




STAFF REPORT/RESOLUTION

TO: Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council Board of Directors

FROM: Matt Ransom, Executive Director

DATE: November 26, 2020 

SUBJECT: **RTC's Public Participation Plan Update,
Resolution 12-20-30**

AT A GLANCE - ACTION

The proposed action is to adopt a periodic update to RTC's Public Participation Plan. The draft Plan update was presented to the Board of Directors on October 6, 2020 and published for public review and comment after that meeting. At the November meeting of the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, RTAC recommended RTC Board adoption of the Public Participation Plan update. Periodic review and update of the Plan keeps RTC compliant with federal and state laws.

BACKGROUND: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Public participation is an important part of the regional transportation decision-making process carried out by RTC and is required by both federal and state laws. Policies and guidance for public outreach and participation are outlined in RTC's Public Participation Plan. Periodic review and update of RTC's Public Participation Plan is a requirement of the federal metropolitan transportation planning process.

The Public Participation Plan addresses both federal and state requirements for public participation in RTC's transportation planning activities; RTC acting as both designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Clark County region and as state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the Clark, Klickitat and Skamania County region. The Public Participation Plan documents RTC's commitment toward providing opportunity for public participation and sets RTC Board policy to allow for public comment and input in the transportation planning process.

Essential components for public outreach and participation, as required by federal and state transportation laws, are reflected in the Public Participation Plan. These components include the need for RTC to ensure early and continued public awareness of and access to the transportation decision-making process in the region. There must be commitment to publish, or make available for public view, transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs and to hold public meetings at convenient and accessible times and locations. Plans and programs should be understandable with visualization techniques used to simplify concepts where possible. The public and stakeholders should be involved in development of the Public Participation Plan and there must be a minimum 45-day public comment period before adoption of the Public Participation Plan or any updates. The Plan is drafted to reflect current practices for public involvement, consultation with interested parties, interagency consultation, and describes RTC's existing

governance and operations. RTC has recently been working to review and update several plans that also help to document how the regional transportation planning process is carried out. In addition to the Public Participation Plan, these include the Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Plans.

Specific changes in the 2020 Public Participation Plan update include: updated electronic hyperlinks; commitment to evaluate use of social media (see page 39); updated description of tribal consultation following passage of EHB 1584, codified in RCW 47.80.050, which resulted in the Cowlitz Indian Tribe joining RTC and the Yakama Nation participating in the Klickitat Transportation Policy Committee; and addressing virtual meeting access in the section "Access for All" (see pages 27-28).

The process to develop the 2020 Public Participation Plan update included a review of the regulatory basis for public involvement, review of RTC's public outreach and participation practices, review of other Public Participation Plans, review and input by RTAC and the RTC Board, and circulation to stakeholders, public and consultation agencies. Once the 2020 Public Participation Plan update was drafted, the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee reviewed the draft update at the September 18 meeting. Subsequently, the RTC Board reviewed the draft Public Participation Plan at its October 5 meeting and approved its release for public comment. Following the RTC Board meeting, the draft Public Participation Plan was released on October 9 for a required 45-day public comment period. A media release was issued and notices of its release for public comment were published in local newspapers including the Columbian, the Battle Ground Reflector, the Camas Post Record, the Asian Reporter and the Skanner. Public comments were also solicited through the Clark County and City of Vancouver network of neighborhoods. The draft Public Participation Plan was posted on RTC's website and its distribution included to planning and consultation partners at federal and state agencies through RTAC and RTC Board mailings.

POLICY IMPLICATION

Periodic update of the Public Participation Plan is a requirement of the federal transportation act and Washington state laws. The Plan confirms with all federal and state policy and procedural requirements. The Public Participation Plan provides information on RTC's organization, on RTC's transportation planning program, addresses how RTC will conduct public outreach, involvement and participation and how the Plan will be periodically evaluated. RTC continues its commitment to publish, or make available for public view, transportation plans, and transportation improvement programs (TIPs), and to hold public meetings at convenient and accessible times and locations. The Public Participation Plan covers both federal and state requirements for public participation in transportation planning activities of RTC as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Clark County region and as state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization for the Clark, Klickitat and Skamania County region. The public participation process must be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure early and continued public awareness of, and access to, the transportation decision-making process. The law requires a 45-day public comment period prior to adoption of any updates to the Public Participation Plan.

BUDGET IMPLICATION

None. Public participation activities are programmed within the Regional Transportation Program Coordination and Management element of RTC’s Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Revenue sources for this element are a combination of Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration planning funds together with local matching funds and state Regional Transportation Planning Organization funds.

ACTION REQUESTED

Adoption of Resolution 12-20-30, approving a periodic update to and publishing RTC’s "Public Participation Plan"

ADOPTED this 1st day of December 2020, by the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council.


**SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL**

ATTEST:

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Scott Hughes
Chair of the Board

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Matt Ransom
Executive Director

Attachments: RTC’s Public Participation Plan, December 1, 2020