

Appendix A: RTP Statutory Requirements

Introduction

Federal legislation (23 USC 134(d) and 49 USC 5303) requires the designation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for each urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000. Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Clark County portion of the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area. As such, RTC has certain statutory requirements, both federal and state.

Federal

The metropolitan transportation planning process must meet, or substantially meet, the requirements of 23 U.S. Code §134. The process should result in transportation plans and programs that are consistent with the comprehensive land use plans of all jurisdictions within the region.

Federal regulations require that a designated **Metropolitan Planning Organization** (MPO) be the forum for cooperative decision-making by principal elected officials of the region's general-purpose local governments. Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) was designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Clark County by agreement of the Governor of the State of Washington and units of general-purpose local governments (representing at least 75 percent of the affected population, including the central cities) on July 8, 1992. With passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, Clark County became a federally designated **Transportation Management Area** (TMA).

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council, as the MPO—in cooperation with the Washington State Department of Transportation and C-TRAN, Clark County's transit operator—is responsible for carrying out federal transportation planning requirements.

The federal government requires the MPO to develop a Regional Transportation Plan to meet the requirements of federal laws including successive federal transportation acts: the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991, 1998's Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), SAFETEA-LU (the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) enacted in 2012, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act ([FAST Act](#)) signed into law in 2015, and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act ([IIJA](#)) signed in 2021.

The first Regional Transportation Plan for Clark County was developed by the MPO and was adopted in December 1982. It established regional transportation policies and provided consistency with the regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This 1982 RTP version provided a benchmark document for local decision-makers and met federal requirements of the FHWA and FTA. Prior to the development of the 1982 RTP, the Portland-Vancouver Metropolitan Area Transportation Study (PVMATS) served as the long-range plan for Portland and Vancouver. PVMATS was developed by the Columbia Regional Association of Governments ([CRAG](#)) and listed a number of highway projects needed in the region by 1990.

The RTP should consist of short- and long-range strategies to address transportation needs and should guide effective investments to enhance transportation system efficiency. The transportation plan must be consistent with the region's comprehensive long-range land use plans and development objectives, as well as the region's overall social, economic, environmental, system performance, and energy conservation goals and objectives.

When developing the transportation plan, the urban transportation planning process shall include:

- Consideration of social, economic, and environmental effects as required by the federal Transportation Act and the Clean Air Act;
- Provisions for citizen participation;
- No discrimination on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical disability under any program receiving federal assistance;
- Special efforts to plan public mass transportation facilities and services for the elderly, people with disabilities, and people with low income;
- Consideration of energy conservation goals and objectives;
- Involvement of appropriate public and private transportation providers; and
- The following activities as necessary, and to the degree appropriate, for the size of the metropolitan area and the complexity of its transportation problems:
 - Analysis of existing conditions of travel, transportation facilities, vehicle fuel consumption, and systems management;
 - Projections of urban area economic, demographic, and land use activities consistent with urban development goals, and projections of potential transportation demands based on these activity levels;
 - Evaluation of alternative transportation improvements to meet areawide needs for transportation and make more efficient use of existing transportation resources and reduce energy consumption;
 - Refinement of transportation plan by corridor, transit technology, and staging studies; and subarea, feasibility, location, legislative, fiscal, functional classification, institutional, and energy impact studies; and
 - Monitoring and reporting of urban development, transportation and energy consumption indicators and a regular program of reappraisal of the transportation plan.
- The RTP must meet federal planning requirements outlined above and comply with provisions set forth in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA); the Americans with Disabilities Act; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; and Executive Order 12898, a 1994 Presidential Order that directed every federal agency to make environmental justice a part of its mission. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act continues to require that specified planning factors are

addressed as part of the metropolitan planning process, with two added factors related to stormwater mitigation/resiliency and reliability and travel and tourism. The growing importance of operating and managing the transportation system is recognized as a focal point for transportation planning. There is also an increased recognition of the importance of security of the transportation system. The planning factors are:

- Support the **economic vitality** of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the **safety** of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- Increase the **security** of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- Increase the **accessibility** and **mobility** options available to **people** and for **freight**;
- Protect and enhance the **environment**, promote **energy conservation**, and improve **quality of life**;
- Enhance the integration and **connectivity** of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient **system management** and **operation**;
- Emphasize the **preservation** of the existing transportation system.
- Improve the **resiliency** and **reliability** of the transportation system and reduce or **mitigate stormwater** impacts of surface transportation; and
- Enhance **travel** and **tourism**.

The MPO must also select and prioritize transportation projects for programming in a **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**. IJA requires that metropolitan TIPs be updated at least every 4 years and must contain at least 4 years of projects and strategies. The TIP specifies federally funded transportation projects to be implemented during the next four years. Projects are listed in the TIP based upon a realistic estimate of available revenues. Projects programmed for funding in the TIP have to be consistent with the adopted RTP.

All Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) projects in the MPO urbanized area funded under Title 23, U.S.C. (Highways) or Chapter 53 of Title 49 U.S.C. (Transportation) must be selected from the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) produced by the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT). In order for projects located within the metropolitan area to be included in the STIP, they must be consistent with the MPO's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and be included in the MPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The majority of projects within the metropolitan area are selected by the MPO in consultation with the State and transit operator. In all cases, FHWA and FTA must jointly certify that the transportation planning process in a TMA meets or substantially meets federal planning regulations before recognizing the RTP and TIP.

State

Within Washington State, Regional Transportation Plans are expected to be consistent with the policy framework and objectives described in the transportation plan for Washington State. The Washington Transportation Commission published the latest update to the State's Washington Transportation Plan (WTP), Washington Transportation Plan 2040 and Beyond in December 2018.

The WTP is based on the following five transportation policy goals established by the legislature:

- **Economic Vitality:** To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy;
- **Preservation:** To maintain, preserve, and extend the life and utility of prior investments in transportation systems and services;
- **Safety:** To provide for and improve the safety and security of transportation customers and the transportation system;
- **Mobility:** To improve the predictable movement of goods and people throughout Washington State;
- **Health and the Environment:** To enhance Washington’s quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment; and
- **Stewardship:** To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.

The [Highway System Plan](#) (HSP) is the state highway component of the Washington State planning efforts. WSDOT just published a new draft HSP that recommends that new revenue for state highways over the next 20 years be dedicated first to funding preservation and maintenance, with remaining funds balanced between safety and efficiency strategies and highway expansion projects at a 2:1 ratio. The draft recommendation provides for a resilient state highway system that is sound, safe, and smart.

WSDOT planning reports include the [Travel Washington Intercity Bus Program](#), [Washington State Freight System Plan](#), [2017-2027 Grain Train Strategic Plan](#), [Washington Aviation System Plan](#), [Ultra-High Speed Rail Study](#), [Strategic Highway Safety Plan](#), [2016 Washington State Public Transportation Plan](#), [2022 Washington Statewide Human Services Transportation Plan](#), [2019-2040 Washington State Rail Plan](#), [Washington State Ferrier 2010 Long Range Plan](#), [Washington State Active Transportation Plan](#).

Washington State’s Regional Transportation Planning Program

Washington State’s Growth Management Act, enacted in 1990, approved the Regional Transportation Planning Program, which created a formal mechanism for local governments and the State to coordinate transportation planning for regional transportation facilities. The Growth Management Act (GMA) authorized the creation of Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) by units of local government. Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is the designated RTPO for the three-county area of Clark, Skamania and Klickitat. In 1994 further state legislation clarified the duties of the RTPO outlined in the GMA and further defined RTPO planning standards.

Duties of an RTPO

The duties of the RTPO, as outlined in state law, include:

- Designation of the regional transportation system.
- Development of a six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include regionally significant city road projects, county road projects, transit capital projects, and WSDOT transportation projects. The TIP must include a financial plan.
- Development of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to include a regional transportation strategy, identification of existing and planned facilities and programs, Level of Service standards, a financial plan, and assessment of regional development patterns and capital investment using a regional transportation approach. The plan should also establish the relationship of High Capacity Transit to other public transportation providers. The concept of least cost planning is to be used in development of the RTP.
- Review of the Regional Transportation Plan at least every two years to ensure that it is current.
- Establish guidelines and principles for development and evaluation of local comprehensive plan transportation elements and certify that the transportation elements meet the requirements of the GMA, and
- Develop a regional Level of Service (LOS) standard for the regional system.

The Regional Transportation Planning Program is designed to be integrated with and augment the federally required Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Program. The RTPO has to be the same organization as that designated as the current MPO. The Regional Transportation Planning Program extends transportation planning by the RTPOs to rural areas not covered by the federal program. The Regional Transportation Planning Program is also intended to tie in and be consistent with local comprehensive planning in urban and rural areas.

RTPO Transportation Planning Process

The regional transportation planning process follows the principles listed below. The process should:

- Guide the improvement of the regional transportation system.
- Use regionally consistent technical methods and data.
- Consider environmental impacts.
- Ensure early and continuous public involvement.
- Be consistent with the local comprehensive planning process.
- Be an ongoing process.
- Incorporate multimodal planning activities.
- Address major capacity expansion and operational improvements to the regional transportation system.
- Be a partnership, including federal, state, and local governments; special districts; private sector; general public; and others during conception, technical analysis, policy development, and decision-making.
- Meet the requirements of the State's 1990 Growth Management Act. RTC continues the established regional transportation planning process for the MPO, supplemented by the regional transportation planning standards formulated by WSDOT for RTPOs.

Regional Transportation Plan: Required Elements

To comply with Washington State standards, the RTP will include the following components:

- Description of the designated regional transportation system,
- Regional transportation goals and policies. Level of service standards will be established and used to identify deficient transportation facilities and services,
- Development of a financial plan for necessary transportation system improvements,
- Regional transportation system improvement and strategy plan. Specific facility or service improvements, transportation system management, and demand management strategies will be identified and priorities determined,
- Establishment of a performance monitoring program. The performance of the transportation system will be monitored over time. The monitoring methodology, data collection, and analysis techniques to be used will be outlined, and
- Plans for implementation of the RTP.

State legislation of significance in regional transportation planning includes the Growth Management Act (1990), High Capacity Transit legislation (1990), the Clean Air Washington Act (1991), and the Commute Trip Reduction law (1991).