

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## A Plan for the Next 25 Years

The primary purpose of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is to provide an overarching vision and 25-year direction for the transportation system serving the Longview-Kelso-Rainier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) areas. The plan should be used to guide decisions to address current and anticipated demands on the region's entire transportation system, encompassing roadways, public transportation systems, non-motorized transportation facilities, as well as maritime, rail, and aviation facilities. The RTP is centered on a shared regional vision – a statement of aspiration for the future of the transportation system. Five goals and 28 policies were crafted in order to assist the region advance toward this vision. The RTP proposes a list of next steps to provide further guidance for plan implementation, helping bring the vision to fruition.

The RTP was developed through a cooperative process of regional stakeholders, consisting of two state Departments of Transportation, 28 cities, five counties, five Tribal governments, 12 ports, four transit authorities, and numerous other stakeholders. This process was led by the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOCG), which serves as the lead agency for the MPO and the SWRTPO. CWCOCG partnered with the Grays Harbor Council of Governments (GHCOCG) and Lewis County to assist with stakeholder outreach and plan development. The RTP serves as a link between cities, counties, and state transportation planning efforts within the MPO and the SWRTPO.

## Guiding Principles

The RTP is built upon four foundation principles, which were crafted by CWCOCG staff through an analysis of the common regional

aspirations identified during stakeholder visioning discussions. These principles were used to guide the development of the plan, and to determine areas of focus for the existing conditions analysis (Chapter 4), as well as the Gap Analysis and Needs Assessment (Chapter 5). The RTP's guiding principles are:

- 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.

## Vision, Goals, & Policy Development

The vision of the Regional Transportation Plan is “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.”

The goals outlined in the RTP were developed with the guidance of the above-mentioned guiding principles, and through common

regional aspirations identified during stakeholder visioning discussions. These goals aim to lead the MPO and SWRTPO in a unified direction that treats the region's transportation infrastructure as one interconnected, multi-modal system, rather than as separate parts. Numerous policies were then crafted under each goal, which are outlined in Chapter 3. The RTP goals include:

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

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

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

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

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

## Existing Transportation System Conditions

The MPO and SWRTPO transportation network facilitates the movement of people throughout the region for purposes of reaching places of employment, education, recreation, and for personal needs. Beyond people, the system is essential for the movement of goods and continued economic development. Goods are transported to, from, and through the region with major intermodal centers located primarily in Longview, Aberdeen, and Kalama.

The existing transportation system, further detailed in Chapter 4, includes roadways, public transportation systems, non-motorized transportation facilities, as well as maritime, pipeline, rail, and aviation facilities. The regional roadway system is an interconnected network of interstates, highways, arterial streets, collectors, and local streets. The regional public transportation system includes fixed routes provided by transit authorities and non-profit agencies,

paratransit services, as well as demand-response services. Passenger rail is provided in two of the five SWRTPO counties. The railroad network also includes two freight rail lines serving three of the five SWRTPO counties. Active transportation facilities generally include bicycle and pedestrian facilities such as bicycle lanes, bicycle routes shared with vehicle traffic, and paths or trails that accommodate walking or biking. The airport system consists of general aviation facilities serving passenger needs.

## GAP Analysis/Needs Assessment

The vision of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) focuses on the attainment of a safe and well-maintained regional transportation system that integrates all modes of travel, supports a healthy economy, and enhances the quality of life across the region. To achieve this vision, CWCOG staff has conducted a gaps analysis and needs assessment of the transportation system. After identifying each gap and need by emphasis area, staff created a list of first steps to be addressed which will help the region resolve the issues identified. The next and final phase in the process is to convene stakeholder groups, representing all five counties of the SWRTPO, to develop more specific strategies and objectives that will allow the region to attain the vision, goals, and policies established in the RTP.

A total of four emphasis areas were identified to assist in the analysis of the regional transportation gaps and needs, and the development of next steps. These emphasis areas are not intended to be a replacement for the regional transportation goals. Instead, they were established with the recognition that many of the next steps developed under each strategy will help further the intent and direction of the RTP vision, goals, and policies. The four emphasis areas are:

- Freight Transportation
- Roadway
- Public Transportation
- Active Transportation

## Next Steps

Federal transportation planning is intended to be conducted in a coordinated, comprehensive, and continuous manner. The 3 C's of transportation planning ensure that a continuous community dialogue is maintained in developing plans, priorities, and projects that ultimately deliver the results needed to maintain the economic competitiveness and livability of the region.

A continuous planning process with progressively deeper conversations will strengthen regional ties and collaboration. These efforts will result in a more comprehensive approach to plans and projects that have evolved over extended discussion.

The conversations that identified the Vision, Goals, and Policies in this document will continue to lead discussions regarding implementation strategies. This process is outlined in Chapter 6.