CHAPTER THREE - REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION GOALS & POLICIES

INTRODUCTION

The goals, policies, and strategies herein were developed through the transportation planning process and subsequently adopted by the BFCG Board. These goals and policies will guide and direct the regional transportation planning process for the next twenty years.

MISSION

The mission of this Regional Transportation Plan is to develop and maintain a balanced regional transportation system that provides access and mobility for people, goods, and services in a safe, convenient, and energy efficient manner; minimizes impacts upon the environment; is coordinated through a multi-jurisdictional effort; is compatible with adjacent land uses; facilitates planned economic growth; and maintains the livability of the region and the communities therein.

GOALS OF THE RTP:

- The preparation and implementation of a long range plan which identifies transportation related deficiencies and problems, provides clear direction, and seeks comprehensive least-cost solutions for maintaining the integrity of and adding capacity to the transportation system in Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla Counties;
- A transportation system that is integrated with local land use policies;
- A transportation system that provides lower cost solutions in the form of transit, vanpool/carpool, bicycling, and walking, in lieu of expanding capacity;
- A transportation system that gives access for goods, services, and people while minimizing total system costs;
- A transportation system that provides access and mobility for all citizens regardless of age, race, or handicap;
- A transportation system that gives access while minimizing energy consumption and environmental impacts;
- A transportation system that meets the needs of sustained economic growth;
- A transportation system that is consistent with local, regional, state and federal policies; and
- A transportation system that assures improvements are consistent with and support the values of communities and neighborhood structures.

POLICIES

Policy 1 - Access

It is the policy of the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments to support a regional transportation system that emphasizes access for goods, services, and people.

Background

Access is the ability to reach desired destinations within a convenient proximity and time frame. It differs from mobility, which refers to a state of individuals moving within space. The distinction between the two is important to understand. If we are to accept access as the fundamental end product for society, then a whole realm of possibilities enters into the scope of transportation planning. Paramount among these is the belief that if individuals have access to work, shopping, schools, entertainment, etc., all within walking distance, for example, then excessive mobility requirements, in the form of roads and highways, are significantly reduced, and the costs for maintaining and building transportation infrastructure are greatly lessened.

Action Strategies

Establish a system to define acceptable levels of accessibility of all modes to various land uses for all potential users of the transportation system through minimum service standards.

Support land use strategies that reduce excessive mobility requirements such as mixed-use development, transit oriented development, and infill development.

Encourage multi-modal accessibility to land uses including measures, which provide access for the transportation disadvantaged and mobility challenged.

Policy 2 – Access Management

It is the policy of the BFCG to encourage access management among the member jurisdictions by adopting policies and incorporating access management into their construction projects and project prioritization processes.

Background

State Statute RCW 47.50 requires incorporated cities to have in place access management policies (ordinances) for non-limited access state highways within their boundaries. Those policies shall be equal to or exceed those of WSDOT. Local agencies also have the option of adopting WSDOT's access management rules (WAC 468-51 and 52).

The cities are responsible for issuing access permits on those non-limited access highways. Counties do not issue state highway access permits, but can educate developers of adjacent lands for a smooth permit application process with WSDOT by incorporating access management into their land use codes.

Access management seeks to balance the needs and access rights of adjacent property owners with the need of the traveling public to have smooth traffic flow and to correlate those needs in proportion to a number of factors such as development level, speed limit, and the functional classification of the highway. Access management combines traffic and land use regulatory techniques aimed at protecting the public investment in streets and highways. Safety is enhanced by eliminating some conflicting traffic movements, smoothing traffic flow, and reducing accidents. Capacity is preserved, particularly through spacing and frequency of signalized intersections. Access management supports alternative modes such as walking, bicycling, and transit by reducing access points. Access management smoothes traffic and reduces air pollution and noise levels, creating more aesthetically pleasing roadways. Businesses profit by protecting their client base through improved accessibility and travel time.

Action Strategies

Encourage cities and counties to incorporate access management into their comprehensive planning and into their land use and subdivision regulations and policies.

Encourage incorporation of access management into project prioritization and selection criteria.

Encourage cities and counties to incorporate access management into their construction projects.

Encourage developers to incorporate access management into their plans.

Policy 3 - Efficiency

It is the policy of the BFCG to support a regional transportation system that 1) Maintains the greatest efficiency of movement in terms of travel time and distance and 2) Requires transportation investment decisions to maximize the full net benefits of the system.

Background

An efficient transportation system is fast and economical for the public, assures the public is faced with the full costs of their transportation choices, and ensures that transportation investment decisions maximize the net full benefits of the system. Full benefits and costs include social and environmental impacts, the benefits of mobility to users, and costs of construction, operations and maintenance.

Action Strategies

Explore the possibility of assimilating cost effectiveness of alternative supply and demand investments, long term level of service/life-cycle cost comparisons, and other economic criteria into the planning process in order to develop cost-effective solutions and more efficient transportation facilities (i.e. least-cost planning).

Encourage coordinated planning practices and road and street standards among the counties and their cities and towns.

Consider the possibility of developing pricing programs for those systems in which the users are not facing the full cost of their transportation choices. These might include congestion pricing, vehicle emission based on urban miles traveled, employee parking fees, and users fees.

Curtail inefficient modes of transportation, such as single occupancy vehicles (SOVs), during peak hours and promote Commute Trip Reduction/Transportation Demand Management (CTR/TDM), transit, HOV, bicycling, and walking.

Policy 4 - Balance

It is the policy of the BFCG to support a regional transportation system that 1) Stresses multi-modalism with minimum service standards, 2) Provides transportation options, 3) Avoids dependence on any particular mode, especially single occupancy vehicles, and 4) Optimizes the efficiency of each mode.

Background

A transportation network contains a variety of modes that provide its users with viable choices for making a complete trip. Each of us should have a variety of transportation options for conducting our daily activities whether the mode be walking, bicycling, transit, or the automobile. When a particular mode of transportation becomes too dominant, such as single occupancy vehicles, then the system as a whole becomes imbalanced and inefficient. The effects are widespread---pollution, excessive energy consumption, and traffic congestion. It is, therefore, important to strive for balanced use of all modes so everyone may benefit and be given the opportunity to choose from a variety of transportation options.

Action Strategies

Encourage systems and facilities that accommodate multiple modes, when possible, especially along transportation corridors that provide users with cost-effective choices in their travel options.

Support demand management techniques that strengthen the efficiencies of each mode of transportation.

Support the use of the most efficient form of transportation for each area, recognizing that not all modes are appropriate for each area.

Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

Policy 5 – Safety & Security

It is the policy of the BFCG to provide a transportation system that maintains and improves safety and security in all aspects of the transportation network, including both users and non-users of the system.

Background

The safety and security of all individuals should be high priorities in the planning, design, construction, and maintenance of the transportation system. In particular, special attention should be given to automobiles. Automobiles invade almost every part of the built environment, creating potentially dangerous safety hazards for both pedestrians and bicyclists. Safety and security at the "modal-interface" of automobiles, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians is a significant aspect of the transportation system and especially important in multi-modal planning. Adequate lighting should be provided. Shrubbery should not provide a hiding place for persons of ill intent.

Safety and security are easily taken for granted and, therefore, must be continually reemphasized. The aphorism "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" makes good sense in transportation planning and should be applied throughout the process.

Washington State's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP): Target Zero has been developed to identify traffic safety needs and guide investment decisions to achieve significant reductions in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads. In order to achieve Target Zero, the state must experience 24 fewer fatalities each year for the next twenty-five years. The data-driven emphasis areas of the SHSP are addressed on page 1-30.

Action Strategies

Support and promote region-wide participation in the state's efforts to identify traffic safety needs and guide investment decisions to achieve significant reductions in traffic fatalities and serious injuries on all public roads (SHSP: Target Zero).

Support and promote programs that ensure both structurally and operationally safe and secure pedestrian, bicycle, automobile, truck, rail, waterway, and air travel movement.

Encourage interagency cooperation between governmental and private enterprises to increase overall safety and security awareness.

Promote high levels of safety standards for all modes of transportation so that users feel safe and secure as they travel.

Implement traffic calming measures to reduce automobile speeds in pedestrian areas, such as residential neighborhoods and school zones.

Encourage cities and counties to seek competitive funding solutions through WSDOT's Safe Routes to Schools Program.

Policy 6 – Safety Conscious Planning (SCP)

It is the policy of the BFCG to promote integration of urban land use and transportation planning efforts through implementation of safety conscious planning.

Background

Conventional safety practices for decades have consisted of a process of updating road, street and highway design standards in response to increased speeds, traffic congestion, and accidents. Results are wider roadways and shoulders, traversable side slopes and clear zones (recovery areas) and guardrails, concrete re-directional barriers and crash cushions to protect non-removable rigid objects from impacts and to lessen the damage to property and vehicular occupants. All of this sounds simple enough—design for capacity and safety and react to developing problems (accident hotspots). While current strategies aimed at speeding, impaired driving, and hotspot improvements still have significant crash reduction potential, they will reach a level of saturation over time.

Safety conscious planning (SCP) goes beyond conventional safety practices by proactively incorporating road safety into the transportation and land use planning process with a view toward preventing "unsafe" situations from occurring in the first place and making it more difficult for drivers to have crashes.

The BFCG computer traffic model for the Tri-Cities is available to the individual jurisdictions to evaluate transportation impacts associated with their anticipated urban growth developments and to determine which, if any, of those impacts should be assessed against the developers. The basis of such evaluation is adequacy of street capacity to handle the anticipated traffic increases. SCP would take that process a step further, utilizing crash prediction models (under development) to assess street access alternatives for the proposed development to further improve safety and to prevent or minimize the anticipated frequency of accidents. That same crash prediction model would likewise be used throughout a city's system to implement safety conscious planning (i.e., safer transportation network planning).

Transportation planners and engineers would logically take the lead in implementing SCP in concert with their designers and safety practitioners and those responsible for land use planning. Implementing SCP will take time to evolve, with safety practitioners and researchers playing a significant role in advancing the knowledge of SCP, and providing the "tools" needed to effectively integrate SCP with other decision-making factors.

Action Strategies

Monitor national efforts toward development and obtainment of a user-friendly crash prediction model and the associated analytical techniques to diagnose and identify areas in which there is potential to improve the inherent safety of the transportation system.

Seek and distribute SCP educational materials to engineers and planners.
Encourage jurisdictions to compile collision statistics, if they are not already doing so.

Encourage development of transportation safety goals (e.g. road safety targets and policies) to provide direction to the safety component of a plan.

Stress the quantitative safety impacts of the alternative measures be derived, as a significant input to the multi-criteria evaluation process.

Ensure that the measures incorporated in a plan effectively reflect road safety issues.

Encourage plan implementation strategies to effectively stage the implementation and to reflect road safety priorities and financial programming.

Stress the need for SCP in land use planning decisions and processes, to influence everything from the policies that shape the direction of land uses to the specifics of urban form, mix and density of use.

Stress that SCP is also an integral part of transportation planning for all modes of travel, in order to shape both the amount of travel as well as the mix of transportation modes.

Stress that SCP works hand-in-hand with Transportation Demand Management (TDM) initiatives to encourage and safely accommodate alternative travel modes. And addresses the planning aspects of road form compatible with its function; intersections and access; route and speed management; and an efficient emergency response system.

Policy 7 - Environmental Responsibility

It is the policy of the BFCG to provide a regional transportation system that limits and mitigates adverse and harmful impacts on the environment.

Background

Environmental awareness in transportation planning is an important responsibility. The impacts of transportation projects are far reaching and can affect ambient noise levels, air quality, water quality, wetlands, forests, and other sensitive lands. Increased awareness of the environment has led to legislation designed to protect the environment for future generations. Unfortunately, accompanying environmental responsibility is the possibility of adverse effects on the development of transportation systems and projects. In the short term, this may be true, but this is due more to our lack of understanding of how transportation systems should integrate with environmental stewardship rather than work against it. A balance of transportation and environmental protection can be reached, but it will require expanding the decision-making process to include a greater spectrum of participants. It will also require investigating new methods and technologies. We must also understand, however, that the purpose of this planning document is transportation and decisions need to be in this context.

Many solutions will involve reassessing modes and assuring that they are charged the full costs of their impacts on the environment. Fair and true pricing is, after all, fair---and something which we are all duty-bound to satisfy. Environmental responsibility is not an undue burden hampering progress, although it may appear that way to environmentally irresponsible projects. It's a step into a new era of creative, ingenious, and responsible planning.

Action Strategies

Ensure all elements of the RTP support environmental responsibility in order to meet federal and state requirements in air, water, and noise standards.

Promote environmentally efficient modes of transportation such as transit, HOVs, bicycling, and walking in order to minimize negative impacts on the environment.

Evaluate and coordinate education and awareness programs that address transportation impacts upon the environment.

Promote development of alternatives to actions that adversely impact the environment.

Coordinate with local agencies in identifying and mitigating the effects of the transportation system on sensitive areas.

Promote the preservation of agricultural lands and open spaces and the conservation of fish and wildlife habitat.

Promote consistency with environmental rules and regulations.

Policy 8 - Transportation Financing

It is the policy of the BFCG to promote funding strategies that ensure regional financial stability for the transportation network.

Background

It is clear that not all currently identified projects will be funded. Decision-makers face a challenge in meeting the transportation needs of Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla County residents and businesses. Addressing this challenge requires clear strategies for guiding transportation investments to assure that the most critical and important transportation needs are addressed. Major efforts will be required to raise adequate revenues to support extensive capital improvements and maintenance programs in the future.

Action Strategies

Work with community, business and citizen interest groups to establish agreement on transportation needs and to seek support on funding measures to finance capital improvement projects, including innovative financing strategies.

Encourage the state legislature to index the state motor fuel tax to inflation to forestall ever-decreasing buying power.

Encourage the state legislature to consider funding alternatives to the gas tax as vehicles get more fuel efficient, hybridize, or use alternative fuels.

Encourage the state legislature to exempt transportation construction projects from the retail sales tax that currently shifts transportation funds back into the general fund.

Policy 9 - Intergovernmental Cooperation

It is the policy of the BFCG to provide a regional transportation planning process that 1) Coordinates federal, state, regional, and local comprehensive plans, policies and legislation and 2) Emphasizes cooperation among jurisdictions.

Background

Though sometimes visualized as a tangled web, complex interagency communication is necessary in an environment with multiple levels of government and overlapping jurisdictions. Regional and metropolitan transportation planning are highly complex, involving a number of agencies, each with their own agendas and policies. Through continuous communication and interaction among agencies, transportation decisions and improvements crossing jurisdictional boundaries are coordinated and consistent.

Action Strategies

Continue to encourage active participation by all members of the MPO/RTPO structure at the technical, policy, and board levels, including the formation of special committees for specific projects or programs.

Promote and host meetings and workshops pertinent to regional transportation issues, policies, and planning.

Coordinate between state and member jurisdictions concerning technical methods and data to identify and analyze needs of regional significance.

Provide for coordination between the state and member jurisdictions on major transportation decisions involving all transportation modes.

Policy 10 - Citizen Involvement and Public Education

The BFCG in July 1994 adopted "Public Involvement Procedures for Transportation Planning" (last updated in 2003). The BFCG to develops and maintains on-going programs that include citizen participation in all transportation related decisions.

Background

Involving citizens is important when preparing and adopting a transportation plan, transportation plan element, facility plan or transportation improvement programs. Citizen input throughout the planning process assures the public is informed and aids in maintaining consensus for various projects. Without the assistance of the public, the process becomes dominated by professionals and special interests, who, while specially trained and qualified, may not see every aspect of a project.

Public education is particularly important when transportation related actions or initiatives require public vote.

Action Strategies

Make information about transportation plans, policies, projects, and programs available to the public in an understandable form.

Develop ongoing public education programs and transportation forums about regional and statewide transportation planning to assure the public is informed on current issues, proposed improvements, new technologies, and upcoming events.

Continue to apprise the media (newspapers, radio, television) of newsworthy transportation information for publication or general disclosure. Arrange interviews, print and distribute flyers, etc.

Continue to include up-to-date transportation information in the BFCG monthly newsletter (circulation 275).

Continue to expand and improve BFCG Public Involvement Procedures to attain the most effective citizen involvement and awareness.

Communicate with potential users of the transportation system, including the private sector, to ensure that transportation decisions that impact private facilities or public services are coordinated with the affected users or industries.

Policy 11 - Livability

It is the policy of the BFCG to encourage transportation related decisions that maintain and enhance livability for all citizens and communities within Benton, Franklin, and Walla Walla counties.

Background

Livability is a way to describe how suitable communities or cities are for conducting our daily lives. It varies for each individual and also varies for different communities. In this respect, it is a rather ambiguous word, but yet adequately describes the complexity of us as individuals---we are all different and have different needs.

To determine livability in a community, think about how they go about their daily activities. Can they get to destinations easily? Do they feel safe when going somewhere? Can they opt to walk, bicycle, take transit, or drive? Are the amenities of the city such as parks, schools, sidewalks, stores or markets, or public squares within a comfortable distance (1/4 to ½ mile)? These are just a few examples. Livability is highly subjective. Transportation planning and projects need to support those values, which meet the needs and desires of citizens and their communities as they conduct their daily lives.

Urban land use and design strategies to implement “Smart Growth” and improve livability are further addressed in Policy 16.

Action Strategies

Promote transportation projects and improvements that maximize the positive effects of regional, community, and neighborhood livability.

Work with citizens and community groups to assure transportation projects support livability within neighborhoods and communities.

Promote the provision of greenbelts, parks, and paths and preservation of open space relative to transportation improvement projects and new infrastructure development.

Policy 12 - Aesthetics

It is the policy of the BFCG to support the protection and enhancement of aesthetic values associated with the transportation network in order to support the economic well being and livability for the region.

Background

The appreciation of our environment is something that is shared by most everyone. Transportation projects by their very nature have the potential to alter and even threaten the natural environment. For this reason it is important to assess the potential aesthetic impacts of transportation projects. It is also important to realize that protecting aesthetic values must be balanced with economic opportunity within the region.

Action Strategies

Provide adequate review procedures to assure transportation projects and improvements protect aesthetic values.

Policy 13 - Pedestrians and Bicycles

It is the policy of the BFCG to promote pedestrian and bicycle travel as essential modes of transportation both within existing communities and new development and to provide opportunities for the safe and efficient use of pedestrian and bicycle facilities as a legitimate alternative to motorized travel and for improved health.

Background

Bicycling and walking are viable components in a multi-modal transportation network. Historically, bicycle and pedestrian travel have not received as much attention as automobile travel. But now with the support of federal legislation they are included in the entire transportation-planning spectrum.

Bicycles. Bicycling is very efficient and capable of transporting people over distances of five miles or more while using no fossil fuels and using a minimal amount of space. There is much untapped potential for bicycling in our environment, but physical, institutional, and mental barriers keep bicycling from becoming a more common mode of transportation. Overall, the built environment has a significant impact on bicycle behavior. Many people cite existing conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists as the reason for not using these alternative modes. Existing conditions include trip barriers (distance, fear of safety, inadequate facilities, environmental factors) and destination barriers (security, facilities, lack of employer support).

Pedestrians. Pedestrian movement is perhaps the most important mode in the transportation network since all other modes ultimately depend on walking. If we drive we usually walk from our cars. If we take transit, we usually walk from the transit stop. Walking is inherently

assumed to be the end mode in which we arrive at our destinations. However, if pedestrian movement is to evolve as a mode by itself, rather than just finishing off automobile trips, it will take more than just laying down sidewalks. Pedestrians typically do not walk greater than one-half mile. This means that land uses and other transportation modes need to be coordinated if they expect to support this mode of transportation. Additionally, the pedestrian is much more exposed to the elements than the occupants of a car or bus and requires extra attention in regards to safety and comfort.

For bicycling and walking to increase as partners in the transportation network, usable facilities must be in place, along with the land use designations to support them. A bicycle and pedestrian friendly transportation network will provide increased travel options for individuals.

Action Strategies

Develop, implement, and maintain, a pedestrian and bicycle plan that is consistent with federal, state, and local pedestrian goals and objectives.[1]

Establish Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) to oversee, promote, review, and make recommendations on regional bicycle and pedestrian issues.

Assign a high priority to the provision of bicycle and pedestrian access in local comprehensive plans.

Encourage local jurisdictions to develop ordinances, which require the provision of safe, adequate, and convenient access for pedestrians and bicycles in new development.

Encourage provision of sidewalks and bicycle lanes on arterials and school routes.

Encourage local jurisdictions and school districts to cooperatively seek funds through WSDOT's Safe Routes to Schools Program.

Encourage the connection of parks, open spaces, water and other recreation areas to residential areas with bicycle and pedestrian paths and when appropriate, equestrian paths.

Promote the adoption of efficient non-motorized compatible land use patterns and zoning requirements.

Encourage consideration of pedestrian/bicycle transportation needs relative to all urban transportation improvement projects and subdivision developments.

[1]See Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Transportation Plan for Benton, Franklin and Walla Walla Counties and Tri-Cities Urban Area, December 2005, BFCG; and the 2005 Walla Walla Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and accompanying 1997 Bicycle and Pedestrian Planning Handbook.

Policy 14 - Transit Element

It is the policy of the BFCG to 1) Support Ben Franklin Transit and Valley Transit and their goals and policies; 2) Promote a transit system which offers alternatives to the single occupancy vehicle; 3) Promote land use patterns that support the use of transit; and 4) Support WSDOT's efforts to reestablish intercity bus service between Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities.

Background

Transit remains a priority for the region. Two transit districts operate within the BFCG RTPO jurisdiction: Ben Franklin Transit serving the Tri-Cities, Benton City, Prosser, and the community of Finley; and also Valley Transit serving Walla Walla and College Place. Subsequent to loss of Greyhound bus service between Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities, Genie Tours has received a state grant to provide that service with intermediate stops at Burbank, Wallula and Touchet. Each of these transit districts or services outlines a plan for development, which the RTP supports.

Action Strategies

Support our transit agencies in their efforts to maintain effective and predictable operations of the transit systems to meet customers' expectations.

Support Genie Tours in seeking additional state funding for continuation of bus service between Walla Walla and the Tri-Cities.

Integrate the regional transit systems with other modes of transportation including air, rail, auto, bicycles, and pedestrians to facilitate smooth inter-modal connections.

Evaluate the possibility of providing further intercity transit service as a viable alternative to highway expansion.

Periodically reevaluate the viability of providing some form of transit service to those rural RTPO communities not currently having such service.

Encourage transit friendly land use plans and development patterns.

Provide all citizens, including the elderly, handicapped, socially and transportation disadvantaged, with basic transportation needs, including access to education, human services, health care, employment, inter-modal facilities, and other community activities.

Policy 15 - Transportation Demand Management/Commute Trip Reduction

It is the policy of the BFCG to promote strategies that offer low-cost solutions to capacity challenges on our streets and highways, and to devise methods that avoid costly capital expenditures brought on by excessive use of single occupancy vehicles at peak hours.

Background

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) programs are designed to address transportation congestion problems from the demand side. TDM/CTR seek methods that reduce the amount of vehicles on roadways in order to reduce the demand for constructing costly road improvements. As a result, those programs offer low-cost solutions for some road capacity problems. The focus of TDM/CTR techniques is single occupancy vehicles (SOVs) during the journey-to-work commute. Thus, strategies to reduce SOVs have concentrated on trips to work sites. These include ridesharing, alternative work hours, use of transit, non-motorized modes, and other employee/employer incentives. Other demand strategies involve land use alternatives to reduce or eliminate the need for excessive automobile trips.

Experience shows that TDM/CTR techniques work best in high-density employment centers and are most successful when applied to larger employers, in particular those who employ more than 100 persons at a site or complex. Demand management is not a cure-all for transportation but does appear to offer reasonable low-cost strategies for addressing portions of future traffic congestion.

Action Strategies

Work with WSDOT, Ben Franklin Transit, our urban jurisdictions, and major employers to develop and implement a Commute Trip Reduction program for the Tri-Cities to reduce single occupancy vehicle use, vehicle miles traveled, and minimize trip length during peak periods. Overall benefits will be reduced congestion and delay, cleaner air and less fuel consumption.

Continue to work with decision-makers, jurisdictions, and other agencies to encourage the Department of Energy (DOE) to implement the Federal Employees Commute Trip Subsidy Program.

Encourage employers to offer flexible work schedules (flex time), telecommuting, 4-day work week, and other incentives that reduce peak period travel and lessen the need for roadway capacity.

Encourage commercial drivers to make deliveries and the shipping of freight during off-peak hours.

Investigate ways in which parking can be managed to decrease drive alone commuters.

Explore land use strategies that can reduce the use of single occupancy vehicles.

Policy 16 - Streets and Highways

It is the policy of the BFCG to encourage a network of streets and highways that 1) Supports a balanced and efficient multi-modal transportation network; 2) Is accessible for a variety of users; 3) Meets the needs for safely moving people, goods, and services throughout the region; 4) Contributes to the livability of both urban and rural communities; and 5) Promotes tourism.

Background

Streets and highways are vital links among neighborhoods, communities, cities, and regions, supporting both our economy and personal movement. They also serve functions beyond point-to-point travel. In communities, streets are the conduits through which the public interacts---people coming in contact with other people. On streets we see children on bicycles, people walking, trucks delivering, and people driving automobiles. Our perceptions of the different functions of streets and highways are essential in determining how they are planned in the future.

Action Strategies

Encourage consideration of multi-modal needs and accessibility, including pedestrians and bicycles, freight and goods movement, etc., relative to all urban transportation improvement projects and subdivision developments.

Promote transportation improvements that enhance community access and livability.

Promote transportation improvements that meet infrastructure needs of the region's major sources of economic growth and vitality, including recreation and tourism.

Maintain the arterial street system for the safe and economical movement of people, goods, and services within and through the region and to promote a diversified economy.

Encourage and support transportation infrastructure improvement and expansion projects that eliminate bottlenecks and choke points and support a strong economy through promotion of economic development and increased employment opportunities.

Encourage preservation of transportation corridors for future growth.

Policy 17 - Land Use & Urban Design Strategies

It is the policy of the BFCG to support integrated land uses and urban design strategies which create livable communities, compact urban development, and allow a multi-modal transportation system, including pedestrians, bicycles and transit, to operate efficiently while decreasing dependency on single occupancy vehicles and promoting health and fitness.

Background

Land use is becoming increasingly important in the planning of transportation systems. Many land use patterns and transportation systems we see today are the result of decisions made years and even decades ago that promoted sprawl. Sprawl results in low-density development that is not conducive to public transit, pedestrians, or bicycles. Sprawl exacerbates congestion, wastes energy and valuable land, contributes to air pollution, forces people to spend hours isolated within private vehicles, thus, adding to the national trend toward obesity and lack of physical fitness.

Changing attitudes toward land use and transportation planning, reflected in recent legislation, require adjustment and change of habits. A balanced multi-modal transportation system requires land uses to be efficient and compact with mixed uses. This permits a

spectrum of transportation alternatives for individuals making travel decisions. The vision is for compact cities surrounded by farms and open spaces. This concept can be applied to urban, suburban and rural communities and is one of the most important elements in preserving livable communities. The Growth Management Act (GMA) supports this concept by establishing Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) which denote where growth may take place. Cities are allowed to provide infrastructure only to areas within their identified UGAs.

Action Strategies

Encourage infill development and redevelopment in areas where access to alternative transportation is provided.

Support developments that provide options for people to live, work, and shop in the same areas and accomplish day-to-day needs close to home via mobility options other than single-occupancy vehicles.

Support increased densities and in-fill development for efficient use of urban land while still maintaining open-space area and residential privacy and safety.

Strive to improve circulation and access within areas that are most likely to support mixed-use developments, in-fill development, and increased density.

Consider land use and transportation linkages in transportation planning and visioning to promote compatibility and efficient use of available land, including increased land use densities.

Continue efforts of the Regional Smart Growth/Livable Communities Committee to implement the Three Rivers Compact, an effort to increase dialogue between transportation planners and land use planners and decision-makers.

Policy 18 - Air/Waterways/Rail

It is the policy of the BFCG to encourage air and rail passenger facilities and services and river and rail freight facilities and services that enhance regional economic competitiveness.

Background

Air, waterways, and rail continue to move a variety of goods and people throughout the region. These modes of transportation have special characteristics, requiring special consideration in regards to adjacent land uses, access, and expansion, to ensure long term continuation.

Action Strategies

Ensure that the impact of surrounding development on airport operations is minimized and adjacent land use decisions are consistent with airport operations.

Promote expansion of mainline freight railroad capacity by the railroads and the improvement of rail access to and efficient use of inter-modal terminals and ports.

Promote continuation and improvement of freight service on branch and light density rail lines and preservation of any essential lines threatened with abandonment.

Support and encourage projects to reduce or eliminate conflicts between trains and vehicles and/or pedestrians.

Continue to reject and oppose river draw-downs below current operating levels and removal or breaching of any dams on the lower Snake River or Columbia River systems. The Minimum Operating Pool (MOP) should be maintained by the Corps of Engineers to ensure the preservation of the 14 foot federal navigation channel.

Support the US Army Corps of Engineers in their ongoing efforts to deepen the Columbia River shipping channel from 40 feet to 43 feet to accommodate modern ships bound for ports in the Portland/Vancouver area.

Support and encourage the Corps of Engineers to continue Snake River dredging as needed to preserve the viability of port facilities at Clarkston, Washington, and Lewiston, Idaho.

Policy 19 - Freight Movement

It is the policy of the BFCG to encourage safe and efficient freight movement; support inter-modal freight facilities; and ensure that any harmful effects of freight movement are mitigated with the users of the system.

Background

Freight movement plays an important role in the regional economy by transporting various raw materials and finished products to and from the region. The efficient movement of freight is, therefore, important. However, freight movement by virtue of its magnitude, places wear and stress on roadways. It is necessary to restrict major freight movement to specific roadways designed to withstand inordinate conditions. The protection of neighborhood communities, livability, and public safety should also be a major concern when planning freight movement.

Preservation of existing networks is a priority. Of particular importance are rail abandonments. The elimination of rail routes may create additional freight movement on roads, highways, and freeways and result in public money being diverted into increased maintenance costs or capital expenditures. Therefore, special efforts are necessary to keep these lines active.

Also of particular importance is preservation of the Columbia/Snake River navigation system extending 465 miles inland from Astoria, Oregon to Lewiston, Idaho. Siltation is rapidly depreciating the viability of the uppermost ports. Modern ships require a 43-foot deep channel to access the lower ports of Kalama, Longview and Portland. Legal actions continue to hinder the Corps of Engineers efforts to dredge on the Snake River and to deepen the lower Columbia River channel from 40 to 43 feet. In the interim, two international shipping lines have discontinued service at the Port of Portland. The net result is a shift from water transport to rail and truck. Overall tonnage shipped from the Port of Pasco's terminal by barge and rail was down 47 percent for 2005, with the balance being shipped by truck.

Of great importance to Washington and other northwest states is the continued viability and reliability of Snoqualmie Pass (I-90) as the primary freight route over the Cascade Mountains to the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma. Severe winter storms and avalanches have been known to close the pass for hours and even days at a time. "On time delivery" is not always an option. Major planning efforts are under way at WSDOT to solve the major problems with the pass. However, adequate funding to implement projects of such magnitude will require innovative efforts by WSDOT, the state legislature and our Congressional delegates.

Action Strategies

Gather and maintain freight information for all appropriate modes. Coordinate with local jurisdictions.

Periodically review and update the regional portion of the statewide Freight and Goods Transportation System.

Evaluate freight movement needs, restrictions, opportunities, and constraints within the region. Examine hazards created by freight movement to local communities and search for solutions to mitigate inequities or hazards.

Encourage local comprehensive plans to address the issue of freight movement within their boundaries and address the impacts associated with land use and freight movement.

Support private sector investments in advanced technologies and management systems that support regional goals and policies.

Apply the recommendations from the Eastern Washington Inter-modal Transportation Study (EWITS) and the Strategic Freight Transportation Analysis, both by Washington State University, to applicable policies and strategies.

Promote and encourage all-weather surfacing of farm-to-market roads subject to heavy truck usage and seasonal closures or weight restrictions.

Encourage freight access improvements to agricultural processing, industrial facilities, ports, rail terminals and other shipping facilities.

Encourage the location of freight facilities adjacent to appropriate existing arterials and transportation hubs and encourage the consolidation of freight facilities wherever feasible.

Support efforts by the Corps of Engineers and the states of Washington, Oregon, and Idaho to restore and upgrade the Columbia/Snake River navigation system to strengthen our position in the international trade market.
Support WSDOT in their efforts to increase the capacity, safety and reliability (avalanches, storms) of I-90 over Snoqualmie Pass.

Support WSDOT's efforts to find solutions to the major problems with Snoqualmie Pass and to secure needed construction funding at state and national levels.

Policy 20 – Intermodalism

It is the policy of the BFCG to encourage and maintain an accessible intermodal passenger and freight network with transportation hubs to facilitate access to urban, rural, and other destinations while maintaining an efficient and balanced transportation system.

Background

Any efficient transportation system relies on a variety of modes to move people and freight. Being able to easily transfer people, goods, and services from one mode to another without unnecessary delay or confusion is part of the concept of intermodalism. Ships, trains, planes, trucks, buses, automobiles, bicycles, pipelines, and even walking all contribute to intermodalism. As our transportation system becomes increasingly complex, the need for efficient connectivity between modes becomes more important.

The regional airports facilitate inter-modal passenger and freight services. WSDOT is trying to reestablish intercity bus service from a Valley Transit station in Walla Walla to Pasco's inter-modal depot. The Pasco intermodal depot connects Amtrak, Greyhound Bus Lines, Ben Franklin Transit and local taxi services. Transit transfer stations provide pedestrian shelters and at some locations, bike lockers. The buses have bicycle racks. The assorted port facilities along the Columbia/Snake River system provide intermodal connections between trucks, barges, and in some cases, rail.

Action Strategies

Identify major transportation terminals, facilities, routes, and corridors that connect passenger and freight movements with other intermodal facilities.

Develop an intermodal plan outlining the region's strategies to deal with any constraints to increasing intermodalism.

Recognize the ability of each mode to enhance the efficiency of other modes. Explore the possibility of other modes contributing to the overall efficiency of the network such as waterways and rail.

Encourage the development or expansion of efficient freight and passenger intermodal facilities that expedite transfers between modes, routes, and carriers.

Support WSDOT in seeking a state supported vendor for reestablishment of Walla Walla to Pasco bus service.

Work with local jurisdictions to develop and promote regional intermodal facilities to avoid duplication of services.

Explore the concept of integrating intermodalism with large scale developments.

Policy 21 - Regional Consistency and Certification

In compliance with the Growth Management Act (GMA) the BFCG certifies the transportation elements of city and county comprehensive plans.

Background

To assure consistency between local and regional planning efforts, the GMA (RCW 47.80.023) requires all transportation elements of local comprehensive plans to undergo a consistency review and certification process to ensure that they conform with 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 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 Regional Transportation Goals and Policies of this RTP articulate the 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 Plan (RTP), Tri-MATS met regularly to discuss and resolve regional issues related to the RTP including: Regional growth assumptions (population and employment) used for transportation modeling; Level of service standards; and mode split assumptions. Additionally, the Technical Advisory Committee served as the staff forum for inter-jurisdictional and regional coordination.

Action Strategies

Develop regional "guidelines and principles" to serve as a guide for developing, updating, and reviewing local comprehensive plan transportation elements. (See Appendix C).

Certify that the transportation elements of comprehensive plans conform with the appropriate requirements of RCW 36.70A.070 and recommend steps to meet the RCW requirements in Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 365-195-325.

Certify consistency between the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans and this Regional Transportation Plan.

Determine consistency of city comprehensive plan transportation elements with the Countywide planning policies adopted by the respective Boards of County Commissioners and the cities within those counties.

Develop a checklist for certifying conformity of transportation elements with the GMA and the Regional Transportation Plan. (See Appendix C.)

Discuss and resolve any inconsistencies identified during the certification process, first with jurisdictional staff, and if necessary, at the Technical and Policy Advisory Committee levels. The BFCG Board will make the decision on any issues of inconsistency.

CHAPTER THREE

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION GOALS & POLICIES