

# Lane Council of Governments

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June 1, 2005

To: Metropolitan Policy Committee

From: Paul Thompson

Subject: Item 4.b: Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update Schedule and Issues

**Action Recommended:** Discuss pending update of RTP, including horizon issues and schedule for update.

## Issue Summary

At the December 9, 2004 MPC meeting, the Central Lane Metropolitan Planning Organization adopted an updated federal Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). That plan expanded the geographic boundary encompassed by the RTP to the MPO boundary established as a result of the 2000 census, and extended the time horizon to the year 2025.

According to guidance issued by the Federal Highways Administration (FHWA) on April 12, 2005:

. . . metropolitan long-range transportation plans shall address 'at least a 20-year planning horizon.' For FHWA and FTA actions on STIPs/TIPs and associated amendments or transportation conformity determinations without amending the current transportation plan, a long-range transportation plan initially adopted with a minimum 20-year planning horizon is sufficient. However, if the long-range transportation plan is amended to add, delete, or significantly change a regionally significant project (in any metropolitan area), the transportation plan's horizon should be at least 20 years at the time of the MPO's action.

Also, in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas, a new conformity analysis that covers at least 20 years is required for certain actions involving a regionally significant project (e.g., adding a regionally significant project to the transportation plan, deleting a regionally significant project from the transportation plan, significantly changing the design concept or scope of a regionally significant project in the transportation plan, or moving a regionally significant project between horizon years (a similar, but distinct term defined in the U. S. Environmental Protection Agency's transportation conformity rule (see 40 CFR 93.106)).

December 9, 2005 will mark the point at which the current adopted Central Lane RTP ceases to address a 20-year planning horizon. According to the Oregon Division of the FHWA, amendments to the Central Lane Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) that require an air quality conformity determination also require a current minimum 20-year planning horizon in the RTP at the time of the USDOT (U.S. Department of Transportation) conformity determination. This requirement means that, lacking an extension of the RTP's planning horizon, after December 9, 2005 it will not be possible to process MTIP project amendments that require air quality conformity determinations.

In general, projects that require air quality conformity determinations are those that are regionally significant, federally-funded, or that need federal approval for some aspect of the project. Regionally significant projects are those projects that serve regional transportation needs such as access to and from the area outside the region, major activity centers in the region, major planned developments such as new retail malls, sports complexes, etc., or transportation terminals. At a minimum, projects on principal arterial highways, fixed guideway transit facilities, and other projects that have a more than minimal affect on traffic volume capacity are considered regionally significant.

Due to this restriction, should the RTP horizon fall below 20 years, certain projects currently on the RTP's financially constrained project list that are not yet programmed in the MTIP may not be able to move forward. Examples of these projects include:

- Bus Rapid Transit - corridors beyond Franklin.
- Centennial Blvd - 28th to 35th St. (RTP #930)
- Beltline Hwy - 4 lane widening to West 11th. (RTP #431)

Slippage of other projects such as the Delta/Beltline interchange (RTP #638) or completion of the I-5/Beltline interchange project (RTP #606) beyond 2007 would require a new conformity determination since the project's construction date would move beyond the analysis year in which they were modeled for the current adopted air quality conformity determination.

## Discussion

The pending update of the RTP is necessary to maintain a 20-year horizon in the long-range plan to support necessary programming and air quality conformity actions in the MTIP. Furthermore, prior to the December 9, 2004 adoption of the RTP with a 2025 horizon the MPO communicated the following to FHWA:

As we move to adoption of the updated RTP in December 2004, we want to make sure that the new RTP planning horizon meets federal requirements for both the RTP and air quality conformity purposes. All analysis to date for the current update effort is based on a 2025 horizon, providing a 21-year plan from adoption. . . . We can commit the Central Lane MPO to one of two approaches to ensure that we achieve and maintain the required 20-year minimum horizon . . . :

1. In December 2004, adopt an RTP horizon of 2025 with the understanding that by December 2005 the MPO would need to adopt an additional amendment(s) to the RTP to extend the horizon further (at least another 2 years).
2. In December 2004, adopt an RTP horizon extending through at least 2027, thus providing a 23-year horizon from adoption.

In December 2004 the Central Lane MPO adopted an RTP with a 2025 horizon, committing to the first approach listed above. Since that time further discussion with FHWA has clarified that extending the RTP horizon beyond 2025 need not be accomplished by December 2005, *but no air quality conformity determinations will be possible after that date until a minimum 20-year horizon is again established in the RTP.* MPO and partner jurisdiction staff have discussed this issue and believe that a

maximum of six months could elapse after December 2005 before projects may be in jeopardy. Staff recommends that an update to the RTP extending the planning horizon be adopted in the June-July 2006 time frame at the latest.

## **Status of Current Update**

Work on the update of the Regional Transportation Plan has focused to date primarily on developing the work program and considering the issues associated with extending the planning horizon. A draft work program timeline is included as Attachment 1, and reflects, among other tasks, the development of a public involvement strategy, updating base and projected data, updates to the trip generation model, an update of the financial constraint analysis, and an update of the air quality conformity analysis and determination. Staff does not anticipate the need to modify the RTP Policy Element. The RTP update will also incorporate the Alternate Mobility Standards (AMS) scheduled to be adopted by MPC and the Oregon Transportation Commission (OTC) as part of the AMS project.

The attached update schedule does not yet address the potential integration of the RTP with the local and regional Transportation System Plans (TSP). Analysis of this option is scheduled to commence during FY2006. Staff will retain as much flexibility as possible within the federal requirements to work toward integration of the plans should that option prove feasible.

Extension of the RTP planning horizon beyond 2025 is the primary focus of the current update. The 2025 horizon was chosen for the prior update as a result of analysis that showed that the demands of growth beyond that time might exceed the capacity of the current metropolitan UGBs. The current update will revisit that analysis, specifically looking for any changes in growth trends and projections, land utilization and supply, nodal/mixed use development trends and other factors that affect the accommodation of growth in the urban area. Land use and travel modeling for an RTP horizon beyond 2025 may require policy choices regarding the utilization of land and the accommodation of growth.

A public outreach program for the current RTP update will be developed in conjunction with the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) and brought to MPC. Public workshops and hearings will be held at appropriate times prior to adoption.

Federal reauthorization of the transportation spending bill will be a key factor in the update of the RTP's financial constraint analysis. After reauthorization, it is anticipated that the statewide working group of ODOT and MPO staff that develops coordinated revenue forecasts will revisit the current forecasts.

**Attachments:** Attachment 1 – Draft RTP Update Work Program Timeline