

MOVE SKAGIT



Move Skagit 2050 Appendix E: Public Involvement Plan



Skagit Council of Governments Public Involvement Plan for 2050 Regional Transportation Plan

Transportation Policy Board Approval: Dec. 18, 2024

Project Overview

Document purpose

This public involvement plan identifies communications and engagement activities to reach key audiences and align those activities with decision points in development of a long-range Regional Transportation Plan. The public involvement goal is to **consult** with agency partners and community members to identify issues of community interest related to transportation and obtain feedback on analyses, goals, policies and priority projects before decisions are finalized.

Project description

The Skagit Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a multimodal long-range plan that establishes the strategic framework for meeting the Skagit County region's transportation needs. When completed, the RTP documents the policies and priorities to facilitate regional cooperation and maximize resources for transportation projects and programs for funding and implementation over the next 20+ years. Completion of the plan allows regional entities to be eligible for state and federal funding.

As the metropolitan planning organization for the Skagit County region, Skagit Council of Governments is completing the 5-year update of the required plan and associated regional travel demand model (RTDM) as required by federal law. A new plan must be prepared by March 2026, with a new model being prepared to inform the plan and local comprehensive plans.

Problem statement

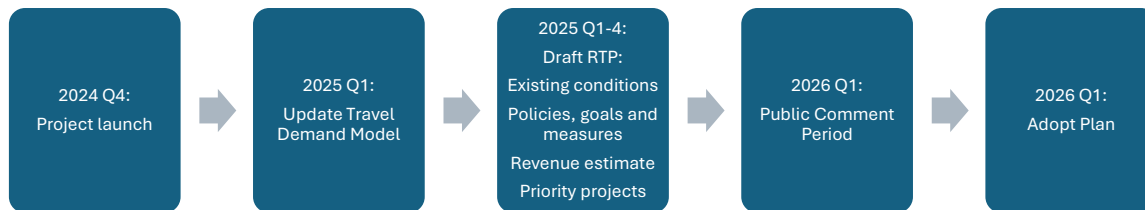
Since the last RTP update in 2021, changes were adopted in Washington state law related to growth management, climate change, resiliency, multimodal level of service, housing and equity. The 2050 Regional Transportation Plan must be developed to comply with state laws and to be best positioned for future funding that supports the safety, economic vitality

and quality of life for the Skagit County community. Consistency between state plans and local plans are required, beneficial and cost efficient, which necessarily involves a regional approach.

Decision makers and decision process

The SCOG Transportation Policy Board (TPB) directs the transportation work program and will adopt the 2050 RTP in March 2026. The TPB will receive recommendations from SCOG staff and the SCOG Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), which consists of engineers, planners and other representatives from SCOG member jurisdictions in Skagit County. The TAC meets to discuss regional transportation issues and provide technical input to inform SCOG TPB decisions.

Project schedule



Guiding Principles and Strategy

Throughout the public involvement process, the project team will endeavor to:

Be consistent with SCOG and federal and state guidance for public engagement

- SCOG’s [Public Participation Plan of 2017](#) recommends creation of an RTP-specific plan and identifies best practices.
- Meet SCOG’s [Title VI Plan](#) (May 2023) for access and non-discrimination. The Title VI plan requires vital documents, including public notification documents or major planning documents, be translated to Spanish.

Build on Existing Efforts to Create Efficiencies

- Use existing scheduled and noticed meetings of the TAC, TPB and partner agencies to share new information and gain feedback to avoid the need for staff, partners and the public to plan for and attend a new meeting.
- Integrate RTP engagement with public engagement efforts for the upcoming Safety Action Plan and Resiliency Plan to increase efficiency and promote community understanding of all efforts.

- Apply public feedback related to transportation from recent planning efforts, including current updates to comprehensive plans and transit plans underway in 2024 and 2025, to inform the RTP process.

Elevate the voices of people often underserved by transportation.

- SCOG will focus on engaging communities that are historically underrepresented and underserved. By making information accessible to these groups, we make information accessible to all. This includes, for example, recent immigrants who do not speak English, people who are transit dependent, people who require screen readers for web content and people whose web access is limited to a smart phone. To accommodate underrepresented communities, all public-facing project material will be [508 compliant](#), available online and in person and will be provided in Spanish to those with limited English proficiency to facilitate an inclusive planning process.

Go directly to the community.

- Use information tables in locations where people congregate or celebrate so they don't have to attend a separate meeting.
- Provide presentations at local community or business organizations to share updates and receive input.
- Using online resources so community members can learn about the RTP update at their convenience.

Close feedback loops.

- Inform partners, local organizations and the broader community how their input influenced the final plan.

Public Involvement Scope

Decisions to be made during the planning process

Several decisions are anticipated during the 18-month planning process. Decisions denoted with an asterisk (*) will be of more interest to the community and be part of focused engagement.

- Public involvement plan
- Project name
- Project identity, including project name, logo and document templates
- Transportation policies, goals and measures*

- Financial plan/revenue estimate
- Consistency/compliance with county, state and federal policies and requirements
- Multimodal level of service standards*
- Prioritization of projects*, for example:
 - Freight truck parking needs
 - Fish passage improvements
 - Transit network improvements

Goals, Objectives and Success Metrics

This section describes the public involvement goals and how project staff will measure and evaluate progress.

Goal 1: Historically and currently excluded and underserved communities’ concerns and aspirations are understood and considered throughout the planning process.

Objective 1.1 Planning team staff research and seek out input from those traditionally left out.

Objective 1.2 Input specifically from historically and currently excluded and underserved communities is identified in summary reports.

Measures of success:

- Input about transportation needs from previous or other planning efforts from environmental justice communities is considered for the RTP
- Information about the RTP is delivered to potentially affected parties through trusted community sources, in preferred languages.
- Materials and comment forms about the RTP are clear, culturally relevant and translated when necessary to meet Title VI guidelines.
- Comments are received in languages other than English
- Decision-makers consider the input of those historically excluded before RTP is adopted.

Goal 2: Skagit County residents understand the purpose and importance of the RTP.

Objective 1.1 Clearly communicate information about the planning process in all materials prepared for the RTP update.

Objective 1.2 Audiences have multiple accessible channels to learn about the project throughout the planning process.

Measures of success:

- Key materials are developed to meet the region’s information needs, language needs, Americans with Disabilities Act guidelines and an 8th grade literacy level.
- News media cover the projects and traffic effects accurately.
- Website receives visitation traffic that indicates readers are spending more than 2 minutes on the site.
- Partners distribute project information through their networks
- Greater than 50% of participants express satisfaction with the clarity, quality and relevance of information presented at events, meetings or online as measured by informal feedback mechanisms such as show of hands or online Zoom poll or evaluation question at the end of online survey.

Goal 3: Skagit County residents and partner agencies see their transportation priorities reflected in the final RTP.

Objective 3.1 Audiences are provided opportunities to share relevant ideas, impacts, challenges and missing information with project staff to inform the RTP.

Objective 3.2 Planning team receives useful and timely feedback from stakeholders that informs decisions.

Objective 3.3 Final RTP identifies how public input was incorporated.

Measures of success

- Public and partner feedback is actively sought before decisions are made at outreach events, interviews, partner meetings and through the comment period.
- Community members provide feedback through multiple channels throughout the planning process.
- Input is received from throughout Skagit County.
- Changes to the RTP are communicated via community/committee meetings, newsletters and final RTP.

Stakeholder Assessment

Demographics

[SCOG developed a demographic analysis in 2023.](#)

Demographic Information	Skagit County	Washington
Total Population	130,696	7,812,880
Race/Ethnicity:		
Hispanic/Latino	18.4%	14.6%
Not Hispanic/Latino:		
American Indian/Alaska Native	2.2%	2%
Asian	2.2%	10.8%
Black or African American	0.7%	4.7%
Caucasian/White	74.5%	64.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.9%
Multi-racial	20%	5.4%
Economically disadvantaged	11.1%	10.3%
Language other than English spoken at home	6.2%	20.5%
Spanish or Spanish Creole		
Slavic languages		
Other Asian and Pacific Island languages		
Tagalog		
With a disability	14.5%	13.9%
Age 65 and older	22.1%	17.1%
Youth (age 19 and below)		
Households with a computer	95.4%	96.1%
Households with a broadband Internet subscription	91.9%	92.1%

Washington state demographic information was collected from www.census.gov. Some parallels to Skagit County demographic information could be unreliable. Sources:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/skagitcountywashington,WA/PST045223>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/skagitcountywashington/RHI525223>

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/skagitcountywashington/RHI525223>

Skagit County demographic take aways to inform inclusive engagement strategies:

- People responding that they were of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity, and of any race including White, totaled 18.4% of the population in 2020, which is a higher proportion than the state. About 7,600 residents are estimated to have been born in Latin America. **Previous work with this community suggests that working directly with community leaders or organizations increases participation.**
- Population age groups in Skagit County have continued to shift since 2010, showing that the population is aging. Seniors make up largest group of those who experience disabilities. **Seniors and people with disabilities may have access needs.**
- Overall, youth and seniors make up 44.7% of the countywide total population.
- About 13% have incomes at 200% or less of the federal poverty level. The two lowest median household incomes by race were those of the following groups: American Indian or Alaska Native, and Some Other Race.
- Access to a computer and broadband internet is above 90% of the population.
- According to SCOG’s demographic profile and Title VI plan, about 94% of the population speak English very well. Of those that speak English less than very well,

Spanish is spoken most frequently and more than 5% speak the language. The meets the Safe Harbor threshold of 5% of the population or 1,000 total LEP speakers, which means **certain vital documents must be translated into Spanish**. This includes public outreach materials, webpages and executive summaries and/or introduction sections of major planning documents, where applicable, such as Regional Transportation Plan.

Stakeholders

The table below identifies RTP audiences, their interests, and the communication needs and methods to best inform and engage them during the planning process.

Audience	Anticipated Areas of Interest	Communication Channels & Needs
SCOG Transportation Policy Board	RTP is a primary responsibility of TRB	Board meetings Website
WSDOT Region (state routes)	Oversees implementation of state law related to RTPs; fish passage; truck parking	TPB meetings; staff meetings Website
WSDOT Ferries	Plans ferry service which affects Skagit roads	Staff meetings Website
Tribal	Safety, fish passage, environmental quality; consistency with Tribal plans; projects and mobility	Tribal consultation
Staff at County and cities	Consistency with local plans; local projects and mobility	North Sound Transportation Alliance Briefings at local meetings and TAC meetings Website
Hispanic and Latin American community	Safety and mobility	Briefings of Community Action of Skagit County Latinx Advisory Committee, Mt Vernon Chamber's Latino Business Leaders Tabling after Spanish services at Immaculate Conception Catholic Church Informational materials; comment form; Advertising in Spanish
Freight haulers	Road safety and access; truck parking	Briefings (Mt. Vernon Chamber of Commerce, Washington Public Ports Association, Washington Trucking Association, freight advocacy or business groups or businesses) Media coverage Newsletters

Audience	Anticipated Areas of Interest	Communication Channels & Needs
		Website Advertising
Tourism and economic interests, including agriculture	Road safety and access	Briefings (Mt. Vernon Chamber of Commerce , Burlington Chamber, La Conner Chamber, Skagit Tourism Bureau) Media coverage Newsletters Website Advertising
Active transportation advocates	Multimodal access, safety for all users	Washington Bikes; Skagit Bike Club Media coverage Newsletters/emails Website Advertising
People who are disabled	Multimodal access, safety for all users	Center for Independence North Sound Media coverage Newsletters/emails Website Advertising
Transit agencies	Multimodal access, safety for all users	Skagit Transit Briefings at local meetings Website
Educational institutions	Multimodal access, safety for all users	Skagit Valley College, school districts Tabling Media coverage Newsletters/emails Website Advertising
Skagit County residents and travelers	Multimodal access, safety for all users	Media coverage Newsletters Website Advertising

Messaging Themes

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 required, long-term plan that helps identify and prioritize future transportation needs in the Skagit region.
- 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 an integrated multimodal transportation system for safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
- The current RTP looks out to the year 2045; the update will look out five years further, to 2050.

- **“What Is the Process to Update the Regional Transportation Plan?”**

- The process to update the current RTP update began in 2024 and must be completed by March 2026
- A draft of the updated RTP will be published in late 2025, and will be available for public review and comment before adoption
- The Skagit Council of Governments is coordinating with local, state, tribal and federal jurisdictions to review and update the current RTP

- **“What Regional Transportation Projects Are Included?”**

- Some projects are already included in the current RTP and will be carried over to the next version.
- As part of RTP development, estimated capital and operational costs as well as estimated available revenue will be calculated.
- Limited funding will require tradeoffs and some projects may be unaffordable, based on future financial estimates.

- **“How Do I Provide Input?”**

- Input can be provided at any time by contacting key project team members, either by phone or email.
- We will be seeking input through existing advisory committees and community organizations.
- In late 2025, the draft plan will be published for public review and comment.

Public Involvement and Communications Tactics

Tactic and description	Purpose	When Use?
Meetings at Transportation Policy Board	The SCOG Transportation Policy Board directs the transportation work program and will adopt the 2050 RTP in March 2026.	Use existing scheduled and publicly noticed meetings of the SCOG TPB to share new information and gain feedback.
Meetings with Technical Advisory Committee	The TAC meets regularly to discuss regional transportation issues, such as the RTP, and provide technical input to inform SCOG TPB decisions.	Use existing scheduled and noticed meetings of the TAC to regularly share new information and gain feedback.
Briefings to local government staff or boards	Keep Skagit County, cities in the SCOG service area and Skagit Transit informed at key milestones and seek their input.	Key milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation polices, goals and measures • Financial plan/revenue estimate • Consistency/compliance with county, state and federal policies and requirements • Multimodal level of service standards • Prioritization of projects
Stakeholder interviews & Discussion groups	Gain input for key decision points from historically underserved and underrepresented communities. This includes federally recognized Indian tribes and the Latin American community	Schedule at the beginning of the process to refine transportation needs and gaps before the RTP is drafted.
Briefings/Presentations to Community Organizations	Gain input for key decision points from organizations that have members who rely on the transportation system.	Briefings should occur throughout the process, with particular focus on project start and when the draft plan is available for public comment.
Website with interactive map	The RTP website will serve as a landing platform and clearinghouse for all public engagement activities and materials related to the Plan update, including informational documents, interactive map, online surveys, staff contact information.	Launch website in early 2025 and keep updated throughout the RTP process.
Electronic Newsletters	Keep interested parties updated on project progress.	Topics and schedule:

Tactic and description	Purpose	When Use?
		Q1 2025: Project launch and community priorities Q3 2025: How input is shaping the plan Q4 2025: Notification of comment period Q1 2026: Summary of new plan
Focused and personalized emails/mailings to specific groups	Inform and ask for input from interested and/or affected parties at key milestones. Email topics are similar to briefings topics.	Key milestones: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project start and schedule • Goals and measures, community priorities • Call for projects • Draft plan; comment opportunity
Fact sheet (including translated version)	General overview of RTP purpose and schedule	Distributed at public involvement events or briefings. Also available through the RTP website.
Online and printed comment forms/survey (including translated version)	Gain input on draft plan	Late 2025
Media briefings	Gain earned media about RTP project purpose and public comment opportunities	At project launch (early 2025) and as public comment period begins (late 2025)
Advertising in local news outlets	Alert community of public comment opportunity	As public comment period begins.
Information tables	Meet people where they are for quick interactions and input gathering.	Summer and fall 2025, when weather is decent.

Evaluation and Reporting

Feedback on the engagement process will be sought through 1-3 added questions on the public comment survey, at the end of discussion groups or interviews and a focused email to highly interested parties.

A final report that summarizes tactics to engage the community on the RTP, the input received and an evaluation of the process will be developed in early 2026.

Roles and Responsibilities

This plan will be implemented collaboratively by SCOG staff and the consultant team of WSP and RSG, consistent with the available budget and consultant scope.

Schedule

	2024 Q4	2025 Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2026 Q1	Q2
PI Phase → Project Tasks ↓	Start up	Community assessment	Community conversations	Community conversations	Public comment	Adopt Plan	
Project Launch	Kick off, develop PMP						
Update Model for Planning							
Identify Policies, Goals and Measures		Goals, measures					
Identify Existing Conditions, Gaps			Revenue estimate	Existing conditions			
Identify Potential Projects for RTP			Call for projects (coordinated with Safety Action Plan)				
Develop RTP					Draft RTP	Final RTP	
Decision Making	TPB to review PIP				TPB to review draft RTP	Adoption	
Public Involvement Planning and Implementation							
Public Involvement Start Up	Branding, PIP						
Align RTP PIP with Safety Action Plan PIP							
Informational materials	Fact sheet, website launched	Newsletter 1: Community priorities		Update 2: What we learned; how input is shaping the plan	Update 3 & notification: Comment period	Update 4: Plan adopted	
Focused community engagement		Equity community interviews	Discussion groups with Latinx and Tribal communities on emerging plan		Tribal consultation, as needed		
Events, briefings and presentations	Ongoing conversations with partner/advisory committees and organizations						
		Media: Plan goals	Information tables	Information Tables	Media: Comment period		
Public comment period online survey					Update website, add online survey		
PIP summary report							