



## STAFF REPORT/RESOLUTION

**TO:** Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors  
**FROM:** Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*  
**DATE:** March 31, 2020  
**SUBJECT:** **Regional Transportation Plan Amendment Policy and Process,  
Resolution 04-20-13**

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### AT A GLANCE - ACTION

*The Adoption of Resolution 04-20-13 will establish a formal policy and process for amendment of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Clark County.*

### INTRODUCTION

The current RTP was adopted by the RTC Board of Directors in March 2019. The 2019 RTP has 2040 as its horizon year and supports local land uses as well as the region's economic development. A comprehensive update to the Regional Transportation Plan for Clark County is tentatively scheduled for adoption in late 2023 to early 2024.

At this time, the RTC lacks a prescribed process and interval for consideration of amendments to the RTP, in between major update cycles (currently, Federal statute prescribes a 5-year interval between RTP updates). Since the RTP's adoption, several RTC member agencies have initiated planning processes, which may result in recommendations to update the RTP's "Project Lists". In order to promote continuity between local and regional Plans, a defined policy and process for RTP amendments is needed. Transportation solutions need to be identified in the RTP for Clark County in order to maintain consistency between state, regional and local plans and to ensure grant program eligibility.

Development Process: RTC staff has consulted in local agencies in the preparation of the proposed. At October 2019 and February 2020 meetings, Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) members had the opportunity to review and comment on a draft of the proposed Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Amendment Policy and Process. At the March 2020 meeting, RTAC members took action to recommend RTC Board adoption of the formalized RTP amendment process.

### BACKGROUND

#### **What is the Regional Transportation Plan or Metropolitan Transportation Plan?**

The Regional Transportation Plan for Clark County is this region's long-range transportation plan. The RTP is part of the required federal metropolitan transportation planning process and Washington State's Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) process. The RTP is based on the land uses identified in the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan for Clark

County. The RTP offers a collective regional strategy for developing a transportation system to provide mobility and accessibility for person trips as well as freight and goods movement.

The RTP considers the region's existing and future travel demands and recommends policies, transportation strategies, and projects to meet the transportation needs. Transportation projects from state and local plans are included in the RTP. Transportation projects and strategies must be identified in the RTP before they can be programmed for funding in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

### **RTP AMENDMENT POLICY: CURRENT STATUS**

Currently, RTC has no formalized RTP amendment policy. RTP amendments are currently addressed on page 176 of the current RTP (March 2019) where it is stated, "Should changing policies, financial conditions or growth patterns warrant, then Plan amendments can take place subject to meeting the public participation and fiscal constraint requirements." Appendix J of the RTP outlines a history of RTP updates and amendments noting that since 1992 there have been seven RTP updates and eight RTP amendment actions by the RTC Board to maintain consistency between the RTP for Clark County, federal, state and local transportation planning and project identification efforts.

RTC's adopted Public Participation Plan (November 2016), addresses RTP amendments on page 42 where it is noted that "Changes to the RTP may be required and can be made through Plan amendments."

### **Federal Regulations Regarding RTP Development, Update and Amendment**

In the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) the metropolitan transportation planning process is addressed in § 450.312. Responsibilities of the Metropolitan Planning Organization are outlined including the need to develop a regional transportation plan as outlined in § 450.324. The MPO shall review and update the transportation plan at least every 5 years in air quality attainment areas, such as the Clark County region, to confirm the transportation plan's validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends. Federal regulations do not limit the number of times an RTP can be amended, but the expectation is that RTP amendments follow the same process as RTP updates and include review of fiscal constraint and allow for public outreach and participation. In air quality attainment areas, such as the Clark County region, RTP updates and amendments are not subject to air quality conformity determination.

### **Washington State Regulations Regarding RTP Development, Update and Amendment**

In Washington State, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) were authorized as part of the 1990 Growth Management Act (GMA) to ensure local and regional coordination of transportation plans. One of the requirements of an RTPO is to prepare a Regional Transportation Plan, as outlined in RCW 47.80.030, which must be periodically updated. The RTPO shall review the regional transportation plan biennially for currency and forward the adopted plan along with documentation of the biennial review to the state department of transportation.

## **PROPOSED RTP AMENDMENT POLICY and PROCESS**

Occasionally, projects or assumptions made in a Regional Transportation Plan will change. When new projects arise that are not in the plan or when changes need to be made to identified RTP transportation projects or strategies, the plan can be amended. The establishment of a formal process to address periodic requests to amend the Regional Transportation Plan for Clark County (RTP) will clarify the review process to determine whether or not an amendment should be made, will outline the amendment process, and the approximate time needed to carry out and complete adoption of RTP amendments.

There are several general sources for RTP amendment requests including:

- (1) periodic requests from the Washington State Legislature and/or WSDOT that require an amendment to the RTP for specific projects or the phasing of existing projects.
- (2) local requests from cities or county involving transportation projects that are either partially or fully funded; these may result from Transportation System Plan, Capital Facilities Plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) updates.
- (3) requests from transit agency to align transit plans and the Regional Transportation Plan.
- (4) amendments resulting from environmental impact statements (EIS) that make specific recommendations that change the RTP project listing or phasing.

### **Policy on Timing of RTP Amendments**

When a major update to the RTP is developed, published and adopted, planning staff will endeavor to set in place an RTP that anticipates needed transportation projects and strategies and identifies them in the RTP in order to minimize the number of RTP amendments that will be needed in the five years between major RTP updates.

In the five year window between major RTP updates, there will be one opportunity for agencies and jurisdictions to submit any proposed RTP amendments. This opportunity will occur two years after adoption of any major RTP update. Two years after a major RTP update, RTC will solicit potential RTP amendments from sponsoring agencies with projects to be submitted in the time period from January 1 to March 1. Adoption of RTP amendments would follow at the August RTC Board meeting to align with timing of the Transportation Improvement Program development and adoption process; the TIP is typically adopted annually at the October RTC Board meeting. The first opportunity for submittal of proposed RTP amendments will begin January 1, 2021.

The only exception to this proposed RTP amendment timeline is if there is a major statewide initiative, such as the Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment<sup>1</sup>, where it is in the best

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<sup>1</sup> A [Statewide Transportation Needs Assessment](#) has been commissioned by the Washington State Legislature's Joint Transportation Committee to assess statewide transportation needs and priorities over the ten-year timeframe spanning 2022-2031. The Needs Assessment is to be presented to the 2021 Legislative session for the Legislature's consideration.

interest of the region to carry out RTP amendments in order to ensure consistency between identified transportation projects at the state and regional levels.

Outside of the two year RTP amendment process described in the timeline above, RTC will issue a call for projects to be identified in the RTP update that occurs at least every five years.

### **Process for RTP Amendments**

RTP amendments would be reviewed by local agency planners, RTAC and the RTC Board of Directors. The approval of RTP amendments would require the following procedures:

- RTC staff review and coordinate with sponsoring agency representatives – planners, engineers, and/or elected officials on proposed RTP amendment(s) and confirm whether projects are part of the Designated Regional Transportation System or the local transportation system.
- RTC staff validate that proposed changes to transportation projects come from transportation plans of transportation agencies or adopted transportation plans of local jurisdictions.
- RTC staff conducts financial constraint analysis in coordination with sponsoring agency.
- RTC staff coordinates with sponsoring agency regarding public outreach and participation on the proposed RTP amendment(s) and documents public outreach already conducted.
- Review and recommendation of proposed amendment made by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC).
- Review of the proposed RTP amendment made by the RTC Board with release for public comment.
- A minimum 30-day public comment period would be invited on RTC's website.
- A written RTC staff response within 30-days to all public comments received.
- Review and recommendation made by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC). If additional significant modifications are necessary as a result of the comment period, then a new 30-day comment period would be warranted.
- Review and approval by the RTC Board of Directors.
- Update and notification of RTP amendment changes, including any tables, spreadsheets and/or maps, on the RTC website.
- Submittal of RTP amendment change to WSDOT headquarters, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration.

### **Timeline RTP Amendment Process**

The timeline to conduct the procedures outlined in the process section above could take as much as six months to complete given the need to meet fiscal constraint and public participation requirements.

## **POLICY IMPLICATION**

The RTP represents the framework plan and policies for development of the regional transportation system. Regular update and amendment of the RTP is a requirement for the receipt of federal and state transportation funds. RTC works in coordination with WSDOT, C-TRAN, and local jurisdictions as state and transit plans are developed and as the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans are updated. This close coordination helps to ensure consistency between state, regional, and local plans. Projects must first be identified in the RTP before they can be programmed for federal funding in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Action on this Resolution will formalize and clarify the RTP Amendment Policy and Process.

Given the process steps that must be followed before the RTP can be amended, transportation agencies and local jurisdictions should not take RTP amendments lightly, and, wherever possible, transportation projects and strategies should be identified in the regular update to the RTP which must be carried out at least every five years.

Following adoption of the RTP Amendment Policy and Process, specific RTP amendments will be solicited from state, local jurisdictions and transit agencies and will be discussed and acted upon at future RTAC and RTC Board meetings in keeping with the Policy on Timing of RTP Amendments as described on page 3 of this Resolution. In the interim, RTC can provide website links to information on recently identified transportation solutions suggested in WSDOT and local planning studies and which may be the subject of future RTP amendments.

## **BUDGET IMPLICATION**

None.

Ongoing federal and state planning, monitoring, and compliance requirements associated with the Regional Transportation Plan, including any requested RTP amendments, are funded by the RTC through contributions of federal, state and local agency revenues.

## **RTAC RECOMMENDATION TO THE RTC BOARD**

At the March 20, 2020 meeting, Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) members took action to recommend RTC Board adoption of Resolution 04-20-13 formalizing an amendment policy and process for the RTP for Clark County.

**ACTION REQUESTED**

Adoption of Resolution 04-20-13, “Regional Transportation Plan Amendment Policy and Process.”

ADOPTED this 7<sup>th</sup> day of April 2020, by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council.

SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON  
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

ATTEST:

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Scott Hughes  
Chair of the Board

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Matt Ransom  
Executive Director