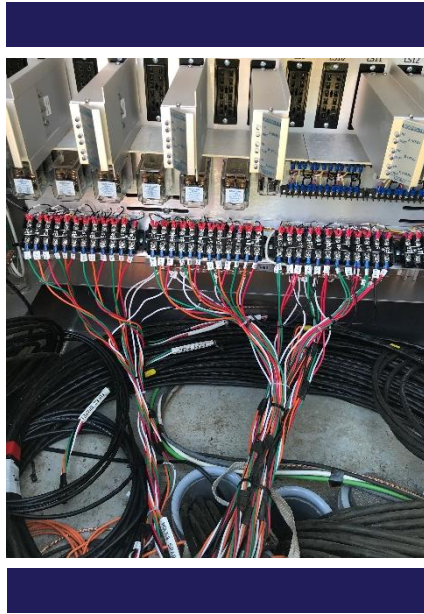


Transportation Programming Guidebook

Policies and Procedures

March 2025



Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council

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Introduction

The Transportation Program Guidebook is intended as a resource document for local agencies in Clark, Klickitat, and Skamania counties

Guidebook Purpose

The Transportation Programming Guidebook is intended as a resource document for local agencies in Clark, Klickitat and Skamania Counties, Washington. Most of the guidebook applies to RTC's function as a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), but all grants administered by RTC will need to follow the policies of this guidebook. The guidebook provides member agencies background information, policies, and procedures for the development of the region's Transportation Improvement Programs and the regional grant selection process. The guidebook is intended to be a working document that can be updated as needed.

Agency Overview

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Clark County, Washington portion of the larger Portland (Oregon)/Vancouver (Washington) urbanized area. RTC is also the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the three-county area of Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties (see Figures 1 and 2 for maps of the region).

A Metropolitan Planning Organization is an organization of elected officials in urbanized regions with a population of 50,000 or over. The MPO provides a forum for local decision-making on transportation issues of a regional nature. As a condition for receipt of federal capital or operating assistance, MPOs must have a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. RTPOs serve the same basic transportation planning functions as MPOs but were created by state legislation. An RTPO covers both urban and rural areas and receives state funding in support of its planning efforts.

Figure 1: Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)



Figure 2: Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO)



RTC is required by federal law to maintain a four-year TIP

Transportation Programming Overview

RTC is required by federal law to maintain a four-year Clark County Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As the MPO for the region, RTC selects and prioritizes projects programmed in the Clark County TIP. The Clark County TIP is developed by RTC through a cooperative and coordinated process involving local jurisdictions, WSDOT, and C-TRAN.

For the RTPO TIP, Klickitat County and Skamania County are responsible for selecting projects in their respective counties, in cooperation with local jurisdictions, for the regional allocation of federal highway funds. This includes the regional allocation of the Surface Transportation Block Grant program (STBG).

As the RTPO for the region, RTC selects and prioritizes projects for the Transportation Alternative Program across the three county RTPO region. Selected Transportation Alternative projects are then programmed in their respective county TIPs.

Projects included in the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) are drawn either directly from specific recommendations made in the Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) or developed from a more general series of recommendations; for example, preservation and maintenance of transportation facilities, traffic safety improvements, facilities for walking and biking system management, transit services, and demand management. The project-sponsoring agencies develop specific project proposals that are consistent with the RTP recommendations.

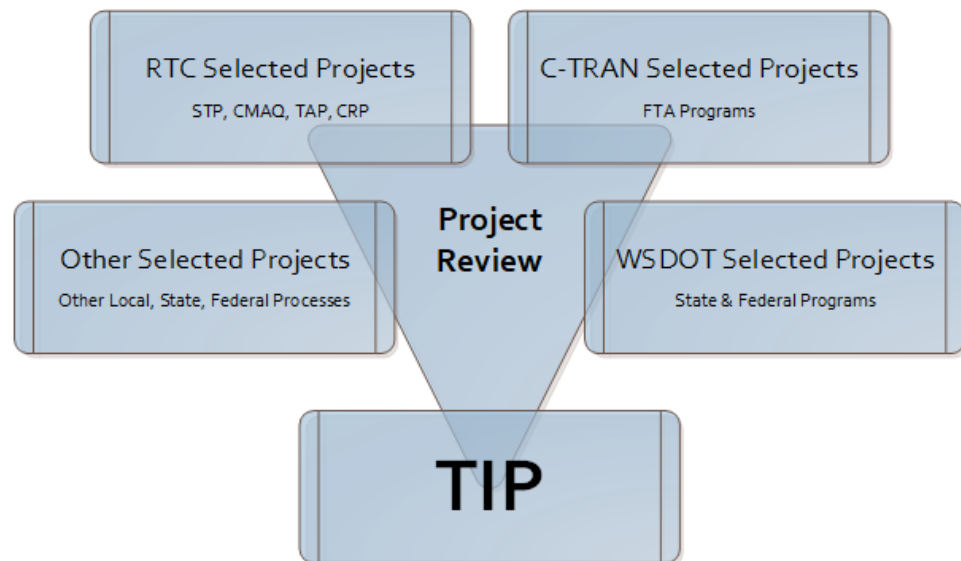
Only projects consistent with the RTPs are included in the TIPs, as required by federal law. This means that even fully funded projects would be excluded from the TIPs if they were inconsistent with the RTP. Projects are reviewed for consistency with the RTP as they are considered for inclusion or amendment into the TIPs.

The TIP development process includes the programming of projects that were selected for funding through multiple grant selection processes. These processes include the selection of projects by RTC, WSDOT, C-TRAN, and other grant funding processes. TIPs must include all projects that are federally funded through the Federal Highway Administration

(U.S. Code Title 23) and Federal Transit Administration (U.S. code Title 49). The TIPs also include all projects that are considered regionally significant, regardless of the funding source.

The first two years of a TIP are considered selected and the project sponsor can begin implementation of those projects when ready. Federally funded projects programmed in the TIP can be obligated through FHWA and FTA. The obligation of a federal highway project occurs when FHWA and WSDOT execute a project agreement or when FTA awards a grant. Once obligated, the project sponsor can start work and receive reimbursement for work incurred.

Figure 3: TIP Development Process



RTC, in consultation with member agencies, is responsible for selecting projects for the regional allocation of federal highway funds

RTC Selected Projects

RTC, in consultation with member agencies, is responsible for selecting projects for the regional allocation of federal highway funds. This includes the regional allocation of Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Transportation Alternative (TA) programs, Carbon Reduction Program (CRP), and other regionally allocated federal funds.

C-TRAN Selected Projects

C-TRAN is the local public transit provider and is the designated recipient of regionally allocated federal transit funds. C-TRAN receives Federal

Transit Administration (FTA) urban area funds and selects projects for Section 5307 (Urbanized Area Formula Program), Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities), Section 5337 (State of Good Repair Grant), and Section 5339 (Bus and Bus Facilities Program).

WSDOT Selected Projects

WSDOT is responsible for selection of projects for allocated state and federal highway funds. This includes state allocation of federal National Highway Performance Program (NHPP), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Transportation Alternatives program (TA), and state highway programs funded through state revenues. In addition, WSDOT selects projects to be implemented by local agencies through a statewide competitive grant processes including Safety, Bridge, and Safe Routes to School programs.

Other Selected Projects

Regionally significant projects are also selected through other local, state and federal processes. This could include the use of local funds, legislative selected projects, and statewide or nationwide competitive grant programs.

No matter the source of funding, RTC reviews all projects before programming the project in the TIP

Project Review

While some of the projects programmed in the TIPs are selected for funding by RTC, many of the projects programmed in the TIPs are selected for funding through other processes. No matter the source of funding, RTC reviews all projects to ensure the following before programming the project in the TIP:

- ◆ Consistency with Regional Transportation Plan
- ◆ Air Quality conformity
- ◆ Consistency with local comprehensive plans
- ◆ Consistency with other federal and state requirements
- ◆ Funds are reasonably expected to be available
- ◆ Reasonable timeline for project implementation

TIP Development Schedule

RTC generally develops a new regional Transportation Improvement Program each year. The Clark County TIP is adopted at the October RTC Board meeting and becomes effective the following January. The TIP development process includes a 30-day public comment period, prior to RTC Board approval of the Clark County TIP.

The RTPO TIP is generally developed each year. The TIP for Klickitat and Skamania counties are approved by the Transportation Policy Committees (TPCs) at their October meeting and become effective the following January .

The TIPs become part of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which is Washington States four-year, fiscally constrained prioritized multimodal transportation program of state, local, tribal, and public transportation projects. The STIP is a calendar year document and is developed on an annual basis with monthly updates from January through October. The current version of the STIP can be found at: www.wsdot.wa.gov/business-wsdot/support-local-programs/delivering-your-project/statewide-transportation-improvement-program-stip.

Regional Transportation Plans

At least once every five years, RTC prepares Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs) for Clark, Klickitat, and Skamania counties. They represent a coordinated planning process between local jurisdictions to develop regional solutions for long-term transportation needs. RTPs establish a 20-year transportation vision and goals for the region, and identifies projects and strategies that will be needed to meet that vision.

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies future regional transportation system needs and outlines transportation plans and improvements necessary to maintain adequate mobility and safety within and throughout each county region. It supports the development of a future regional transportation system that adequately serves the population, employment, and visitor growth projected for both Clark, Klickitat, and Skamania counties.

Regional Federal Funding Programs

Background

Through Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), federal funds are allocated to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) such as RTC for selecting projects that implement the Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs). In addition, WSDOT sets annual delivery targets for each region. RTC receives funds for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Transportation Alternatives program (TA), and Carbon Reduction Program (CRP).

Funds for the different programs can be designated to urban and rural areas, as well as air quality maintenance areas as indicated in Figure 5. Most funding programs are designated to the MPO region except the TA funds, which also provides funds for the RTPO area. This section provides a general overview of each of the regional federal funding programs and WSDOT Delivery Targets.

Surface Transportation Block Grant

The Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) is the most flexible of all the Federal Highway Administration programs and can be used for a wide range of transportation improvements including auto, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and planning projects.

The STBG funds are allocated to RTC for the region based on population; with varying amounts being allocated to U.S. Census defined urban and rural areas. The amount varies based on annual apportionments, but RTC generally receives over \$7 million per year.

The call for Urban STBG projects usually occurs in April of each year, while the call for Rural STBG projects generally occurs in April of even

years (2024, 2026, etc.). Project applications are due to RTC in July. Projects are selected for funding by the RTC Board in September and programmed for funding. The call for projects is usually for funding in the third or fourth year of the new TIP.

Additional STBG project information can be found on the RTC website at <http://rtc.wa.gov/programs/tip>.

The following table outlines the urban STBG, CMAQ, CRP, TA project selection and programming schedule:

Project Development Schedule (STBG, CMAQ, CRP, TA)

Date	Action
April	Call for Projects
Mid-July	Project Application Due to RTC
Mid-August	RTAC Recommends Prioritization
Early-September	RTC Board Selects Projects

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

The CMAQ program is used for projects and programs that improve air quality and reduce congestion. CMAQ projects must demonstrate an air quality improvement within the Vancouver Air Quality Maintenance Area.

The CMAQ funds are allocated to RTC within Clark County for air quality improvements within the designated Vancouver Air Quality Maintenance area. The amount varies based on annual apportionments, but RTC generally receives over \$3 million per year.

The call for CMAQ projects runs concurrently with the STBG call for projects. The call for projects occurs in April, with project applications due in July. Projects are selected for funding by the RTC Board in September and programmed for funding. The call for projects is usually for the third and fourth year of the new TIP.

Annually \$300,000 in CMAQ funds are flexed under the TA program for eligible projects.

Additional CMAQ project information can be found on the RTC website at <http://rtc.wa.gov/programs/tip>.

Transportation Alternatives Program

The TA program is used for community improvements such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, viewing areas, and safe routes to schools.

The TA funds are allocated to RTC for the Clark, Skamania, and Klickitat counties region based on population; with varying amounts being allocated to U.S. Census defined urban and rural areas. The amount varies based on annual apportionments, but RTC generally receives approximately \$1.0 million per year. Funding from the CMAQ program and CRP program are flexed to the TA program bringing the total funding availability to around \$1.6 million annually.

The call for TA projects runs concurrently with the STBG call for projects and will utilize its on separate grant application. The call for projects occurs in April, with project applications due in July. Projects are selected for funding by the RTC Board in September and programmed for funding. The call for projects is usually for the third and fourth year of the new TIP

Eligible Activities

The following is a summary of eligible activities authorized in federal legislation. Projects will be selected by the RTC Board through a competitive process that will apply evaluation criteria to rank projects on their merit. Eligible projects must meet one or more of the eligible activities and relate to the surface transportation system (except for recreation trails). There is no requirement for equal distribution of funding among the various eligible activities. For a full explanation of eligible activities, please review the Federal Highway Administration Guidance at:

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_alternatives/guidance/

- ◆ On-road and off-road trail facilities for pedestrians, bicyclists, and other nonmotorized forms of transportation
- ◆ Infrastructure-related projects and systems that will provide safe routes for nondrivers
- ◆ Conversion and use of abandoned railroad corridors for trails
- ◆ Construction of turnouts, overlooks, and viewing areas

- ◆ Community improvement activities, which include but are not limited to:
 - Inventory, control, or removal of outdoor advertising
 - Historic preservation and rehabilitation of historic transportation facilities
 - Vegetation management practices in transportation rights-of-way
 - Archaeological activities relating to impacts from implementation of a transportation project
- ◆ Any environmental mitigation activity:
 - Stormwater management, control, and water pollution prevention or abatement
 - Reducing vehicle-caused wildlife mortality
- ◆ Recreational Trails Program
- ◆ Safe Routes to School Program

Please note that Washington State is using a portion of Statewide Transportation Alternatives Program funds to conduct statewide Safe Routes to School and Recreational Trails programs. Additional TA project information can be found on the RTC website at <http://rtc.wa.gov/programs/tap>.

Carbon Reduction Program

The Carbon Reduction Program (CRP) is used for projects that reduce transportation emissions. CRP eligibility is similar to the CMAQ program. All CRP projects must be consistent with the State-developed Carbon Reduction Strategy.

The CRP funds are allocated to RTC for the Clark County region based on population, with varying amounts being allocated to U.S. Census-defined urban and rural areas. The amount varies based on annual apportionments, but RTC receives less than \$1 million per year.

Most of the Urban CRP funds will be incorporated into the STBG/CMAQ call for projects, utilizing the CMAQ criteria. The Rural CRP funds will be

incorporated in the TA call along with \$162K in CRP-Urban funds, for projects utilizing the TA project evaluation criteria.

WSDOT Delivery Targets

WSDOT has placed additional responsibility on MPO's to ensure annual obligation of the local share of the Federal Highway Administration funds. This includes the STBG, CMAQ, TA, and CRP funds administered by RTC. This policy requires that by the end of each federal fiscal year the MPO region must obligate 100% of their regional federal obligation target or funds could be lost. WSDOT policy also allows a region to advance up to two years of their annual obligation target, if there is capacity within the statewide obligation limits. Regions that meet their obligation target are eligible to receive redistributed funds from regions that did not meet their annual obligation target.

Regional Project Development Process

Background

One of the most important decisions that a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) faces is deciding how to allocate scarce regionally federal funds while realizing the best possible transportation system. The grants awarded by RTC are part of the solution to addressing mobility, safety, economic development, and other regional needs. Since the need for transportation improvements exceeds the available revenue and in keeping with federal regulations, a competitive project selection process is conducted for the distribution of RTC's regional federal funds.

The overall goal of the regional grant process is to implement the goals and policies of the Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs). The RTP goals focus on economy, safety and security, accessibility and mobility, environment, efficiencies, management and operations, preservation, finance, vision and values.

To meet these overall goals, the following strategies were developed to guide the regional STBG, CMAQ, TA, and CRP project development process:

- **Leverage other grant sources.** One of the successes of the regional project development process lies in its flexibility. Allowing local governments to create projects that fit their local needs and use regional federal funds to leverage other grants to complete priority projects.
- **Implement Transportation Management and Operations improvements.** Transportation System Management and Operations strategies provide money-saving, multimodal solutions that relieve congestion and optimize existing infrastructure investments.
- **Build multimodal urban arterials.** The urban areas of the region have grown rapidly, resulting in many urban areas being served by

a rural transportation system. Arterials built to urban standards provide an efficient, balanced, multi-modal regional transportation system that improve safety, reduce congestion, and support economic development.

- **Preservation of Transportation System.** Local agencies have the primary responsibility for maintaining the transportation system and regional federal funds will not be used for maintenance or preservation projects.

The following guideline is to further clarify preservation of the transportation system as it applies to bus purchase. Within the RTC grant process, transit buses that substantially improve air quality or increase ridership capacity are eligible for federal FHWA funds (STBG, CMAQ, CRP). A transit bus purchase will be considered a replacement bus (Preservation) and not eligible for federal FHWA funds, unless it meets one of the following:

1. The bus purchase is for a new route that is currently not served by transit.
2. There is a demonstrated need for addition transit seat capacity, and the bus purchase will increase seat capacity by 25% through either larger buses or additional service hours.
3. Replacement of old diesel buses that emit significant pollutants, with cleaner technology such as hybrid or electric buses.

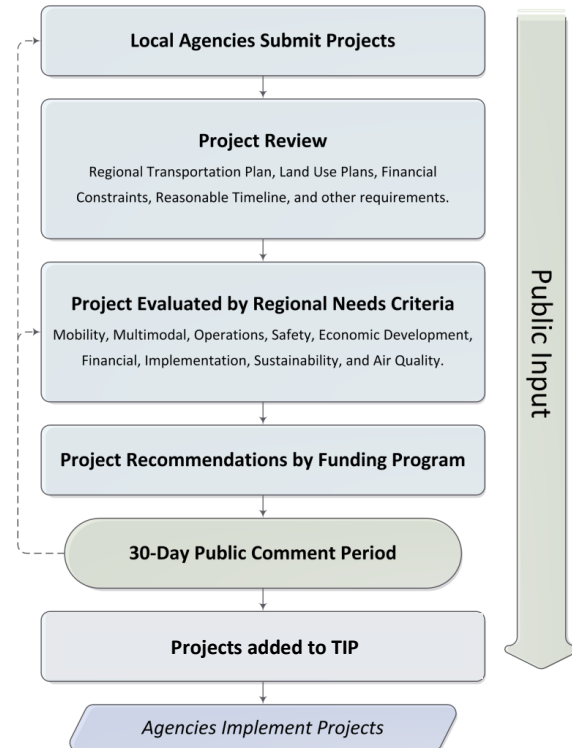
To meet the RTP goals, the following strategies were developed to guide the regional Transportation Alternative project development process:

- **Build bicycle and pedestrian projects.** There is a strong need for stand-alone bicycle and pedestrian projects that improve the public travel experience and benefit local communities.

Regional Project Development Process

The regional project selection process approach as adopted by the RTC Board of Directors is displayed in Figure 4 and described in greater detail after the graphic.

Figure 4: Regional Project Development Process



Call for Projects

RTC will issue a call for projects for each of the regionally allocated federal transportation programs. The call for projects will be conducted within the regional transportation planning process which includes technical review and recommendation by the Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC), Transportation Policy Committees (for the Transportation Alternatives program), and final RTC Board project selection. Formal notice about the process will be posted on RTC's web site. The call for projects will include information on submittal requirements and deadlines. Applications will only be accepted for projects that will have a Certification Acceptance agency. Certification Acceptance is necessary for an agency to have authority to develop, advertise, award, and manage federal transportation projects.

The screening criteria, needs criteria, and project applications will be developed for each regional federal program and clearly identified in each call for projects and on RTC's website.

Project Submittal

The regional project development process begins with local agencies identifying and submitting projects for consideration. These projects should be identified based on information from the Regional Transportation Plan, Congestion Management Process, Transportation System Management and Operations implementation plan, local plans, and other plans and studies that identify regional transportation needs.

Step 1: Project Review

Proposed projects are screened to determine each project's basic eligibility. This review is used to determine whether to move a project forward in the programming process. This step includes a review that the project is consistent with the applicable Regional Transportation Plan, local comprehensive plans, air quality and other federal and state requirements. Projects are also reviewed for financial feasibility and timeline for implementation.



Screening criteria for each of the programs administered by RTC can be found in the final chapter of this document.

Step 2: Project Evaluation

The general approach for evaluating projects for regional federal funds involves assessing each candidate project against a set of regionally adopted needs criteria. Following evaluation, projects are placed in ranked order to inform the project selection step.

A summary of needs criteria for each of the programs administered by RTC can be found in the final chapter of this document.

Step 3: Project Selection and Programming

The final step in the regional project development process is project selection. The Regional Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC)

recommends projects for funding utilizing the project information generated in the project evaluation. The RTC Board makes final selection based on the technical recommendation from RTAC, the TPCs, and public input.

Generally, all newly regionally awarded funds will be programmed in the third or fourth year of the next Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Public Involvement

Public involvement is a key component of the transportation planning process and one of the core functions of all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs). Meaningful public involvement improves decision making by generating ideas for how the transportation system may be improved and by bringing a diverse set of views to planning discussions. The purpose of public involvement is to make better decisions that will reflect the community's transportation needs. Public input is invited throughout the project development process, in accordance with the RTC adopted Public Participation Plan.

Grant Award Letters

A grant award letter will be provided to recipient agencies for each project selected to receive a regional federal grant (STBG, CMAQ, STP, TA, and CRP). The grant award letter will specify project name, federal grant program, grant award amount, year programmed, and key conditions of the grant award.

Project Implementation

Once a project is programmed in the first two years of the TIP, the project sponsor can begin implementation of the project by obligating funds. Federal transportation programs are reimbursement grant programs. Only after a Local Agency Agreement has been approved through WSDOT or a grant is approved by FTA can project costs become eligible for reimbursement. Agencies may receive approval from WSDOT to proceed using local funds, with the understanding that federal

reimbursement will be delayed until obligation authority becomes available. Due to statewide management of funds, obligation of a project in the current year cannot be guaranteed.

The first two years of the TIP are selected and are considered to be the regionally agreed to list of projects. This means that once a project is programmed (listed) in the first two years of the TIP; the project sponsor can proceed with obligation.

RTC Project Database

The RTC Project Database can be found on RTC's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) webpage at <https://rtc.wa.gov/programs/projects/>. The RTC Projects Database shows those projects which have been awarded regionally selected federal transportation grants by the RTC Board since year 2010 and the current status of each project. The database provides project information, location maps, pictures, and documents associated with each project.

Project Showcase

All projects using STBG, CMAQ, TA, or CRP funds will be required to complete a one-page Project Showcase within 45 days of the project being functionally complete. The purpose is to report on the use of regional federal funds to the RTC Board.

Before and After Analysis

All projects using STBG, CMAQ, TA, or CRP funds will be required to complete a Before and After Analysis within 12 months of grant closure. The purpose is to monitor the development of a project towards meeting goals or performance measures and ensure the efficient use of regional federal funds.

RTC has not prescribed a format or content, but has provided a template which is available on the RTC TIP web page (<http://rtc.wa.gov/programs/tip>). Generally, the Analysis will be between 2 and 4 pages in length. Although an agency has flexibility to develop their own Analysis report, the report should consider including the



following elements: Project title, location, description, goals, outcomes, funding, map, photos, and agency name.

TIP Administration: Updates, Modifications and Amendments

Background

Occasionally, changes need to be made to the TIP following its adoption. Changes can include project cost adjustment, scope changes, addition or deletion of a project, etc. When a change is requested it will be identified as an Update, Administrative Modification, or TIP Amendment. The process for incorporating the change into the TIP differs by the type of change and the regional action that is required.

Any changes that need to be made to the Clark County TIP require different processes based on the type of update. The process for these changes are outlined in the following section. Klickitat County and Skamania County are responsible for making any needed updates to their TIPs.

Clark County TIP Administration Process

Updates to the Clark County TIP do not substantially change a project and do not require the TIP to be changed. TIP Administrative Modification is a moderate change that requires approval from the RTC Executive Director and typically takes 4-6 weeks. TIP Amendments are substantial changes to a project that require action from the RTC Board of Directors and typically take 8-10 weeks.

Changes to the TIP can be submitted monthly between December and September. Requests for changes to the TIP are due to RTC eight days prior to the third Friday of each month; which is usually the second Thursday.

The Clark County TIP Administrative Modification and Amendment process includes the following steps:

- 1) Project sponsor submits written request to RTC for change, including submitting a modified State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) record within the online STIP database. The written request should provide sufficient detail to understand the requested change and reason for change.
- 2) RTC staff reviews request to ensure that all needed information is provided and determines the type of action that is required. The request is also reviewed for financial feasibility, air quality conformity, consistency with the RTP and state and federal requirements, etc.
- 3) Administrative Modifications and Amendments are posted on the RTC website: (<http://rtc.wa.gov/programs/tip/amendments>).
- 4) If request is an Administrative Modification, the RTC Executive Director acts. If approved, staff will change the regional TIP and submit the change to WSDOT for inclusion in the STIP. RTAC is notified of the Administrative Modification.
- 5) If request is an Amendment, RTAC reviews the change and makes a recommendation for approval to the RTC Board. If the RTC Board approves the change, staff will change the regional TIP and submit the change to WSDOT for inclusion in the STIP
- 6) Once Administrative Modifications and Amendments are submitted to WSDOT, they are reviewed by WSDOT staff, approved by the Governor's representative, and receive final approval by FHWA and FTA.

Updates

Updates do not substantially change a project and do not require the TIP to be changed. This could include the following:

- ◆ Moving a project within the four years of the TIP
- ◆ Change in federal funding source(s)

- ◆ Adjustment in project's funding following bid process to allow for award of contract
- ◆ Moving dollars to the next project phase (preliminary engineering to right-of-way or right-of-way to construction)
- ◆ Minor Scope changes

Administrative Modifications

Projects that meet the following conditions can be administratively modified into the TIP at the discretion of the RTC Executive Director:

- ◆ Revision to lead agency
- ◆ Adding a prior phase of project not previously authorized
- ◆ Changes or errors in project information
- ◆ Minor scope changes
- ◆ Change in federal funding amounts of less than \$3 million (STIP Amendment required if change to total program amount is greater than 30%)
- ◆ Addition of federal aid project or project phase that has approval from granting agency and does not exceed \$3 million in federal funding (STIP Amendment required)
- ◆ Deletion of project (STIP Amendment required)
- ◆ Restoration of project to the TIP that was included in a previous version of the TIP (STIP Amendment required)



Amendments

Projects that meet the following condition will require a TIP amendment and approval from the RTC Board of Directors:

- ◆ Adding a new project or future project phase greater than \$3 million

- ◆ Adding a regionally selected project or adding regionally selected funds to a project.
- ◆ Major Scope Changes
- ◆ Changes to a project's total programming amount that exceeds \$3 million



Policies and Procedures

TIP Policies and Procedures

General Policies and Procedures

Policy 1.1 – All projects in the TIP must be consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). To be consistent with the RTP, projects must be identified as an RTP Capital Project Solution or be consistent from a more general series of recommendations such as safety and preservation.

Policy 1.1.1 – RTC staff shall determine consistency with the RTP. RTC staff will work with local agency staff to make RTP consistency determination.

Policy 1.2 – All projects in the TIP must be consistent with the transportation element of the local comprehensive plan.

Policy 1.3 – All TSMO project elements must be consistent with the strategies contained in the Regional Transportation Systems Management and Operations (TSMO) Plan for Clark County. TSMO elements of projects shall be coordinated with agency transportation operations staff.

Policy 1.3.1 – At a minimum all projects that open the road for utilities must include conduit.

Policy 1.3.2 – RTC ITS Grant Eligibility. To be eligible for a grant through RTC, all ITS hardware and software must have approval of the VAST Steering Committee prior to seeking grant funding. If ITS hardware or software changes after grant approval, VAST Steering Committee approval is required before expenditure on the technology.

Policy 1.4 – All regionally significant projects must be programmed in the TIP. All projects receiving Federal Highway Administration funds (U.S. Code Title 23), Federal Transit Administration funds (U.S. code Title 49), or determined to be regionally significant must be programmed in the TIP.

Policy 1.4.1 – RTC staff shall determine if a project is regionally significant. Based on information provided to RTC, RTC staff will make a regionally significant determination.

Policy 1.5 – All agencies shall submit local TIPs and Transit Development Plans (TDPs) to RTC. Agencies can submit TIPs/TDPs to RTC in any format that provides sufficient information for understanding of project needs.

Policy 1.6 – All federally funded and regionally significant projects to be included in the annual STIP must be entered into the State’s STIP system and submitted to the MPO by August 15th of each year. The STIP system can be found at www.secureaccess.wa.org.

Policy 1.7 – RTC will follow the public involvement process, as outlined in RTC’s Public Participation Plan, when developing the regional TIP.

Policy 1.7.1 – RTC staff shall provide the required 30-day public comment period for the draft TIP. RTC will make available a draft TIP for public comment the first week of September through the October RTC Board meeting.

Policy 1.8 – Letter of Support Policy. The RTC Executive Director may provide letters of support for a grant request for member agencies or affiliated public agencies, according to the following procedures:

- Request for letters of support is made to RTC with sufficient time to review the request and prepare a letter.
- A letter of support will be provided for projects or programs listed in the adopted Regional Transportation Plan.
- A letter of support may be provided for projects or programs that are considered to be consistent with advancing the goals and policies of the adopted Regional Transportation Plan.

Clark County TIP Administration Policies and Procedures

Policy 2.1 – RTC will follow the process outlined in the Clark County TIP Administration chapter.

Policy 2.2 – Project sponsors shall submit a written request to RTC to initiate the project administrative process. The written request should provide sufficient detail to understand the requested change and reason for change, including submittal of a modified STIP record.

Policy 2.3 – RTC is responsible for determining the type of TIP administration action that is required. RTC staff will review the request to ensure that all needed information is provided and determine the type of action that is required.

RTC Federal Grant Procedures

General Policies

Policy 3.1 – Projects must be completed. By receiving regional federal funds for a project, the respective applicant is making the commitment to complete the project, even if only partial funding is received. If the project fails to proceed to the next phase within 10 years, the agency may be required to repay federal funds (23 U.S.C. 102(b)). Uncompleted projects will be included in the project delivery score for 10 years past the end of the last phase completion.

Policy 3.2 – Projects Scope. Agencies are required to deliver the project scope as outlined in the RTC grant application or must be granted a scope modification.

Policy 3.2.1 – Scope Modification. Minor scope changes can be granted by the RTC Executive Director after notifying RTAC. Major scope changes must be approved by RTAC and RTC Board after the following steps are completed: 1) Grant agency must demonstrate that the requested change is consistent with adopted long-range plans; 2) The public must be provided an opportunity to be informed of the change in scope; 3) Technical documentation of the change must be provided to RTAC.

Policy 3.2.2 – If a project is built, but does not match the grant application scope, the agency will need to rectify at agency’s own cost.

Policy 3.3 – Recognition of grant award through RTC.

Policy 3.3.1 – Written acknowledgement. Written local Council/Board Staff Reports shall cite the federal program (STBG, CMAQ, TA, CRP), grant award, and Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) as the granting agency.

Policy 3.3.2– Acknowledgement through communications. All broad public project communication shall cite the federal program (STBG, CMAQ, TA, CRP), grant award, and Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council (RTC) as the granting agency. Broad project communication includes website, newsletter, etc.

Policy 3.4 – All projects that receive regional federal funds must prepare a one-page project showcase within 45 days of the project being functionally complete. A Project Showcase template is available from RTC’s website.

Policy 3.5 – All projects that receive regional federal funds will be required to complete a *Before and After Analysis* within 12 months of grant closure. By January of each year, RTC staff will notify agencies of all projects that must complete a Before and After Analysis in that calendar year. A Before and After Analysis template is available from RTC’s website.

Policy 3.6 – After the regional project selection process, all newly selected regional grants will generally be programmed in the third or fourth year of the TIP.

Policy 3.7 – Each agency is limited to a maximum of four STBG-Urban/CRP-Urban/CMAQ and two TA/STBG-Rural grant applications per year, unless otherwise noted in the call for projects.

Cost

Policy 4.1 – Projects are limited to \$6 million in regional federal funds, regardless of length or size, with an annual maximum award of \$2.5

million. For Transportation Alternative projects, the annual maximum award is limited to 60% of the available funds in the call for projects.

The project can reach the cap based on one of the following sub-policies:

Policy 4.1.1 – Maximum of \$6 million per mile. The maximum per phase is \$750,000 for preliminary engineering, \$1.25 million for right-of-way, and remaining federal funds, up to the total maximum for construction. If a project is less than a mile, the maximum per phase is factored by the percentage of mile.

Policy 4.1.2 – Intersection improvements are limited to \$1.5 million per intersection or \$3 million for high volume intersections. High volume intersections are intersections with 20,000 or more entering vehicles per day. The maximum per phase is 15% for preliminary engineering, 20% for right-of-way, and remaining funds for construction.

Policy 4.1.3 – Shorter high cost projects are limited to \$6 million. Projects such as a bridge, interchange, and park-and-ride are limited to \$6 million even if the length is less than one mile. Project will follow funding limits per phase as found in Policy 4.1.1, as if the project was considered to be one mile in length.

Policy 4.1.4 – Preliminary Engineering (PE) and Planning (PL) 100% federal request. Agencies can request 100% federal funding for PE or PL using WSDOT Toll Credits if the following conditions are met: (1) PE phase does not exceed 20% of total estimated project cost (2) Total request for PE and RW does not exceed the preliminary engineering and right-of-way cost limit (currently \$2 million per mile).

Policy 4.1.5 – Denial of Grant Request. The RTC Executive Director has the authority to deny an applicant eligibility if an agency is deemed to have too many RTC grants that have not proceeded to construction. The RTC Executive Director may deny a request only if one of the following has occurred:

- If the agency had a project in the previous calendar year that did not meet the required RTC Obligation deadline (usually June).

- If the agency has a project that has been granted a delay beyond the allowable one-year delay.

Policy 4.2 – Funding increases are not allowed for preliminary engineering. An agency cannot move regional federal funds from a later phase to preliminary engineering or request additional regional funds for preliminary engineering.

Policy 4.3 – If a project is divided into multiple segments after it has been selected for regional funding, the following policies will occur:

Policy 4.3.1 – Proportional allocation. All obligated funds will be proportioned between segments, based on mileage of each segments.

Policy 4.3.1 – PE fund limit. None of the project segments are eligible for additional preliminary engineering funds.

Policy 4.3.2 – The cost limit will be recalculated for each segment. If necessary, programmed funds will be reduced to match cost limits.

Policy 4.4 - Regional federal funds cannot be moved forward to an earlier phase. For example, funds cannot be moved from construction to right of way.

Policy 4.5 – Regional federal funds can be moved back to future phases without amending the TIP. For example, funds can be moved from preliminary engineering back to right of way or construction. The WSDOT Local Agency Agreement will need to be modified.

Policy 4.6 – Project cost overruns are the responsibility of the applicant. An increase in regional federal funds is not allowed to cover cost increases. Applicants are responsible to cover any cost overruns.

Policy 4.6.1 – An applicant can return selected regional funds back to RTC and make a new request for funding. An applicant can return unobligated regional funds by following the TIP administration process and requesting the funds be removed from a project. By doing so, the applicant has no guarantee of future regional federal funds, but can reapply for funding in a future call for projects up to the cost limits.

Policy 4.6.2 – If applicant is awarded partial phase funding, the project applicant can apply for the remaining funds in future call for projects. This new request cannot exceed the original total request, unless cost limitations have been raised.

Policy 4.7 – Regional federal funds cannot be moved to a different project or beyond the approved scope.

Policy 4.8 – An applicant may request cost policies exception. The request must be written and explain the circumstances for the cost exception and why the cost exception should be considered. The approval of a cost exception must be financially feasible and requires approval of both RTAC and the RTC Board.

Policy 4.9 – Increase in Available Federal Funds. The method chosen will be made by the RTC Executive Director, based on the amount of funding and how near funds become available to the annual grant cycle. RTC will distribute funds using the following methods:

Policy 4.9.1 – Next Grant Cycle. Generally, increase in federal funds will be added to the next grant cycle. No action required by RTAC or RTC Board.

Policy 4.9.2 – Next Priority Project. If funds become available following the completion of a grant cycle, funds can be awarded to the next priority project(s) from the recently completed grant evaluation and ranking process. New grant award(s) will require RTAC and RTC Board approval.

Policy 4.9.3 – One-Time Grant. If funds require near-term obligation to meet the regional obligation target, RTC will work with local agencies to see if currently programmed projects can be advanced to meet the obligation target. If not, a one-time call for projects will occur using the follow steps:

- (1) RTC will announce a one-time call for projects through an RTAC memorandum. The memorandum will outline the process and any requirements.
- (2) Each RTC member agency is allowed to submit a single project application. The request for funding can exceed RTC designated funding limits (Policy 4) but must meet other requirements

outlined in the RTAC memorandum. The following type of projects can be submitted:

- a. Federal funding increase for a federally obligated Right-of-Way (RW) or Construction (CN) phase.
- b. Federal funding increase for a federal RW or CN phase that will be obligated before identified deadline.
- c. Federal funding for a new project Design phase. No increase in funding is allowed for an existing Design phase.

(3) Submittal occurs by submitting RTC's Application by identified deadline.

- a. All project submittals must maintain a local match (nonfederal funding) of at least 15%, with the additional funding request.

(4) RTC staff will complete an expedited ranking process. Ranking will be approved by RTAC prior to grant award.

(5) RTC staff will develop a funding scenario based on the project ranking step and availability of funds.

(6) New grant award(s) will require both RTAC and RTC Board approval.

(7) Local agencies that receive a grant through this process and do not meet the required obligation deadline, which results in the Region not meeting our FFY Obligation Target, will lose the new grant award and will be ineligible to seek grant funding from RTC in the next calendar year.

Policy 4.9.4 – One-Time Bonus. If the region is not likely to meet its obligation target using other 4.9 policies due to insufficient approval time, the RTC Executive Director may strategically recommend award of one-time bonuses, pending RTC Board of Directors approval, for all construction projects obligated by June 1st of the current federal fiscal year. If needed, the one-time bonus may be extended to right of way projects obligated by June 1st.

Project Delivery/Obligation

Policy 5.1 – RTC will provide a grant award letter for regional grant awards. The grant award letter will specify project name, federal grant program, grant award amount, year programmed, and key conditions of the grant award. RTC will also provide recipients with occasional reminders of grant award requirements.

Policy 5.2 – The first two-years of the TIP are selected and are considered to be the regionally agreed to list of projects. Only projects programmed in the first two years of the TIP can proceed with obligation.

Policy 5.3 –Project phase obligation date will be tied to June 1st of the year identified in the project award letter. By June 1st each agency must submit paperwork for obligation of projects.

Policy 5.4 – By the end of the calendar year, RTC staff will notify agencies of all projects that must or are allowed to be submitted for obligation by June 1st of the next year.

Policy 5.5 – By February of each year, RTC staff will calculate a project delivery score for each agency. These points will be added to all grant requests submitted to RTC in the calendar year. Score will be calculated based on project delivery performance from the previous 3 calendar years. The range for project delivery performance points will be from negative 2 to positive 2.

Policy 5.5.1 – Exemption from Project Delivery Score. On rare occasions when a project is unable to proceed due to a factor outside of a jurisdiction's control, the agency can seek an exemption to have the project removed from scoring. Exemption request must be submitted in writing to RTC and approved by both RTAC and RTC Board.

Project Delivery Performance Scoring:

- 1 for each year a federal project goes over 3 years without progressing to next phase or completion.
- 1 point for each one-year programming project delay.
- 2 for each project that does not meet their allowable delay.
- 1 for each outstanding project showcase/before-after analysis.

- + 1 point for every project showcase/before-after analysis delivered by due date.
- + 0.5 point for every project showcase/before-after analysis delivered late.
- + 2 for every project that has been substantially completed (Project Showcase submitted).
- + 1 point for every project phase that is delivered a year early.
- + 0.5 point for every project phase delivered on-time.
- + 1 point for every project that provided before, during, and after construction pictures.
- + 1 point for an agency that had no projects in the previous 3 years.

Policy 5.6 – By December 1st and March 1st of each FFY, all local agencies will provide to RTC an anticipated obligation month for projects programmed in the TIP that can be delivered in the next 9 months. This would be the anticipated month for submittal of appropriate paperwork to obligate funds (LAA, FTA Grant Submittal, Work Order, etc.). RTC will request information at least two weeks prior to deadline. Failure to notify RTC may result in projects being delayed within the TIP.

Policy 5.6.1- Additional obligation notification. The March 1st notification will include notification of any project that could use \$500,000 or more if federal funds are redistributed from other regions. A STIP record must be submitted unless the project is already in the STIP. A project list will be submitted to WSDOT.

Policy 5.7 – Based on estimated obligations date, RTC staff will proposed a TIP Correction or Amendment for RTAC consideration. This TIP change would follow RTC TIP administration policy as outlined in Policy 4.9.

Policy 5.8 – Preliminary engineering funds must be obligated by June 1st of the year the project phase is programmed in the TIP. After June the project would be removed from the TIP and agency would need to reapply for funding.

Policy 5.9 – Right-of-way and construction funds can be delayed up to one year. A written request must be submitted to RTC by March 1st of the year the project is programmed in the TIP to receive the one-year extension. If a written request is not submitted, the agency will have until December 31st to obligate funds. After allowable delay the project will be removed from TIP and agency would need to reapply for funding.

Policy 5.10 – Agencies can return funds to the region in writing up to March 1st of the program year. If funds are returned to the region by March 1st, the agency can reapply for funding without penalty. If funds are returned after March 1st or after the allowable delay, the agency will not be allowed to reapply for funding in the next grant cycle.

Program Criteria

Background

This section provides an overview of project screening criteria and summary of evaluation criteria. The detailed criteria for each program will be adopted by the RTC Board and posted on RTC's website.

Urban STBG/CMAQ/CRP Programs

Project Screening Criteria

1. Consistent with Regional Transportation Plan, Local Comprehensive Plans, and Congestion Management Process. (Projects that add capacity must be listed in the RTP)
2. Road projects must be on a facility that is federally classified as an urban collector or above.
3. Preservation and maintenance projects are not eligible.
4. Consistent with the regional cost limits.
5. Ready to proceed and have a reasonable timeline for implementation.
6. Operational improvement must be consistent with the regional TSMO Plan.

Summary of Needs Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Mobility	22
Multimodal/Operations	18
Safety	22

Economic Development	22
Financial/Implementation	15
Sustainability/Air Quality*	11
Total	110

*Air Quality points are tripled for CMAQ/CRP projects

STBG Rural Program

Project Screening Criteria

1. Consistent with Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Local Comprehensive Plans? (Projects that add capacity must be listed in the RTP)
2. Road projects must be on a facility that is federally classified as a rural major collector or above?
3. Preservation and maintenance projects are not eligible.
4. Must have a reasonable cost and timeline?

Summary of Needs Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Project Need	15
Safety	25
Road Condition	25
Economic Development	10
Financial/Implementation	25
Total	100

TA Program

(Includes TA funds, set aside from the CRP-Urban and CRP-Rural, and CMAQ)

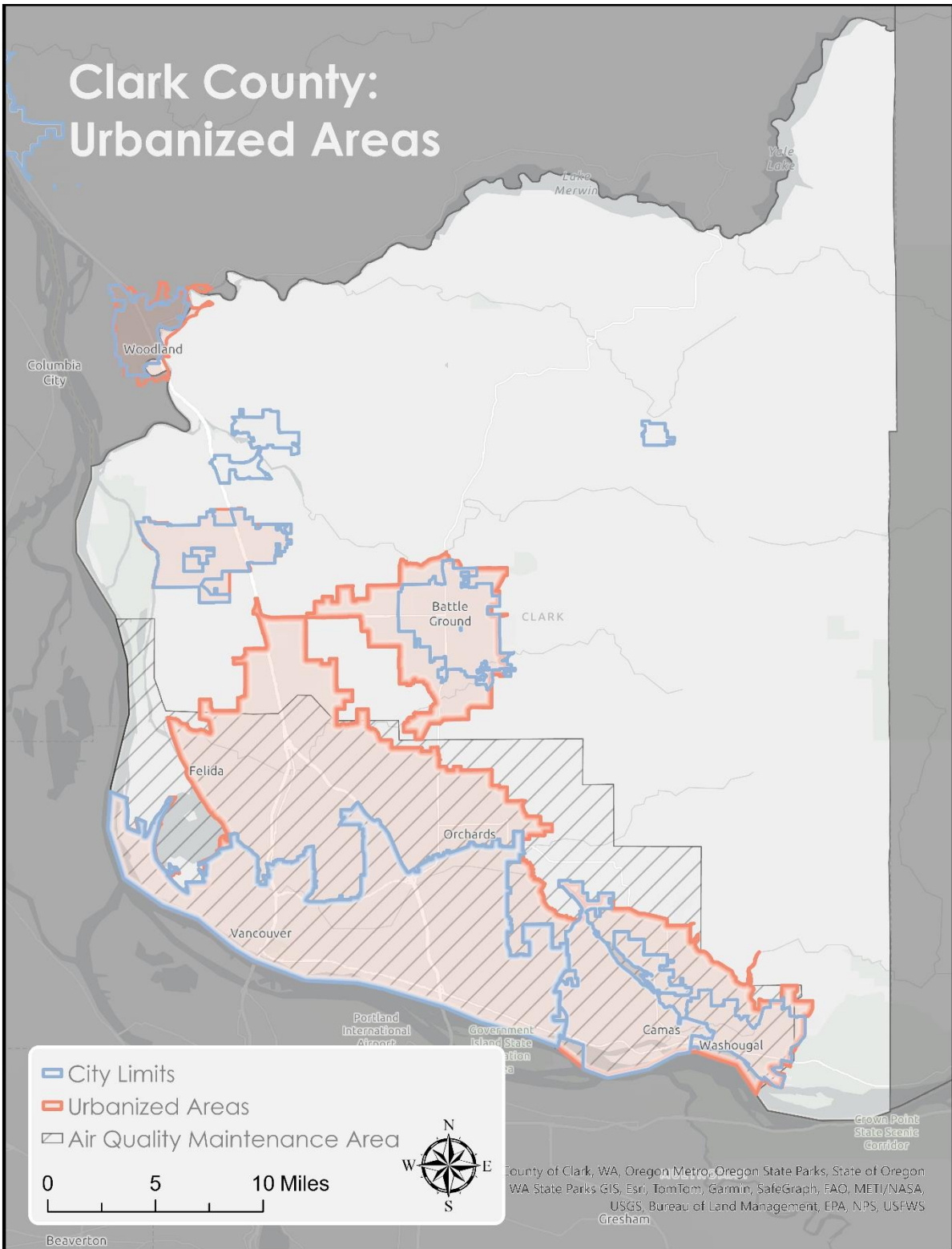
Project Screening Criteria

1. Project is consistent with the RTP and local long-range plans
2. Project contains at least one eligible Transportation Alternatives Category
3. Project provides connections within the transportation system
4. Project does not supplement the construction of a previously or currently RTC funded road project
5. Project is open to public access
6. Community engagement process has been held or is scheduled to be held for the project

Summary of Needs Criteria

Evaluation Criteria	Weight
Project Planning	25
Connectivity	25
Accessibility	10
Safety	25
Financial/Constructability	15
Total	100

Figure 5: Clark county Urbanized Areas Map



The map shows Clark County urban and rural areas for federal transportation purposes. The Vancouver Air Quality Maintenance Area is where CMAQ funds can be spent.

Figure 6: White Salmon and Bingen Urbanized Areas Map

