

WSDOT's Process for Cooperating with Non-Metropolitan Local Officials

During the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program

23 CFR §450.210 (b)

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Title VI Notice to Public

It is the Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) policy to assure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin or sex, as provided by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise discriminated against under any of its federally funded programs and activities. This is also reflected in WSDOT Executive Order 1087. Any person who believes his/her Title VI protection has been violated, may file a complaint with WSDOT's Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO). For additional information regarding Title VI complaint procedures and/or information regarding our non-discrimination obligations, please contact OEO's Title VI Coordinator at (360) 705-7090.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Information

This material can be made available in an alternate format by emailing the Office of Equal Opportunity at wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov or by calling toll free, 855-362-4ADA(4232). Persons who are deaf or hard of hearing may make a request by calling the Washington State Relay at 711.

Notificación de Título VI al Público

Es la póliza del Departamento de Transportación del Estado de Washington de asegurar que ninguna persona sea excluida de poder participar, sea negada beneficios, o sea sujeta a discriminación bajo cualquiera programa o actividad financiada con fondos federales por causa de su raza, color, origen nacional o sexo, como proveído por el Título VI del Acto de Derechos Civiles de 1964. Cualquier persona que crea que sus derechos bajo el Título VI han sido violados, puede levantar una queja con la Oficina de Igualdad de Oportunidades (OEO). Para información adicional con respecto a procedimientos de quejas del Título VI y/o información con respecto a nuestras obligaciones, por favor comuníquese con el Coordinador de Título VI de la Oficina de Igualdad de Oportunidades (OEO) 360.705.7090.

Información del Acta de estadounidenses con Discapacidades

Este material se puede hacer disponible en un formato alternativo. Para ayuda con esto puede mandar un mensaje al equipo de Asuntos de diversidad/ADA WSDOT vía wsdotada@wsdot.wa.gov o puede llamar al 855-362-4ADA (4232). Personas sordas o con problemas de audición pueden solicitar llamando el relé de estado de Washington al 711.

Background

Purpose of this Document

This document describes how the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) cooperates¹ with Non-metropolitan Local Officials² *when developing the long-range statewide transportation plan (statewide plan) and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) [emphasis added]*, per 23 CFR 450.210 (b). The five-year effectiveness assessment applies only to parties in section (b): non-metropolitan local officials and must be reviewed and updated, if necessary, every five years. The last review was finalized and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration on February 17, 2016 and can be found at:

https://wsdot.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2017/07/07/WSDOT_Nonmetro_Consultation_Process_2016.pdf.

Engagement for rural local agencies is called out in federal regulations because transportation needs of the rural counties are often much different from the needs of metropolitan areas. Rural counties frequently partner with the smaller local jurisdictions to meet the broader needs of the countywide transportation system. At the creation of MPOs, states had a mechanism for engaging metropolitan local agencies; most states didn't have a way of engaging rural local agencies. The requirement to engage non-metropolitan local officials ensured they had a voice in the comprehensive, cooperative, and continuous (3C) planning process. The statewide plan and the STIP are the only two statewide transportation planning and programming documents required to follow the federal statewide planning process.

The process outlined in 23 CFR 450.210 (b) is separate and unique from general public involvement requirements. The direction for general public involvement practices is set forth in WSDOT's [strategic plan](#) through vision, mission and values that guide the work of the agency. Engagement is one of our core values. Including all perspectives, disciplines and backgrounds in our outreach and decision making is key to everything we do. The agency's community engagement policies are guided by the strategic plan's Inclusion goal and Engagement value and are detailed in the [Community Engagement Plan](#).

WSDOT invites the participation of federal, state, and local governments, regional organizations including Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), community groups, affected residents, and the traveling public in the decision-making process. WSDOT also participates in these partners' processes where possible and appropriate.

For the specific federal requirements for the process described above, please see [Appendix D](#).

¹ Cooperation: "parties involved in carrying out the transportation planning and programming processes work together to achieve a common goal or objective."

² Nonmetropolitan local officials: "elected and appointed officials of general purpose local government in a nonmetropolitan area with responsibility for transportation."

Introduction

Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan

Washington state's long-range statewide transportation plan (statewide plan) is called "The Washington Transportation Plan (WTP)" and establishes a 20-year vision for the development of the statewide transportation system. The WTP is based on the six transportation system policy goals established by the Legislature: preservation, safety, mobility, environment, stewardship, and economic vitality ([RCW 47.04.280](#)) and is done in two phases:

WTP 2035 – 2040 and Beyond (Phase 1 - Policy) was completed by the Washington State Transportation Commission (WSTC) and provides the statewide policy recommendations to the Legislature. The Commission's most recent update is available at: www.wtp2040andbeyond.com.

WTP Phase 2 – Implementation 2017-2040 was updated by the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), replaces the 2007-2026 long range transportation plan, and meets federal and state requirements. It implements key policy recommendations for the development of the state's multimodal transportation system through four focus areas and eleven action items and is available at: washtransplan.com.

WTP Phase 2 is the long-range statewide transportation plan (statewide plan) referenced in [23 CFR 450.210](#) and sub-sections, and is the plan referenced in this document.

STIP

[Washington state's STIP](#) is a four-year, fiscally constrained prioritized multimodal transportation program of state, local, tribal, and public transportation (transit) projects, which includes highways, streets, roads, rail roads, transit-hubs, park-and-ride lots, bridges, sidewalks, bike lanes, ferry terminals, trails and safety projects funded with federal, state, tribal and local sources. The STIP is a calendar year document and, in Washington state, is developed on an annual basis with monthly updates from January through October.

STIP development happens well before projects are added to the database. The program is developed from local, MPO, RTPO, and the state's planning processes. An environment of community engagement is woven into each stage of the planning process merging public dialogue forums with practical solutions to deliver transportation projects that "fit" into the communities and augment their transportation needs.

Projects programmed in the STIP are the highest priority for the available funding, to preserve and improve the state's transportation network and achieving the national goals established in the [Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act \(MAP-21\)](#) and continued in the [Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act \(FAST\)](#) and its one year extension.

Only those projects programmed in the STIP can be authorized by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to utilize federal funds.

Once projects are approved in the STIP, agencies may request federal fund authorization of the project.

WSDOT's Assessment Method

In Fall 2020, WSDOT reviewed the 2016 document that had combined 23 CFR 450.210 (b) and (c), updated state and federal guidance information, and did not propose any changes. WSDOT sent the draft documentation of current processes and cover email to each RTPO, each county that is not represented by an RTPO, Tribes, the Western Federal Lands Highway Division, and city and county associations (Association of Washington Cities, Washington State Association of Counties, and Washington Association of County Officials) for review and comment. WSDOT requested that the recipients also share this document with local officials (counties, cities, and planners) and invited their comments during the 60 calendar-day review period from November 6, 2020 – January 8, 2021.

Commenters emailed WSDOT their feedback, which was logged in an Excel spreadsheet. Requests for edits were considered, and commenters received an email outlining how their feedback was or was not incorporated. Based on the feedback received, WSDOT decided to split apart (b) and (c) and return the document to its original intent. This document reflects the original process outlined only in (b).

WSDOT's Non-Metropolitan Local Officials Cooperation Process During the Development of the Statewide Plan and the STIP

23 CFR 450.210 (b)

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Statewide Plan

Regional Transportation Planning Organizations

RTPOs are voluntary organizations composed of local governments within a county, or within geographically contiguous counties, whose purpose is to coordinate transportation planning on a regional basis, develop a regional transportation plan, and develop a regional transportation improvement program. Their membership is non-metropolitan local officials, and responsibilities may include:

- Establishing a cooperative planning process with public involvement.
- Providing a forum for state and local agencies to coordinate their planning.
- Certifying that local plans are consistent with the GMA and the regional plan.
- Preparing a regional transportation plan that identifies regionally important transportation facilities, outlining a strategy and approach for the region to guide system development and a financing plan.
- Developing a six-year RTIP which is required to be updated at least once every two years and includes a prioritized list of regional projects drawn from state, transit, tribal, city, and county transportation programs and how the program of projects will be financed.
- Developing criteria that relates to regional priorities, establish application procedures, project selection, informing local agency of selection, and monitoring to ensure delivery of regional [Transportation Alternatives Program \(TAP\)](#) funds. Federal funds cannot be sub-allocated to individual jurisdictions or modes based on a predetermined percentage or formula ([23 CFR 450.324](#)).

WSDOT is a [voting member of each RTPO policy board](#). RTPOs in Washington state include:

- Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (MPO and RTPO)
- Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council (MPO and RTPO)
- Island RTPO
- Northeast Washington RTPO
- Okanogan Council of Governments
- Palouse RTPO
- Peninsula RTPO
- Puget Sound Regional Council (MPO and RTPO)
- Quad-County RTPO
- Skagit Council of Governments (MPO and RTPO)

- Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (MPO and RTPO)
- Southwest Washington RTPO
- Spokane Regional Transportation Council (MPO and RTPO)
- Thurston Regional Planning Council (MPO and RTPO)
- Walla Walla Valley Sub-RTPO (MPO and sub-RTPO)
- Whatcom Council of Governments (MPO and RTPO), and
- Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (MPO and RTPO)

For more information on Washington state RTPOs see:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/TribalRegional.htm>.

Cooperation with RTPOs during the WTP

During the last update of the WTP, RTPOs participated in the Steering Committee (Southwest Regional Transportation Council) and Advisory Group (Puget Sound Regional Council, Southwest Regional Transportation Council, and Spokane Regional Transportation Council) from Phase 1 and agreed to remain during Phase 2.

The role of the Steering Committee is to:

- Solicit advice from the Advisory Group and
- Provide WSDOT with recommendations on the plan's process and content.

The role of the Advisory Group is to:

- Represent its particular constituency,
- Offer advice to the Steering Committee, and
- Review and provide comments on the plan's products.

WSDOT intends to continue this format to retain the same steering committee for both WTP phases. This continuity supports alignment between the two phases and affords RTPOs the opportunity to directly engage in statewide transportation planning efforts.

Additional Cooperation Methods

It has been the practice for WSDOT to coordinate outreach for the update of the statewide plan using the following strategies:

- Provide opportunities to get involved early, often, and continuously during the decision-making process.
- Minimize surprises by actively engaging with the community.
- Promote the use of internet and web-based resources as the primary source of information.
- Document community input and concerns in a central, easily retrievable location for review and consideration.
- Provide the community with the outcomes resulting from their input.

In order to implement these strategies, the following tools and methods are used to cooperate with non-metropolitan local officials during the update of the statewide plan:

- Surveys
Opinion surveys are administered electronically and can be provided in written format, if requested.
- Meetings
WSDOT requests time on the agenda of regular meetings conducted by RTPOs.
- Website
The WTP website contains draft documents as they are prepared for public comment. WSDOT sends the link to the website to RTPOs for distribution to their jurisdictions.
- Email
For WTP Phase 2, WSDOT sent an email notification of the draft public review comment period to RTPO directors. WSDOT intends to continue to use this method for cooperation with non-metropolitan local officials.

WSDOT plans to continue these practices in future plan updates.

STIP

There are several venues WSDOT utilizes to cooperate with non-metropolitan local officials on projects, well before they are added to an RTIP or the STIP document:

Planning Studies

WSDOT Region Planning Offices lead planning studies for the agency. When conducting the study, staff consult impacted parties throughout the duration and when developing recommended solutions to transportation needs. WSDOT and RTPOs collaborate in creating a comprehensive, continuous, and cooperative planning process, regularly utilizing various outreach mechanisms to reach local communities and collaboration with local government partners to develop goals and strategies for the particular segment being studied. Staff conducting studies regularly collaborate through advisory groups comprised of technical experts, executive staff, elected decision-makers from local governments, tribal governments, and state and federal agencies.

RTPO Policy Board Meetings (WSDOT is a [voting member](#))

RTPO Policy Boards include representatives of member jurisdictions and regional business, labor, civic and environmental groups. They typically meet monthly to hear recommendations from their respective technical advisory group and to advise the RTPO membership on key transportation issues. WSDOT is a voting member.

RTPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings

RTPO TACs provide policy review and guidance to transportation activities and projects that will eventually require adoption by the RTPO board and/or local jurisdictions, including the RTIPs. They meet regularly to make recommendations to the RTPO Policy Board on regional

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transportation planning and other related issues at key points during the process. The TAC is typically comprised of planners and engineers from member jurisdictions, agencies, special purpose districts, municipal and tribal planners, and WSDOT. At TAC meetings, members discuss current and projected challenges. When RTIPs are being developed, they have the opportunity to review and discuss projects, typically in the summer before recommending adoption to the Policy Board and subsequent submission in the fall for inclusion in the STIP.

Projects (Planning, environmental impact reviews, Traffic, Design, etc.)

Any time a project is initiated, WSDOT has the responsibility to reach out to impacted parties. As mentioned above, project recommendations are discussed between interested parties through planning studies. The [National](#) and [State Environmental Policy Acts \(NEPA/SEPA\)](#) require identifying and analyzing environmental impacts associated with governmental decisions. These decisions may be related to issuing permits for private projects, constructing public facilities, or adopting regulations, policies, and plans. Design, Traffic, Construction, Maintenance, and other WSDOT staff utilize one or more different outreach strategies to inform, consult, involve, or collaborate with communities, as appropriate.

In many cases, WSDOT utilizes the RTPO venue to reciprocate project information sharing. Local agency and WSDOT projects are submitted to the STIP web-based system through the RTPO for inclusion in the RTIP. WSDOT has the opportunity to review and provide comments on the RTIP prior to adoption and submittal for inclusion in the STIP. Once the RTIP is adopted, it is submitted to WSDOT through the STIP web-based system.

The annual draft STIP is posted on the [STIP web page](#), for a 30-day public comment period, which allows anyone to make comments on the STIP. Once the STIP is approved, if a local agency or WSDOT needs to make changes to a project they have programmed in the STIP, remove a project, or add a new project, they can do so January through October through the agreed upon process with the RTPO. STIP amendments are posted on the [STIP web page](#) for a 10-day public comment period.

Appendices

Appendix A: WSDOT Contact Information

WSDOT is organized into [six regions](#) located across the state with its headquarters located in Olympia and Washington State Ferries (WSF) located in Seattle. Regions, WSF, and headquarters work together to develop the long-range statewide transportation plan (2017 Washington Transportation Plan – Phase 2 Implementation) and the STIP. This work includes continuous consultation with Tribes, governments, stakeholders, and the public.

Statewide Plan and MPO/RTPO Assistance

Multimodal Planning and Data Division Director
(360) 705-7151
www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/

STIP

Local Programs Division Director
(360) 705-7372
www.wsdot.wa.gov/localprograms/

Washington State Ferries

Planning
Finance and Administration Director
(206) 515-3403
www.wsdot.wa.gov/ferries/planning/

Eastern Region

Local Issues
(509) 324-6000
www.wsdot.wa.gov/region/Eastern/

North Central Region

Local Issues
(509) 667-3000
www.wsdot.wa.gov/region/NorthCentral/

Northwest Region

Local Issues
(206) 440-4000
www.wsdot.wa.gov/region/Northwest/

Planning (Whatcom, Skagit, and Island Counties)
Mt. Baker Planning Manager
(360) 757-5980

Planning (King and Snohomish Counties)
Sno-King Planning Manager
(206) 464-1264

Olympic Region

Local Issues
(360) 357-2600
<https://wsdot.wa.gov/region/olympic>

South Central Region

Local Issues
(509) 577-1600
www.wsdot.wa.gov/region/SouthCentral/

Southwest Region

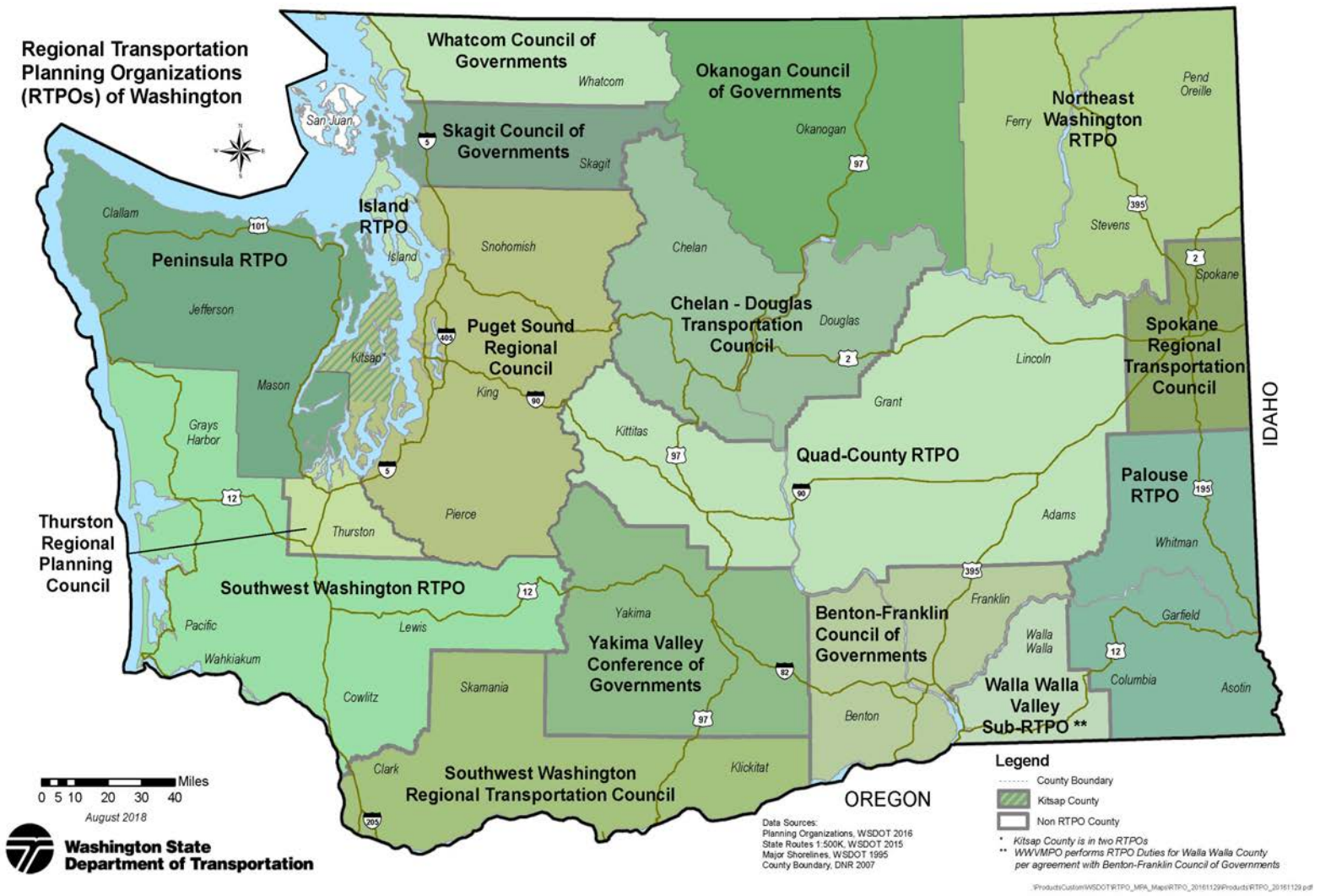
Local Issues
(360) 905-2000

www.wsdot.wa.gov/region/Southwest/

Appendix B: Map of WSDOT Regions



Appendix D: Map of Washington State RTPOs



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Appendix E: Cooperation Federal Requirements during WSDOT's development of the Statewide Plan and STIP

23 CFR §450.210 (b)

“The [State](#) shall provide for non-metropolitan local official participation in the [development](#) of the [long-range statewide transportation plan](#) and the STIP. The [State](#) shall have a documented process(es) for cooperating with [non-metropolitan local officials](#) representing units of general purpose local government and/or local officials with responsibility for transportation that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process and provides an opportunity for their participation in the [development](#) of the [long-range statewide transportation plan](#) and the STIP. Although the FHWA and the FTA shall not review or approve this cooperative process(es), the [State](#) shall provide copies of the process document(s) to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes.

(1) At least once every 5 years, the [State](#) shall review and solicit comments from [non-metropolitan local officials](#) and other interested parties for a period of not less than 60 calendar days regarding the effectiveness of the cooperative process and any proposed changes. The [State](#) shall direct a specific request for comments to the [State](#) association of counties, [State](#) municipal league, regional planning agencies, or directly to [non-metropolitan local officials](#).

(2) The [State](#), at its discretion, is responsible for determining whether to adopt any proposed changes. If a proposed change is not adopted, the [State](#) shall make publicly available its reasons for not accepting the proposed change, including notification to [non-metropolitan local officials](#) or their associations.”