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230.01 Introduction

This chapter describes transportation plans prepared by counties and cities, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), and WSDOT's role in working with these entities to coordinate local, metropolitan, regional, and state transportation planning.

230.02 Local Comprehensive Plans

Under the State's Growth Management Act (GMA), city and county comprehensive plans serve as basic building blocks for transportation planning. They define land uses and the transportation system needed to support those land uses over a 20-year planning period. Local comprehensive plans must include six elements, including transportation. The transportation element should integrate land use assumptions by identifying and developing:

- An inventory of land, water, and air transportation facilities.
- An analysis of impacts on other jurisdictions, and a feedback loop to reassess land uses that cannot be served with available funding. Each local jurisdiction planning under the GMA is required to identify the effect of its land use decisions on the state highway system.
- Current and future transportation needs.
- A realistic funding analysis.

Other key components are plans developed by special transportation districts, such as transit agencies and port districts. These plans define the needs and services to carry out these special purpose government missions.

*Web sites and navigation referenced in this chapter are subject to change. For the most current links, please refer to the online version of the EPM, available through the WSDOT Environmental Services Office (ESO) home page: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/environment/>

The County Road Administration Board (CRAB) helps county governments meet their transportation planning responsibilities through direct technical support, research on current issues with framework plans, workshops, and discussion papers. More information is online at:

☞ <http://www.crab.wa.gov/>

WSDOT Regional Offices work with counties and cities when they update the transportation element of their comprehensive plans to coordinate state and local interests. They should also encourage local governments to consider potential impacts to state-owned and state-interest transportation facilities and services in Environmental Impact Statements prepared for a comprehensive plan or plan update.

230.03 Metropolitan Transportation Plans

In Washington, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) have a major role in transportation planning as required by federal statutes (23 USC 134 and 49 U.S.C. 1607). Each urbanized area with a population 50,000 or more must have such an organization to receive federal transportation capital or operating assistance. The purpose of an MPO is to provide a forum for cooperative transportation decision-making by local and state governments. The products of this ongoing cooperative, comprehensive transportation planning process are plans and programs consistent with the comprehensively planned development of the urban area.

A map showing all Metropolitan Planning Organizations and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations in the state is online at:

☞ <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/Regional/>

Each MPO has a transportation policy committee of elected officials of the counties and cities in the area. The MPO may have a technical committee of staff from local public works and planning agencies. WSDOT is represented on the policy and technical committees concerning transportation in each MPO.

The MPO is required to prepare an annual work program that describes its planned transportation and transportation-related activities. The federal government provides part of the funds for these plans and studies, with the remainder from local sources.

The products of this urban planning process are:

- A metropolitan transportation plan for the area describing policies, strategies, and facilities or changes in facilities.
- A transportation improvement program (TIP) that is usually a six-year program of projects including an annual or biennial element.

- The annual or biennial element consists of a list of transportation improvement projects proposed for implementation during the first one or two years of the TIP.

230.04 Regional Transportation Plans

Regional transportation plans are developed by Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), which are forums for local governments and the State to coordinate the planning of regional transportation facilities and services, as authorized under Chapter 47.80 RCW. An RTPO is created through the voluntary association of local governments in a region. Member jurisdictions determine their own structures to ensure equitable representation among local governments and to allow flexibility across the state. A map showing all of the RTPOs and MPOs in the state is online at:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/planning/Regional/>

A WSDOT RTPO Transportation Planning Guidebook is available online at:

<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/NR/rdonlyres/E5A25A1A-61E0-44E8-B000-AA546E5C3BE3/0/RTPOGuidebook.pdf>

RTPO Membership and Designation – Each RTPO must include at least one county and serve a population of at least 100,000. Regions may be formed in areas with less than 100,000 population if a minimum of three geographically contiguous counties are linked. RTPOs must include all counties in the region, and at least 60 percent of the cities and towns representing at least 75 percent of the population of the cities and towns, as well as tribal governments and school districts.

In areas where there are Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) as required by the federal government, the RTPO and MPO must be the same organization. WSDOT verifies the designation of each RTPO to ensure that all state requirements are met.

Each RTPO must establish a Transportation Policy Board whose membership includes representatives from the member counties, cities and towns. Some RTPOs also include other transportation interests, such as major employers, WSDOT, transit providers, and port districts within the region. State legislators are ex officio members. RTPOs are encouraged to form Technical Advisory Committees.

RTPOs ensure consistency of the transportation element of local comprehensive plans with the Regional Transportation Plan.

Lead Planning Agency – RTPOs are required to designate a lead planning agency, which may be a regional council, county, city, town agency, or a WSDOT regional office. Of the 14 RTPOs that have formed, ten have MPOs as their lead planning agencies, two have economic development agencies, one has a WSDOT regional office, and one has a county public

works department. The key role of the lead planning agency is to provide staff support to the RTPO and to coordinate development of the Regional Transportation Plan.

Developing the Regional Transportation Plan – A key function of the RTPO is to develop a Regional Transportation Strategy that addresses alternative transportation modes and transportation demand management in regional corridors. The strategy includes recommended transportation policies consistent with the region’s growth strategies. The RTPO also develops a Regional Transportation Plan, guided by the Regional Transportation Strategy and countywide planning policies, guidelines, and principles. With the plan as a guide, RTPOs also develop regional transportation improvement programs (TIPs), in cooperation with WSDOT, public transit operators, local jurisdictions, and tribal governments. TIPs are proposed regionally significant transportation projects and programs and transportation demand management measures.

230.05 Exhibits

None.