



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*
DATE: August 27, 2019
SUBJECT: Legislative Affairs Update

AT A GLANCE – INFORMATION

The purpose of this memorandum is to keep the RTC Board apprised of legislative activities and to generally describe RTC’s engagement in legislative affairs.

BACKGROUND

RTC is a voluntary association of governments, formed under Interlocal Agreement to carry out the functions of regional transportation planning and coordination in fulfillment of both federal (Title 23 CFR § 450 Subpart C) and state (Chapter 47.80 RCW) mandates. RTC’s duties are described in the Interlocal Agreement, and further defined by state and federal regulations. The remainder of this memo outlines the parameters of how RTC engages in recurring legislative affairs activities and describes two current legislative affairs issues.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

RTC has a history of engaging in legislative affairs to share the policy direction established by the RTC Board of Directors and to advocate for implementation of RTC’s Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) projects.

The scope of legislative affairs activities which RTC has both historically and currently engage in may include:

Type	Example
Policy Setting	Adopting Plans and TIP documents which set regional policies and investment priorities.
Sharing Information	Coordinating and adopting regional legislative priority statements which support implementation of RTC’s plans and priority regional projects (ex. Clark County Transportation Alliance – CCTA - Legislative Statement); Considering policy Resolutions which support implementation of RTC plans and priority regional projects; Testifying or making presentation at public hearings, commission or council meetings in regards to implementation of RTC plans and priority regional projects; and

	Meeting with federal, state, regional, and local officials and stakeholders to share information regarding implementation of RTC plans and priority regional projects at official's request.
Supporting Implementation	<p>Preparing and/or reviewing member grant applications and providing technical inputs; and</p> <p>Writing letters of support and sharing information with granting agencies in support of member agency led specific funding requests (as long as implementing RTC designated priority regional projects), and consistent with Regional plans.</p>

By virtue of RTC's funding structure and governing regulations, RTC is prohibited from attempting to "influence a covered official" (lobbying), if using state or federal funds for reimbursement of time spent on those activities. In the event that such a conflict or expenses related to such are incurred, RTC will identify these and report them as detailed in RTC's Indirect Cost Allocation Plan. However, in general terms sharing information about RTC's regional plans, TIP project priorities, and advocating for implementation thereof should be considered within the scope of RTC's legislative affairs activities.

ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Throughout the year, legislative matters arise that may deserve the attention of either RTC staff and/or the Board of Directors. Where RTC staff can address the matters, it does so. Where further policy guidance is desired from the Board of Directors, those matters will be presented at a monthly Board meeting. In instances where the Board of Directors feels it is appropriate to adopt specific policy guidance through specific actions, endorsements or policy Resolutions, those are presented for full Board consideration.

Examples of past legislative affairs activities include:

- 1) RTC staff participation in the development of the annual Clark County Transportation Alliance Policy Statement (see attachment); RTC Board endorsement of the Policy Statement; and RTC staff participation in the annual Legislative briefing day in Olympia.
- 2) RTC Board endorsement of past Resolutions pertaining to establishment of state rulemaking and designation of the I-5 Bridge Replacement projects as a project of "Statewide Significance"; and
- 3) Upon request, RTC staff meets with state and federal officials to provide information regarding regional project priorities and initiatives, and to make presentations or statements to legislative committees.

Two matters have recently come forward and may deserve further consideration and guidance by the RTC Board. Those matters are described below:

Regarding Regional Project Priorities: I-5 / NE 179th Street Interchange

The improvement of I-5/NE 179th St. Interchange is a multi-agency regional project priority. The scope includes a reconstruction of the freeway interchange and connecting street reconfiguration/upgrades to arterial roadways connecting into and abutting the interchange area. Lead project agencies include: WSDOT (interchange work) and Clark County (connecting roadways).

Funding status:

-The interchange work has been largely funded by the Connecting Washington statewide transportation package. Current OFM programming documents list the project funding as being available as follows: \$500,000 (17-19 biennium); and, \$50,000,000 (23/25 biennium). Further clarify on the adequacy of this funding commitment is subject to further engineering study.

-The roadway work funding plan is in development between Clark County and affected stakeholders. As planned, the roadway work funding commitments are in progress.

Legislative activity:

RTC's Board of Directors endorsed the Clark County Transportation Alliance 2019-20 Policy Statement (see attachment). In that legislative Policy Statement, regional partners identify "accelerating funding" for projects in the Connecting Washington package. During this past legislative session, the RTC Director did participate in legislator briefings wherein this topic and specific projects were discussed.

Looking forward:

It is presumed that acceleration of the I-5 / 179th St Interchange improvement project schedule is in the interest of the region. RTC staff will continue to support legislators and stakeholders with information relative to supporting this CCTA legislative statement and the project outcomes identified therein. Whether advocacy is warranted beyond the current CCTA Policy Statement and/or RTC staff support to member agencies (WSDOT, Clark County), is a matter of further Board review.

Regarding Transportation Funding: Initiative 976

Background:

A citizen initiative has been filed and will appear on the general ballot in Washington in November 2019. Initiative 976 (I-976) concerns motor vehicle taxes and fees. The full ballot title of Initiative No. 976 as it will appear on the November 5, 2019 ballot is as follows:

Statement of Subject: Initiative Measure No. 976 concerns motor vehicle taxes and fees.

Concise Description: This measure would repeal, reduce, or remove authority to impose certain vehicle taxes and fees; limit annual motor-vehicle-license fees to

\$30, except voter-approved charges; and base vehicle taxes on Kelly Blue Book value.

Should this measure be enacted into law? Yes [] No[]

RTC Region context:

As proposed, I-976 would repeal and reduce some currently imposed fees and taxes which would have the effect of reducing funding for certain transportation system related improvements. The impacts are two-fold. The average resident/business is presumed to receive a cost savings from license and other fees which would be reduced or eliminated by enactment of I-976. Conversely, State and local operating and capital budgets will likely have a negative impact.

Within the RTC Region, several cities currently impose a vehicle license tab fee under the statutory authority of a Transportation Benefit District (TBD). Within the RTC region, the Cities of Vancouver and Battleground currently impose this license fee. The cities of Ridgefield and Washougal have established the authority, but do not currently impose any fee. It is understood that local agencies currently assessing the TBD authorized license fee are using those funds for routine street maintenance and specific project improvements.

At the state level, the Legislature imposes many fees which are subject to impacts from I-976. The majority of the fees in question support both WSDOT and State Patrol operating and capital budgets.

Impact Analysis:

Fiscal impacts to RTC member agency transportation programs may include the following:

Local Agency TBD revenue loss:

Vancouver (estimated \$4.8M annual)

Battle Ground (estimated \$300K annual)

WSDOT revenue loss:

An impact assessment has been produced by the Washington state Office of Financial Management, and can be found here:

<https://ofm.wa.gov/sites/default/files/public/budget/ballot/2019/I-976-fiscal-impact-statement.pdf>

C-TRAN revenue loss: *Under further review. Fiscal impacts may occur to numerous Washington State Department of Transportation administered grant programs, which could affect C-TRAN when utilized for capital and operating services.*

Looking forward:

Several efforts are underway to share information with the public regarding the potential benefit or impacts of I-976. RTC members can access those resources in accordance with their own interests. Whether further RTC advocacy or information sharing is warranted is a matter of further Board review.

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.

In preparation for the forthcoming federal transportation act re-authorization discussion, RTC staff will inform the Board of key policy issues in the coming months. Many national associations provide just-in-time review and policy analysis of pending legislation. An example of this type of analysis has been prepared by the national Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO). AMPO produced a bill analysis for an initial piece of US Senate committee legislation, which set in motion reauthorization discussions for the FAST Act. A link to the AMPO bill analysis is provided here:

<http://www.ampo.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/ATIA-AUGUST-9-2019--edits-1.0.pdf>.

Other MPOs, such as our regional peer Metro, have prepared policy briefing papers which serve the purpose of advocating specifics within the legislative reauthorization process. An example of the policy briefing paper endorsed by Metro's Joint Policy Advisory Committee on Transportation is provided here:

<https://oregonmetro.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=7159825&GUID=5F1BCC68-FB73-47E7-893D-748D75F60175>

The Board may desire crafting a legislative statement which can be used by RTC and members in their future consultations with our congressional representatives. An option would be to utilize the CCTA Policy Statement as a project specific statement, and include a cover memo highlighting policy and program matters which are valued elements for reauthorization of the federal transportation act. Whether further RTC advocacy or information sharing on the federal transportation act reauthorization process is warranted is a matter of further Board review.

NEXT STEPS

RTC staff will follow-up with any further attention to the issues described in this memorandum consistent with the Board's direction.

Attachment: Clark County Transportation Alliance 2019-20 Policy Statement

Clark County Transportation Alliance 2019-20 Policy Statement



Sponsoring Organizations:

Battle Ground Public Schools
 Building Industry Association of Clark County
 Camas School District
 Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce
 City of Battle Ground
 City of Camas
 City of La Center
 City of Ridgefield
 City of Vancouver
 City of Washougal
 Clark College
 Clark County
 Clark County Association of Realtors
 Columbia Corridor Association
 Columbia River Econ. Dev. Council
 Columbia River Steamship Operators' Assn.
 C-TRAN

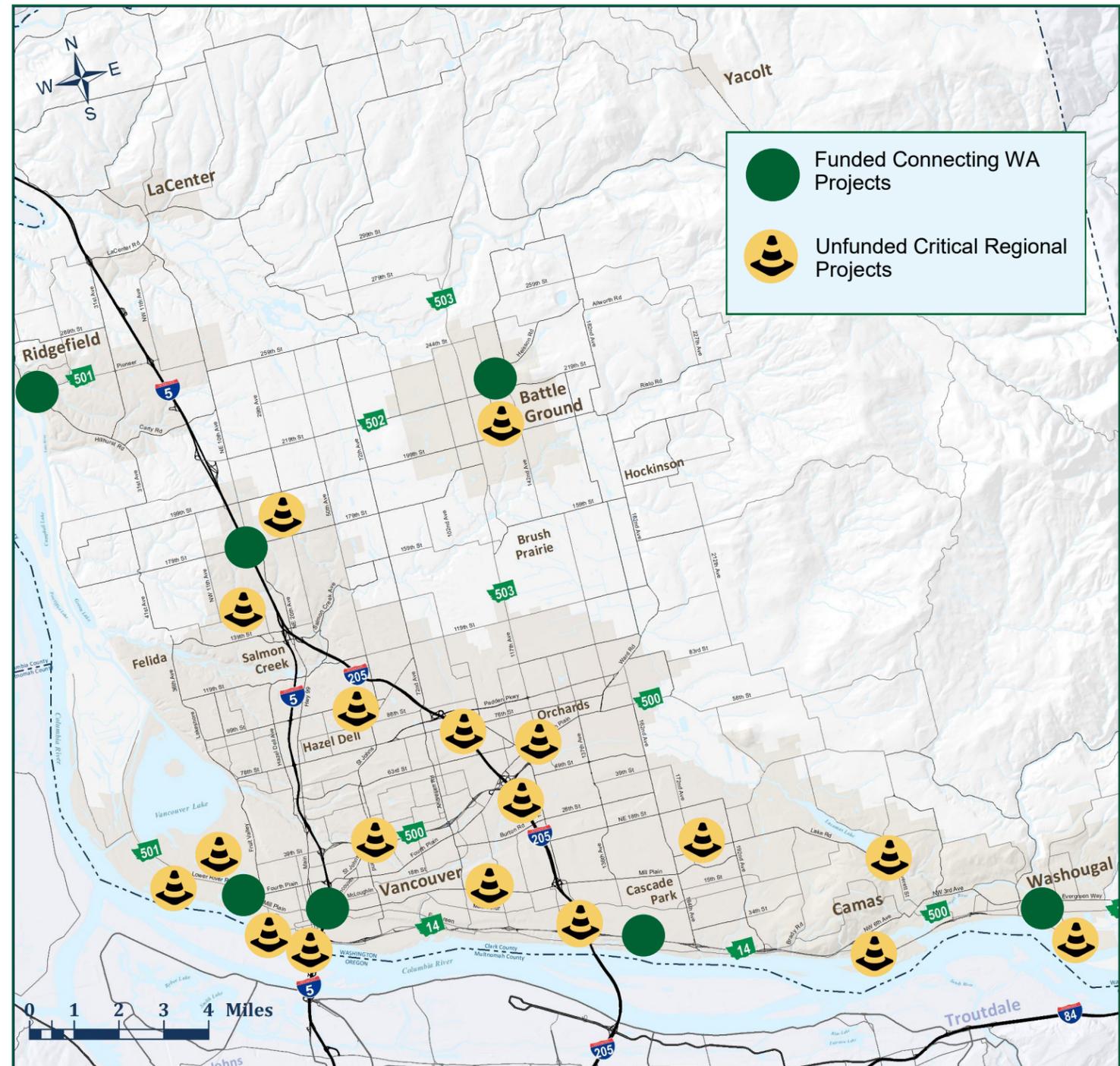
East Vancouver Business Association
 Evergreen Public Schools
 Greater Portland 2020
 Greater Portland, Inc.
 Greater Vancouver Chamber of Commerce
 Hazel Dell/Salmon Creek Business Assn.
 Hockinson School District
 Identity Clark County
 IBEW Local 48
 Labor Roundtable of SW WA
 Legacy Salmon Creek Medical Center
 Neighborhood Traffic Safety Alliance
 Pacific Building Trades
 Pacific Northwest Waterways Association
 Partners in Careers
 PeaceHealth Columbia Network
 Port of Camas-Washougal

Port of Portland
 Port of Ridgefield
 Port of Vancouver
 Portland Business Alliance
 Regional Transportation Council
 Ridgefield School District
 SW WA Central Labor Council
 SW WA Contractors Association
 SW WA High Technology Council
 SW WA STEM Network
 The Historic Trust
 The Vancouver Clinic
 Vancouver's Downtown Association
 Vancouver Public Schools
 Visit Vancouver USA
 Washington State University Vancouver
 Washougal School District

For more information, contact admin@iccbusiness.org or call 360.695.4116

As of 1/31/19

Clark County Transportation Alliance 2019-20 Policy Statement



A CALL TO FURTHER ACTION

Clark County's residents, employers, workers and guests are experiencing serious transportation constraints from rapid growth and urbanization. Already the 12th worst congested commute among 240 cities (INRIX), traffic pressures will magnify as southwest Washington welcomes 140,000 more residents and 86,000 jobs (RTC), and Portland adds 500,000 residents and 350,000 jobs (Metro/RTC) by 2040.

As the second-largest metropolitan area in the Pacific Northwest, our top priority is addressing deficiencies in the I-5 bridge and influence area, including replacing its outdated, chronically congested and accident-prone spans. Traffic crawls at below 30 mph seven hours a day, and at just 9 mph on I-5 during peak hours (RTC) as 135,000 trips are made daily between Washington and Oregon – 300,000 when including I-205.



Century-old I-5 bridge is only Interstate lift span in the West

We urge local, state and federal legislators to be our champions in addressing specific needs described in this statement.

I-5 Bridge Replacement and Influence Area Improvements

Action #1

Create an I-5 Bridge Replacement Project Office (\$15M): pursue bi-state legislative consensus, prepare critical permitting pathway, develop funding plan, begin permitting work

Complete Supplemental EIS Process: re-evaluate prior scope and EIS, restart permitting work, submit and achieve approvals, secure funding commitments, develop construction packages (\$50-100M, depending on scope)

The Clark County Transportation Alliance (CCTA) fully supports replacement of the I-5 bridges and related corridor improvements. The I-5 spans are functionally obsolete and over time will require substantial maintenance investments to remain operational. Broad support is demonstrated through the process framework established in SSB 5806 along with widespread regional business and governmental statements supporting immediate action.

A bi-state approach focused on finding significant, practical solutions through this primary freight, commerce and commuter corridor is imperative, in keeping with the I-5 Corridor Strategic Plan (2002). We endorse efforts by the Oregon legislature to fund projects that address I-5 corridor deficiencies, especially the I-5/I-84 interchange (a.k.a. "The Rose Quarter") in downtown Portland. We also place high priority on long-range transportation corridor planning given steadily rising population and commerce forecasts.

Regionally Critical Projects and Needs



Action #2

Fund Regionally Critical Projects to Address Immediate Needs: secure funding either through single-project awards or as part of the next statewide transportation funding package for regionally critical projects

Fund Critical Area Planning: Find additional maintenance, planning and traffic operations funds for critical urban areas (SR-14, SR-500, I-5, I-205) to provide increased response

We support the acceleration of projects in the Connecting Washington package, such as **economically vital interchange improvements at I-5 and 179th St.** We support project budget adjustments where labor, materials and right-of-way costs have risen substantially.

Funding is requested for additional regional system priorities that serve the growth needs of communities, reduce congestion hotspots, improve safety and provide multi-modal enhancements. Each project has been vetted through the regional planning process.

The following is a list of critical regional projects:

SR-500 Intersections at 42nd Ave and 54th Ave (\$6M): implement cost effective safety improvements from 2018 practical solutions study; additional investments including overpasses may be warranted

I-205/SR-500 to Padden Expressway (\$30M): add auxiliary lanes to address congestion hotspot

I-205 at Mill Plain Blvd to SR-500 (\$25M): add auxiliary lanes and active traffic management facilities to increase flow and capacity; project study underway

SR-500/Fourth Plain/SR-503 (\$60M): intersection improvement to address congestion hot spot; project study underway

SR-14 Camas Slough Bridge (\$35M): parallel bridge structure for westbound traffic and added capacity

SR-14/I-205 Interchange (TBD): provide funds for congestion relief; project study underway

SR-14 Phase 2 Access Improvements, Towncenter Connectors and Railroad Grade Separation (\$64.8M): road improvements, connectors and rail over/underpass at 15th St, 32nd St, 27th St, A/Addy St. and Index St.

NE 10th Ave from 149th to 154th St/Whipple Creek (\$10M): completes new north-south corridor for I-5

NE 15th Ave from 179th Street to NE 189th St vicinity (\$15M): adds new arterial connection to increase capacity in conjunction with 179th/I-5 interchange upgrade

NW 32nd Ave Industrial Corridor (\$3M): planning, environmental review for north-south arterial

SE 1st Street at 164th to 192nd Avenue (\$7M): arterial widening and multi-modal upgrade; leverages significant private sector investments

SR-500 (Everett Street) and NE Lake Road Intersection (\$5M): new roundabout at intersection to improve capacity and safety

SE Grace Avenue at SE Rasmussen Blvd to East Main Street (\$6.6M): arterial street realignment and new signal for upgraded capacity

Public Transit (\$5M): C-TRAN is building upon its 2017 Bus Rapid Transit debut on Fourth Plain and is assembling plans for a similar BRT line along Mill Plain. It also seeks to expand its successful Bus on Shoulder project on SR-14 with a project along I-5 Southbound from the 99th St. Park and Ride to the I-5 bridge. It is consolidating and modernizing its maintenance and operations and seeks \$5M in capital support for the \$30M project.



C-TRAN introduces the region's first Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Facilitating Transportation Mobility and Economic Growth

We urge legislators to embrace the following priorities where possible:

- Enhance or expand funding programs to improve safety and accessibility for everyone, including increased funding for safe bike and pedestrian pathways, sidewalks and street crossings
- Support broadband infrastructure to disperse economic opportunity, foster telecommuting and better compete in the gig economy
- Fund regionally significant improvements for marine access within the Columbia River, and rail access improvements and track upgrades for ports and the county-owned Chelatchie Prairie Railroad
- Support the Port of Vancouver USA's Terminal 1 Waterfront development project for safety, commerce and tourism
- Reform and fund the Model Toxics Control Act (MTCA) to assure a healthy environment
- Create a broader array of infrastructure financing methods, including tax increment financing, design-build, public/private partnerships (P3), and continued Public Works Trust Fund, CERB, FMSIB, TIB and FRAP funding
- Actively embrace smart technologies to ease pressures on the transportation grid and improve safety for all users.