

APPENDIX C

REGIONAL CONSISTENCY AND CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Benton-Franklin-Walla Walla RTPO

Regional Consistency and Certification Process

INTRODUCTION

This document describes a process of how the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG) will certify the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans. This certification is based on the Growth Management Act (GMA) requirements adopted in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) and the Washington Administrative Code (WAC), and adopted County-Wide Planning Policies for transportation.

BACKGROUND

To assure consistency between local and regional planning efforts, the GMA (RCW 47.80.023) requires all transportation elements of local comprehensive plans undergo a consistency review and certification process to ensure that they conform to the requirements of GMA and are consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The GMA states that this process is to be developed and administered by Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). The Benton-Franklin Council of Governments is the RTPO for Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties.

The Washington Administrative Code's Procedural Criteria for Adopting Comprehensive Plans (Chapter 365-195 WAC) reiterates sections of the RCWs and recommends further steps to meet the requirements. The adopted County-Wide Planning Policies for Transportation articulate the countywide policy perspective on regional consistency. These policies are a requirement of the GMA and are intended to further the coordinated development of comprehensive plans.

The GMA (RCW 36.70A.100) emphasizes coordination and consistency in planning efforts among jurisdictions and agencies. During the development of the Regional Transportation (RTP), the RTPO met regularly to discuss and resolve regional issues. The RTPO Technical Advisory Committee also served as the staff forum for interjurisdictional and regional coordination.

GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES

Section 47.80.026 of the Revised Code of Washington requires RTPOs to establish guidelines and principles that provide specific direction for the development and evaluation of the transportation elements of comprehensive plans, and to assure that state, regional, and local goals for the development of transportation systems are met. The guidelines and principles (Attachment A) are closely related to the goals and policies in the RTP. However, rather than guiding decision making as goals and policies do, these guidelines and principles form the criteria for certifying city and county transportation elements in comprehensive plans. The guidelines and principles are expected to address, at a minimum, the following factors:

1. Concentration of economic activity;
2. Residential density;
3. Development corridors and urban design that, where appropriate, support high capacity transit;
4. Freight transportation and port access;
5. Development patterns that promote pedestrian and non-motorized transportation, circulation systems, access to regional systems, and effective and efficient highway systems;
6. The ability of transportation facilities and programs to retain existing and attract new jobs and private investment and to accommodate growth in demand;
7. Transportation demand management;
8. Joint and mixed use developments;
9. Present and future railroad right-of-way corridor utilization; and
10. Intermodal connections.

The RTPO has the flexibility to determine how to address each of these factors and may include those factors that are appropriate or determine factors that do not apply to the region.

CONFORMITY WITH THE GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The first GMA conformity requirement directs RTPOs to certify that the transportation elements of comprehensive plans conform to the appropriate requirements of RCW 36.70A.070, and recommends steps to meet the RCW requirements in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 365-195-325.

The following are required conformity elements from the Revised Code of Washington:

1. Land Use Element
2. Housing Element
3. Capital Facilities Plan Element
4. Utilities Element
5. Rural Element
6. Transportation Element
 - i. Land use assumptions used in estimating travel;
 - ii. Estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities;
 - iii. Facilities and service needs, including:

- A. An inventory of air, water, and ground transportation facilities and services. The inventory must include state-owned transportation facilities within the city or county's jurisdiction boundaries;
 - B. Level of service standards for all locally owned arterials and transit routes;
 - C. For state-owned transportation facilities, level of service standards for highways, as prescribed in chapters 47.06 and 47.80 RCW;
 - D. Specific actions and requirements for bringing into compliance locally owned transportation facilities or services that are below an established level of service standard;
 - E. Forecasts of traffic for at least ten years based on the adopted land use plan;
 - F. Identification of state and local system needs to meet current and future demands;
- iv. Finance
 - A. An analysis of funding capability to judge needs against probable funding resources;
 - B. A multiyear financing plan based on the needs identified in the comprehensive plan;
 - C. If probable funding falls short of meeting identified needs, a discussion of how additional funding will be raised;
 - v. Intergovernmental coordination efforts, including an assessment of the impacts of the transportation plan and land use assumptions on the transportation systems of adjacent jurisdictions.
 - vi. Demand-management strategies.

Local jurisdictions must also adopt and enforce ordinances (RCW 36.70A.070), which prohibit development approval if the development causes the level of service on a locally owned transportation facility to decline below the standards adopted in the transportation element of the comprehensive plan.

The transportation element of local comprehensive plans, and the six-year plans required by RCW 35.77.010 for cities, RCW 36.81.121 for counties, RCW 35.58.2795 for public transportation systems, and RCW 47.05.030 for the state, must be consistent.

WASHINGTON ADMINISTRATIVE CODE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Washington Administrative Code (WAC 365-195-325) recommends further steps to meet the above requirements. The following specifically relate to regional consistency between comprehensive plans and the Regional Transportation Plan.

1. Incorporate a discussion concerning regional development strategies, which promote the regional transportation plan and an efficient transportation system.
2. Jurisdictions should assess the impacts of their transportation and land use decisions on adjacent jurisdiction. Impacts of those decisions should be identified and discussion of strategies to address inconsistencies should be included.
3. Traffic forecasts should be based on adopted regional growth strategies, the regional transportation plan, and comprehensive plans with the region to ensure consistency between jurisdictions. The forecast of at least ten years of travel demand should include vehicular, transit, and non-motorized modes of transportation.

CONSISTENCY WITH THE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION

The second GMA conformity requirement calls for a certification of consistency between the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP is currently undergoing an update that will be adopted in November 2006. This consistency review and certification process will use the goals, policies, and projects from the RTP 2006. Update to measure and certify the consistency of transportation elements in local comprehensive plans with the RTP.

The following eight transportation elements relate to major goals or assumptions format he RTP. Consistency with these goals or assumptions will meet the conformity requirement under GMA.

1. Land use forecasts
2. Mode split assumptions
3. Level of service standards
4. Goals and policies
5. Projects, programs, and services
6. RTP financial plan and regional transportation funding strategy
7. Intergovernmental coordination efforts
8. Transportation demand management strategies

COUNTY-WIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The respective Bards of County Commissioners and cities within the counties have adopted County-Wide Planning Policies. The purpose of these County-Wide Planning

Policies is to frame how the comprehensive plans of the counties, cities, and towns will be developed and coordinated.

These policies will be an integral part of the consistency review and certification process and are specifically reflected in the certification checklist that will be used to determine consistency. A complete set of the County-Wide Planning Policies for each county (Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla) is available at the BFCG office.

PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION

BFCG staff and member jurisdictions of the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will complete the consistency review process. The Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) will recommend approval of certification to the BFCG Board. If the plan is consistent, a certification letter from the Chair of BFCG Board will be sent to the local jurisdiction.

A checklist (Attachment B) will be used to determine where there is consistency and where there is not. The checklist contains a series of questions related to the requirements in the GMA for developing transportation elements in local comprehensive plans. There is a comment section for each checklist item to help clarify what is inconsistent or to provide positive feedback about supportive efforts. The checklist consolidates both conformity requirements for transportation elements of local comprehensive plans with the GMA and the Regional Transportation Plan.

A four-step certification process will be used to review local transportation elements:

1. Preliminary review will be performed by BFCG staff when the draft comprehensive plan is being developed and prior to plan adoption. The checklist will be used as an aid in conducting the preliminary certification review. Any inconsistencies or potential problems across jurisdictional boundaries would be noted at this time.
2. Once the final transportation elements are adopted, BFCG staff will prepare an overall certification report that addresses all of the individual elements from the checklist.
3. Following a review by the Technical Advisory Committee, the final report will be sent to the PAC for review.
4. After the PAC has reviewed the report, the committee will make an recommendation of certification to the BFCG Board for action.

If inconsistencies and/or problems are identified during the certification process, discussions will first occur between BFCG staff and the jurisdictions staff. If issues cannot be resolved at this level, the discussion will next take place with the Technical Advisory Committee. The Policy Advisory will next discuss any unresolved issues from the Technical Advisory Committee level. Ultimately, the BFCG Board will make the decision on any issues of inconsistency. Any decisions rendered by the BFCG Board may be appealed to the Eastern Washington Growth Management Hearings Board.

Local jurisdictions transportation elements are certified until amended or updated. Any changes to the transportation element will require certification. If the Regional Transportation Plan is amended or updated, then all local transportation elements in the region would have to be revisited. Local transportation elements, which are certified by the RTPO, are eligible for State and Federal Funding.

SUBMISSION OF LOCAL PLANS FOR CONSISTENCY REVIEWS

The following plans shall be reviewed for consistency and certified by the BFCG under the Growth management Act (RCW 47.80.023 and RCW 36.70A.070):

Local Comprehensive Plan Transportation Elements:

City of Benton City	City of College Place
City of Connell	City of Kahlottus
City of Kennewick	City of Mesa
City of Pasco	City of Prescott
City of Prosser	City of Richland
City of Waitsburg	City of Walla Walla
City of West Richland	Benton County
Franklin County	Walla Walla County

State Systems Plan

Washington State Department of Transportation

Transit Agency Six-Year Transit Program (RCW 35.58.2795)

Benton Franklin Transit	Valley Transit
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