



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director 
DATE: May 7, 2019
SUBJECT: State Legislative Session Recap

AT A GLANCE – INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to keep the RTC Board apprised of legislative activities.

BACKGROUND

The Washington State Legislature convened for its 2019 session on January 14 and is scheduled to complete its full session on April 28. At the outset of the legislative session, RTC staff began tracking bills that would revise laws that govern transportation funding, planning, and RTC operations. The 2019 legislative session reached Sine Die on schedule (April 27).

LEGISLATIVE WRAP-UP

In the weeks leading up to the wrap-up of this session, major progress was made in advancing funding or establishing new regulations for major regional projects in the RTC region.

Key Projects:

- \$35,000,000 which sets in motion seed funding to initiate formal stakeholder engagement and design planning for the replacement of the I-5 bridges.
- \$4,900,000 approval of Regional Mobility Grant which funds C-TRAN’s I-5 Bus on Shoulder project between 99th Street and I-5 Bridge.
- \$250,000 in project planning funds for Ridgefield South I-5 Access Planning project (*funds are conditional upon fund balance from storm-water activities*).
- \$300,000 in funds for Washougal 32nd Street Underpass Design and Permitting (*funds are conditional upon fund balance from storm-water activities*).
- \$1,500,000 in funds for Chelatchie Prairie railroad roadbed rehabilitation project.
- \$320,000 approval of Regional Mobility Grant for Klickitat County which funds express fixed route bus service between Klickitat County and Gorge communities.

New Law:

- Approval of EHB 1994 creating a framework for designating transportation infrastructure project like the I-5 bridge replacement a “Project of Statewide Significance”.
- Approval of EHB 1584 which compels Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) to invite tribal nations within their planning boundaries, to become voting members

of the RTPO Policy Board as an eligibility condition for RTPO's to receive state planning funding.

- \$500,000 in additional state funds to be allocated to the statewide RTPO planning program. RTC will receive its proportional share of these funds based upon the statewide allocation formula.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EHB 1584

EHB 1584 becomes effective law as of August 1, 2019. After that date, as a condition to being eligible to receive state appropriated planning funds (for designated RTPO purposes), RTPO's: "must provide a reasonable opportunity for voting membership to federally recognized tribes that hold reservation or trust lands within the planning area...". The RTPO must offer that voting membership either: "every two years or when the composition of the board (of the RTPO) is modified in an interlocal agreement".

The two tribal nations that fit the definition as federally recognized tribes within the RTC planning area are: Cowlitz Tribe and Yakama Nation (see attached map).

RTC's General Counsel has reviewed the Session Law and has provided the following points of consideration for how to proceed in making the invitation, and how to incorporate voting members into the agency's governing documents.

- It is recommended that based upon the schedule provided in the Session Law, that the RTC Board Chair will extend a letter of invitation after August 1, 2019, which the Executive Director will transmit to each eligible tribe.
- The Executive Director will facilitate the intermediary engagement with each tribe to determine their interest and their response to the letter of invitation.
- The Board will then consider a revision to the RTC Bylaws at the Annual Meeting (the December Board meeting) at least every two years, and the Bylaws will be introduced for amendment to reflect Tribe voting membership per their formal response to the letter of invitation.

A more thorough explanation will be provided as needed at the upcoming Board meeting.

OREGON LEGISLATIVE SESSSION REPORT

The Oregon Legislature convened on January 22 for their annual legislative session. As of this report, RTC is monitoring various bills. RTC Staff will report on monitoring activities at the Board meeting.

FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law Public Law 114-94, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The FAST Act funds surface transportation

programs—including, but not limited to, Federal-aid highways—at over \$305 billion for fiscal years (FY) 2016 through 2020.

Preliminary dialogue has been floating around Washington DC for quite some time regarding the current Administration and Congress' interest in advancing a major infrastructure bill. Within the last two-weeks, there have been reports that the “concept” of a \$2 Billion infrastructure bill may be on the horizon. With that said, recent Congressional history suggests that a major “funding increase” in a transportation bill re-authorization (by year 2020) may be legislatively difficult, especially in a major election cycle. In preparation for the forthcoming federal transportation act re-authorization discussion, RTC staff will present key policy issues / concerns in the coming months, and will facilitate the crafting of a legislative statement which can be used by RTC and members in their future consultations with our congressional representatives.

NEXT STEPS

RTC staff will work with the General Counsel and Chair to prepare the Board's inquiry with the federally recognized tribes and will keep the Board apprised as this engagement process moves forward.

Attachment: Map

Federally Recognized Tribes

Reservation or Trust Lands within the RTC Planning Area

