

Chapter 3

Policy Element

Introduction

This Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update began with an extensive visioning process, conducted through a bottom-up approach. CWCOG staff worked closely with planning partners, Technical Advisory Committees (TACs), and/or Policy Boards in all five Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) counties. The TAC in Cowlitz County also included representatives of the City of Rainier, Oregon and the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT). The large area and geographic diversity of the RTPO and MPO regions creates a wide variety of challenges in building, maintaining, and managing a safe and efficient transportation system. Acknowledging those differences, planning staff worked with each county group of stakeholders to craft a vision, guiding principles, goals, and policies specific to their county. The regional visioning elements were then created through identifying challenges and aspirations that are shared between multiple counties within the region.

Statewide Transportation Policy Goals

CWCOG staff relied on statewide goals in Washington and Oregon to facilitate visioning discussions with local stakeholders for the purposes of this RTP. When crafting the RTP policy element, CWCOG staff worked to ensure the region's future efforts coincided and advanced the vision outlined in the Washington Transportation Plan and Oregon Transportation Plan. The policy goals of each state are listed in the following two subsections.

Washington Transportation Plan

The Washington Transportation Plan, WTP 2035, is based on the following six transportation policy goals established by the Legislature:

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.

ENVIRONMENT: To enhance Washington's quality of life through transportation investments that promote energy conservation, enhance healthy communities, and protect the environment.

STEWARDSHIP: To continuously improve the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of the transportation system.

ECONOMIC VITALITY: To promote and develop transportation systems that stimulate, support, and enhance the movement of people and goods to ensure a prosperous economy.

Oregon Transportation Plan

The Oregon Transportation Plan created the following seven policy goals designed to guide state, regional, and local transportation planning:

MOBILITY AND ACCESSIBILITY: Provide a balanced, efficient, and integrated transportation system that ensures interconnected access to all areas of the state, the nation, and the world. Promote transportation choices that are reliable, accessible, and cost-effective.

MANAGEMENT OF THE SYSTEM: Improve the efficiency of the transportation system by optimizing operations and management. Manage transportation assets to extend their life and reduce maintenance costs.

ECONOMIC VITALITY: Expand and diversify Oregon’s economy by transporting people, goods, services, and information in safe, energy-efficient, and environmentally sound ways. Provide Oregon with a competitive advantage by promoting an integrated freight system.

SUSTAINABILITY: Meet present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs from the joint perspective of the environment, economy, and communities. Encourage conservation and communities that integrate land use and transportation choices.

SAFETY AND SECURITY: Build, operate, and maintain the transportation system so that it is safe and secure. Take into account the needs of all users: operators, passengers, pedestrians, and property owners.

FUNDING THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM: Create sources of revenue that will support a viable transportation system today and in the future. Expand ways to fund the system that are fair and fiscally responsible.

COORDINATION, COMMUNICATION, AND COOPERATION: Foster coordination, communication, and cooperation between transportation users and providers so various means of transportation function as an integrated system. Work to help all parties align interests, remove barriers, and offer innovative, equitable solutions.

County Visioning Process

CWCOG staff initiated county visioning processes through first presenting a list of themes, which were gathered from the

transportation elements of area comprehensive plans. These themes were used as a starting point for exercises, where the stakeholders were asked to develop a list of local transportation issues. Once the lists were developed and discussed, the stakeholders then prioritized the needs or issues through popular vote. Planning staff relied on the top needs or issues to craft each county’s transportation vision and guiding principles. The guiding principles were used to help develop a list of goals and policies, which were also partly shaped by the full list of issues. Each group of stakeholders was asked to modify or enhance the language of each piece before being finalized through group consensus.

Regional Visioning Process

The regional vision was crafted through reconciling the common issues identified through the county stakeholder meetings. Six common regional issues were then identified:

- Bicycle/Pedestrian Mobility
- Bridge Performance
- Economic Vitality
- Funding Structures
- Safety Across Modes
- Public Transportation Service

The shared issues were used to develop a regional vision, guiding principles, goals, and policies, which aim to lead the entire RTPO and MPO in a direction that treats the region’s transportation infrastructure as one interconnected, multi-modal system, rather than as separate parts. While the counties’ individual visioning elements are an important part of the RTP, the regional policy elements are overarching, and act as an umbrella over the counties’ visioning elements. The counties’ policy elements can be found in the Chapter 3 Appendix.

Regional Transportation Plan

Policy Element

Vision

To achieve a safe and well-maintained regional transportation system that integrates all travel modes, supports a healthy economy, and enhances the quality of life across the region. The transportation system will:

- Protect the region's investment by preserving and enhancing existing infrastructure.
- Provide viable travel options across all modes and throughout our diverse region.

Guiding Principles

- Preserve and improve the regional transportation system through partnerships in order to maximize investment.
- Provide an integrated transportation system that encourages the use of all modes by offering accessible, safe, and efficient travel options.
- Encourage the preservation and enhancement of public transportation programs and infrastructure throughout the Southwest Washington RTPO, and explore opportunities for expanding service to increase access to jobs, services, and other key destinations.
- Support the region's economic vitality through ensuring the transportation network addresses inter- and intra-regional accessibility and mobility needs for both people and goods.

Goals and Policies

Goal 1: Promote and support a transportation system that strengthens the region's economic competitiveness.

- **Policy 1a:** Increase the capacity and efficiency of a multi-modal freight network that accommodates trucking, rail, marine, and air cargo services; facilitates competitive choices for the movement of

- goods; supports the region's economic well-being; and minimizes negative impacts on land-use and the environment.
- **Policy 1b:** Install alternative energy fueling stations, including electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, to provide visitors who drive alternative energy vehicles the capability to travel easily throughout the region, increasing access to jobs, services, tourist attractions, and other key destinations.

Goal 2: Preserve and enhance the region's existing transportation infrastructure and facilities.

- **Policy 2a:** Encourage regional coordination and decision-making to develop a regional transportation system that is maintained and improved through adequate investment.
- **Policy 2b:** Facilitate cooperation between public, private and non-profit organizations to identify new funding mechanisms for transportation projects and programs, and to manage the regional transportation infrastructure.
- **Policy 2c:** Encourage the maintenance and improvement of the region's rail network and address at-grade rail crossings to increase the efficient movement of people and goods.
- **Policy 2d:** Encourage federal and state legislators to fully fund bridge replacement for structurally deficient bridges and bridges beyond their useful and functional life span.
- **Policy 2e:** Preserve the existing transportation infrastructure and services to optimize capacity and reliability, and to improve travel and safety conditions.
- **Policy 2f:** Improve, rebuild, or retrofit infrastructure which has exceeded its useful and functional life, and develop a plan for the timely replacement of infrastructure nearing the end of its useful and functional life.
- **Policy 2g:** Focus efforts and investments on transportation projects that maximize the efficiency and safety of the existing system.

Goal 3: Develop an integrated non-motorized transportation system.

- Policy 3a: Create a safe and comprehensive network of bicycle and pedestrian facilities integrated into the regional transportation network which provides alternatives to automobile travel; links resources and destinations; provides greater connectivity between neighborhoods, employment hubs, schools, and parks; increases recreational opportunities; promotes healthy lifestyles; and enhances the quality of life in Southwest Washington.
- Policy 3b: Identify new trail segments and connect gaps in the existing trail system to strengthen region-wide trail connectivity.
- Policy 3c: Ensure the public transportation system is integrated with the bike/pedestrian system and with bike/pedestrian infrastructure.
- Policy 3d: Improve the safety of routes through accommodating bicycle traffic, making the roadways safer for cyclists and all other users of the system.
- Policy 3e: Expand bicycle and pedestrian walkways in order to enhance connectivity between destinations, create new recreational opportunities, and to better protect the safety of all users.
- Policy 3f: Identify new funding sources specific to non-motorized transportation projects.

Goal 4: Maintain, modernize, and enhance a sustainable and comprehensive public transportation system.

- Policy 4a: Preserve, modernize, and expand an accessible, reliable, convenient, and safe public transportation system of buses, vanpools, carpools, and specialized transportation services that provides all residents, regardless of their age, income, or special needs, with access to employment centers, commercial areas, recreational facilities, and other destinations within the region.
- Policy 4b: Improve access and coordination between public transportation providers across the region.
- Policy 4c: Promote increased public transportation ridership through service enhancement and expansion, improved pedestrian

and bicycle linkages, and encouraging transit-oriented development patterns.

- Policy 4d: Improve the efficiency of public transportation programs through incorporating new technologies, such as Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) solutions.
- Policy 4e: Expand the reach of the public transportation network, through improving connectivity to other areas, neighboring counties, and connections with other public transportation providers.
- Policy 4f: Improve access to jobs through operational improvements and service expansions.
- Policy 4g: Expand public transportation services to underserved areas, potentially through forming new partnerships between agencies, to maximize efficiency through coordination.

Goal 5: Maintain and enhance a regional transportation system that is safe and accessible for multiple travel modes.

- Policy 5a: Promote designs for new or widened roadways that include sufficient width to accommodate anticipated future demand, utility expansion, emergency vehicle access, buses, and for safe bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Policy 5b: Maintain and enhance a safe and accessible public transportation, pedestrian, and bicycle system which promotes functional and recreational opportunities.
- Policy 5c: Address at-grade rail crossings to improve safety and to ensure emergency vehicles can respond in a timely manner.
- Policy 5d: Increase safety for pedestrians with improvements to separate pedestrians from vehicular traffic.
- Policy 5e: Explore methods to improve safety at intersections and roadways that experience high traffic volumes and higher rates of traffic accidents.

Regional Long-Range Strategies

In the RTPO and MPO regions, transportation planning is a cooperative, coordinated, and comprehensive process designed to foster involvement by all users of the transportation system. Regional long-range strategies were developed for each emphasis area with the input and assistance of city and county elected officials, port managers, transit providers, active transportation advocates, tribal governments, two state departments of transportation, and a number of other stakeholders.

The RTP encompasses a total of four emphasis areas. These emphasis areas were identified to help further the intent or direction of the RTP vision, goals, and policies. The four emphasis areas are: active transportation, freight, public transportation, and roadways.

Throughout this process, the uniqueness of each county and Rainier, Oregon surfaced – each faces particular transportation issues, has unique demographics, and the geographic limitations vary as much as the transportation networks. Acknowledging those differences, CWCOG worked with each county’s group of stakeholders to accomplish the development of regional long-range strategies for all four emphasis areas.

Active Transportation Emphasis Area

Comprehensive Network Strategies

- Coordinate the planning, design, construction, and funding of an integrated bicycle and pedestrian network with citizens, elected officials, staff, business groups, and other stakeholders in order to connect popular destinations with existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Work with counties, cities, and towns to consider pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of all roadway projects.

- Encourage jurisdictions to identify bicycle and pedestrian facilities in comprehensive, transportation, and recreational plans, and adopt and integrate complete street policies.
- Designate bicycle and pedestrian priority areas for focused planning and funding to improve bicycle and pedestrian networks. Develop and adopt a method to prioritize projects that incorporate feasible active transportation projects and improvements.
- Promote active and healthy lifestyles by implementing the proposed active transportation network by connecting popular destinations, retail centers, businesses, and existing active transportation facilities.
- Collaborate with advocacy groups to build community and elected official support to implement bicycle and pedestrian facilities projects.

Funding Strategies

- Work with counties, cities, towns, ports, airports, health agencies, businesses, and non-profits to pursue federal, state, local, and private funding opportunities and identify matching funds for bicycle and pedestrian facilities projects for all jurisdictions in the SWRTPO region.
- Leverage local funding contributions and incorporate bicycle and pedestrian improvements by private developers where feasible.
- Collaborate with advocacy and community-based groups in order to get bicycle and pedestrian projects funded, implemented, and maintained.

Public Transportation Connections Strategies

- Work with counties, cities, towns, agencies, businesses, and stakeholders to encourage the provision (when needed and appropriate) of bicycle infrastructure (lighting, seating, landscaping, trash receptacles, bike racks/lockers, handicap access, etc.) at destinations (i.e., retail and employment

- centers and popular destinations) to promote and facilitate walking and biking to transit.
- Develop education campaign to promote transit and bicycles on buses. Provide bicycle rack instructions at bus shelters and key destinations. Produce short video on how to use bike racks.
- Work with transit providers to encourage transit use by improving pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing and future transit and school bus systems, and by improving the security and utility of park and ride lots and bus stops and stations.
- Consider pedestrian and bicycles along with transit in all aspects of planning and implementing improvements in developing the transportation network. Incorporate transit supportive elements in local comprehensive plans.

Safety Strategies

- Develop and implement programs that educate all users on the rules of the road and safety.
 - Public Awareness Media Campaign (e.g., Public Service Programming on local radios, in newspapers, and on visible social media platforms).
 - Posters at transit kiosks and on buses.
- Install/promote wayfinding and route signs to direct users through the pedestrian and bicycle facilities systems to destinations.
- Employ effective traffic calming measures to reduce speed (i.e., pavement markings, flashing crosswalk signs and beacons, roundabouts) to encourage bicyclists and motorists to share the road.
- Minimize hazards and obstructions on pedestrian and bicycle facilities by ensuring that the system is properly maintained (i.e., clear debris, patch holes).

- Work with counties, cities, towns, agencies, and stakeholders to fund and identify desirable and practical data to be collected, maintained, and reported.
- Work with law enforcement to educate all users in the compliance of traffic laws.

Freight Emphasis Area

Increase Capacity Strategies

- Identify economic opportunities for airport expansion through use of feasibility studies.
- Explore the expansion of the regions' airport operations by expanding runways to support some cargo operations.
- Maintain and promote funding for infrastructure critical to port operations and growth. Focus—rail, surface streets, and highway connections; berth and channel dredging/maintenance; and berth expansion/creation.
- Encourage and support funding opportunities for brownfield redevelopment to promote port and other freight expansion.
- Improve rail and roadway safety and at-grade railroad crossings. Promote and encourage funding for grade separation at high capacity intersections.
- Improve and maintain existing transportation infrastructure segments that serve the local/regional movement of freight and goods. Focus efforts on the following projects:
 - Grays Harbor:
 - East Aberdeen Mobility Project
 - US 101 Truck Route EIS
 - Complete seismic upgrades to Chehalis River Bridge
 - Lewis:
 - I-5—Add lanes, on/off ramp improvements
 - I-5 flood mitigation projects
 - County roads—wider/shoulders
 - Exit 72 and 82—access improvements

- A new exit for direct access to Port of Centralia and distribution centers
 - North County Industrial Access
- Cowlitz:
 - I-5 (Woodland Bridge) repaving
 - Exit 21 and 22
 - Exit 30 reconfiguration
 - Exit 32 interchange/access
 - SR 432 corridor improvement
 - Major logging truck routes in Cowlitz County
 - Re-designation of SR 4 to Allen Street
 - Landslide mitigation along roadways
- Pacific:
 - SR 6 – straighten Pluvius bridge
 - Hwy 101 – road conditions (sliding), bike/pedestrian safety enhancements
 - SR 103 – Seaview to Oysterville
- Promote capacity upgrades on arterial routes to accommodate new freight opportunities to increase freight mobility.
- Promote on/off ramp improvement projects that will increase capacity.
- Promote the development of alternative truck freight routes for use by heavier trucks.
- Examine the feasibility of flexible lane configurations for truck freight corridors in the event of partial closures.
- Develop corridor plans specific to pipeline infrastructure.

Increase Efficiency Strategies

- Engage elected officials, legislators, and members of congress to advance *local* and regional high priority freight transportation projects.
- Coordinate with local land use planning efforts to ensure that current and future freight/industrial needs along I-5 and other corridors are addressed.

- Promote local, regional, and state regulations that support freight growth.
- Encourage local, state, and federal streamlined permitting processes for rail, port, and roadway projects.
- Plan for the strategic closures of railroad crossings and the need for alternate routes during closures.
- Promote construction of rail loops on-site to improve the ability for the railroad mainline tracks to remain clear of traffic.
- Advocate for funding opportunities for railroad quiet zones.
- Promote safe access to rail and roadway facilities for first responders during emergencies.
- Develop and implement Intelligent Transportation System strategies to optimize efficiency and capacity of the freight transportation system. May include: signal timing coordination and optimization; crossing arms for safety and silent crossings; phone apps to provide information on railroad, highway closures and delays, alternate routes, available truck parking locations, and emergency planning information.
- Encourage development of more safe, accessible truck parking locations in areas off of the main freight corridors.
- Examine the potential use and impacts of driverless vehicles on the existing roadway system.
- Promote the use of existing WSDOT Intelligent Transportation System resources such as the Commercial Vehicle Emergency Detour Pass System and Freight Alert System.
- Develop public education campaign aimed at reinforcing driving laws and etiquette (passing lane driving, blocking traffic at intersections, etc.).
- Educate decision makers, stakeholders, and community members on the economic benefits and necessity of goods movement, as well as the importance of having a diverse freight system.
- Promote truck speed limits that are the same as other vehicles.

Public Transportation Emphasis Area

Improvements Strategies

- Seek and secure sustainable long-term funding for capital, operational, and maintenance (vehicle and facilities) to address service gaps, expansion needs, and systems' deficiencies.
- Assist with the development of a wide range of accessible user and system information (i.e., current schedules, routes, and issues) and technologies (i.e., Google Transit) to enhance ease of travel between all system providers and users in the SWRTPO, and make transit more accessible and easier to use.
- Explore affordable ways to provide interregional public transportation services along the I-5 corridor to improve current connections and promote service expansions between Lewis and Cowlitz counties.
- Develop a clear message to engage a full range of community members, including low-income, minority, and transit dependent residents to communicate systems needs and funding available/needed to state and federal officials when planning for future and/or enhanced transit services.
- Improve passenger information systems to include real-time service information in order to make it easy to transfer amongst service providers.
- Consider the usage of volunteer drivers/services or neighborhood carpools to expand the region's public transportation system.
- Improve transit access for transit dependent populations, specifically homeless and transient populations.
- Engage elected officials and community leaders to overcome political barriers in order to provide a coordinated system of public transportation services that is responsive to the needs of all residents, particularly those for whom transit is a necessity (i.e., youth, seniors, people with disabilities, low income populations, and people without access to an automobile).

Coordination Strategies

- Work with counties, cities, towns, health agencies, businesses, and non-profits to explore and pursue public and private funding opportunities for public transportation in the SWRTPO region.
- Work cooperatively with regional partners and transit providers to share and develop applicable databases and performance measures.
- Explore ways to improve the existing communication system (cell phones, radios, etc.) in order to coordinate service provision amongst transit providers.
- Coordinate with counties, cities, towns, and other agencies to include county emergency management practices and document each organization's emergency management practices history.

Roadways Emphasis Area

Alternative Energy Fueling Stations Strategies

- Encourage the development and accessibility of alternative energy fueling stations throughout the SWRTPO region, including:
 - Fast charging (1-3 hours) stations
 - Connections to bike and pedestrian network and transit routes
 - Public/private partnership (use of parking spaces)
 - Develop/implement identification signs to assist with the wayfinding of alternative energy fueling stations.
- Work with Federal, state, and local governments to address lack of funding to implement alternative energy fueling stations in the SWRTPO region.

At-Grade Rail Crossings Strategies

- Work with the railroad and Federal, state, and local governments to:

- Identify at-grade crossings that will qualify for quiet zone implementation.
- Secure funding to eliminate unsafe at-grade crossings and install safety measures to increase emergency vehicle response time.
- Educate and seek support from stakeholders and general public.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety.
- Implement advanced technologies (ITS) and systems at highway-railway at-grade crossings to warn of railroad blockages and advise on alternative routes.

Bridges Strategies

- Maintain the safety and reliability of the existing bridge infrastructure in the SWRTPO region to:
 - Accommodate all users including buses, bicycles, and pedestrians.
 - Work with WSDOT to retrofit bridges critical to the transportation network to current earthquake standards and evacuation routes.
- Coordinate with WSDOT and Fish and Wildlife to identify high-priority fish passage barriers when replacing culverts with bridges.
- Work with WSDOT, counties, cities, and towns to pursue funding opportunities to preserve and enhance bridges.

Multi-modal Inclusion and Accommodation Strategies

- Work with WSDOT and local governments to identify safety issues along strategic multi-modal corridors and implement appropriate solutions where necessary.
- Connect existing and future bicycle and pedestrian network to other transportation modes/networks (i.e. transit, trains, alternative fuel stations, park and ride facilities) and high-volume area/destinations in the SWRTPO region.
- When planning, designing, and constructing roadway projects consider possible impacts on the multi-modal user and

accommodations that may be needed to promote improved use by all modes.

- Work with Federal, state, local governments, and transit agencies to address the lack of planning, coordination, and provision of ongoing funds when developing transportation projects along strategic corridors.

Preservation and Enhancement Strategies

- Enhance the effectiveness of intergovernmental coordination by working with Federal, state, regional, and local entities to coordinate projects that preserve and enhance the regional roadway network and projects that accommodate and address:
 - Left turn and passing lanes
 - Multi-use scenic pullouts
 - Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
 - (Lack of) right-of-way
 - Environmental issues (i.e., storm water, slides, erosion).
- Foster interagency collaboration to seek, secure, and prioritize the most effective funding solutions to maintain and upgrade the existing transportation system.
- Dedicate Federal road funds to capacity, technology, and condition preservation and upgrade projects to encourage consistent improvement of the regional roadway network.

Summary

The local and regional visioning processes for this plan were conducted through a bottom-up approach, relying heavily on area stakeholders. This visioning process allows the RTPO and MPO to effectively face transportation challenges by having a regional plan that addresses both local issues, while also focusing on the overarching needs and aspirations of the region.