



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*
DATE: July 30, 2019
SUBJECT: **Transportation Corridor Visioning Study (2008) – Retrospective Review**

AT A GLANCE – INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide background information on the Transportation Corridor Visioning Study conducted by RTC and planning partners between 2006 and 2008. The retrospective review of the Study is provided at the request of RTC Board members who asked that a refresher on the Study be presented.

BACKGROUND

The Transportation Corridor Visioning Study (Vision Study) was conducted between 2006 and 2008 in an effort to identify and assess potential new and/or upgraded regional transportation corridors in Clark County. This memorandum provides a synopsis on the Study and will highlight key background information and Study findings in light of subsequent interest. The full Vision Study report is available on RTC’s website for review prior to the August 6 RTC Board meeting.

The Vision Study began with a question posed by Battle Ground Mayor John Idsinga who asked whether corridor improvements between the two rapidly-growing communities of Battle Ground and Camas should be explored. At the time RTC Board members recognized that any new corridor or major upgrades to existing corridors take many years to develop, fund and construct. The Vision Study was launched as an inquiry to look beyond the traditional focus of the 20-year planning cycle required of State Comprehensive Growth Management Plans and federal and state-required, fiscally-constrained, Regional Transportation Plans.

The Vision Study was guided by an RTC Board-appointed, eight member Steering Committee and eight accompanying senior staff members. Steering Committee membership included representation from Clark County, Vancouver, Battle Ground, North County, East County, Port of Vancouver, C-TRAN, and WSDOT. Eleven meetings of the Steering Committee were held and two Think Tank workshops addressing land use and potential corridors.

Additional information on the Vision Study is provided in this Memo in the form of questions and responses regarding the Study’s purpose, assumptions, findings and post-Study activities.

WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?

The Vision Study was viewed as merely an initial step in the necessary integrated land use and transportation planning process. The study attempted to examine a single long term transportation/land use outcome within the County and would provide a “50,000-foot level” sketch planning analysis. Study corridors were mapped as broad swaths because it was

recognized that arterial alignments would take additional steps to identify and would need to be addressed and validated by individual member agencies in conjunction with local Comprehensive Planning processes.

In addition, any future improvements would need full opportunity for public scrutiny and acceptance. The RTC Board was asked to endorse, rather than “adopt”, the published Vision Study report acknowledging that it was merely a first step in a long-term planning activity for the Clark County region.

WHAT GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS WERE MADE?

In summary, the Vision Study assumed a population of 1 million people in Clark County and 4 million in the whole Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area together with half a million jobs in Clark County and 2 million employment in the entire metropolitan area. The assumptions were theoretical, and introduced for analytical purposes only. Study growth forecast assumptions were not endorsed or adopted by any RTC member local agencies as part of a Growth Management Act comprehensive planning process, nor were they coordinated with RTC’s peer MPO (Metro) in Oregon.

WHAT LAND USE ASSUMPTIONS WERE MADE?

The Vision Study’s growth (population, employment) assumptions were placed spatially on the landscape without regards to local comprehensive plan Urban Growth Area boundaries, nor were the placements endorsed by any local agency. Population growth was allocated on available land throughout Clark County at 8 housing units per acre filling areas of the County below the 800 foot contour level. Flood plains and conservation areas funded by Real Estate Excise Taxes (REET) were avoided. Employment growth in Clark County was allocated on available (non-built) employment lands at gross employee/acre units for lands below the 400 foot contour level.

For Oregon, growth assumptions were allocated through increased densities in urban centers and with some Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) expansion. No coordination or endorsement of the study’s land-use assumption methodology(s) took place with RTC’s peer MPO (Metro) or any local agency in Oregon.

The RTC regional travel demand model was used as the analytical tool to evaluate study assumptions and the travel behaviors between the urban growth areas within Clark County.

The assumptions used for the Vision Study represented a single conceptual scenario for the future of the County. It was a given (albeit not developed or analyzed) that other growth and land use scenarios were just as likely to occur.

WHAT WERE THE PRIMARY STUDY FINDINGS?

The Vision Study was regarded as exploratory and informational only. Study participants directly acknowledged that the assumed land uses were hypothetical only, and any further evaluation of corridor need and location would require extensive future policy decisions and public engagement by land use jurisdictions.

Within Clark County, the study revealed that if the conceptual land use forecast was built as presented, there may likely be future demand for new and/or upgraded north-south corridors on both the west and east sides of the County as well as east-west corridors in North County. Analysis of model results revealed a substantial demand for sub-regional trips in the potential new corridors rather than regional trips (regional trips are defined as longer than 8 miles in length). During the study process, the importance of completing a grid system to enable route choice, particularly in the Discovery Corridor Subarea, was recognized. The Study also found that most creek and river crossings were well over capacity. It should be noted that no transit expansion was assumed beyond the 20-year forecast and there was no optimization of existing corridors for efficiencies.

Following the initial focus on internal Clark County transportation corridors, the conceptual north-south corridors were assessed regarding their potential for extension to cross the Columbia River. The study found conceptual locations where space may be available to provide a connection location in Washington. However, the study provided no analysis of connection locations into Oregon. Further, the study did not evaluate the relative need, land-use plan consistency, nor did the assessment engage affected stakeholders and communities.

WHAT WERE THE RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS?

In April 2008, the RTC Board chose to endorse the findings of the “50,000-foot” Vision Study. The Board recognized that more work would need to be done particularly on land use assumptions. Further, the Board noted a need for more advanced review of the countywide growth vision through a community values and scenario planning process. Corridor upgrades and needs will require further assessment of demand and engineering before they should be advanced into the Comprehensive Plans for the County and member agency jurisdictions, and prior to inclusion into a fiscally-constrained Regional Transportation Plan. In addition, it was recognized the next steps in a multi-step process would have to include outreach and participation of the public in articulating a future long-term vision for their County.

HAVE ANY OF THE NEXT STEPS BEEN ADVANCED?

Following publication of the Vision Study report (April 2008), RTC did advance a process to convene stakeholders regarding scenario planning as a tool for long-term community values-based planning. In this regard, RTC was acting as a convener for that discussion, since RTC has limited responsibility under the state Growth Management Act related planning processes.

In April 2011, the Federal Highway Administration and Volpe Institute conducted a Transportation and Land Use Scenario Planning workshop in Vancouver, hosted by RTC. In October 2011, a values assessment was proposed similar to the Envision Utah process successfully conducted in Utah and the Salt Lake City region. However, lack of funds, staffing, a champion to pursue the values and visioning process together with the recessionary economy combined to halt further progress.

Recent discussions among land use and transportation planners at the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee meeting affirmed that local jurisdictions have not individually taken steps to incorporate findings of the Study into local plans. RTC’s most recent certification of local

Transportation Corridor Visioning Study (2008) – Retrospective Review

July 30, 2019

Page 4

Comprehensive Plans, which largely occurred in 2016, found that no jurisdictions had advanced the Vision Study findings as part of their regional transportation systems.

Attachment: Summary of Report

Report: Provided through RTC website link: [Transportation Corridor Visioning Study Report](http://www.rtc.wa.gov/studies/vision)
www.rtc.wa.gov/studies/vision

20190806RTCB_CorridorVisioning.docx



April 2008

Transportation Corridor Visioning Study

Visioning Study Recommendations and Next Steps

The key findings and conclusions from the Corridor Visioning Study analysis resulted in a final, recommended set of candidate corridors that is shown in Exhibit 8. These are the corridors recommended by the Steering Committee for further consideration in future phases of the Corridor Visioning process. The Steering Committee requested that this map be accompanied by a clear understanding of what the desired objectives and resulting outcomes Phase I of the Visioning Study represent.

This map of recommended candidate corridors is the culmination of the first phase of what may be a multi-phase effort to identify one or more regional corridors that would be added to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and local Comprehensive Plans. The map represents a set of potential corridors that require further study and analysis. In order to eventually add one or more of these corridors to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and local Comprehensive Plans, a process will need to be established to guide narrowing and eventual selection of the corridor(s) for adoption. This map should not be mistaken for an adopted plan or alignment of any of these corridors, and until one or more corridors are adopted, right-of-way cannot be preserved for future corridor construction.

The next phase of the Visioning Process should include a review of the impacts of these candidate corridors on future land use patterns within Clark County, and in Oregon with the potential new crossings of the Columbia River. The land use assessment should also include a visioning process of its own to identify desired policies to encourage land use patterns and densities supportive of multimodal corridors. These discussions should also address one of the key conclusions from Phase I, which identified several subregional corridors that would be needed to provide subregional trip mobility and connections to the regional system.

The next phases should also continue and enhance the Bi-state discussion about a new Columbia River crossing. Each crossing option would likely carry with it land use implications on both sides of the Columbia River, as well as needing to identify where multimodal (and, for freight, intermodal) connections can be made in Oregon.

Further study is also needed with regard to existing regional corridors and what improvements they may need in the future, even with one or more new regional corridors being added to the MTP. Additionally, further effort is needed regarding potentially improving the existing major creek and river crossings, all of which were identified in the travel demand model as being over capacity in the Visioning scenario. These included crossings over the East Fork of the Lewis River, Salmon Creek, Lacamas Creek, and Burnt Bridge Creek.

Exhibit 8. Vision Plan Candidate New Regional Corridors Map

