at the March RTC Board meeting, are resulting in a paradigm shift in the way transportation system performance is viewed and analyzed and the policy changes that go hand-in-hand. The demographic and lifestyle changes include an aging population, slowing in-migration, increase in minority populations, changing aspirations and lifestyle expectations of Generation Y, flattening or decreasing incomes and revenues, and downward trend in Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT). These trends are partly the reason for a paradigm shift in transportation planning with the new paradigm expanding the range of transportation modes, objectives, impacts and options considered in planning. It is now recognized that some transportation corridors in the region are already built out and cannot be widened. In these corridors, demand management and system management under such programs as the Transportation System Management and Operations (TSMO) become more significant. With the paradigm shift, transportation accessibility and reliability are valued as well as mobility. Accessibility is peoples’ ability to reach services and activities by various transportation modes such as automobile as well as by walking, cycling, public transit, telework, or delivery services, etc. Transportation planning is increasingly integrated with strategic planning for land uses and health.

PREPARATION FOR MTP AND COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATES

The analysis carried out as part of the 2035 MTP Capital Facilities Review is preparing us for the MTP update due in 2015. Lessons learned as part of this work element will lead into scoping of the MTP update which will be outlined later this year. Results of transportation system analysis using the slower growth scenario will not only have value in preparing for scoping the MTP update but will also be of value to local jurisdictions as the next round of updates to local Comprehensive Plans are addressed in tandem with the next MTP update. The work element also provides opportunity to consider alternative policy approaches to transportation solutions as called for via “least cost” planning principles and WSDOT’s Moving Washington principles “to operate efficiently, manage demand and add capacity strategically.”

TIMELINE

The provisional timeline for the MTP Capital Facilities Review is provided in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Proposed MTP Capital Facilities Review Timeline and Topics	
RTC Board Meeting	Presentation:
Jun. 4	Comparison of transportation system performance between: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Base Year • Committed Transportation System (projects programmed in the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program) • Current 2035 MTP (adopted Dec. 2011) • Slower Growth Forecast (RTC, Apr. 2011, based on OFM)
Jul. 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do the identified transportation projects accommodate travel demand? • What changes might be considered? • What are the highest priority 20-year transportation facilities?
Sep. 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report on the 20-year MTP Capital Facilities Review in preparation for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scoping the next MTP update (update due 2015) ○ Meeting Federal Transportation Act, MAP-21, performance managed transportation system requirements

NEXT STEPS

To recap, the purpose of this MTP Capital Facilities review is to re-look at the list of the MTP’s transportation capital projects given a slower demographic growth forecast. The most critical projects that will have the highest benefit for transportation system performance and for transportation users will be identified. Ultimately, the goal is to make fiscally responsible decisions about the future transportation system. Staff will provide a further progress report to the RTC Board at the July meeting. Completion of the MTP Capital Facilities Review will result in useful data and transportation system analysis that can be used in the scoping process for the next major MTP update due in 2015 as well as for local jurisdictions’ Comprehensive Plan and Capital Facilities Plan updates.