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120.01 General

Transportation planning is a decision-making process required by federal and state law that is used to implement complex, interrelated transportation and land use solutions. Transportation interests from affected jurisdictions, including local, regional, and state governments, as well as businesses, transportation providers, and community groups, typically identify transportation needs. These needs are then evaluated within the framework provided by local, regional, and state land use and transportation policies, as well as state and federal laws. They are interpreted in terms of constructed or service strategies that would meet those transportation needs, and the strategies are then evaluated based on projected fiscal constraints.

120.02 References

(1) Federal/State Laws and Codes

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), 2005

23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450, Subpart B, Statewide Transportation Planning

23 CFR 450, Subpart C, Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming

23 United States Code (USC) 134, Metropolitan planning

23 USC 135, Statewide planning

[Revised Code of Washington \(RCW\) 35.58.2795](#), Public transportation systems – Six-year transit plans

[RCW 35.77.010\(2\)](#) and [RCW 36.81.121\(2\)](#), Perpetual advanced six-year plans for coordinated transportation program expenditures – Nonmotorized transportation – Railroad right-of-way

[RCW 36.70A](#), Growth management – Planning by selected counties and cities

[RCW 43.21C](#), State environmental policy

[RCW 47.05](#), Priority programming for highway development

[RCW 47.06](#), Statewide transportation planning

[RCW 47.06B](#), Coordinating special needs transportation

[RCW 47.38](#), Roadside areas – Safety rest areas
[RCW 47.39](#), Scenic and Recreational Highway Act of 1967 (and changes thereto)
[RCW 47.50](#), Highway access management
[RCW 47.76.220](#), State rail plan – Contents
[RCW 47.80](#), Regional transportation planning organizations
[RCW 70.94](#), Washington clean air act (includes commute trip reduction law)
[Washington Administrative Code \(WAC\) 468-51 and 52](#), Highway access management
[WAC 468-86](#), RTP/O planning standards and guidelines

(2) Supporting Information

Roadside Manual, M 25-30, WSDOT

120.03 Acronyms and Definitions

ACCT	Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation
ARB	Agency Request Budget
B/C	Benefit/Cost
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CIPP	Capital Improvement and Preservation Program
CLB	Current Law Budget
CMP	Corridor Management Plan
CTR	Commuter Trip Reduction
FAST	Freight Action Strategy for the Everett-Seattle-Tacoma Corridor
FGTS	Freight and Goods Transportation System
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GMA	Growth Management Act
HSP	State Highway System Plan
HSS	Highways of Statewide Significance
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
LOS	Level of Service
MTIP	Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RDP	Route Development Plan

RTID	Regional Transportation Investment District
RTIP	Regional Transportation Improvement Program
RTPO	Regional Transportation Planning Organization
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SHSP	State Highway System Plan, also known as the HSP
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TDM	Transportation Demand Management
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TPO	Transportation Planning Office
UPO	Central Puget Sound Urban Planning Office
USC	United States Code
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation
WTP	Washington Transportation Plan

120.04 Legislation and Policy Development

The Washington State Legislature requires WSDOT to plan, develop, maintain, and preserve the transportation network in accordance with state and federal laws. The Washington State Transportation Commission, which is appointed by the Governor, interprets these requirements through a set of policies that guide the process.


The following are highlights of federal and state legal requirements that influence or direct planning activities conducted by WSDOT. These legal requirements must be satisfied for WSDOT to be eligible to receive or expend federal and state transportation funds.

(1) Federal Law: Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)

SAFETEA-LU was signed into law in 2005 and represents the largest surface transportation investment in our nation's history. The two landmark bills that brought surface transportation into the 21st century—the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21)—shaped the highway program to meet the nation's changing transportation needs. SAFETEA-LU builds on this firm foundation, supplying the funds and refining the programmatic framework for investments needed to maintain and grow our vital transportation infrastructure.

SAFETEA-LU acknowledges the importance of statewide and metropolitan transportation planning activities at the state and regional levels. Following are the mandatory federal planning requirements included in SAFETEA-LU.

- **Statewide Planning:** 23 USC 135 and 23 CFR 450, Subpart B, outline the federal requirements for statewide planning by state departments of transportation
- **Metropolitan Planning:** 23 USC 134 and 23 CFR 450, Subpart C, outline the federal requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

Each urbanized area (an area determined by the U.S. Census Bureau to have a population of 50,000 or more with a density of at least 500 per square mile) is required to have an MPO. The MPO develops and obtains approval of a metropolitan transportation plan and transportation improvement program to receive and expend federal transportation capital or operating assistance. The 2000 Census identified 13 urbanized areas in Washington; these areas have established 11 MPOs ( <ftp://ftp.wsdot.wa.gov/public/Cartography/RTPO/rtpompoSimple.jpg>):

- Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG)
- Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG)
- Lewis-Clark Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (LCVMPO)
- Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)
- Skagit Metropolitan Planning Organization (Skagit MPO)
- Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (SWRTC)
- Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC)
- Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC)
- Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council (WVTC)
- Whatcom County Council of Governments (WCCOG)
- Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG)

MPOs cover the metropolitan areas prescribed by federal law. They also serve as the lead agencies for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), as enabled by state law ([RCW 47.80](#)), that form to include the MPO area (in some cases RTPOs cover a larger area). MPOs with a population over 200,000 are also designated as Transportation Management Areas (TMA).

Each MPO has a transportation policy board consisting of local elected city and county officials. These boards may also consist of representatives from ports, transit agencies, tribes, WSDOT, major employers, the public, and other local transportation interests. Typically, each MPO also has a technical committee composed of staff from local planning and public works departments and WSDOT regional personnel.

The results of this transportation planning process are transportation plans and programs that are consistent with and implement local comprehensive plans. The MPO planning process provides for:

- A forum to gain local consensus on regional transportation needs.
- The creation of a metropolitan transportation plan to identify future transportation facilities and services needed to support and implement local comprehensive plans.
- Targeted transportation studies used to develop the metropolitan transportation plan.
- A forum to decide how to allocate certain categories of transportation funds.
- The development of a three-year list of facilities and services (to be funded by member organizations) called the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP).

Metropolitan transportation plans provided a significant building block for the development of the Washington Transportation Plan created by WSDOT.

(2) State Laws: Planning Mandates Shape Project Selection

The state of Washington has adopted several important laws affecting transportation planning at various levels. These laws provide the framework for transportation decision making, ultimately guiding the programming, design, and construction of transportation facilities and services. The following is a partial list of the state laws that address transportation planning:

(a) Statewide Transportation Planning (RCW 47.06)

This set of laws establishes that “. . . the state has an appropriate role in developing statewide transportation plans.” RCW 47.06 specifies that state-owned transportation facilities and services, as well as those transportation facilities and services of state interest, be addressed in these plans and that these plans guide short-term investment decisions and the long-range vision for transportation system development.

1. Washington Transportation Plan (WTP)

The WTP provides guidance for the development, maintenance, and operation of a comprehensive and balanced multimodal transportation system. The overall direction of the WTP, prepared pursuant to RCW 47.06, is provided by the Washington State Transportation Commission. The WTP provides the direction for investment decision making at WSDOT for all modes of transportation.

The WTP covers all major transportation modes and includes:

- Meeting federal requirements.
- Critical factors affecting transportation.
- Important issues concerning each mode and strategies to solve problems or improve function.
- Plans for development and integration of the various modes of transportation.
- Major improvements in facilities and services to meet transportation needs.
- Financial resources required to implement recommendations.

The WTP is a dynamic plan that is updated on a regular basis to address changing conditions. Information and recommendations for the WTP are received from WSDOT regions and Headquarters (HQ), Metropolitan Planning Organizations, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations, local governmental agencies, private transportation operators, and the public.

The WTP addresses transportation facilities owned and operated by the state, including state highways, Washington State Ferries, and state-owned airports. It also addresses facilities and services that the state does not own, but has interest in. These include public transportation, freight rail, intercity passenger rail, marine ports and navigation, nonmotorized transportation, and aviation.

2. State Highway System Plan (SHSP or HSP)

The State Highway System Plan is the highway component of the WTP. The HSP defines service objectives, action strategies, and costs to plan for, maintain, operate, preserve, and improve the state highway system for a duration of 20 years. The HSP is updated every two years, in coordination with local plan updates, to reflect completed work and changing transportation needs, policies, and revenues.

3. State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)

The State Environmental Policy Act requires the environmental effects of state and local agency actions be evaluated per [WAC 197-11](#). Certain categorical exemptions exist. Agencies are required to adopt these regulations by reference and may develop more specific regulations for their own agency to specify how SEPA will be implemented.

WSDOT adopted agency-specific SEPA regulations in 1986. Per [WAC 468-12-800\(3\)](#), the following transportation planning activities are categorically exempt under these rules:

The development, adoption, and revision of transportation plans and six-year construction programs and any other studies, plans, and programs that lead to proposals that have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded and that do not commit WSDOT to proceed with the proposals.

Local government comprehensive plans developed pursuant to the Growth Management Act contain a transportation element and these Comprehensive Plans include a SEPA review.

Typically, transportation planning does not require review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) because there is no federal action in the development of state and local transportation plans.

(b) Growth Management Act (GMA)

Enacted in March 1990, the state's Growth Management Act ([RCW 36.70A](#)) requires cities and counties that meet certain population or growth-rate thresholds to adopt comprehensive plans. Jurisdictions that are required to or choose to plan under the GMA must also adopt and enforce ordinances that implement the policies adopted in the comprehensive plans. Under the GMA, comprehensive plans carry the force of law and require full public participation in their development.

A comprehensive plan is a series of coordinated policy statements and formal plans that direct growth and articulate how a community will be developed in the future. They include elements that address housing, utilities, capital facilities, economic development, land use, and transportation. GMA planning requires that the transportation element be consistent with and support the land use elements in comprehensive plans.

Continuous coordination and open discussion during the development of local comprehensive plans are key to developing valid plans that direct the growth of a community. Representatives from neighboring jurisdictions, special purpose districts, WSDOT, and others with an interest in future development must be involved at the beginning and throughout the planning process. This is to ensure comprehensive plans are consistent with all other state and local plans.

Local comprehensive plans are important to WSDOT because they influence how state facilities not classified as transportation facilities of statewide significance should be addressed, how state highways will be impacted by local land use, and how access requirements will be met or maintained.

WSDOT seeks to work in partnership with local governments as they develop comprehensive plans to help create a balance between mobility and access needs, while emphasizing design components that improve or maintain community livability. It is also WSDOT's responsibility to review and comment on local comprehensive plans and amendments.

(c) Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs)

Washington has two types of "regional" or "area-wide" transportation planning organizations: MPOs and RTPOs. MPOs, which serve areas with urbanized populations over 50,000, were introduced in the discussion on federal laws in [120.04\(1\)](#). An RTPO ([RCW 47.80.020](#)) is a voluntary organization enabled under state law. In an area where an MPO exists, the MPO is required by state law to be the lead agency for the RTPO.

Although voluntary, cities, counties, ports, tribes, and transit agencies usually become members of the RTPO; their participation is the best way to influence local and statewide transportation planning.

RTPOs perform some functions similar to MPOs, and like MPOs, they provide a forum for information exchange and collective decision making between local governments and WSDOT. WSDOT is represented on each RTPO technical advisory committee and on most RTPO Policy Boards.

Fourteen RTPOs exist in Washington State, covering all counties of the state except San Juan County (see [Exhibit 120-1](#)). Of the eleven MPOs listed in [120.04\(1\)](#), only Lewis-Clark Valley MPO is not the lead agency for an RTPO. In addition to the ten RTPOs with MPOs as lead agencies, there are also the following RTPOs:

- Palouse RTPO (Asotin County is an adjunct member)
- Peninsula RTPO
- QUADCO RTPO
- Northeastern Washington RTPO (N. E. W.)

(d) Transportation Facilities and Services of Statewide Significance ([RCW 47.06.140](#))

The Legislature has declared certain transportation facilities and services that promote and maintain significant statewide travel and economic development to be of statewide significance.

Transportation facilities and services of statewide significance (TFSSS) are considered essential public facilities ([RCW 36.70A.200](#)). Essential public facilities cannot be precluded from operation or expansion by local comprehensive plans and development regulations. This means that WSDOT's interest in these facilities and services takes precedence over local interests in the planning process. These facilities must comply with local ordinances and permits.

Planning for TFSSS must be conducted with a statewide perspective in mind. WSDOT, in consultation with transportation providers and regulators, is responsible for developing a statewide, multimodal plan for these facilities and services. The balance between providing for the movement of people and goods and the needs of local communities is the main consideration.

One category of transportation facilities and services of statewide significance is highways of statewide significance (HSS). The HSS designation was approved by the Legislature to identify significant state-owned transportation facilities and establish that HSS routes:

- Have standardized levels of service (LOS) for mobility.
- Receive a higher priority for WSDOT mobility improvement funding.
- Are specifically exempt from concurrency requirements (except in Island County).
- Will be the focus of Regional Transportation Improvement District funding (King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties).

HSS routes include the Interstate highway system, interregional state principal arterials, and ferry connections that serve statewide travel.

WSDOT makes the final decision regarding the acceptable level of service (LOS) for highways of statewide significance. The MPOs and RTPOs, in consultation with WSDOT, set the acceptable LOS on regionally significant state highways (non-HSS). For a list of highways of statewide significance in Washington, see: www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/HSS/Default.htm

(e) Functional Classification of Highways and Roadways (RCW 47.05.021)

Functional classification is the grouping of highways, roads, and streets that serve similar functions into distinct systems or classes within the existing or future highway network. The objective of functional classification is to define the appropriate role (mobility versus access) of various highways in providing service and influencing development. Generally, the higher functional classification routes provide mobility between communities, have higher travel speeds, and serve longer-distance travel. The lower functional classification routes focus on providing localized access to the land adjacent to the roadway. Functional classification is important in:

- Identifying routes for inclusion in the National Highway System.
- Providing the basis for administering the Surface Transportation Program.
- Determining design levels for a specific route.
- Planning.
- Establishing access control.
- Providing information for land use plans and decisions.
- Conducting needs assessments and cost allocation studies.
- Helping to determine the level of maintenance.
- Conducting the priority programming process.

State highways are subdivided into three functional classifications. (See [Chapter 1140](#), Full Design Level, for definitions of the collector, minor arterial, and principal arterial classifications.)

(f) Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS)

The FGTS is established to develop the most effective and efficient system for moving freight from suppliers to destinations. The FGTS is required by [RCW 47.05.021\(4\)](#).

The FGTS ranks state highways, county roads, and city streets based on annual tonnage carried. Freight corridors with statewide significance, usually designated as Strategic Freight Corridors, are those routes that carry an average of four million or more gross tons by truck annually.

The tonnage classifications used for designating the FGTS are as follows:

- T-1 = more than 10 million tons per year
- T-2 = 4 million to 10 million tons per year
- T-3 = 300,000 to 4 million tons per year
- T-4 = 100,000 to 300,000 tons per year
- T-5 = at least 20,000 tons in 60 days

The FGTS is primarily used to establish funding eligibility for [Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board \(FMSIB\)](#) grants, support highways of statewide significance designation, fulfill federal reporting requirements, and plan for pavement needs and upgrades. At a minimum, WSDOT updates the list of T-1 and T-2 roadways every two years to assist in FMSIB strategic freight corridor designation.

The Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) uses the FGTS to designate strategic freight corridors and is obligated to update the list of designated strategic corridors every two years per [RCW 47.06A.020\(3\)](#). WSDOT provides staff and logistical support to FMSIB, including updates to the FGTS.

Further information on the FGTS can be accessed here:

🔗 www.wsdot.wa.gov/Freight/FGTS/default.htm

(g) Access Control ([RCW 47.50](#), [WAC 468-51](#), and [WAC 468-52](#))

Access control is a program that combines traffic engineering and land use regulatory techniques. Access control balances the desire and need for access (from adjacent properties to streets and highways) with other elements such as safety, preservation of capacity, support for alternative transportation modes, and preservation and enhancement of communities.

There are two types of access control on state highways: limited access control and managed access control (see Chapters [520](#), [530](#), and [540](#)). For limited access control, WSDOT purchases the right to limit access to a highway. Managed access control is a regulatory program established by state law that requires access to state highways in unincorporated areas be managed by WSDOT to protect the public and preserve highway functionality. Cities also have authority to grant access to state highways with managed access within incorporated areas. WSDOT retains authority on state highways with limited access.

WSDOT has established the Limited Access and Managed Access Master Plan for access control, which is consulted when transportation improvement strategies are planned.

120.05 Planning at WSDOT

The role of planning at WSDOT is to identify transportation needs and facilitate the development and implementation of sound, innovative investments and strategies. Many groups within WSDOT conduct planning activities that directly or indirectly influence the design of transportation facilities.

These groups serve a variety of departmental purposes, including advocating multi-modal strategies, providing technical assistance, and implementing a wide variety of programs, projects, and services.

The following is a list of the groups involved in planning, which includes their responsibilities and their effect on the design of transportation facilities.

(1) *Transportation Planning Office*

The Transportation Planning Office of the Strategic Planning and Programming Division at WSDOT Headquarters consists of three branches: Systems Analysis and Program Development; Policy Development and Regional Coordination; and Central Puget Sound Urban Planning Office (UPO).

(a) *Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch*

The major responsibilities of the Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch are to:

- Coordinate planning activities and provide technical assistance to WSDOT regions.
- Oversee the development and programming of the State Highway System Plan (HSP).
- Collect and process data, conduct studies, and develop travel forecasts.

(b) *Policy Development and Regional Coordination Branch*

Policy Development and Regional Coordination Branch responsibilities include:

- Coordination of planning activities and technical assistance to WSDOT regions, the Central Puget Sound UPO, eleven MPOs, and fourteen RTPOs.
- Management oversight of the MPOs to ensure fulfillment of federal metropolitan transportation planning regulations in [23 USC 134](#) and the RTPOs regarding state requirements in [RCW 47.80](#), [WAC 468-86](#), and the WSDOT regional planning standards.
- Administration of federal and state planning grants for planning organizations.
- Development of the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) in partnership with other WSDOT organizations, MPOs, and RTPOs. (See [120.04\(2\)\(b\)](#) for a description of the WTP.)

The responsibilities of the Central Puget Sound UPO are discussed in [120.05\(4\)](#).

(2) *Public Transportation Division*

The Public Transportation Division works to enhance mobility options by managing, coordinating, and advocating for rail, commuting options, and public transportation programs throughout the state. The division's mission is to:

- Improve transportation choices, connections, coordination, and efficiency.
- Provide planning, project oversight, financial, and technical assistance to public transportation providers.

The division also oversees the state Commute Trip Reduction Program and provides technical assistance and grants to help reduce vehicle miles traveled by commuters in urban regions of the state.

The Public Transportation Division's plans and programs add value to highway and roadway design decisions by emphasizing enhancement, improvement, and coordination of intermodal connections. It is recommended that these plans and programs be referenced during the design process to ensure coordination and efficiency.

(a) Public Transportation and Commute Options Office

Programs organized by the Public Transportation and Commute Options Office support passenger transportation systems and services through grants, technical assistance, research, and planning. The office works in partnership with local communities and governments to promote, improve, expand, and coordinate public transportation resources, and access to those resources, throughout the state. The major emphases in the public transportation program include:

- Implement projects and strategies identified in the Public Transportation Plan for Washington State and the Washington Transportation Plan.
- Identify, support, coordinate, and monitor the planning, capital, and operating funding needs of small urban and rural public transportation providers.
- Improve the effectiveness and efficiency of public transportation through training, technical assistance, and coordination with agencies engaged in public transportation, including nonprofit agencies and private for-profit bus and taxi companies.
- Establish mobility options in areas where public transportation is limited or does not exist.
- Develop, implement, and manage grant programs to enhance and sustain statewide mobility.
- Monitor compliance for safety, including the drug and alcohol programs of rural public transportation providers.
- Manage information and data for the efficient coordination of transportation programs and providers.
- Provide leadership and support for the Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT). ACCT is an interagency team responsible for recommending policies and guidelines to promote institutional and operational structures that encourage the efficient coordination of transportation programs and providers.

(b) Transportation Demand Management Office (TDM)

The TDM Office advocates for, creates, and develops effective solutions to capacity constraints within the state transportation system. The TDM Office provides financial and technical support within WSDOT and external transportation organizations to help ensure demand management can be implemented whenever such programs are appropriate and cost-effective.

Program support is provided in areas such as land use planning, TDM research, parking management, high-capacity transportation planning, and policy development for the state's freeway high-occupancy vehicle system.

The TDM Office also assists public and private employers, jurisdictions, and other interested parties with implementation of [RCW 70.94.521](#) through [551](#). The goals of the commute trip reduction (CTR) statutes are to reduce air pollution, traffic congestion, and the consumption of fossil fuels. The TDM Office provides financial and technical support to employers to meet their mandated CTR requirements.

The TDM Office provides leadership through developing policies and guidelines that help direct public and private investment in the state's transportation system. An essential function of the TDM Office is to develop and maintain a TDM Strategic Plan for WSDOT. This plan helps ensure the Washington Transportation Plan and all other internal planning processes incorporate TDM activities.

Regional and local TDM activities and planning functions are further supported by the TDM Office through coordinating and implementing statewide TDM programs and providing public information, marketing tools, and training opportunities. The office also administers local TDM grant programs and planning grants that generate commute efficiencies in certain urban areas of the state.

(c) **Freight Systems Division**

The movement of truck freight is the focus of the Freight Systems Division's Truck Office. The Truck Office is working to develop a strategic freight investment plan to increase our state's economic vitality, improve marketplace competitiveness, and ensure resiliency. It is also working to integrate truck freight requirements into WSDOT's highway design, planning, operations, and project prioritization. The office works with planners and designers; MPO's; RTPO's; local jurisdictions; other WSDOT offices (HQ and region); ports; railroads; trucking companies and associations; and other stakeholders.

(3) Rail Office

Intercity passenger rail and freight rail are the focus of the Rail Office. Passenger and freight rail services are an important part of our state transportation system. Moving people and goods by rail is often safer and more environmentally friendly than adding traffic to our already congested highways. Improvements to the state's rail system, whether funded by the private sector or the public sector, can help mitigate the impacts of our fast-growing economy and population.

The Intercity Rail Passenger Plan for Washington State defines a passenger rail system that links major population centers throughout the state and provides the blueprint for needed improvements to these intercity rail systems. The plan emphasizes incrementally upgrading the Amtrak passenger rail system along the Pacific Northwest Rail Corridor in western Washington. The vision is to reduce travel times and provide better passenger rail service in the Pacific Northwest. A number of activities unrelated to passenger rail are continually underway in the corridor, requiring extensive coordination among various agencies and private organizations. The corridor also serves some of the world's busiest ports. WSDOT is working with the Puget Sound Regional Council and other area agencies through the

Freight Action Strategy for the Everett-Seattle-Tacoma Corridor (FAST Corridor) project to plan for the elimination of at-grade highway/railroad crossing conflicts and to improve port access.

The Washington State Freight Rail Plan fulfills a Federal Railroad Administration requirement that the states establish, update, and revise a rail plan. It also fulfills the Washington State legislative directive ([RCW 47.76.220](#)) that WSDOT prepare and periodically revise a state rail plan that identifies, evaluates, and encourages essential rail services. The plan identifies the abandonment status of various rail lines, provides analysis of the various alternatives to these proposed abandonments, and provides recommendations that are incorporated into the Washington Transportation Plan.

(4) Highways and Local Programs Division (H&LP)

WSDOT's H&LP Division is a statewide organization with staff in all six WSDOT regions and at Headquarters. Under WSDOT's stewardship agreement with the FHWA, H&LP serves as the steward of the local agency federal-aid program by administering and managing federal funds from project development through construction administration. H&LP provides assistance to cities, counties, ports, tribal governments, transit, and metropolitan and regional planning organizations in obtaining federal and state grant funds to build and improve local transportation systems. H&LP, on behalf of the Secretary of WSDOT, is responsible for preparing and submitting the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) to FHWA, without which no federal project would be authorized. In addition, H&LP provides federal compliance oversight on federally funded projects and technical assistance and training, and it promotes cooperative planning and partnerships between WSDOT and local agencies.

(5) WSDOT Regions and the Central Puget Sound Urban Planning Office (UPO)

The planning roles at the WSDOT regions and the Central Puget Sound UPO are similar in many ways. Following are descriptions of the different region and UPO planning roles:

(a) WSDOT Region Planning

Each WSDOT region has a Planning Office that has several roles, including:

- Conducting and overseeing a variety of long-range planning studies.
- Coordinating and assisting planning organizations outside WSDOT.
- Assisting in the development of prioritized plans.
- Administering internal WSDOT programs.
- Overseeing access control activities.
- Performing Development Services activities.

For the Olympic and Northwest Regions, many of these long-range planning functions are assigned to the Central Puget Sound UPO.

Each region Planning Office conducts long-range planning studies such as route development plans, corridor master plans, and site-specific transportation alternatives and studies. These studies evaluate alternative solutions for both existing and projected transportation needs, initiate the long-range public involvement process, and ultimately provide the foundation for inclusion of

identified improvement strategies into the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) and the State Highway System Plan (HSP).

Region Planning offices coordinate with and assist the local Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). In some cases, the region Planning Office provides staff support for the local RTPO.

The region works with the Washington State Patrol to include its weigh sites and other highway-related needs in WSDOT projects.

Often, the region Planning Office is responsible for administering internal WSDOT programs such as traffic modeling and the Travel Demand Management (TDM) program and responding to citizen's concerns about pedestrian, bicycle, and other transportation-related issues.

The region Planning Office also reviews and provides comments on local comprehensive plans so development regulations, local transportation elements, and WSDOT goals and interests are consistent.

Development Services reviews new developments affecting state highways, such as master-planned communities, major subdivisions, and commercial projects. Developers provide mitigation for their impacts to the state highway system under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the Highway Access Management program. The Development Services section works closely with the local lead agency during SEPA reviews and the permitting process to secure appropriate improvements to the state transportation system from developers.

(b) The Central Puget Sound Urban Planning Office (UPO)

The Central Puget Sound UPO is based in Seattle and is part of the Strategic Planning and Programming Division. It has a similar role to a region Planning Office, yet the UPO role is more specialized. The UPO oversees WSDOT's long-range planning efforts in the four-county Central Puget Sound area of King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties. This is the same area covered by the MPO called the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), located in Seattle. The four-county region is geographically split between WSDOT's Olympic and Northwest regions.

Development Services' responsibilities remain with the Northwest and Olympic Regions' Planning offices.

The Central Puget Sound Urban Planning Office also participates in the review of documents mandated by the Growth Management Act (GMA). This includes the review of draft comprehensive plans as well as the Draft Environmental Impact Statements that provide supporting documentation to the comprehensive plans. The UPO also provides staffing and logistical support for the Regional Transportation Investment District (RTID). The RTID, a regional transportation planning committee created by legislation, provides funding for major transportation projects in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.

The UPO also has the responsibility of coordinating plans developed by Washington State Ferries with the strategies contained in the State Highway System Plan.

(6) Washington State Ferries Division

The Long-Range Ferry System Plan, prepared by the Washington State Ferries Division, considers recent trends in ferry ridership, system costs, regional economy, and other system and site factors. It is recommended that designers contact the Washington State Ferries Planning Office during the design phase of any conceptual solution occurring near a ferry terminal or for a project that might add significant traffic to or around a ferry terminal.

(7) Aviation Division

The WSDOT Aviation Division:

- Provides general aviation airport aid, including an award-winning lighting program.
- Provides technical assistance for airspace and incompatible land use matters that may affect airport operations or compromise safety.
- Coordinates all air search and rescue and air disaster relief.
- Administers pilot and aircraft registration.

This division is responsible for development of the Washington State Airport System Plan. The division also operates 17 state airports strategically placed throughout the state.

120.06 Linking Transportation Plans

A major WSDOT objective is that our transportation system allows the public to travel on the state's highways quickly, safely, and with the least possible inconvenience and expense. To fulfill WSDOT's and the public's desire for a seamless transportation system, coordination of transportation planning efforts is essential.

(1) Coordination of Planning Efforts

Coordination of planning efforts between city, county, MPO, RTPO, public and private transportation providers, and state transportation plans is not only required by federal and state laws—it makes good business sense. [Exhibit 120-1](#) is a diagram that explains the general relationships between the various transportation planning processes and organizations.

Cities and counties explore their needs and develop *comprehensive plans*. Among other components, each comprehensive plan contains a land use element and a transportation element, which must be consistent with each other. The transportation element (sometimes known as the *local transportation plan*) supports the land use element. The requirements in the Growth Management Act (see [120.04\(2\)\(b\)](#)) guide most of the comprehensive plans developed in the state of Washington.

MPOs and RTPOs coordinate and develop metropolitan and regional transportation plans. These plans cover multiple cities and, for RTPOs, encompass at least one county. The purpose of metropolitan and regional transportation plans is to accurately capture a region's transportation needs in one document: to develop a financial strategy to address the unfunded needs and to ensure local plan consistency across jurisdictional boundaries.

Planning is undertaken to ensure consistent policy among the various jurisdictions, whether state, regional, or local. It does not matter where the planning process begins because the process is both cyclic and iterative. If one component of a plan changes,

it may or may not affect other components. If any one plan changes significantly, it may affect each of the other plans in the cycle. Early communication and coordination of conceptual solutions are critical to ensuring project delivery.

(2) Transportation Improvement Programs

[Exhibit 120-2](#) shows the coordination of effort that produces consistent and comprehensive transportation plans and programs.

From these transportation plans, each town, city, county, and public transportation provider develops a detailed list of projects that will be constructed in the ensuing three to six years. This detailed list of transportation projects is called the six-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program (also known as the Six-Year RTIP) or the three-year Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP).

The six-year RTIP and the three-year MTIP must be financially constrained, meaning that the total cost of all projects cannot exceed the established revenue authority. Financially constraining the RTIP and the MTIP is one method used to ensure the list of projects represents what the local agency intends to build in the near future to implement local transportation plans. Once each jurisdiction develops its individual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the RTPO and the MPO compile these individual TIPs into a regional or metropolitan TIP.

Each RTPO/MPO completes a Regional or Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP or MTIP) at least once every two years ([RCW 47.80.023](#)). The RTIPs/MTIPs must meet the requirements of federal and state laws regarding transportation improvement programs and plans. To achieve this, the RTIP/MTIP:

- Is developed cooperatively by local government agencies, public transit agencies, and the WSDOT regions within each area.
- Includes all federally funded WSDOT Highway Construction Program projects.
- Includes all significant transportation projects, programs, and transportation demand management measures proposed to be implemented during each year of the next period.
- Identifies all significant projects, whether funded by state or federal funds.
- Includes all significant projects from the local transit development plans and comprehensive transportation programs required by [RCW 35.58.2795](#), [35.77.010\(2\)](#), and [36.81.121\(2\)](#) for transit agencies, cities, towns, and counties.
- Includes all transportation projects funded by the FHWA and the FTA.
- Includes all federally funded public lands transportation projects.
- Includes all WSDOT projects, regardless of funding source, and clearly designates regionally significant projects as such.
- Complies with all state ([RCW 70.94](#)) and federal ([40 CFR 51](#) and [93](#)) Clean Air Act requirements (where applicable).
- Includes only projects consistent with local, regional, and metropolitan transportation plans.
- Includes a financial section outlining how the RTIP/MTIP is financially constrained, showing sources and amounts of funding reasonably expected to be received for each year of the ensuing six/three-year period, and includes an explanation of all assumptions supporting the expected levels of funding.

Funding agencies often give preference to jointly sponsored transportation projects. RTPOs and MPOs can develop jointly sponsored projects since they represent multiple agencies. Major projects backed by an RTPO or an MPO have a better chance of receiving funding.

(3) Development of the STIP

An important role of the WSDOT Highways and Local Programs Division is to combine all RTIP, MTIP, and HSP projects in appropriate years, and all of the state and federally funded projects and projects of regional significance, into the (three-year) Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

Development of a new STIP every two years is required by federal law in order to expend federal transportation dollars. The state of Washington, however, develops a new STIP each year to enhance project flexibility and ensure project delivery.

The Governor's approval of the MTIPs, plus the FHWA's and the FTA's approval of the STIP, are required prior to expenditure of federal funds.

120.07 Linking WSDOT Planning to Programming

[Exhibit 120-3](#) is a flowchart describing the process conceptual solutions must go through to receive funding. This chart also describes the link between planning and program development. (For more information, see [Chapter 300](#) for project definition, [Chapter 1100](#) for design matrices, and [Chapter 220](#) for environmental documentation.)

(1) The Role of the Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch

The WSDOT planning process determines *what* facilities or services will be provided *where*. The role of WSDOT Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch is to determine *when* the improvements will be implemented. The WSDOT Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch prioritizes the projects that are selected from the State Highway System Plan component of the Washington Transportation Plan (see [120.04\(2\)\(a\)1](#)).

Taking the HSP from the planning stage through the programming stage is another role of the Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch. The Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch and the Project Control and Reporting Office manage the statewide highway construction program, including:

- Recommending subprogram funding levels.
- Developing project priorities.
- Preparing, executing, and monitoring the highway construction program.

The Systems Analysis and Program Development Branch is responsible for the oversight of the *Programming Process*. The legislative authorization for this activity is in [RCW 47.05](#), Priority Programming. The Programming Process describes how projects that have been identified in the HSP are prioritized.

(2) Subprogram Categories

Subprogram categories for the service objectives and action strategies have been established within WSDOT's budget to allow decision makers to determine timing and the amount of money to invest in meeting transportation needs. (See the HSP for the service objectives and action strategies.)

The order of needs within each subprogram category is usually prioritized based on benefit/cost methodology; however, some subprograms do not have a prioritization methodology attached to them (such as Economic Initiatives).

The department may combine projects that are scheduled to be constructed within six years of each other to eliminate projects at the same location just a few years apart.

Following completion of construction, WSDOT evaluates the effectiveness of the project on the performance of the transportation system.

(3) WSDOT Budgets

WSDOT uses the State Highway System Plan component of the twenty-year Washington Transportation Plan as the basis for prioritizing and programming to select projects for the Agency Request Budget (ARB) and Current Law Budget (CLB). To be selected, a project must already be included in the HSP.

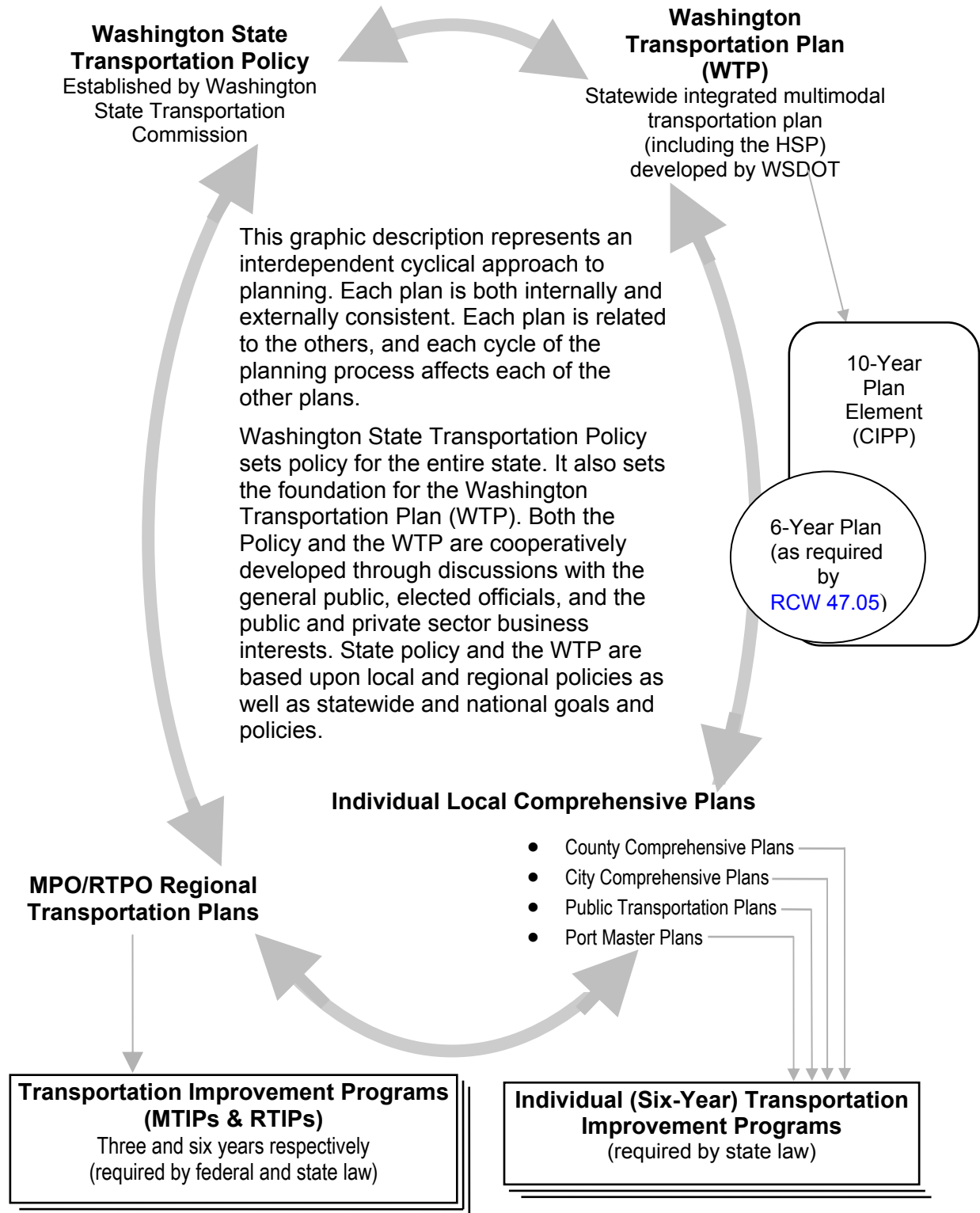
WSDOT operates on a two-year funding cycle. This is primarily because the state Legislature appropriates state transportation funds on a biennial basis. The Washington State Transportation Commission recommends a Six-Year Plan Element and the ten-year Capital Improvement and Preservation Program (CIPP). The plans are developed to better implement the federal and state laws influencing transportation and land use; to encourage a longer-range perspective in the funding of transportation projects; and to be consistent with local and regional transportation planning processes. These plan elements are used to develop the two-year budget proposals.

When appropriated by the Legislature, WSDOT's two-year budget is forwarded to the appropriate RTPOs and MPOs for any needed revisions to the RTIPs and MTIPs.

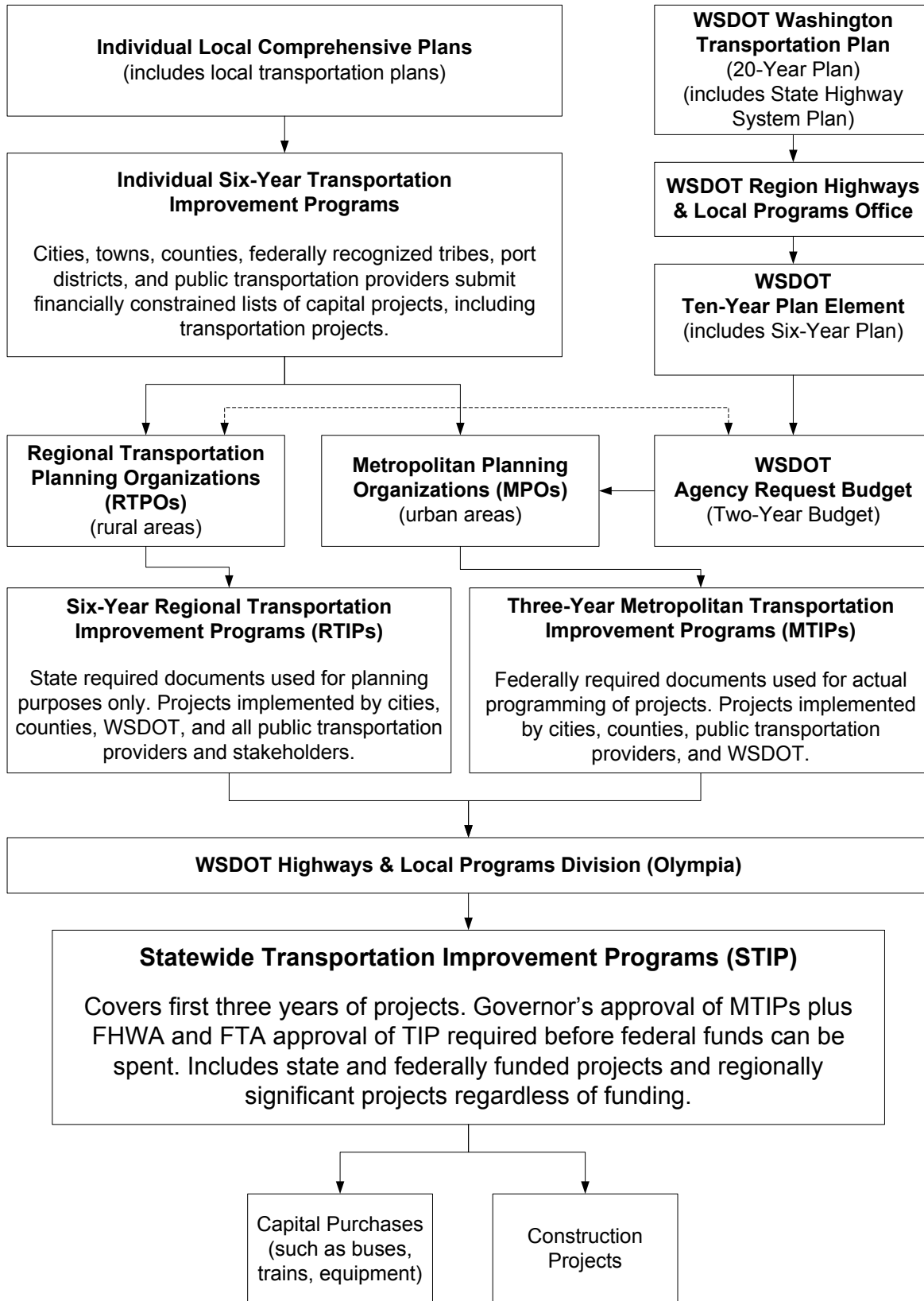
(4) Key Points of Planning and Programming at WSDOT

Following is a list of key points to remember about WSDOT's planning and programming processes:

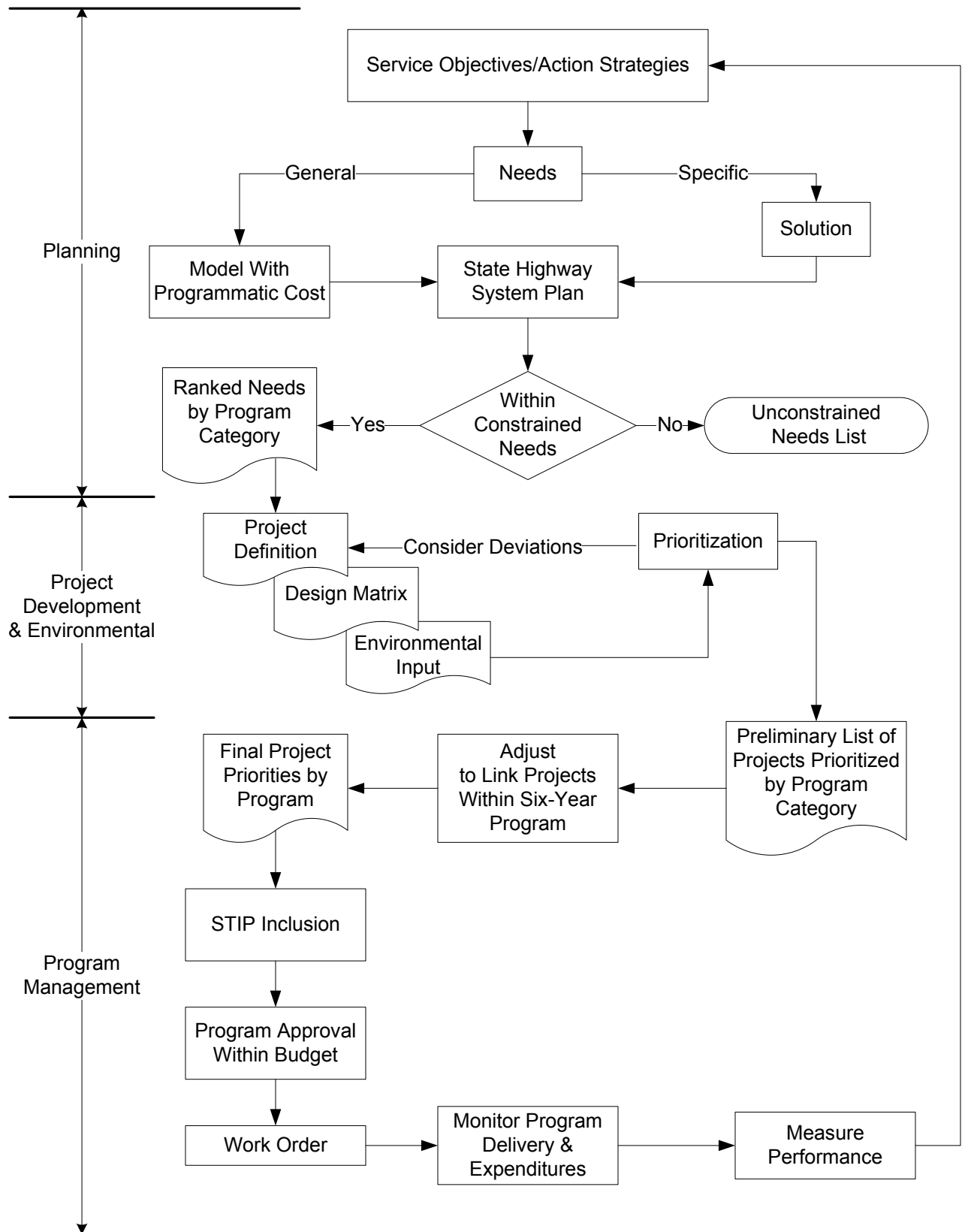
- Executive policy sets the direction for the WTP.
- Federal transportation laws and state transportation and land use laws guide solutions to address the needs for transportation facilities and services.
- The WTP is developed in partnership with MPOs and RTPOs and is tied to the land use plans of towns, cities, and counties.
- Region Planning offices are responsible for meeting many of the state and federal planning requirements.
- The SHSP is a component of the WTP.
- The SHSP sets forth service objectives and action strategies.
- Conceptual solutions are prioritized within most budget categories based on benefit/cost analyses to obtain the greatest benefit at the least cost.
- Tradeoffs between project categories are made by policy choice through a multitiered process.
- An improvement strategy must be listed in the HSP to be considered for project funding.



Relationship Between Transportation Plans and Planning Organizations
Exhibit 120-1



Transportation Improvement Programs
Exhibit 120-2



Linking Planning and Programming
Exhibit 120-3

