



MEMORANDUM

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors
FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director *MR*
DATE: December 29, 2015
SUBJECT: Growth Management Act – RTC Certification Process and Policy

AT A GLANCE – DISCUSSION

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide background information on the role of RTC in certifying local comprehensive plans as part of the Growth Management planning process.

BACKGROUND

Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) is the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the Clark, Klickitat and Skamania County region. As an RTPO, RTC has responsibility for the regional transportation planning process. One of the duties of an RTPO is to certify the transportation element of local Comprehensive Plans and any update to these Plans. The certification process reviews the transportation element within the Comprehensive Plan to assure conformance with the state’s Growth Management Act (GMA), consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and meets the requirements of Washington State’s Level of Service (LOS) Bill.

HISTORY

The GMA Certification requirement was first addressed at RTC Board meetings in 1994 during the development of the first Comprehensive Growth Management Plan for Clark County required by the State’s Growth Management Act passed in 1990. The certification requirement was again reviewed in 2003 when the RTC Board acted to endorse an updated Certification Process. Certification of local plans was ratified with subsequent updates to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Clark County, recognizing the close cooperation and coordination between the state, region and locals in developing Plans within the Clark County region.

ELEMENTS OF THE GMA CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Listed below are key elements of the Certification Process as required by Washington State law codified in Chapter 36.70A RCW, Growth Management – Planning and in Chapter 47.80 RCW, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations.

• **Guidelines and Principles**

Washington state law (RCW 47.80.026) calls for the RTPO to establish guidelines and principles to provide direction for development and evaluation of comprehensive plan transportation elements. RTC has relied upon the goals and policies in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) as the guiding principles. Transportation policy themes include: Economy, Safety, Security,

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Accessibility and Mobility, Environment, Efficiencies, Management and Operations, Preservation, Finance and Community Vision and Values.

- **Conformity with the Growth Management Act (GMA)**

The RTPO is asked to certify that transportation elements of local Comprehensive Plans conform with the requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA) as listed in RCW 36.70A.070.

The GMA requires that the transportation element address the following issues:

- (i) Land use assumptions used in estimating travel
- (ii) Estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities resulting from land use assumptions
- (iii) Facilities and services needs
- (iv) Finance
- (v) Intergovernmental coordination efforts
- (vi) Demand management strategies
- (vii) Pedestrian and bicycle component

- **Consistency with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

Another certification requirement calls for consistency between the transportation element and the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). Consistency with the RTP is determined through a comparison of the transportation elements in local plans (ex. projects, programs, strategies) with the transportation provisions in the RTP.

- **Meeting the Requirements of the Level of Service (LOS) Bill**

Washington State passed a Level of Service Bill in 1998 to enhance coordinated planning for transportation facilities. RTPOs are required to develop regional LOS standards and to review local LOS methodologies.

Level of Service (LOS) requires significant coordination between federal, state, regional and local agencies and jurisdictions. LOS standards represent the minimum performance level desired for transportation facilities and services within the region. They are used as a gauge to evaluate the quality of the transportation system. RTC is required to coordinate with cities, counties, transit agencies, the department of transportation, and others to develop Level of Service standards or alternative transportation performance measures.

LOS was addressed at RTC meetings in 2003 and the agreed-to regional LOS standards were subsequently incorporated into Chapter 3 of the Regional Transportation Plan for Clark County. By law, RTC is required to review level of service methodologies used by cities and counties planning under chapter 36.70A RCW to promote a consistent regional evaluation of transportation facilities and corridors.

- **County-Wide Planning Policies**

Clark County and cities within the County have adopted County-Wide Planning Policies (CWPP). The purpose of these County-Wide Planning Policies is to frame how the comprehensive plans of the counties, cities, and towns will be developed and coordinated. RTC is required to certify that the CWPPs are consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan.

PROCESS FOR CERTIFICATION: RTC GUIDANCE DOCUMENT, CHECKLIST AND TIMELINE

Elements described above will be described in more detail in RTC's GMA Certification Process Guide now being developed by RTC staff in coordination with RTAC members as an aid to help local jurisdictions meet RTC's certification process requirements. The certification process endorsed by the RTC Board in 2003 provides the framework and basis for the Certification Process Guide.

To expedite the certification process, local jurisdictions will be asked to complete a Consistency and Certification Report Form. The form will essentially be a checklist based on current statutory Growth Management Act and Level of Service requirements. Clark County and local jurisdictions will need to submit updated Comprehensive Growth Management Plans with completed checklist for certification by RTC in sync with submittal to the Department of Commerce of the Notice of Intent to Adopt the Plan. The Department of Commerce requires a Notice of Intent to Adopt at least 60 days prior to the anticipated Plan adoption. RTC staff will review draft Comprehensive Plan updates prior to their adoption. If necessary, RTAC will discuss coordination issues and the RTC Board will be asked to take action to complete the certification process after the Comprehensive Plan updates are adopted by local jurisdictions.

NEXT STEPS

RTC will review a draft of RTC's GMA Certification Process Guide with agency planning partners and RTAC in early January and will review this draft Guide with the RTC Board at the February 2 Board meeting. The anticipated timeline calls for RTC Board adoption of RTC's GMA Certification Process Guide at the March 2016 Board meeting to allow for its use by jurisdictions required to update their Comprehensive Plans in 2016.