



# Oregon

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## Advisory Committee on Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Targets

Meeting #3 – August 23, 2016

### SUMMARY OF COMMENTS ON METROPOLITAN PLANNING EXPERIENCES

#### Overview

At the second advisory committee meeting on July 6, participants were asked a series of questions about the existing metropolitan transportation planning requirements, and how they were working for each area. Metropolitan areas were asked about their progress toward adopting and reviewing Regional Transportation System Plans (RTSPs), the required inclusion of standards and benchmarks demonstrating increasing transportation choices, and ongoing evaluation of progress towards meeting those benchmarks.

Participants from metropolitan areas provided information about successes, areas that were not working well, and some suggestions for improvements. Advisory committee participants not affiliated with a metropolitan area were asked to respond more generally on their views of the issues or difficulties local governments face with the existing rules, and to also provide suggestions for improvement.

This memo provides a general summary of many of the common issues raised at the second advisory committee meeting. This summary is not intended to be an exhaustive list of every concern expressed. This memo includes a summary of process, legal, and technical issues, as well as a summary of potential opportunities for improvement.

#### Summary of Process Issues

- There are **too many plans and requirements**. In many areas, local Transportation System Plans (TSPs), RTSPs, and Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) have plan elements, geographies, and timeframes that are both overlapping and inconsistent. Some of the requirements for these plans are the same or very similar. However, other mandates require additional work, or work that varies enough from other requirements to require duplicative work.
- The **RTSP is duplicative** and doesn't add value to the planning process. As mentioned above, the RTSP is often seen as duplicative with other local and regional planning efforts. There are questions about how the RTSP actually affects transportation planning decisions.

- **Federal requirements are growing in complexity.** With the continued implementation of performance requirements mandated by *MAP-21* in 2015's federal transportation bill, *FAST*, metropolitan areas are faced with increasing levels of planning and reporting complexity. While it may be possible to leverage some of these activities for state-required planning efforts, the current state of these requirements continues to be in flux as federal administrative agencies have continued to develop and refine requirements over a number of years.
- **MPOs have limited resources.** Federal planning funds delivered to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) for development of the RTP cannot be used to complete state required RTSPs. Funding for planning at all levels is limited and using resources to complete duplicative or unnecessary work is not productive.
- **The rules are confusing.** There is ambiguous language in the Transportation Planning Rules (TPR) concerning the roles and responsibilities of local governments in metropolitan areas as well as the MPOs themselves. The rules could be clearer about who does what, and should respect the scope of responsibility of each entity.

### Summary of Legal Issues

- There is **questionable legality of state mandates** on federally-required organizations. The state may have limited ability to place requirements on MPOs, which are creations of federal transportation planning requirements. MPOs are required to be chartered by the governor, however, and other states do have a more robust set of responsibilities for their MPOs.
- **Adopting an RTSP is a land use action.** MPOs are not land use planning agencies, and have limited authority. The TPR does require land use actions to be taken by local governments. However language regarding adoption of RTSPs is not clear, and has been interpreted differently in different places.
- **Local governments are hesitant to adopt a regional plan.** Some participants noted that local jurisdictions are apprehensive about adopting plans that include areas outside their planning areas. There are also concerns about how local governments set and follow up on regional benchmarks.
- **Mobility goals often conflict** with land use goals. Some requirements for performance on state highways and some local streets are in conflict with the urbanizing character of many communities in metropolitan areas. Some changes to the Oregon Highway plan (OHP) and TPR in recent years have addressed this in some cases. More work may be needed.

### Summary of Technical Issues

- There is a **lack of data availability** to appropriately monitor benchmarks. This is an issue of resources for data collection activities, as well as a lack of clear responsibility for

collecting and analyzing data. Participants noted that local and regional data sources were not always in alignment.

- The **VMT reduction measure is difficult to meet**, and alternative measures are vague. The TPR has been evolving over the years to address VMT reduction in metropolitan areas. The original requirement was a large reduction in VMT per capita. When this was found to be unreasonable, a variety of alternatives were added to the rule. However these rules are not clear. Different metropolitan areas handle these rules in varying ways.
- **Changes in geography and model** limit the ability to track progress over time. The boundaries of MPOs change as often as every ten years. In some cases, as with the Rogue Valley MPO, these changes can be substantial and include new jurisdictions. MPOs also continue to update models used to plan for the future. These changes over time make it hard to compare “apple to apples” from one year to the next, and over the planning horizon.

### Summary of Potential Opportunities

These are potential opportunities mentioned by advisory committee participants.

- **Merge processes** to achieve overlapping goals. Many participants noted that the varied concerns about duplicative plans and requirements could be addressed by merging multiple processes. Issues to be worked out would include concerns about jurisdiction, geographies, and roles of plans and organizations.
- **Require TSPs to have performance measures.** Current rules are ambiguous about the responsibility to adopt performance measures, what performance measures should measure, and how they are to be used over time. Clear requirements to adopt performance measures as part of TSPs may address some of these concerns.
- MMAs, corridor plans, and other localized **planning often show reductions** in VMT. Recent revisions to the TPR have introduced the Mixed-Use Multimodal Area (MMA) as a tool for communities to allow denser development in appropriate areas by accepting more congestion. This tool has not yet been extensively adopted, but its availability as well as local corridor and district planning that has occurred in many communities points the way towards reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) in key areas. Future rules could emphasize this work.
- **Rewrite the TPR** with clear purpose, goals, and responsibilities. Many of the issues that have been identified have to do with unclear rules and responsibilities, and duplication of effort over multiple plans, entities, and geographies. Rewriting portions of the TPR could rationalize and clarify how transportation planning work is accomplished in metropolitan areas in Oregon.