

Summary of RTPO/MPO information drafted by Paul Roberts 5/12/10

LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRANSPORTATION PLANNING: RTPOs, MPOs, Cities and Counties

Introduction

This section provides an overview of local transportation plans in effect in the State as context for the WTP 2030 planning process. Local governments represent the front line in the delivery of transportation services, integration of transportation modes and projects. Local transportation agencies (RTPOs, MPOs, cities and counties) work in partnership with WSDOT and the federal government to develop and maintain transportation systems, (roads, transit, rails, marine and aviation) and to address the six goals of safety, maintenance, mobility, economic vitality, environment, and stewardship.

The WTP 2030, and the Transportation Commission, recognize the importance of local government partnerships in the delivery of transportation services. Furthermore, the Transportation Commission recognizes the diversity of interests that comprise Washington's communities, economy and the transportation network. That is why WTP 2030 conducted outreach efforts with local governments, and included their responses in this plan.

In February 2010, Transportation Commission Chair Carol Moser wrote to all RTPOs and MPOs seeking basic information regarding their plans and needs focusing on recent accomplishments, major projects underway, and significant transportation funding needs. In addition, Commission staff and the consultant team invited input from stake-holders including cities, counties, ports and other local government organizations. Through these efforts, the WTP reflects regional differences and diversity in local economy, geography, policy and strategic needs. In Washington State, one size does not fit all, and this is clearly demonstrated in the responses from local governments.

This section is organized in three parts:

1. Description of regional and local transportation organizations
2. Summary of findings and issues of regional significance
3. Plan by plan summary of RTPO submittals

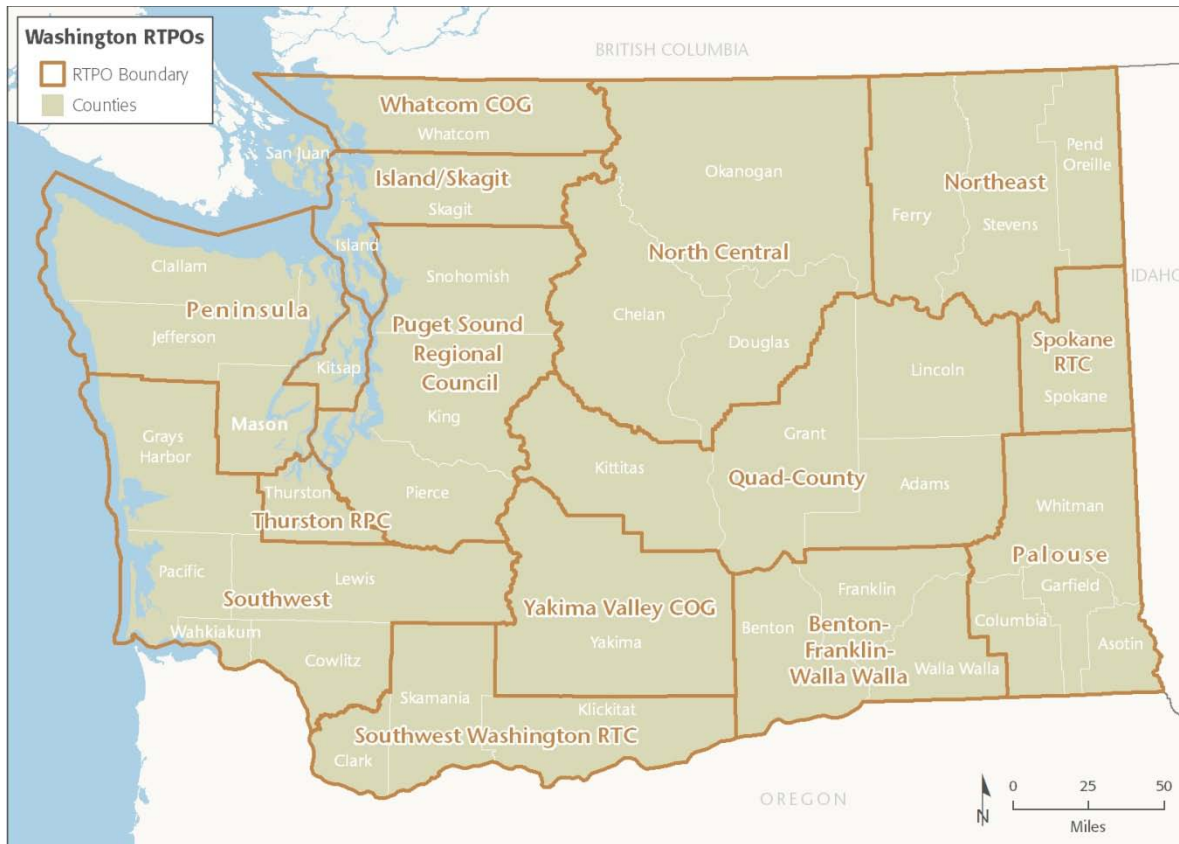
1. Regional and Local Transportation Organizations

Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations perform similar functions regarding the coordination of transportation services and funding. MPOs are federally-mandated transportation planning organizations in areas with urban populations of 50,000 or greater. They coordinate transportation services, mode integration, working partnerships between transportation agencies and the movement of people and goods. Washington has eleven MPOs through which federal transportation dollars are distributed in accordance with their transportation plans.

RTPOs are regional bodies comprised of cities and counties to ensure local and regional coordination of transportation funding and services. The State has fourteen RTPOs incorporating all counties except San Juan. RTPOs are responsible for preparing regional transportation plans, coordinating local jurisdictions' transportation planning efforts, and preparing a transportation improvement program (TIP) for the region. TIPs outline future plans for transportation improvement projects and programs and are required to cover a six-year period.

All MPO and RTPO plans were reviewed for this assessment. Exhibit 1 shows the location of the State's RTPOs.

Exhibit 1
Location of the State's RTPOs



Source: WSDOT; OFM; BERK, 2010

The RTPO/MPO plans were reviewed in the context of the WTP 2030 goals: moving people and goods, performance expectations; and the six statutory goals (safety, maintenance, mobility, economy, environment and stewardship). The plans were also reviewed in light of the State's economic clusters (e.g. agriculture, aerospace, tourism, energy, shipping & trade, information technology, bio-medical, defense etc.). The plans were not rated or compared to one another. Rather, they were reviewed to identify emerging themes and directions related to the WTP goals, changing federal and state realities regarding transportation funding, and regional and statewide needs. Exhibit 2 lists each of the RTPO plans, the date that the plan was completed, and the planning horizon.

Exhibit 2 RTPO Plans Reviewed

RTPO	NAME	DATE	HORIZON
Puget Sound Regional Council	Transportation 2040	January 2010 (Draft)	30 Years
Southwest Washington	Regional Transportation Plan, 2008-2028	October 2009 (Draft)	20 Years
North Central	Regional Transportation Plan, 2009	June 2009	20 Years
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council	Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2007	December 2007	20 Years
Spokane Regional Transportation Council	Spokane Metropolitan Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2007	December 2007	20 Years
Whatcom Council of Governments	Whatcom Transportation Plan	June 2007	20 Years
Yakima Valley Council of Governments	Yakima Valley Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan, 2007-2027	June 2007	20 Years
Quad-County	Regional Transportation Plan, 2007	2007	20 Years
Benton-Franklin-Walla Walla	2006-2025 Regional Transportation Plan	November 2006	20 Years
Northeast Washington	2006-2025 Regional Transportation Plan	August 2006	20 Years
Skagit/Island	Metropolitan Transportation Plan/ Sub-Regional Transportation Plan	August 2005	20 Years
Peninsula	Regional Transportation Plan	July 2005	
Thurston Regional Planning Council	2025 Thurston Regional Transportation Plan	May 2004	20 Years
Palouse	Regional Transportation Plan, 2004	2004	20 Years

2. Summary of Findings and Issues of Regional Significance

General Findings Impacting RTPOs & MPOS 2011-2030

- Federal transportation policies and priorities are changing.** While reauthorization legislation has been extended until 2011, the preliminary research informing this effort, and the stated direction of the Obama administration (FHWA), signal a significant shift from previous transportation funding (SAFETY-LU). Moreover, the Federal Highway Trust Fund is not sufficiently funded to meet current obligations. New federal direction will likely focus on: funding, promotion of safety in the movement of people and goods, economic competitiveness, energy and environmental quality and livable communities. RTPO/MPOs will likely play an even greater role in delivery and integration of transportation services under changing federal priorities.
- Environmental issues associated with a changing climate** will increase pressure to reduce vehicle miles traveled, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase development of transportation systems that are less dependent - or not dependent - on fossil fuels. Likewise, issues associated with a changing climate (e.g. flooding and more intense storm events) will require adaptation strategies to maintain transportation systems.
- Changes in energy price and availability**, particularly fossil fuels, can have rapid and volatile impacts on transportation systems and the movement of people and goods. Changing transportation energy sources from fossil fuels to electricity or other alternative fuel sources will also have impacts on buildings, urban settings and electrical power generation and delivery systems. RTPO/MPOs will be asked to respond to these changes and to work more closely with energy utilities and cities in the delivery of alternative transportation fuel and energy sources.

- **Urban needs and infrastructure will likely continue to change** to accommodate changing transportation modes including pedestrian, bicycle, transit, rail, and marine as well as automobile. The link between land use, increased density, mixed use and transportation modes will become increasingly important in defining, evaluating and funding transportation systems. Inter-city mobility, inter-modal operability, and alternatives to auto dependent uses will likely increase in the next twenty years.
- **Transportation corridors and corridor development will take on greater significance** and receive greater attention as urbanization and density increase. Urban corridors will need to carry more people and goods more efficiently as well as accommodate multi-modal transportation systems such as rail, transit, bicycle and automobiles.
- **Rural community needs will likely focus on movement of goods on more energy efficient transportation systems and networks** (fastest and lowest cost per ton mile); movement of people between communities; and commuting to and from places of employment. Much of rural Washington State is dependent upon agriculture, forest products and tourism as significant elements of local economies. These industries are heavily dependent on fossil fuels for agriculture production (including fertilizers), market delivery, and transporting tourists to scenic and recreation destinations. Freight mobility will be a central focus for RTPOs serving rural areas for the life of this plan.
- Connections to the interstate system, as well as other modes, including rail, marine and aviation, are critical to rural communities as they are often the **first mile of a journey** from farm to market or house to job.

Specific Findings Related to Review of the RTPO/MPO Plans

- RTPO/MPOs are **keenly aware of their economic base and the need to serve this base in the movement of people and goods**. All of the responses to the Commission's letter, as well as the plans reviewed, reflected a clear understanding of the role the RTPO/MPOs play in the regions they serve.
- In northwest Washington, **the marine highway system serves as the lifeblood**, connecting communities dependent or related to Puget Sound waterways. The Ferry system also serves the tourism industry which is a significant part of the economic fabric of these communities. San Juan County is entirely dependent on the marine highway system. Island, Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Whatcom, Skagit, Snohomish, King, Pierce and Mason also realize benefits from this transportation mode. In addition to tourism, the marine highway system serves the national defense cluster in Puget Sound. The military is the largest employer in Kitsap and Island Counties and is the second largest employer in Snohomish County.
- **Freight mobility was identified as an issue for almost all RTPO/MPOs**. While specific concerns differ from region to region, some common themes emerge and were well documented in the plans from QUADCO (Adams, Grant, Kittitas and Lincoln Counties) and CWCOG (Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Lewis, Grays Harbor & Pacific Counties). Both are regional and rural planning organizations dealing with rail and marine transportation (ocean and rivers) in addition to highways. It is clear from these and other RTPO/MPO plans there is a need to coordinate planning and project development related to freight mobility, grade separations, rail corridor protection and inter-modal integration.

- **Tourism is a significant part of the State's economy**, and it is of particular importance in some rural communities where it is a relatively larger component of the local economy. Many of the rural RTPOs in both eastern and western Washington identified projects that would enhance access to popular tourism destinations including providing trail links.
- **Urban mobility and corridor development were mentioned as common themes from all of the RTPO/MPOs.** The PSRC examples were prominent, including I-5, I-405, SR-520 Bridge, SR-2, SR-167, SR 509 and many more. Other responses also focused on corridors, including I-82 improvements identified in both Yakima and Benton / Franklin submittals where urban, rural, freight and tourism transportation needs converge. There already is a history of moving toward corridor development. Clearly that focus will intensify in the next twenty years along with the role and importance of RTPO/MPOs in project development.
- **Inter-modal transportation has been identified by virtually all players in the emerging federal reauthorization efforts.** Clearly inter-modal operability has emerged as a theme in the RTPO/MPO submittals as well. The PSRC, S.W. Washington / Vancouver, Spokane, Yakima, Whatcom, Wenatchee and others are planning projects that integrate transit, pedestrian, and bicycle modes as well as autos. Many of the emerging projects include trails and trail improvements. Furthermore, all of the urban areas are planning for higher density and mixed use development.
- Developing **stronger links between land use plans, developments and transportation** is an emerging theme present in almost all of the RTPO/MPO responses, and prominent in all of the MPOs. Developing the details around these linkages will likely be a primary focus for the next twenty years. This is inherently a local government responsibility with regional, state wide and national implications.
- **Nature's role in defining or altering transportation systems** is recognized in several of the RTPO/MPO plans. The CWCOC plan noted flooding in Lewis County (Chehalis River, January 2010) resulted in major disruptions to the I-5 corridor and transportation in SW Washington. In Wahkiakum County, mud and rock slides closed SR-4. In Whatcom County, WSDOT is moving a section of SR-542 away from the bank of the Nooksack River. In Franklin County, R-170 was closed due to a landslide, as well as SR-410 in Yakima County and SR-18 in King County. More intense weather events are predicted in the future. Therefore, floods, avalanches and shifting earth are forces to be reckoned with in designing, building and maintaining the transportation system.
- **Tribal governments are emerging as participants in transportation plans and connections around the state.** Notably, Yakima and CWCOC have identified Tribal entities as partners in their plans and Yakima identified an FTA-Public Transit project they are undertaking to serve the Yakima Nation with transit between Toppenish and White Swan. Connections with Tribal governments will likely increase as a component of local transportation networks. The next twenty years will likely present new opportunities for partnerships between local governments, FHWA, WSDOT and Tribes.

- RTPO/MPOs located along the borders of Washington and British Columbia, Oregon, and Idaho all encounter special circumstances related to transportation needs, projects and funding. Whatcom County and Clark County both are involved in projects that require **multi-jurisdiction coordination**, including WSDOT, BC and Oregon respectively, as well as agencies of the federal government. The North Sound Connecting Communities project, also known as the "Farmhouse Gang," is a loose coalition of elected, agency, and citizen representatives from Whatcom, Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Snohomish counties. The goal of the Farmhouse Gang is to develop better ways to move people through the region by using all available modes in an effective and smoothly functioning network that does not rely solely on the automobile. Inter-governmental cooperative ventures will need to continue through the life of this plan.

3. Summary of Regional Transportation Plans

The following section summarizes each RTPO plan. The summaries include the year adopted and key elements of each plan. The RTPO summaries identify the transportation goals developed for each region, the number of projects in the region's TIP, and the total estimated cost of those projects, where they have been developed. TIP estimates vary greatly as some are quoted in current dollars at the time of plan development while others are inflation adjusted for each year of expenditure. In addition, regions update their plans on different cycles, so those that have updated their plan more recently have more recent estimates.

DRAFT

Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) Plans

Plan	Adopted	Updated	Summary
<p>Puget Sound Regional Council (King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish Counties) <i>Transportation 2040</i></p>	<p>Draft Released January 2010</p>	<p>Every 10 years</p>	<p>This Plan is a 30 year action plan for the central Puget Sound region, based on a financial strategy that shifts from traditional fuel tax revenue sources towards more reliance on user fees. The Plan focuses on three key strategies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congestion and Mobility: Incorporate land use planning, demand management, efficiency enhancements, and strategic capacity enhancements to improve mobility. • Environment: Improve air quality, improve handling of stormwater runoff to protect Puget Sound, and reduce green house gas emissions. • Funding: Increasing reliance on user fees to fund transportation improvements. (HOT lanes, tolls, VMT charges) <p>Number of TIP Projects: About 415</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$51.9 billion (2008 dollars)</p>
<p>Southwest Washington (Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum Counties) <i>Regional Transportation Plan, 2008-2028</i></p>	<p>Draft Released October 2009</p>	<p>Last plan 2003</p>	<p>Goals for the Plan include: integration with local land use policies; providing low cost solutions where possible; providing access for goods and services; providing access to all citizens; minimizing energy and environmental impacts; meeting the needs of sustained economic growth; consistency with federal, state, and local policies; and assuring improvements are consistent with community and neighborhood structure.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 46</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$2.1 billion (2008 dollars)</p>
<p>North Central (Chelan, Douglas, Okanogan Counties) <i>Regional Transportation Plan, 2009</i></p>	<p>June 2009</p>		<p>Community priorities for the Plan based on public outreach include: funding for the preservation of local roads, improvements for pedestrian and bicycle facilities; additional passing lanes and turnouts for state highways; and tourist facilities along state highways.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 48</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$57.7 million (Year of Expenditure)</p>
<p>Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (Clark, Klickitat, Skamania Counties) <i>Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2007</i></p>	<p>December 2007</p>	<p>Last plan 2005</p>	<p>Goals for the Plan are: to maintain the existing system; provide a safe and secure system; support economic development; provide a balanced and multi-modal system; provide acceptable level of mobility for personal and freight users; be sensitive to the quality of natural resources; provide for a financially sustainable system; and provide a system that reflects community vision and values.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 120</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$2.4 billion (2007 dollars)</p>

Plan	Adopted	Updated	Summary
Spokane Regional Transportation Council <i>Spokane Metropolitan Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan, 2007</i>	December 2007	Last plan 2003	<p>Goals for the Plan are to: provide safe and efficient movement of people; enhance the area's quality of life; efficiently use limited resources; ensure compatibility with citizen's rights to peaceful and healthy enjoyment of life, home, and property; and developed a balanced multi-modal system.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 56</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$3.9 billion (Year of Expenditure)</p>
Whatcom Council of Governments <i>Whatcom Transportation Plan</i>	June 2007	Last plan 2001	<p>Goals and policies for the Plan address: public information/education, safety, access, environmental justice, connectivity, freight mobility, congestion, transportation demand management, alternative forms of transportation, land use, health, and public participation.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 95</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$264 million (2006 dollars)</p>
Yakima Valley Conference of Governments <i>Yakima Valley Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan, 2007-2027</i>	June 2007		<p>The Plan identifies improvements needed and prioritizes projects by sub-region within the Yakima metropolitan area. The Plan's overall priorities and strategies for the transportation system include: preservation, safety, economic development, congestion relief, transit, and transportation demand management.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 166</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$1.96 billion (Year of Expenditure)</p>
Quad-County (Adams, Grant, Kittitas, Lincoln Counties) <i>Regional Transportation Plan, 2007</i>	2007		<p>Goals for the Plan are to: encourage GMA counties to document urban development in areas with adequate services or where services can be provided efficiently; plan for multi-modal transportation where appropriate; promote economic development; protect the environment; encourage citizen involvement; and provide access to transportation for all citizens.</p> <p>No cost information provided.</p>
Benton-Franklin-Walla Walla <i>2006-2025 Regional Transportation Plan</i>	November 2006	Last plan 2001 Every 5 years	<p>Goals for the Plan are to: identify transportation deficiencies; integrate local land use policies; provide low cost solutions (transit, vanpools, bicycling) before adding capacity; provide access for goods and services; provide access and mobility for all citizens; minimize environmental impacts; meet the needs of economic growth; be consistent with local, state, and federal policies; and assure improvements are consistent with community/neighborhood structure.</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$779 million (2006 dollars)</p>

Plan	Adopted	Updated	Summary
<p>Northeast Washington (Ferry, Pend Oreille, Stevens Counties) <i>2006-2025 Regional Transportation Plan</i></p>	August 2006	Reviewed Biennially	<p>Goals for the Plan are to: optimize economic, fiscal, natural, and human resources; plan for a multi-modal system to accommodate growth; identify regionally significant transportation projects that support local plans; recognize areas of cultural, historic, and environmental significance; and coordinate with all levels of government and private businesses.</p> <p>No cost information provided.</p>
<p>Skagit/Island <i>Metropolitan Transportation Plan/Sub-Regional Transportation Plan</i></p>	August 2005		<p>Sub-regional policies for the Plan are to: identify and implement projects that maximize efficiency and effectiveness; identify regionally significant facilities; encourage timely maintenance of the existing system; and facilitate cooperation among stakeholders.</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$123 million (2005 dollars)</p>
<p>Peninsula (Clallam, Jefferson, Kitsap, Mason Counties) <i>Regional Transportation Plan</i></p>	July 2005		<p>Key transportation issues that informed the transportation plan include: preserving and maintaining the system, improving links to and from the Peninsula, improving regional cooperation, prioritizing project for funding, improve the regional economy, adequately fund rural transit needs, and ensure freight mobility.</p> <p>No cost information provided.</p>
<p>Thurston Regional Planning Council <i>2025 Thurston Regional Transportation Plan</i></p>	May 2004	Last plan 1998	<p>The Plan outlines critical regional issues to be addressed in the next few years. The Plan assumes existing revenue; prioritizes safety, preservation, efficiency, and operations; and recommends investment in multiple modes of transportation.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 65</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$750 million (2000 dollars)</p>
<p>Palouse (Asotin, Columbia, Garfield Whitman Counties) <i>Regional Transportation Plan, 2004</i></p>	2004		<p>Goals for the Plan are to: provide a multi-modal system; encourage development in areas with adequate services; encourage economic development that is consistent with communities' comprehensive plans; protect and enhance environmental quality; and encourage public participation in the planning process.</p> <p>Number of TIP Projects: 32</p> <p>Total Cost of TIP Projects: \$55 million (2004 dollars)</p>