

Chapter 1

Introduction

This Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan was developed through a cooperative process led by the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG) as the Longview-Kelso-Rainier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and lead agency for the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO). Partner agencies include the Olympic, South Central, and Southwest regions of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and Region 2 of the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). The plan relies on substantial input from the public, 29 cities, 12 ports, four public transit agencies, and five counties that constitute the Regional Transportation Planning Organization area. This plan serves as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the MPO and the Regional Transportation Plan for the RTPO, but for simplicity is hereafter referred to as simply the Regional Transportation Plan.

CWCOG staff regularly meets with the Technical Advisory Committees and policy boards in each of the five-member counties. Each of these agencies has in-depth knowledge of the transportation issues surrounding their jurisdictions and has used this expertise to establish their transportation priorities.

In this chapter, important background information that guides this Regional Transportation Plan is discussed including:

- 1) The planning period;
- 2) An overview of the planning area of the Longview-Kelso-Rainier Metropolitan Planning Organization and Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization;
- 3) Federal and State planning requirements;

- 4) The public involvement that occurred to develop this plan;
- 5) A brief description of other plans and their relationship to this Regional Transportation Plan; and
- 6) An overview of the topics discussed in the remaining chapters.

Planning Period

This Regional Transportation Plan covers a 27-year period starting with 2019 and ending with the horizon year of 2045.

Planning Area

Metropolitan Planning Organization

The Metropolitan Planning Organization is federally mandated and authorized to fulfill federal planning requirements for the Longview-Kelso-Rainier urbanized area. The 1980 US Census indicated that the Cities of Longview and Kelso (Washington), Rainier (Oregon), and unincorporated areas of Cowlitz (Washington) and Columbia (Oregon) Counties had reached the threshold population and urban densities required for an urbanized area. In 1982, in compliance with federal laws, the local governments and both governors designated the CWCOG as the responsible agency to carry out the required planning responsibilities of an urbanized area for highways, streets, roads, and public transportation. The CWCOG planning responsibilities are defined in the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The CWCOG MPO complies with federal United States Department of

Transportation (USDOT) regulations. Two excerpts from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) summarize the scope of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

“Metropolitan planning organizations designated under §450.310, in cooperation with the State and public transportation operators, shall develop long-range transportation plans and TIPs through a performance-driven, outcome-based approach.”
(23 CFR 450.306(a))

*“The metropolitan transportation planning process shall be **continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive**, and provide for consideration and implementation of projects, strategies, and services that will address the following factors: (1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency; (2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users; (3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users; (4) Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight; (5) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns; (6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight; (7) Promote efficient system management and operation; (8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system; (9) Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and (10) Enhance travel and tourism.”*
(23 CFR 450.306(b))

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization

The RTPO is voluntary, locally developed, and fulfills state planning requirements for a five-county region. The organization is comprised of five counties, 28 cities or towns, 12 ports, four public transit agencies, five tribes, and three WSDOT Regions representing a population of 279,242 persons (US Census Bureau 2016 Annual Population Estimate). The 1990 Legislature authorized regional transportation planning as part of Washington State’s Growth Management Act (GMA). The GMA created a formal mechanism for local governments and the state to coordinate planning for regional transportation facilities and services. Furthermore, where an MPO exists, the regional transportation planning organization is required to be the same entity. In 1991, in response to this state law, the CWCOG consulted with Grays Harbor and Pacific Counties to form the RTPO, with CWCOG as the lead agency. Lewis County was added as a fifth county in 1992. CWCOG is the responsible agency to carry out the regional transportation planning responsibilities of the five-county Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO).

The RTPO was developed specifically to comply with RCW 36.70A, the Growth Management Act (GMA), and RCW 47.80. As state law provides at RCW 47.80.023, the duties of the RTPO are:

- Prepare and periodically update a transportation strategy for the region;
- Prepare a Regional Transportation Plan that is consistent with countywide planning policies, local comprehensive plans, and state transportation plans;
- Certify that the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans reflect the region’s guidelines and principles for

transportation planning; are consistent with the adopted Regional Transportation Plan; and conform with the requirements of the state Growth Management Act;

- Certify that countywide planning policies and the Regional Transportation Plan are consistent;
- Develop a six-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program, which proposes regionally significant transportation projects and programs, and transportation demand management strategies;
- Include specific opportunities and projects to advance special needs coordinated transportation in the coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan.
- Designate a lead planning agency to coordinate preparation of the Regional Transportation Plan and carry out the other responsibilities of the organization;
- Review level of service methodologies used by cities and counties to promote a consistent regional evaluation of transportation facilities and corridors; and
- Work with cities, counties, transit agencies, WSDOT, and others to develop level of service standards or alternative transportation performance measures.
- Submit to the agency council on coordinated transportation every four years an updated coordinated public transit-human services transportation plan and submit to the council every two years a prioritized regional human service and transportation project list.

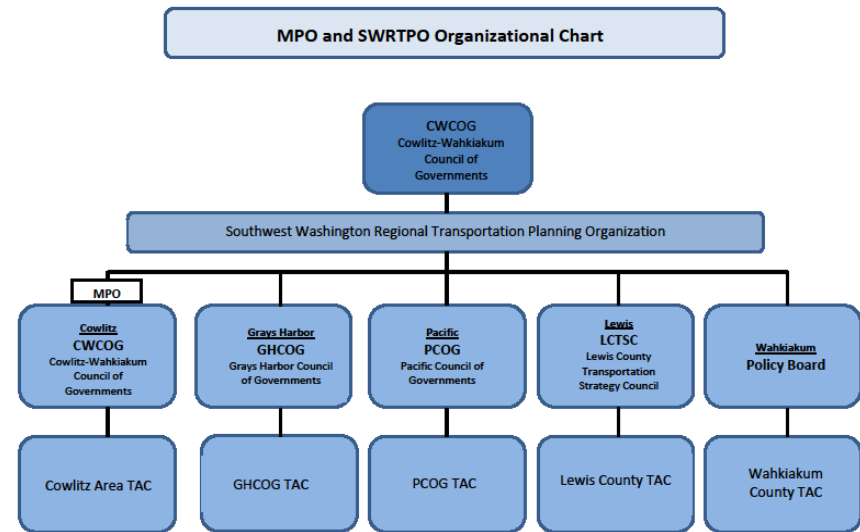


Figure 1-1: MPO and RTPO Organizational Chart

Source: CWCOG

Federal and State Planning Requirements

Recent Federal Legislation

Since 1991, federal transportation legislation has required that metropolitan transportation planning be accomplished through Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and that the ongoing process creates a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive framework for making transportation investment decisions in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more people. Those investment decisions must include both highway and transit projects. Planning

funds are, therefore, provided by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to carry out MPO activities.

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 brought about a new focus on a balanced, efficient transportation system. The 35-year interstate highway construction era was over. ISTEA shifted decision-making about federal transportation funding from the state DOTs to a shared responsibility between the states and the MPOs. Major emphasis was put on local planning and programming. That emphasis expanded the duties of MPOs. ISTEA set forth requirements for Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs), including 16 planning factors to be incorporated into the MTPs.

The 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) built on the initiatives of ISTEA. Flexibility in the use of funds, emphasis on measures to improve the environment, focus on a strong planning process as the foundation of quality transportation decisions—all ISTEA hallmarks—were continued and enhanced by TEA-21. In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was introduced to reauthorize funding and to build on the initiatives of ISTEA and TEA-21.

In July 2012, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) was signed into law. MAP-21 created a streamlined, performance-based surface transportation program and built on many of the highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian programs and policies established in 1991. MAP-21 also addressed the many challenges facing the U.S. transportation system such as improving safety, maintaining infrastructure condition, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency of the system and freight movement, protecting the environment, and reducing delays in project delivery.

The current federal transportation act, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, was signed into law on December 4, 2015. According to FHWA the FAST Act provided “long-term funding certainty for surface transportation infrastructure planning and investment.” It continues many of the metropolitan transportation planning requirements of ISTEA, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU, and MAP-21, and specifically from MAP-21, the focus on performance-based planning and programming.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Requirements

Oversight of the federal metropolitan planning program is a joint responsibility of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Requirements for this plan as a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) are addressed in [Title 23 CFR 450.324](#) and incorporated here by reference.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Requirements

State requirements for regional transportation plans are addressed in [RCW 47.80.030](#) and incorporated here by reference.

Public Involvement

This Regional Transportation Plan was developed through extensive involvement of the public, local agency staff, regional stakeholders, and elected officials. Local agency staff and other regional stakeholders were involved in plan development primarily through technical advisory committee meetings held in all five counties of the RTPO and regional stakeholder group meetings for public transportation and freight held one or more times a year as needed. The technical advisory committees and stakeholder groups helped develop the goals, policies, and long-range strategies through small

and large group discussions; reviewed and provided comments on draft materials prior to their inclusion in the plan; and provided comments on most individual chapters as each was finished. Elected officials provided policy direction through CWCOG and RTPO board meetings and approved the vision, guiding principles, goals, policies, and long-range strategies prior to inclusion in the plan. The public was involved in open houses and through a survey during development of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment, a planning document incorporated into this Regional Transportation Plan's discussion of active transportation. In addition, the public was invited to participate in a Transportation User Survey to provide valuable information on their transportation priorities, needs, concerns, and general travel habits.

These public involvement activities were guided by the objectives of the Public Participation Plan. The [Public Participation Plan](#), incorporated here by reference, is the official policy of the CWCOG on public involvement in all planning processes including transportation. This Plan outlines the adoption and amendment processes for transportation plans, projects, and tasks; comment periods; opportunities for public participation; noticing practices; and strategies for public participation in the activities of the MPO and RTPO.

The final public involvement process prior to adoption of this Regional Transportation Plan by the CWCOG and RTPO boards involved a final review of the draft plan at technical advisory committee meetings during October/November 2018 as well as conducting two public comment periods before taking action to adopt the plan. For the public comment periods a legal notice, or media release, was sent to the following newspapers to announce that public comments were being accepted: 1) *The Daily News*, 2) *The Daily World*, 3) *The Chronicle* [in Centralia], 4) *The Chinook Observer*, 5) *The Wahkiakum*

Eagle, and 6) *The Chronicle* [in St. Helens, Oregon]. The first public comment period started on Friday, September 14, 2018 and ended at 5:00 pm on Friday, September 28, 2018. The second public comment period started on Tuesday, November 20, 2018 and ended at 5:00 pm on Friday, December 7, 2018. There was also a separate public comment period held over the same time period as the first one in September 2018 for a Determination of Non-Significance required under the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

Relationship to Other Plans

There are several plans at the state, regional, and local level that influence the RTP. The Washington Transportation Plan and Oregon Transportation Plan as well as modal plans in both states influence the RTP from the statewide level. City and county comprehensive plans and local agency six-year Transportation Improvement Programs influence the RTP from the local government level. There are also other regional plans of the MPO and RTPO focused on specific areas of the transportation system that provide information for the RTP. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is built upon the policy direction established in local and statewide plans. Regional transportation planning provides a unified blueprint to ensure efforts of all effected jurisdictions are coordinated and the individual parts of the overall transportation system function as a whole.

State Plans

Washington Transportation Plan/Oregon Transportation Plan

The Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) and the Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) provide policy guidance to guide the transportation system across all modes and regions of their respective states. There are overarching goals, six in the WTP and seven in the

OTP, that formed the foundation used to develop the goals, policies, and strategies for this RTP.

Modal Plans

Both Washington and Oregon have several modal plans; each plan provides policy direction and helps in making statewide investment decisions for a specific mode. These statewide modal plans also are a key resource for data and information on the existing conditions of the regional transportation system of the MPO and RTPO. The states also use information from this Regional Transportation Plan to understand regional priorities when developing statewide modal plans. Table 1-1 lists the titles of the various Washington and Oregon modal plans.

Statewide Modal Plan Titles	
Washington	Oregon
Washington State Highway System Plan	Oregon Highway Plan
Washington State Bicycle Facilities and Pedestrian Walkways Plan	Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan
Washington State Freight System Plan	Oregon Transportation Options Plan
Washington State Rail Plan	Oregon Freight Plan
Washington Aviation System Plan	Oregon State Rail Plan
Washington State Public Transportation Plan	Oregon Aviation Plan
WSDOT Ferries Division Long-Range Plan	Oregon Public Transportation Plan
Statewide Human Service Transportation Plan	Oregon Transportation Safety Action Plan
Target Zero: Strategic Highway Safety Plan	Oregon Statewide Transportation Strategy: A 2050 Vision for Greenhouse Gas Emissions Reductions

Table 1-1: Statewide Modal Plan Titles

Metropolitan/Regional Plans

Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (CPT-HSTP) is to plan for strategies to address regional unmet needs of the disabled, elderly, low income, or any other individuals with special needs. CWCOG develops an updated CPT-HSTP every four years for the RTPO. Furthermore, the CPT-HSTP provides a framework for prioritizing projects to receive state and federal public transportation funding. In Washington State, WSDOT has a competitive consolidated grant application process to distribute both state and federal public transportation grants. WSDOT serves as the designated recipient for the federal funds listed above intended for non-urbanized portions of the state, and, in turn, distributes them to local entities through this competitive grant process. ODOT is a designated recipient for federal funds as well and has its own process of awarding public transportation grants in Oregon. The CPT-HSTP is integrated with this Regional Transportation Plan in the following ways:

1. The priorities identified in the CPT-HSTP were used to develop the goals and policies regarding public transportation included in Chapter 3.
2. The existing public transportation services in Chapter 4 are also included in the CPT-HSTP.
3. The latest unmet needs, a challenge for public transportation providers to address now and in the future, developed as part of the 2018 CPT-HSTP are included in Chapter 8.

The current adopted CPT-HSTP for the RTPO is available on the CWCOG website (www.cwcog.org).

Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment

The CWCOG developed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment in 2016 for the MPO and RTPO. This planning document developed the long-range strategies for active transportation that are incorporated in Chapter 3. In addition, it expanded the inventory of existing bike/ped facilities and developed a network of potential facilities all across the region. The existing and potential networks were mapped in a GIS database and are incorporated in Chapters 4 and 8 of this RTP, respectfully. In addition, many of the short-term priority bicycle and pedestrian projects identified in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Assessment are included on the project, or unfunded needs, lists in Chapter 6.

Regional Intelligent Transportation System Architecture

CWCOG, as the Longview-Kelso-Rainier MPO, has kicked-off the beginning of a planning process in late 2018 to develop a Regional Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Architecture that will guide future investment decisions regarding ITS facilities and help all agencies better collaborate. The architecture is scheduled for completion in 2019 and information from it will be incorporated into future Regional Transportation Plans.

Regional Transportation Improvement Program

Whereas this Regional Transportation Plan is the long-range plan for the MPO and RTPO, the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) is the document that identifies and prioritizes transportation investments with secured funding in the MPO and RTPO in the upcoming year. Transportation projects in the RTIP need to be consistent with this RTP as well as local comprehensive plans. The RTIP is a short-range plan and developed on an annual basis; it is

one way that this RTP is implemented. Chapter 7 discusses the RTIP in more detail. The current RTIP is available on the CWCOG website.

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) outlines the transportation studies and tasks to be performed on behalf of the Longview-Kelso-Rainier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the five-county Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) over the state fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). Work activities are performed by CWCOG staff in conjunction with planning partners in Grays Harbor and Lewis Counties. The UPWP outlines transportation planning activities over the next fiscal year in sufficient detail to indicate who will perform the work, the schedule for completing it, expected results from the activity, and a proposed funding estimate for each task. Work items listed in the document are based on the goals, policies, and strategies of this Regional Transportation Plan as well as guidelines established by federal and state requirements. The current UPWP is available on the CWCOG website.

Local Plans

Comprehensive Plans

Local comprehensive plans guide growth and development patterns for county or city jurisdictions over the long term. These plans identify capital improvements and other services necessary to support the types and level of growth desired by the community. For local governments planning under the Washington State Growth Management Act, there is a requirement that local comprehensive plans be coordinated with regional transportation plans. The RTPO reviews and provides feedback on comprehensive plan updates to

ensure consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan. The RTPO completes this review of all comprehensive plan updates even for areas not fully planning under the Growth Management Act. In addition, local comprehensive plans are reviewed for information that can be integrated into the RTP to ensure the character of existing communities and their individual paths towards meeting future growth needs are respected.

Six-Year Transportation Improvement Programs

Counties and cities are required to prepare annually a six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) identifying funded and planned projects within their jurisdiction. The cities in Washington State are required to adopt a six-year TIP by June 30th each year. This deadline allows those projects with secure federal funds, or regionally significant projects with secured funding from any source, to flow into the RTIP in July and August when it is developed. Counties in Washington State do not have to adopt a six-year TIP until the end of December; thus, their eligible projects usually are added to the RTIP as an amendment in January. The local TIP is the local level document that identifies and prioritizes transportation projects. In Oregon, a capital improvement program includes the identification and prioritization of transportation and other projects.

Plan Organization

Now that the important aspects of what guides the plan has been described, the remainder of this Regional Transportation Plan is organized as follows:

1. Chapter 2 reviews demographic, employment, and other regional trends;

2. Chapter 3 describes the goals, policies, and long-range strategies that create the framework of the plan;
3. Chapter 4 provides a summary of the existing conditions of the regional transportation system by emphasis area (active transportation, freight, public transportation, roadways);
4. Chapter 5 describes existing transportation priorities, concerns, issues, and travel habits of the general public as gathered through a Transportation User Survey;
5. Chapter 6 lays out a list of funded, planned, and unfunded transportation improvements for the future that will implement this RTP as well as provides a financial plan to demonstrate fiscal constraint;
6. Chapter 7 provides a description of the RTIP, performance management, and ongoing engagement and outreach that is part of implementing the RTP;
7. Chapter 8 begins by mentioning what the future transportation system may look like; provides a high-level analysis of the existing/future transportation system; looks at potential environmental constraints; and discusses future challenges, possible successes, and opportunities; and
8. Chapter 9 reviews the process for amending and updating the plan.