

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) Receives Two Federal Planning Grants

Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) received two planning grants from the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) over the last year. These two grants enable TRPC and its partners to build upon their on-going work to integrate transportation and land use decision-making, and incorporate that progress into the update of long-range plans as well as launch short-range implementation measures.

Sustainable Thurston (Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant – \$1,500,000)

TRPC and its consortium of local and state partners received the first grant in October 2010 and in 2011 kicked off the [Sustainable Thurston](#) community long-range planning effort.

The region's partners and community are revisiting local Comprehensive Plans and the visions on which they are based for the first time since plans were adopted in the mid-1990s, and developing new plans for affordable housing and economic development. The region is planning for an additional 170,000 people over the next 30–40 years and an additional 84,000 jobs. This growth will be accompanied by significant



Logo Developed and Provided by TRPC, *Sustainable Thurston*, October, 2011.

demographic shifts, increasingly volatile energy costs, and mounting pressure on limited public resources and aging infrastructure. Many things have been learned over the course of the last 15 years, and new issues have emerged.

Sustainable Thurston is bringing together a large and diverse cross-section of the community to revisit, refine and recalibrate long-term goals and objectives for the next 20-30 years, and to forge new strategies and partnerships to reach those goals. The 29 signatory partners are tapping into a long and productive history of regional collaboration and public policy interest. Work will continue throughout 2012 and 2013, with varied and numerous opportunities for engagement and input.

Capitol-Martin Corridor and Neighborhood District Plans (Sustainable Communities Challenge Grant – \$763,962)

On November 21, TRPC learned it received a second HUD grant. The announcement came as TRPC's [Urban Corridors Task Force](#) (UCTF) was wrapping up work at its final meeting. The grant proposal was based on the UCTF's work.

The Task Force was commissioned in November 2009 to identify and understand the barriers to achieving mixed-use infill and redevelopment on strategic transit corridors, and then to develop recommendations for how to address those barriers. The Task Force identified a single priority corridor, the Capitol Boulevard / Martin Way corridor that connects the city centers of Tumwater, Olympia, and Lacey, and which currently enjoys 15-minute or better transit service. This is the former Highway 99 corridor that preceded Interstate 5, and is an example of the kind of multi-modal urban retrofit challenge that communities throughout Washington and across the country face.

The grant will support implementation of several Task Force recommendations for how to stimulate private investment in this corridor, helping to realize objectives of both the regional transportation plan and locally adopted Comprehensive Plans. Work supported by this grant will get underway in early 2012. Most of the transportation–land use components for both planning efforts are supported by TRPC's on-going regional transportation work program. For information on either planning process, contact [Thera Black](#) at TRPC.



Picture provided by TRPC, Urban Corridors Task Force, November 30, 2010.

Planning Resources and Webinars

[*Guidebook for Sustainability Performance Measurements for Transportation Agencies*](#). NCHRP, Report 708. This guidebook describes the underlying principles of sustainability as it relates to transportation. (pdf 9.5 mb)

[*Land Use Planning in Washington State—Online Education on Local Planning*](#). This is a three-hour online workshop that provides basic education about land use planning in Washington State. (2011) (Website)

[*NTI Public Transportation Systems as the Foundation for Economic Growth*](#). This webinar will discuss how population growth, congestion, urban sprawl, and inequalities in society are leading the unique patterns on transit expansion. (January 12, 2012) (Website)

[*Scenario Planning and Visualization in Transportation Planning—Resources*](#). An FHWA Scenario Planning website. Contains noteworthy practices and innovation uses of Scenario Planning applications for transportation planning. (Website)

WSDOT is Working on Better Understanding and Participating in Local Planning

This summer, WSDOT's Community Transportation Planning Office formed a work group composed of WSDOT staff members who review local plans and regulations, including representatives of the region planning offices and of different transportation modes. The purpose of the group was to look for ways to save time, build greater consistency statewide, and participate more effectively in the local planning process. The work group's approach is based on the 2010 [Principles of Correspondence](#), which guide state agency communication with local governments on local growth management plans and development regulations.

What Has the Work Group Done So Far?

The Plan Review Work Group started with identifying WSDOT policies across the entire agency that have implications for local planning: from environmental practices to signage requirements. The group then worked with the WSDOT experts on those policies to develop resources and recommendations for local government planning.

The Plan Review Work Group then developed an internal coordination policy for communicating consistently and clearly with local governments on planning issues. We've also created a new central repository for WSDOT comment letters on local plans and regulations so we can all learn from the good work of others within the agency.

Currently, the Plan Review Work Group is working on translating the resources and recommendations we developed into text for the update of the Department of Commerce's Transportation Guidebook. You can find out more about Commerce's Transportation Guidebook Update at http://www.commerce.wa.gov/portal/alias_CTED/lang_en/tabID_403/DesktopDefault.aspx. The Transportation Guidebook Update is very timely because many local governments will soon be working on a major review and update of their comprehensive plans to meet a 2015 deadline.

Finally, the Plan Review Work group is working closely with the Department of Commerce to learn more about local planning and how WSDOT can be a helpful partner to cities and counties during their planning process.

Over the past few months, the Department of Commerce has provided excellent training to WSDOT staff on:

- Making Your Record - How to Effectively Participate in the Local Planning Process.
- Reviewing a Transportation Element.
- State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Up-Front Environmental Review.

WSDOT Plan Review Work Group Members

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SEPA Up-Front Environmental Review

SEPA up-front environmental review involves a full environmental analysis completed by a city or county for a "neighborhood-sized" district before development proposals occur. This type of review typically pre-defines detailed mitigation requirements for all potential private and public projects in the district, replacing the need for a detailed environmental analysis for individual development proposals.

WSDOT is working on how to partner with local governments to address impacts to state transportation facilities during this type of review. One of the outcomes of WSDOT's discussion with Commerce was the realization that both WSDOT and local governments could benefit from WSDOT's involvement during the scoping of an up-front environmental review.

WSDOT would like to be notified of SEPA up-front environmental reviews during the scoping process. Cities and counties can find a link to the map of WSDOT's region SEPA reviewers on Ecology's web site at: <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sepa/sepacont.html>.

What's Next for the Work Group?

In the next few months, the Plan Review Work Group will be working with Commerce to respond to feedback on the Transportation Planning Guidebook section we authored. We will also be continuing to work on other strategies for engaging more effectively with local governments on planning issues.

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