

CHAPTER TEN - PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the 2011-2032 Regional Transportation Plan involves putting the vision of the plan to work - initiating transportation demand programs, and building transportation improvements. An integral part of the RTP is monitoring the performance of the regional transportation system over time, and comparing the results with the established regional growth and transportation strategies. This information is necessary to determine the success of plan implementation and the effects of the desired improvements on the performance of the regional transportation system.

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

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

REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

The Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimates the current population of the RTPO to be 317,200. This number lies between the OFM medium and high population projections discussed in Chapter Five. Based on those projections it is reasonable to estimate a population of roughly 400,000 for the RTPO in 2030.

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

Urban Development

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

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

The transition of land use from rural to urban, management of development applications and provision of services within the UGA are being accomplished through cooperative planning between the counties, local jurisdictions, and responsible agencies. These efforts coordinate policy in areas such as land use and subdivision planning, common development standards, service delivery, and infrastructure financing. A process is also in place by which jurisdictions

may comment on comprehensive plan amendments, zone changes, and development applications within the UGA.

Rural Development

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

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

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

Development of Resource Lands

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

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

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STRATEGIES

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

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

- ***Meet the transportation infrastructure needs of the region's major sources of economic growth and vitality.***

Projects that meet this condition are improvements that directly facilitate the movement of goods or people in a manner that provides a net benefit to the region as a whole. This would include the improvement of the recreational roadway system to attract visitors from outside the region; the improvement of the portions of the haul road system and access to water ports, railheads, and airports. Development of these components of the roadway system facilitates movement that generates income for the region's principal industries and contributes to regional development.

➤ *Support the coordination of land use and transportation decisions.*

There are portions of the region which are undergoing significant development with regard to land use. Chapters Six and Seven have described these in some detail. Projects that support or accommodate land use development in these areas meet this condition.

➤ *Improve multi-jurisdictional coordination to avoid transportation system deficiencies.*

This applies to situations where a project requires involvement of either more than one level of government, adjacent governmental jurisdictions, or agreements between public and private sector entities. In the case of all these partnerships, the administrative oversight, financing, and other aspects of project development can be shared and make a productive outcome more likely.

➤ *Promote efficient multimodal transportation systems and connections.*

Projects should evaluate and address the needs of all forms of transportation, including public transit, pedestrians and bicyclists. Multimodal connections should be readily accessible, convenient and provide smooth transitions between modes.

➤ *Promote effective intermodal transportation systems and connections.*

Opportunities for intermodal facilities are few. Existing facilities should be maintained and the development of new intermodal facilities encouraged. Raillex and the Port of Pasco Big Pasco facility are examples.

➤ *Ensure sufficient rail and road access to the Snake and Columbia River port facilities and ensure sufficient infrastructure (i.e. barge slips, docks, and storage facilities) at those ports.*

Barge transportation on the Snake/Columbia River system is vital to the economy of the region, the state, and the entire northwest. Without that competitive option, the costs of transporting by rail or truck would surely increase. Furthermore, massive rail and road capacity improvements would be needed to move those commodities now shipped by barge.

➤ *Actively support the US Army Corps of Engineers (COE) in their efforts to maintain adequate depth in the lower Columbia River ship channel. Also, support the COE's ongoing efforts to dredge and maintain sufficient clearance for barge traffic on the Snake River from the Lewiston/Clarkston area to the Columbia River near the Tri-Cities.*

As stated above, shipment of freight by barge is a significant component of total freight traffic for goods traveling from the RTPO to the coast. International shipping is vital to Washington's continued economic growth. Continued viability of the rivers themselves is critical to successful maintenance of this freight mode.

➤ *Promote innovative financing strategies.*

Decreased transportation revenues make it imperative that innovative financing strategies be utilized to get the most possible benefit from available funds. Innovative financing strategies can involve partnering between jurisdictions and may also include the private sector.

PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

Monitoring the performance of the regional transportation system involves the measurement of changes in specific factors over time. "Transportation Trends and Key Facts" released by BFCG in 2010 summarizes data on multiple aspects of both the metropolitan and regional transportation systems over time. The report presents data in the areas of Growing Travel Demand, Transportation System and Transportation Impacts. The Transportation Trends report is available on the BFCG website at: <http://www.bfcog.us/transportation.html>.

Tracking changes region-wide provides information to local and regional policy makers and educates interested citizens. Feedback from performance monitoring can lead to program and goal modification, more intensive evaluation of specific factors, changes in the types of data collected, or improvements to the transportation system.

Performance Measures

Two potential highway system performance measures are reviewed below. Additional aspects of the regional transportation system topics or modes that may be tracked are also discussed. System performance measures will be evaluated and incorporated into subsequent RTP updates. The performance monitoring of the RTP will be completed and reported as a part of the biennial RTP review.

Highway Performance Measures

These data are generally used to assess street capacity deficiencies. No single measure can provide a complete assessment of the transportation system. Each analytical technique measures a different performance level.

A street segment or intersection that is performing poorly using one measure may function adequately according to other criteria. Each measure indicates a different range of responses that could address trouble areas identified in the analysis.

Currently, data available for tracking road system performance includes:

Traffic Volumes

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

Vehicle Miles Traveled

The number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) in a region reveals a relationship between land use and the transportation system. Average VMT per vehicle trip is often used to calculate generally how far motorists commute between home and work.

The 2010 Tri-Cities traffic model provides the ability to extract vehicle miles traveled on critical segments of the metropolitan street and highway system. Revision of the metropolitan area model every five years for Regional Transportation Plan updates affords the opportunity to track changes in vehicle miles traveled in the model area.

Level-of-Service

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

Additional Transportation System Measurements

Streets and highways are a significant component of the transportation system in the RTPO, but additional elements could be measured. Some of these are listed below.

Seasonal Weight Restrictions

Seasonal weight restrictions on rural county freight and goods routes are discussed in Chapter Two as a regional transportation issue or concern. During spring freeze/thaw cycles those freight and goods routes not adequately surfaced can suffer damage if weight restrictions are not imposed. Tracking progress toward all-weather surfacing those routes is an easily attainable performance measure.

Public Transportation

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

Freight Transportation Performance Measures

Freight transportation is very important to the economic vitality of this agricultural region. An effective freight system requires swift and economical transport. The data required to measure the needs and effectiveness of the freight transportation system includes an estimate of the amount of freight transported and a determination of deficiencies to include travel routes, frequency of transport, time of transports, and other constraints.

Freight tonnage was collected for the Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS), which categorized roadways based on the level of annual freight tonnage in order to identify road segments, which play a significant role in movement of goods in the state. Other data will need to be collected to establish baseline records.

Air Transportation Performance Measures

The RTP encourages air transportation of people and freight by minimizing the impact of surrounding development on airport operations. Data required to measure air transportation include the amount of freight and passengers transported and a determination of deficiencies to include provision of service demand and frequency. A performance standard for these data could be to not decrease below the baseline level. Both the Port of Pasco (Tri-Cities Airport) and the Port of Walla Walla (Walla Walla Regional Airport) collect annual freight and passenger statistics.

Rail Transportation Performance Measures

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

Non-Motorized Transportation Performance Measures

The non-motorized transportation system component includes commuter and recreational bike routes and pedestrian sidewalks and pathways. Emphasis is given in our cities and towns to providing sidewalks along all arterials and school routes and to connecting parks and residential areas with bicycle and pedestrian paths whenever possible.

The data required to measure the non-motorized system may include pedestrian and bicycle usage of the existing trail system, non-motorized travel patterns, the existing connections between paths and parks or residential areas, sidewalk locations, and the number of improvements made to the existing pedestrian system to meet ADA requirements. The performance standards for these facilities could be to exceed baseline levels. The baseline measurement for sidewalks includes locating them on all arterials and school routes. Baseline data is not available and would have to be gathered for this system component.

Multi-Modal Transportation System

Increased integration of transportation modes in the regional transportation system can result in more efficient use of existing infrastructure and programs. Multi-modal performance measures could be determined by household travel surveys indicating the percentage of trips taken by alternative transportation modes to the single-occupant vehicle.

Intermodal Transportation System

The number of inter-modal connections in the region, and the mode split between the transportation of freight by truck, rail, barge, or air. The performance standard for the number of inter-modal connections and modal split between truck, barge, and rail in the region could be to remain at or exceed the baseline calculation.

Coordination

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

OBJECTIVES-DRIVEN PERFORMANCE-BASED PLANNING

Two separate influences present at the Federal level are encouraging the integration of objectives-driven performance-based planning at the MPO level.

There is a strong possibility the BFCG will become a Transportation Management Area (TMA) following the release of 2010 census data. A requirement of TMA designation is development of a Congestion Management Process (CMP). An element of the CMP is "Definition of

congestion management objectives and appropriate performance measures to assess the extent of congestion.”

Additionally, FHWA is promoting the integration of objectives-driven performance-based planning into the metropolitan planning process. This focuses on management and operations considerations within the context of the ongoing regional transportation planning and investment process. The process, as developed by FHWA, dovetails into the CMP, so implementing the former initiates the latter.

Example objectives from the 2008 Regional Transportation Plan developed by the Regional Transportation Commission of Washoe County (RTC) are listed below:

- Average per capita daily travel time will not increase above 2000 levels more than 20% by 2008; 30% by 2018; and 40% by 2030 and beyond.
- The minimum transit modal share will be 3% by 2013, 4% by 2018 and 6% by 2030 and beyond.
- By 2013, there will be uniform policies and standards for the location and installation of sidewalks in the region adopted by the local governments.

The RTC is the public body responsible for the transportation needs throughout Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County, Nevada, an area with a population of just over 400,000.

THE ROLE OF THE MPO/RTPO

The Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCG), as lead agency for the MPO and RTPO, facilitates a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. The BFCG will lead in the cooperative development of performance objectives for the MPO and the collection of data to monitor system performance.

Collectively, member jurisdictions and agencies in the MPO should assess what is, or can be, periodically and effectively measured and evaluated. Based on that information, decisions should be made concerning what is tracked over time. The critical component in this process is committing to increments of change, or objectives. These objectives, targeted limits of acceptable change, are included as part of the Plan.

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

NEXT STEPS

1. The primary next step is to develop, adopt and implement objective-driven performance measures for the regional transportation system to ensure measured progress toward achieving the goals of subsequent RTPs.
2. The BFCG will form a committee of MPO jurisdictions and agencies to begin discussions to identify and describe performance objectives for inclusion in the 2016-2035 Regional Transportation Plan.