

## Chapter 5

### Policies and Goals

#### Introduction

The establishment of policies and goals serves three primary purposes: guiding the planning process, addressing Federal guidelines, and meeting State requirements. Although Federal guidelines do not specifically mention policies and goals, they do list seven planning factors. The Washington State Department of Transportation's (WSDOT) "RTPO Transportation Planning Guidebook" defines two specific areas to be addressed by the policies and goals: intergovernmental coordination and coordination of level of service standards.

More important than the requirements, however, is the intent of the process, which is to provide a framework for the development of the plan. For the purposes of this process, a set of draft policies and goals were developed at the outset. Those draft policies and goals attempted to address all the areas of concern in a general sense, establishing the importance of each policy area, but not tying down specific goals initially. The policies and goals were then reviewed throughout the planning process with the technical advisory committee (TAC) committee members, Policy Board members, and the public. The final policies and goals reflect the decisions made during the planning process.

#### Federal Guidelines

The federal guidelines are stated in Title 23 for the United State Code, also known as the Transportation Equity Act of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA21) under section 134 (f)(1). These guidelines are called as factors and are:

- (A) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- (B) Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- (C) Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
- (D) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
- (E) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- (F) Promote efficient system management and operations; and
- (G) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

The Act states that failure to address any of these factors in the planning process is not reviewable in a court of law, clearly establishing the flexible nature of the factors. This flexibility allows the metropolitan planning organizations the ability to select the factors that apply to the individual circumstance of their region for emphasis. Each of these factors is relevant to the Skagit Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization (S-RTPO) and is addressed in the policies and goals.

### **State Requirements**

The State requirements for policies and goals are stated in the RTPO Transportation Planning Guidebook, which identifies intergovernmental coordination and level of service standards as the only two areas that must be covered by policies. The Guidebook also suggests considering the areas of transportation modes, economic development, tourism, land use, environmental concerns, and other related items.

### **Metropolitan Policies and Goals**

At the beginning of the planning process a draft set of policies and goals were developed. These draft policies were developed using the Federal planning factors and the State planning principles. Specific direction was avoided because it was felt that this should be left to the end of the process. Instead, they were used as a sounding board for public and agency comment during the process. The draft policies were then revised using public input and the direct involvement of the technical advisory committee and the policy boards to finalize the policies and goals that follow.

### **It is the policy of the Skagit MPO to:**

1. Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the metropolitan transportation system through a cooperative effort with its member agencies, the Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization, the public sector, and State and Federal agencies;
2. Provide a Metropolitan Transportation Plan that identifies significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, regional, inter-regional, State, Federal, and public needs and requirements while recognizing the inter-relationships within the contiguous urban area and areas immediately adjacent to it;
3. Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing transportation system by encouraging timely maintenance of the system;

4. Facilitate cooperation and information exchange amongst stakeholders in the Skagit MPO;
5. Maintain and execute an ongoing public involvement program and plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the citizens of the Skagit metropolitan planning area in the planning process.

**It is the goal of the Skagit MPO, based on Policy 1, to:**

- a. Select and build the most efficient mix of modes and facilities based on the need to balance accessibility and demand;
- b. Ensure that the modes are interconnected in a manner that best serves the users by identifying missing links and connections and proposing projects that will make needed linkages;
- c. Consider strategies that recognize the future densification of the urban area as it grows and matures, while connecting seamlessly with the rural areas;
- d. Support Skagit Transit in acquiring additional funding from outside sources to help implement strategies identified in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan;
- e. Provide a level of service across modes that meet the needs of the user, while recognizing the uniqueness of the level of service standards for each mode;
- f. Provide for the safety and security of the users on all modes, by participating in state and Federal programs to increase safety and security and placing an emphasis on projects that incorporate safety and security;
- g. Provide accessibility to the transportation system by the provision of user friendly connections by ensuring that inter-modal facilities are not designed and constructed in isolation. In particular, ensure that the urban area has interconnected opportunities for safe and convenient non-motorized modes;
- h. Provide accessibility to the transportation system by the provision of timely information by developing a regional ITS architecture that includes traveler information as a major component;
- i. Provide access to the transportation system in a manner that balances user convenience with safety and preservation of capacity. Develop and implement access management plans where access issues are or are likely to become impediments to the safe and efficient operation of roadways for all vehicles and non-motorized users, within the context of a growing urbanized area;

**It is the goal of the Skagit MPO, based on Policy 2, to:**

- a. Provide a metropolitan transportation plan that is up-to-date;
- b. Develop a regional growth strategy that incorporates and expresses the growth management plans of the individual jurisdictions. Consider the growth strategy when identifying and funding projects and programs;
- c. Identify needed auxiliary components of the MTP such as those identified in the sub-regional transportation plan and a congestion management plan; develop these components where they don't already exist; and maintain them;
- d. Establish a plan amendment process that will accommodate changes in local, regional, state, federal, private sector, and public needs between plan updates.

**It is the goal of the Skagit MPO, based on Policy 3, to:**

- a. Monitor the condition of existing transportation facilities by working with the Sub-RTPO to identify critical facilities, develop metrics, and establish a data collection program;
- b. Time replacement and rehabilitation of facilities to minimize investment by working with the S-RTPO to develop a regional pavement management system. Require agencies to evaluate the timing of replacement and rehabilitation needs when proposing capacity improvement projects for the Transportation Improvement Program;
- c. Ensure that the operation, appearance, and functionality of the infrastructure meet the users' needs by ensuring that these elements are included in the scope of projects proposed for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program.

**It is the goal of the Skagit MPO, based on Policy 4, to:**

- a. Provide a forum for shareholders to discuss and coordinate their transportation projects, programs, and plans with each other. Consider strategies that recognize the future densification of the urban area as it grows and matures;
- b. Provide technical support for local and other agencies, concerning the metropolitan transportation plan. Track areas where technical assistance is requested and build capacity when needed, if appropriate and within the resources of the MPO. Attempt to find requested technical assistance when it is otherwise outside the scope or resources for the MPO;
- c. Facilitate the involvement of the private sector in metropolitan transportation planning issues by adding one or more non-agency positions to the technical advisory committee. Invite private representation on study review teams when relevant to the study;

- d. Identify sources of funding for transportation planning, programs, and projects that will implement the metropolitan transportation plan and assist in acquiring those funds as needed.

**It is the goal of the Skagit MPO, based on Policy 5, to:**

- a. Develop and implement a public involvement plan during the updating of the metropolitan transportation plan and ensure that the public has an opportunity to review and comment on proposed amendments;
- b. Ensure a two-way communication process in the public involvement process by presenting information in a number and variety of media and incorporating an appropriate number and variety of feedback methods;
- c. Time public involvement interfaces to provide public input into decisions before they are made and provide decision makers with an accurate assessment of public input;
- d. Make the public involvement process meaningful by considering public comments when making decisions;
- e. Maintain an on-going public involvement process.

**Sub-Regional Policies**

Initially only one set of policies and goals were developed, but the refined policies and goals distinguish between the Metropolitan and the Sub-Regional Plans. Because of this the Sub-Regional plans look similar to the Metropolitan, but include significant differences. They are:

**It is the policy of the Skagit Sub-RTPO to:**

1. Identify, encourage, and implement strategies and projects that will maximize the efficiency and effectiveness of the regional transportation system through a cooperative effort with its member agencies, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, the public sector, and State and Federal agencies;
2. Provide a Sub-Regional Transportation Plan that identifies regionally significant transportation facilities and services that support local comprehensive plans and ensures ongoing evaluation necessary to keep current with local, Metropolitan, Inter-Regional, State, Federal, and public needs and requirements;
3. Protect the integrity of the investment in the existing transportation system by encouraging timely maintenance of the system;
4. Facilitate cooperation and information exchange amongst stakeholders in the Skagit Sub-RTPO;

5. Maintain and execute an ongoing public involvement program and plan to ensure the early, meaningful, and continuous participation of the citizens of Skagit County in the planning process.

**It is the goal of the Skagit Sub-RTPO, based on Policy 1, to:**

- a. Select and build the most efficient mix of modes and facilities based on the need to balance accessibility and demand;
- b. Ensure that the modes are interconnected in a manner that best serves the users by identifying missing links and connections and proposing projects that will make needed linkages. Recognize the special needs of the rural areas in terms of providing connectivity to destinations such as public services;
- c. Support Skagit Transit in acquiring additional funding from outside sources to help implement strategies identified in the Sub-Regional Transportation Plan;
- d. Provide a level of service across modes that meets the needs of the user, while recognizing the uniqueness of the level of service standards for each mode;
- e. Provide for the safety and security of the users on all modes, by participating in state and Federal programs to increase safety and security and placing an emphasis on projects that incorporate safety and security;
- f. Provide accessibility to the transportation system by the provision of user friendly connections by ensuring that inter-modal facilities are not designed and constructed in isolation. Recognize the potential limitations of such designs in rural areas;
- g. Provide accessibility to the transportation system by the provision of timely information by developing a regional ITS architecture that includes traveler information as a major component.
- h. Provide access to the transportation system in a manner that balances user convenience with safety and preservation of capacity by developing and implementing access management plans where access issues are or are likely to become impediments to the safe and efficient operation of roadways for all vehicles and non-motorized users.

**It is the goal of the Skagit Sub-RTPO, based on Policy 2, to:**

- a. Provide a Sub-regional transportation plan that is up-to-date;
- b. Develop a regional growth strategy that incorporates and expresses the growth management plans of the individual jurisdictions and by

- considering that growth strategy when identifying and funding projects and programs;
- c. Identify needed auxiliary components of the S-RTP such as the non-motorized element, the freight and goods plan, and a regional ITS architecture. Develop these components where they don't already exist and maintain them;
  - d. Establish a plan amendment process that will accommodate changes in local, regional, state, federal, private sector, and public needs between plan updates.

**It is the goal of the Skagit Sub-RTPO, based on Policy 3, to:**

- a. Monitor the condition of existing transportation facilities by identifying critical facilities, developing metrics, and establishing a data collection program;
- b. Time replacement and rehabilitation of facilities to minimize investment by developing a regional pavement management system. Require agencies to evaluate the timing of replacement and rehabilitation needs when proposing capacity improvement projects for the Transportation Improvement Program;
- c. Ensure that the operation, appearance, and functionality of the infrastructure meet the users' needs by ensuring that these elements are included in the scope of projects proposed for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program.

**It is the goal of the Skagit Sub-RTPO, based on Policy 4, to:**

- a. Provide a forum for shareholders to discuss and coordinate their transportation projects, programs, and plans with each other;
- b. Provide technical support for local and other agencies, concerning the regional transportation plan. Track areas where technical assistance is requested and build capacity when needed, if appropriate and within the resources for the S-RTPO. Attempt to find requested technical assistance when it is otherwise outside the scope or resources for the S-RTPO;
- c. Facilitate the involvement of the private sector in regional transportation planning issues by adding one or more non-agency positions to the technical advisory committee. Invite private representation on study review teams when relevant to the study;
- d. Identify sources of funding for transportation planning, programs, and projects that will implement the regional transportation plan and assist in acquiring those funds as needed.

**It is the goal of the Skagit Sub-RTPO, based on Policy 5, to:**

- a. Develop and implement a public involvement plan during the updating of the regional transportation plan and ensure that the public has an opportunity to review and comment on proposed amendments;
- b. Ensure a two-way communication process in the public involvement process by presenting information in a number and variety of media and incorporate an appropriate number and variety of feedback methods;
- c. Time public involvement interfaces to provide public input into decisions before they are made and provide decision makers with an accurate assessment of public input;
- d. Make the public involvement process meaningful by considering public comments when making decisions;
- e. Maintain an on-going public involvement process.

**Countywide Planning Policies**

As noted in Chapter 3 of this document, each county planning under the Growth Management Act is required to develop a set of countywide planning policies. The policies are intended to help the jurisdictions within the county coordinate their GMA planning efforts. These policies provide an umbrella for all other planning in the county. The countywide planning policies for transportation are as follows:

3. Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
  - 3.1 Multi-purpose transportation routes and facilities shall be designed to accommodate present and future traffic volumes.
  - 3.2 Primary arterial access points shall be designed to ensure maximum safety while minimizing traffic flow disruptions.
  - 3.3 The development of new transportation routes and improvements to existing routes shall minimize adverse social, economic and environmental impacts and costs.
  - 3.4 The Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan shall be designed to: facilitate the flow of people, goods, and services so as to strengthen the local and regional economy; conform with the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan; be based upon an inventory of the existing Skagit County transportation network and needs; and encourage the conservation of energy.

- 3.5 Comprehensive Plan provisions for the location and improvement of existing and future transportation networks and public transportation shall be made in a manner consistent with the goals, policies and land use map of the Comprehensive Plan.
- 3.6 The development of a recreational transportation network shall be encouraged and coordinated between state and local governments and private enterprises.
- 3.7 The Senior Citizen and Handicapped transportation system shall be provided with an adequate budget to provide for those who, through age and/or disability, are unable to transport themselves.
- 3.8 Level of Service (LOS) standards and safety standards shall be established that coordinate and link with the urban growth and urban areas to optimize land use and traffic compatibility over the long term. New development shall mitigate transportation impacts concurrently with the development and occupancy of the project.
- 3.9 An all-weather arterial road system shall be coordinated with industrial and commercial areas.
- 3.10 Cost effectiveness shall be a consideration in transportation expenditure decisions and balanced for both safety and service improvements.
- 3.11 An integrated regional transportation system shall be designed to minimize air pollution by promoting the use of alternative transportation modes, reducing vehicular traffic, maintaining acceptable traffic flow, and siting of facilities.
- 3.12 All new and expanded transportation facilities shall be sited, constructed, and maintained to minimize noise levels.

Consistency between the County Wide Planning Policies and the Sub-Regional and Metropolitan Policies and Goals is an important aspect of this plan.