

Appendix B: Public Involvement Plan



2015 – 2016 UPDATE TO THE SKAGIT COUNTY METROPOLITAN & REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Approved by the Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization
Policy Board on April 23, 2015

Revised by the Skagit Council of Governments
Transportation Policy Board on July 15, 2015

1.0 Overview

Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) were authorized in 1990 as part of the state Growth Management Act to ensure local and regional coordination of transportation plans, among other duties. The RTPO for Skagit County is the Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG). SCOG is a voluntary organization of local and tribal governments that works to foster collaboration and cooperation in Skagit County.

As the RTPO for Skagit County, SCOG is charged with developing and maintaining the Skagit County Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (Regional Transportation Plan or RTP). The RTP is a long-range plan for meeting existing and future transportation needs within the region, and also provides a collaborative process for identifying transportation projects for funding and implementation over the next 20+ years.

The current RTP was adopted in 2011 following extensive coordination with the public, jurisdictions and key stakeholder organizations. Federal requirements that relate to the RTP ensure that it must be updated every five years, at a minimum. In 2014, SCOG began leading the process to update

SCOPE OF PLAN UPDATE

Because of new federal transportation planning requirements, SCOG anticipates doing a major update of the Regional Transportation Plan in 2018. Therefore, the scope of this 2015 – 2016 RTP update is relatively minor, anticipating that extensive changes will need to occur to the plan in the near future to meet the new national performance-based approach, the rules for which are now under development.

the RTP – starting with updating the employment and population forecasts and travel demand model that will be used for the RTP update. The updated RTP is scheduled to be adopted in early 2016, following a public comment period.

1.1 Project Timeline

A project timeline, or “project schedule”, has been developed for the 2015 – 2016 RTP update. The following is a condensed version of the schedule:

- 2014: RTP update process began with data collection, population and employment forecasting, and travel demand modeling
- April – August 2015: Revising regional priorities, policies and goals
- June – November 2015: Updating financing and transportation project prioritization
- Early 2016: Releasing draft RTP and beginning public comment period

(See Appendix A for the full project schedule with tasks, dates and anticipated actions throughout 2015 and into 2016)

2.0 Purpose

This public involvement plan provides a detailed description of anticipated public outreach activities and methods for engaging members of the community and other interested parties as part of the process to update the RTP.

2.1 Primary Outcomes for Public Involvement

Guiding the development of the public involvement plan are several primary outcomes that are sought to inform, consult and involve the public in the RTP update planning process. There primary outcomes are as follows:

- Generate broad public understanding of the RTP, including:
 - The purpose of the RTP and what it includes
 - Why the RTP is important
 - Why the RTP needs to be updated
 - The process to update the RTP, including how transportation projects are identified and selected
 - What the scope of the updated RTP will include
- Ensure public awareness of the various ways to obtain information about the RTP update, and clearly explain the topic areas for which public feedback is requested

- Provide numerous opportunities for meaningful public feedback and input on key topic areas, such as the list of priority transportation projects
- Clearly communicate information about the planning process in all materials prepared for the RTP update

2.2 Messages to Communicate

The messages below are intended to provide general information about the Regional Transportation Plan, and the process to update it. These messages are presented as answers to general questions, and can be used to inform the development of project outreach materials, including, but not limited to, web content, fact sheets, display materials and talking points. The messages are presented as the following questions and answers:

- **“What is the Regional Transportation Plan?”**
 - The RTP is a long-term plan that helps identify and prioritize future transportation needs in Skagit County
 - The RTP addresses roads and highways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit, freight and more
 - The RTP includes a list of regional transportation projects as well as analysis of potential funding options and potential environmental impacts of projects
 - The RTP leads to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods
 - The current RTP looks out to the year 2035; the update will look out five years further, to 2040
- **“What Is the Process to Update the Regional Transportation Plan?”**
 - In accordance with state and federal requirements, the RTP must be updated every five years
 - The process to update the current RTP update began in 2014 and must be completed by April 2016
 - A draft of the updated RTP will be published in early 2016, and will be available for public review and comment before adoption
 - The Skagit Council of Governments is coordinating local, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions to review and update the current RTP

- **“What Regional Transportation Projects Are Included?”**
 - The RTP will estimate revenues and expenses for the regional transportation network out to 2040, including costs to maintain the existing infrastructure, indicating how much funding will likely be available for future transportation projects
 - A project prioritization methodology will be developed to prioritize projects for estimated available funding
 - Limited funding will require tradeoffs and some projects may be unaffordable, based on future financial estimates
- **“How Do I Provide Input?”**
 - The public will have numerous opportunities to provide input as part of the process to update the RTP
 - A variety of methods will be employed to gather input and reach out to those who may not otherwise be involved in helping to plan the region’s transportation future
 - Input can be provided at any time by contacting key project team members in Appendix B, either by phone or email

3.0 Interested Parties

SCOG seeks to provide meaningful, continuous involvement to the entire public, including every interested party, as the RTP is updated. Methods employed to engage different participants will be tailored to unique venues and formats. A number of targeted parties have been identified for outreach, due to varying identified roles and interests in the regional transportation system. Information will be provided to those Spanish speakers with limited English proficiency, as appropriate, to facilitate an inclusive planning process.

3.1 Interested Parties for Public Involvement

SCOG will target the general public for outreach, utilizing methods in the Activities section (Section 4) as appropriate. Through the planning process, reasonable opportunities to participate will be provided to: limited English proficiency speakers; representatives of public transportation users and employees; freight shippers and those offering freight transportation services; representatives of persons with disabilities; non-motorized representatives; and other interested parties. Engaging members of the general public will occur most often by attending events that the public will be attending for other purposes.

3.2 Interested Parties for Consultation

Additional outreach will be done to specific parties to meet federal consultation requirements, especially parties with identified interests in environmental activities included with the RTP and overall development of the plan. These parties include federally recognized Indian tribes, and federal, state and local agencies with responsibilities in land management, wildlife, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation and regulation.

Federally recognized Indian tribes that will be consulted include: (1) the Samish Indian Nation; (2) the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community; (3) the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe; and (4) the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe. Additional federally recognized Indian tribes may be consulted as appropriate.

Federal agencies that will be consulted include the U.S. Forest Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Park Service. Both the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service manage federal public lands in eastern Skagit County. Additional federal agencies may be consulted as appropriate.

State and local agencies will be consulted that have responsibilities for growth planning, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations and freight movements. Additional state and local agencies may be consulted as appropriate.

3.2 Limited English Proficiency and Environmental Justice

Through a previous demographic analysis of Skagit County, SCOG has identified a significant number of Spanish-speaking residents with limited English proficiency. Thus, public outreach materials can be made available in Spanish, and Spanish interpretation services will be provided as requested. Minority and low-income populations are also present in the region and will be targeted for outreach as appropriate.

4.0 Activities

The following activities will be undertaken to share information and receive input on the RTP update. Alternate and/or additional outreach events and activities may be implemented, as appropriate, to be responsive to the needs of the planning process. Utilizing these activities will ensure that participation can occur in a variety of ways and that efforts to engage will be leveraged by attending already-planned annual events, regular meetings and other venues.

4.1 Briefings

Briefings will allow the project team to delve into the details of the RTP update with small groups. Briefing materials will include a presentation, fact sheet, and comment form, and will provide information about the RTP update process. Planning commissioners of counties, cities and towns will be targeted for

briefings. Attendees will be able to provide feedback by talking to the project team, and/or by completing a comment form.

For maximum benefit, briefings should begin in the early stages of the RTP update to build awareness of the RTP update process, and upcoming opportunities for the public to provide feedback, and continue throughout the RTP update process, with an emphasis on when updated information is available, and/or when feedback is sought to help inform key decision points in the process.

Examples of organizations identified for briefings include: the Skagit Transit Citizens Advisory Committee; the Economic Development Association of Skagit County; and the Center for Independence North Sound. Organizations will be contacted during the planning process to see if they would be interested in receiving a briefing. Private providers of transportation services will be contacted as well.

To request a briefing, see Appendix B for key project team members that will be working on the RTP update and their contact information. Any SCOG contacts may be called or emailed. As staffing permits, all reasonable requests for briefings will be met.

4.2 Information Booths

Information booths at existing local public events provide the opportunity to reach the public in an informal setting that does not require attendees to change their schedule in order to receive information. Attendees will be able to provide feedback by talking to the project team, or by completing a comment form. Information booths provide easily accessible opportunities for project staff to meet one-on-one with those interested in the RTP update process and to answer questions and receive feedback.

Materials at information booths will include a display board(s), fact sheet, and comment form. Information presented will focus on what the RTP is, why it needs to be updated, and the proposed updates. For optimal impact, information booths should be held when specific feedback is sought to inform the RTP update process, such as determining which transportation projects can be funded given the estimated available revenues out to 2040.

SCOG staff tested an information booth for the RTP update at the open house Skagit County held as part of their comprehensive plan transportation element update process. Initial input was gathered at the event and several participants were interested in being involved in the planning process going forward.

4.3 Notification

Notification of upcoming outreach opportunities, or key milestones in the RTP update process will occur through a variety of methods, and could include:

emails to key project contacts, information posted on SCOG's website, and announcements in local newspapers.

4.4 Consultation

Federally recognized Indian tribes, Federal agencies, and State agencies will be consulted during the RTP update process. Consultation will involve a discussion of potential environmental mitigation in relation to the RTP and the broader development of the RTP. The views of these parties will be considered prior to taking any formal action updating the RTP. Key decision points for consultation will follow the approved schedule for the RTP update and ample time will be provided to conduct effective consultation.

The *Briefings* (4.1), *Information Booths* (4.2), and *Notification* (4.3) will be utilized in the consultation process, as appropriate.

4.5 Meetings of Governing and Advisory Bodies

All meetings of SCOG governing bodies and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) are open to the public. This level of public access ensures that the decision-making process is open and transparent. The TAC provides advice to the SCOG Transportation Policy Board (TPB), a governing body of SCOG.

Additionally, opportunities for public comment will be provided at all TPB meetings. Comments can be provided by the public – verbally, in writing, or both – that are incorporated as part of the official meetings minutes of the TPB.

4.5 Public Comment Period

After a draft of the updated RTP is completed, it will be released for public comment. The public comment period will be not less than 14 calendar days. Notice of the public comment period will be posted in the Skagit Valley Herald and on SCOG's website. Final action on the updated RTP will be preceded by a public comment period. An additional opportunity for public comment may be provided as well, if necessary.

5.0 Materials

A variety of materials will be developed to assist with providing the public with information about the planning process and to solicit input that will inform the RTP update. Examples of materials expected to be produced are visual display boards, a project fact sheet, a PowerPoint presentation(s), a comment form and a memo summarizing public involvement throughout the planning process.

5.1 Visual Display Boards

Informational visual display boards will be produced for use at the public involvement activities outlined in Section 4. The boards will utilize visualization techniques, as appropriate, and include the following:

- An introduction to the RTP

- Information on the RTP update process
- Information on the project selection process
- Key project contact information

(See Appendix B for key project team members that will be working on the RTP update and their contact information)

5.2 Project Fact Sheet

A fact sheet will be produced and distributed at public involvement events. The fact sheet will contain general information about the RTP update including information on the purpose of, and need to update, the RTP; the process to update the RTP; and how priority projects are identified. The fact sheet will also include key contact information.

5.3 PowerPoint Presentation

A presentation(s) will be produced for use at briefings. Presentation subjects to highlight could include:

- What is the RTP and why is it important?
- Why does the RTP need to be updated?
- What is the process and schedule for updating the RTP?
- What is included in the updated RTP?
- How are transportation projects selected?
- How does funding affect the RTP update process?
- How can the public get involved?

5.4 Comment Form

A public comment form will be developed to easily receive feedback from the public and ensure that opportunities to submit written comments will be available prior to the public comment period(s). The comment form can be used at information booths, briefings and consultations, as appropriate, and will allow for general feedback to be considered during the planning process.

5.5 Public Involvement Summary Memo

The public involvement summary memo will provide an overview of all public involvement activities conducted throughout the course of the RTP update process. The summary memo will note issues identified through the public

outreach process, discuss the key themes of public feedback received, and note how public input was considered in the updated RTP.

In addition to the items listed above, additional informational materials may be developed, as appropriate.

Appendix A: Schedule for 2015 – 2016 Regional Transportation Plan Update

Tasks ¹	2015											2016			
	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	Jun.	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.
Scope of work	Discuss		Approve			Revise									
Public involvement	Discuss		Approve			Revise									
Data and modeling															
Regional transportation system			Review												
Priorities, policies and goals			Discuss				Revise								
Call for projects															
Financial plan							Discuss		Revise						
Project prioritization								Discuss		Revise					
Environmental constraints										Discuss					
Draft plan												Release			
Public comment period ²															
Final plan														Adopt	
Submit plan															Submit

Legend		
	=	Months of Task
Discuss, Approve, Review, Revise, Release, Adopt, Submit	=	Anticipated SCOG Policy Board Action

¹ Task actions prior to July 2015 were taken by the Skagit-Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization; dates and anticipated actions for all tasks are subject to change

² Minimum of 14 days for public comment before action taken on final plan

Appendix B: Key Project Team Members

Name	Organization	Role	Contact Information
Mark Hamilton	SCOG	Public Involvement Lead	(360) 416-7876 markh@scog.net
Kevin Murphy	SCOG	Staff	(360) 416-7871 kevinm@scog.net
Gabe Philips	SCOG	Staff	(360) 416-6678 gabep@scog.net
Summer Naranjo	SCOG	Intern	mailto:summern@scog.net
Justin McCaffree	Envirolssues	Public Outreach	(206) 269-5041 jmccaffree@enviroissues.com
Erin Taylor	Envirolssues	Public Outreach	(206) 269-5041 etaylor@enviroissues.com
Sophie Cottle	Envirolssues	Public Outreach	(206) 269-5041 scottle@enviroissues.com