

CHAPTER TEN - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing this transportation plan involves putting the vision of the plan to work - initiating transportation demand programs, and building transportation improvements. An integral part of the RTP is monitoring the performance of the regional transportation system over time, and comparing the results with the established regional growth and transportation strategies. This information is necessary to determine the success of plan implementation and the effects of the desired improvements on the performance of the regional transportation system.

The regional transportation strategies in this chapter identify and address alternative transportation modes within the region and recommend policies to enhance each transportation mode, enhance inter-modal connections, and promote transportation demand management where appropriate. These strategies are intended to guide development of the RTP and any periodic updates.

The performance measures described in this chapter will be used to monitor change involving the regional transportation system. Performance measures will be coordinated and measured on a consistent basis throughout the RTPO.

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Office of Financial Management Population projections presented in Chapter 5 indicate the three-county RTPO may grow from 282,344 in 2005 to 320,973 in 2015 and 385,619 in 2025 (an overall increase of 103,275). In compliance with the GMA requirements, the Tri-Cities MPO now at 192,382 would be 235,095 in 2015 (a 42,713 increase) and 276,307 in 2025 (a further increase of 41,212). The Walla Walla/College Place urban area is predicted to grow by nearly 14,300 people by 2025.

Land use and growth planning indicate there is a more than adequate supply of land available to absorb the predicted regional growth. Successfully distributing growth while preserving valuable agricultural resource lands is a goal of each of the three counties, all of which have opted into the Growth Management Act (GMA).

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Urban development will first be directed toward those areas already supplied with some level of government services or infrastructure. Urban infill will be encouraged in order to utilize existing infrastructure expenditures.

Outside the corporate city limits, within designated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), the focus will be on phased development. Initially, growth should occur in that portion of the UGA already characterized by urban services and facilities such as paved roads, and public water and/or sewer. Secondly, growth should occur in those areas of the UGA where such services and facilities do not exist but are planned.

The transition of land use from rural to urban, management of development applications and provision of services within the UGA are being accomplished through cooperative planning

between the counties, local jurisdictions, and responsible agencies. These efforts coordinate policy in areas such as land use and subdivision planning, common development standards, service delivery, and infrastructure financing. A process is also in place by which jurisdictions may comment on comprehensive plan amendments, zone changes, and development applications within the UGA.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Two important considerations influencing rural development decisions are the availability of services and the carrying capacity of the land. These two factors are closely related. Inadequate services pose public health and safety risks such as septic system failures, well contamination, and traffic congestion. Impacts of increased housing density include aquifer depletion, surface water runoff, and groundwater contamination.

Rural areas serve as buffers between urban and resource lands, and provide land for future expansion. Development of rural lands will need to be accommodated in a manner that does not diminish open space and privacy values associated with rural lifestyles.

The issues of availability of services, housing density, carrying capacity, and preservation of rural/agrarian lifestyles, underscore the challenges of rural development. Clustered development and focused public investment are valuable tools in the management of that growth.

DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCE LANDS

Encroaching residential development could threaten the agriculture base that is vital to the region's current and future economy. Deterring incompatible land uses on or near resource lands is critical for the continued economic well being of the region.

The focus of growth management is to maintain and enhance existing productive resource lands and discourage incompatible uses, primarily through establishment of minimum parcel sizes.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

Regional transportation strategies are used to implement the regional growth strategy discussed above. The strategies identify and address alternative transportation modes within the region and recommend polices to enhance each transportation mode, enhance inter-modal connections and, as appropriate, promote transportation demand management.

Countywide planning policies and policies from local comprehensive plans that are regional in scope and regionally consistent provide the basis for the regional transportation strategies.

- ◆ ***Meet the transportation infrastructure needs of the region's major sources of economic growth and vitality.*** The projects that meet this criterion are improvements that directly facilitate the movement of goods or people in a manner that provides a net benefit to the region as a whole. This would include the improvement of the recreational roadway system so as to attract visitors from outside the region; the improvement of the portions of the haul road system, which are rated

highly in the Freight and Goods Transportation System classification scheme; and access to water ports, railheads, and airports. Development of these portions of the roadway system facilitates movements that help generate income for the region's principal industries and thus contribute to regional development.

- ◆ ***Support the coordination of land use and transportation decisions.*** There are portions of the region, which are undergoing changes or other significant development with regard to land use characteristics. The forecast conditions section has described these in some detail. Projects that support or accommodate such land use development meet this criterion.
- ◆ ***Improve multi-jurisdictional coordination to avoid transportation system deficiencies.*** This applies to situations where a project requires involvement of either more than one level of government, adjacent governmental jurisdictions, or agreements between public and private sector entities. In the case of all these partnerships, the burden of administrative oversight, financing, and other aspects of project development can be shared and make a productive outcome more likely.
- ◆ ***Promote efficient multi-modal transportation systems and inter-modal connections.*** Projects should evaluate and meet the needs of all forms of motorized transportation, including public transit facilities as appropriate. Pedestrian and bicycle needs should also be met. Inter-modal connections should provide smooth transitions between modes and should be readily accessible and convenient.
- ◆ ***Ensure sufficient rail and road access to the Snake and Columbia River port facilities and ensure sufficient infrastructure (i.e. barge slips, docks, and storage facilities) at those ports.*** Barge transportation on the Snake/Columbia River system is vital to the economy of the region, the state, and the entire northwest. Without that competitive option, the costs of transporting by rail or truck would surely increase. Furthermore, massive rail and road capacity improvements would be needed to move those commodities now shipped by barge.
- ◆ ***Actively support the US Army Corps of Engineers in their efforts to deepen the lower Columbia River ship channel from 40 feet to 43 feet to accommodate international shipping from the Portland/Vancouver area. Also, support the C. of E. ongoing efforts to dredge and maintain a 14-foot minimum barge channel on the Snake River from the Lewiston/Clarkston area to the Columbia River near the Tri-Cities.*** Modern cargo ships require the 43-foot depth to Portland/Vancouver area ports. The Snake River barges require a 14-foot channel. Ongoing siltation will continue to hamper barge shipping without periodic dredging. The C. of E. efforts on both the Columbia and Snake rivers have had continual opposition from a minority faction, including court injunctions. Thus far the C. of E. has successfully prevailed.
- ◆ ***Promote least-cost planning and innovative financing strategies.*** In these times of diminishing transportation revenues it is imperative that least-cost planning strategies be utilized to get the most possible benefit from available funds. This should also include implementation of Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) strategies to help relieve congestion at little or no cost.

Innovative financing strategies can involve partnering between jurisdictions and can also include the private sector (i.e. those who would benefit the most from the proposed improvements).

The regional transportation strategies shall be periodically reviewed and updated as necessary to reflect changing priorities or to maintain regional consistency.

PERFORMANCE MONITORING SYSTEM

Plan implementation includes the periodic measurement of progress toward the region's goals. Performance monitoring determines how well the RTP is being implemented and whether system improvements or applied strategies are having the desired effect. Feedback from performance monitoring can lead to program and goal modification, more intensive evaluation of specific factors, changes in the types of data collected, or improvements to the transportation system.

Monitoring the performance of the regional transportation system typically incorporates the measurement of changes in specific factors over time. RCW 47.80 requires that the RTPO periodically monitor the regional transportation system's performance. The BFCG is required to update the RTP every five years. The RTPO will monitor the system's performance as part of mid-term plan reviews.

The State requires, at a minimum, traffic volumes for monitoring the performance of the regional transportation system. Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) is optional. These two data types are generally used to measure street capacity deficiencies. No single measure can provide a complete assessment of the transportation system. Each analytical technique measures a specific performance level. A street segment or intersection that is performing poorly using one measure may function adequately according to other criteria. Each measure indicates a different range of responses that could address trouble areas identified in the analysis. System performance measures will be evaluated for subsequent RTP updates and to ensure compliance with HB 1487.

Initially, the RTPO must collect baseline data to measure the system components. Much of the baseline data collection effort, including the collection of traffic volumes, has been completed and integrated into the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG) Geographical Information System (GIS) or the transportation planning model databases for the Tri-Cities and the Walla Walla/College Place area. However, some baseline data is not available and will need to be collected.

RTPOs are required to coordinate performance monitoring with participating agencies. The performance monitoring of the RTP will be completed and reported as a part of the biennial RTP review. Coordination among the RTPO participating agencies is an essential component of the development, review, and approval of performance measures. Currently, the information available for determining system performance is:

Traffic Volumes

Traffic volumes are primarily useful for ensuring that roadway improvements are adequate to meet most peak periods. The traffic volumes are one of many data inputs of the regional transportation model and used to project the region's travel behavior and the capacity of roadway segments.

Level-of-Service

Typically, performance standards that measure traffic congestion are presented in the context of level-of-service (LOS) measures. These are measures of observed traffic volume compared with capacity along roadway segments and a measure of delay at intersections and ramps. Data requirements for calculating the LOS of arterials include existing street capacity, traffic volumes, and travel time.

The application of LOS standards differs throughout the RTP area due to the different degrees of development. Higher volumes of traffic are expected in the urban areas because of the concentration of economic and land use activities. These volumes are generally considered acceptable as a normal part of doing business. Conversely, motorists in rural areas tend to expect a lower degree of traffic congestion and may not perceive a roadway with an urban LOS standard acceptable in rural areas. The adopted regional LOS standards are, therefore, LOS C for rural areas and LOS D for the two urban areas. In accordance with WSDOT's systems plan, these same rural/urban standards apply to state routes throughout the region.

Vehicle Miles Traveled

The number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in a region indicates its relationship between land use and the transportation system. The average VMT per vehicle trip is often used to calculate generally how far motorists commute between home and work. Ideally, workplaces should be located as close to the workforce and points of distribution as possible to minimize the distance people and goods must travel. VMT will cease to be an optional data element in this region since we will soon be required to comply with the State's Commute Trip Reduction Law.

The 2003 Walla Walla/College Place traffic model and the 2005 Tri-Cities traffic model provide the ability to extract vehicle miles traveled on the federal functionally classified streets and highways (arterials and collectors). Update of those models every five years for the Regional Transportation Plan updates will afford the opportunity to begin tracking vehicle miles traveled in both of the urban areas

OTHER POSSIBLE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Seasonal Weight Restriction Performance Measures

Seasonal weight restrictions on rural county freight and goods routes are discussed in Chapter 2 as a regional transportation issue or concern. During spring freeze/thaw cycles those freight and goods routes not adequately surfaced can suffer damage if weight restrictions are

not imposed. Progress toward all-weather surfacing those routes is an easily attainable performance measure.

Coordination Performance Measures

The Effectiveness of coordination efforts between RTP members, system stakeholders, and other interest groups and citizens is difficult to evaluate. However, qualitative data can be gathered by surveying persons to assess opinions and evaluate coordination related accomplishments. The performance standard could be an overall adequacy rating of regional transportation planning coordination. There is currently no baseline measurement of this rating.

Public Transportation Performance Measures

The data required to measure the effectiveness of public transportation includes ridership trends and the provision of service to transit dependent citizens. These data requirements should be equal to or exceed baseline calculations. Ben Franklin Transit and Valley Transit maintain records on ridership trends and provision of services.

Freight Transportation Performance Measures

Freight transportation is very important to the economic vitality of this agricultural region. An effective freight system requires swift and economical transport. The data required to measure the needs and effectiveness of the freight transportation system includes an estimate of the amount of freight transported and a determination of deficiencies to include travel routes, frequency of transport, time of transports, and other constraints. Freight tonnage was collected for the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS), which categorized roadways based on the level of annual freight tonnage in order to identify road segments, which play a significant role in movement of goods in the state. Other data will need to be collected to establish baseline records.

Multi-Modalism Performance Measures

Increased integration of transportation modes in the regional transportation system can result in more efficient use of existing infrastructure and programs. Multi-modalism performance measures could be determined by surveys indicating the percentage of trips taken by alternative transportation modes to the single-occupant vehicle, the number of inter-modal connections in the region, and the mode split between the transportation of freight by truck, rail, barge, or air. The performance standard for the number of inter-modal connections and modal split between truck, barge, and rail in the region could be to remain at or exceed the baseline calculation.

Air Transportation Performance Measures

The RTP encourages airports and minimizing the impact of surrounding development on airport operations to improve air transportation for freight and passengers. Data required to measure air transportation include the amount of freight and passengers transported and a determination of deficiencies to include provision of service demand and frequency. Performance standards for these data could be to not decrease below the baseline level. Both

the Port of Pasco (Tri-Cities Airport) and the Port of Walla Walla (Walla Walla Regional Airport) collect annual freight and passenger statistics.

Rail Transportation Performance Measures

Rail services in the RTPO region are very important to the transport of freight and passengers. Data requirements for measuring the effectiveness of the rail system include the amount of freight transported and the number of passengers served. Data on rail deficiencies should also include the number of crossings, the amount of line trackage in compliance with standards, and frequency of service. The performance standards for the data required are its baseline measurements. Baseline data will need to be gathered.

Non-Motorized Transportation Performance Measures

The non-motorized transportation system component includes commuter and recreational bike routes and pedestrian sidewalks and pathways. Emphasis is given in our cities and towns to providing sidewalks along all arterials and school routes and to connecting parks and residential areas with bicycle and pedestrian paths whenever possible. The data required to measure the non-motorized system includes the amount of pedestrian and bicycle usage of the existing trail system, non-motorized travel patterns, the existing connections between paths and parks or residential areas, and sidewalk locations. The performance standards for these facilities could be to exceed baseline levels. The baseline measurement for sidewalks includes locating them on all arterials and school routes. Baseline data is not available and would have to be gathered for this system component.

In addition to the above potential performance measures, the RTPO will also be looking for guidance from the State Legislature in developing performance measures, since they are key to the Governor's and Blue Ribbon Commission's recommendations.

THE ROLE OF THE MPO/RTPO

The Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG), as lead agency for the MPO and RTPO, facilitates a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. It will be the responsibility of member jurisdictions, on an individual and collective basis, to implement the projects contained in the Plan.

This plan provides a factual basis for making decisions concerning the transportation future of the region. Implementation is an ongoing process. Transportation improvements are constructed over time. The vision of the Regional Transportation Plan will not be built in the short run, but will act as a path in achieving long-term transportation goals.

BFCG's Tri-Cities Traffic Model and the Walla Walla/College Place Traffic Model have identified current deficiencies and anticipated ten and twenty-year deficiencies. Level of service analysis for the balance of the regional road and street system has determined some similar deficiencies. Transportation corridors of regional and statewide significance have been identified. The RTP goals, objectives, and improvement projects have been aligned with WSDOT's Washington Transportation Plan goals and service objectives. The RTP has been

updated to be in compliance with the requirements of the federal transportation act (SAFETEA-LU).

NEXT STEPS

1. Develop and implement additional performance measures for the regional multi-modal transportation system to ensure inter-jurisdictional coordination and to measure progress toward achieving the goals of this plan.
2. Review and, if necessary, update the financial feasibility of the RTP, if and when state transportation funding is further clarified.

CHAPTER TEN

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