

Chapter 1

Skagit Regional Transportation Planning Organization and Sub-Regional Transportation Plan

Introduction

This plan combines two planning efforts, one required by Federal statute and the other by state statute. The first is a metropolitan transportation plan (MTP) and the second a sub-regional transportation plan.

The Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SIRTPO) was formed in 1991 in response to enabling legislation within the Growth Management Act (GMA). The Skagit Council of Governments was initially designated as the lead-planning agency, however, the following year it was reorganized with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Northwest Region becoming the lead-planning agency. GMA requires that metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) be the lead-planning agency in Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) with an MPO. Therefore, once the Skagit MPO became an officially designated MPO the transfer of responsibility for the RTPO was transferred back to the Skagit Council of Governments.

Skagit Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization

The Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization was formed in response to enabling legislation in the Growth Management Act. The legislation allows single counties with a population of 100,000 or multiple counties of any size to form an RTPO. The sub-regions act independently of each other on most planning issues, but coordinate with each other on issues of mutual interest.

The RTPOs have two primary responsibilities, those of maintaining a regional transportation plan (RTP) and a regional transportation improvement program (RTIP). The RTPO Transportation Planning Guidebook, produced by WSDOT, describes requirements and guidance for RTPs. The list includes:

- Incorporate the following planning principles:
 - Consistency
 - Partnering
 - Public involvement
 - Regional perspective
 - Continuous improvement
 - Short-and long-term perspectives
 - Sustainability
- Address facility needs

- Address regional transportation issues
- Be consistent with local comprehensive plans
- Be consistent with state transportation policies
- Address regional service needs
- Cover at least 20 years
- Incorporate policies and goals that cover, at a minimum:
 - Intergovernmental coordination
 - Coordination of regional level of service
 - Other (modes, economic development, tourism, land use, environment, and other)
- Establishes and identifies a regional transportation system that meets five characteristics of a regional system, includes all facilities identified as minimal requirements in the Guidebook, and considers certain elements included in the Guidebook
 - Identifies deficiencies that:
 - Include all modes
 - Are prioritized regionally
 - Inventories facilities and services
 - Includes forecasts of demand by mode
 - Compares needs to existing (based on service level standards)
 - Lists projects and programs
- Consideration for data includes:
 - Use existing when available
 - Request from WSDOT Headquarters when needed
 - Include traffic volumes and VMT (vehicles miles traveled)
 - Include people movement in urban areas
- Relate traffic demand to land use in the development of forecasts
- Use the Highway Capacity Manual for level of service analysis (this has changed for state facilities to the index of congestion)
- Include access management
- Describe the method for certifying concurrency
- Identify a performance monitoring program
- Include system performance monitoring
- Include plan implementation performance monitoring
- Include a financial plan
- Include transportation planning guidelines and principles
- Include least cost planning.

The Skagit/Island Regional Transportation Plan consists of two sub-regional elements and a bridge. The Island Sub-Regional Plan was updated in 2002. When the Skagit element is updated it will be related to the Island Sub-Regional Transportation Plan, but will also contain the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Skagit MPO.