

CHAPTER 13—RTP FEDERAL CONFORMITY DETERMINATION

Introduction

Federal regulations require that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) must conform to the regulations set forth for MPOs. The sections of the federal regulations for which the RTP must conform to are summarized below.

1. Section (c) (Long Range Plan) of Subsection 134 (Metropolitan Planning) of Section 6011 of SAFETEA-LU.
2. Section 450.322 (Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process—Transportation Plan) of Federal Regulations dated October 28, 1993.
3. Sections (51.404), (51.408), (51.412), (51.414), (51.416) and 51.418(b) of Subsection 51 of Federal Regulations Dated November 24, 1993.

Regional Transportation Plan—Federal Regulatory Conformity

The Regional Transportation Commission develops the RTP in accordance with the most recently enacted federal regulations to ensure the document is in conformance. RTP's conformance with the federal regulations is described in detail below:

- Identify transportation facilities that should function as an integrated transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions.

Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the RTP identify fully funded and unfunded multimodal transportation facilities needed to serve Washoe County through the year 2040. Several projects emphasize completion, widening, reconstruction and rehabilitation of the two major Interstates that are multi-jurisdictional facilities crossing the county boundary and carrying interstate traffic. Importance is also placed on increased capacity and the maintenance of many regionally significant highways and other modal elements.

- The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act—A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires the planning process to consider the following eight important factors. The RTP has integrated all these factors into the long range planning process, and each factor is also given consideration in the Annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the short-range Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP). In formulation of the RTP, the planning process

includes the following 8 factors as they relate to a minimum of 20-year planning horizon.

The response to each of the 8 factors for Washoe County is as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.

Key issues in supporting the economic vitality of the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area are prevention of incapacitating congestion and ensuring efficient multimodal facilities. The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies the current and long-term improvements necessary to relieve and prevent congestion from occurring. This is primarily carried out through transportation control measures (TCM) and capacity enhancing projects. The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP) provide implementation of priority projects to relieve and prevent congestion. RTC and local government staffs, with the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) staff, worked to develop a comprehensive Congestion Management Process (CMP) that is now part of the RTP.

In addition, RTC, NDOT and local governments participate in the review of traffic impacts associated with new development. This analysis requires that new development provide necessary transportation infrastructure and services to meet the planned policy level of service (LOS) standards.

2. Improve the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

The RTC considers safety and accident reduction as one of the major factors in the street and highway objectives and policies. The intersection accident index data developed by NDOT is one of the factors considered in determining priority projects. Improved safety and emergency response is also a critical consideration in development of the regional Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) improvements. Also, most freeway bridges in the region have been seismically retrofitted to increase their safety against any earthquakes. A freeway patrol system is in place on I-80 and US 395 and has proven quite successful.

The RTP also includes access management standards to be used in the design of future improvements to the Regional Road System (RRS) as well as access to existing roadways. These access management standards are incorporated in the RTC's development review process to help improve safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

3. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and freight.

The RTP documents long- and short-term plans to implement public transportation service and increase non-automotive mode share. Expansion of transit services largely depends on resources available to fund transit services. RTC has developed a program with major employers to fund service expansion into developing areas and to subsidize transit passes for their employees as part of the SMART TRIPS program. The RTP identifies additional funding to implement an expanded public transportation system to the community so that transit can continue to be a mobility option.

The need for system improvements for freight movement is incorporated into the RTP. Goals, objectives and policies that address the goods movement issue are contained in the RTP. The completion of the Reno ReTRAC project will improve the downtown Reno circulation as well as bus operations in the important downtown core area.

4. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation and improve quality of life.

The regional coordination and prioritization of enhancement projects occur through the RTC Citizens and Technical Advisory Committees. These committees develop recommendations forwarded to the RTC Board. The RTC Board recommendations forwarded to the Statewide Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (STTAC) are coordinated by NDOT. These recommendations of the STTAC are then forwarded to the State Transportation Board (STB) for approval.

The planning process to develop the RTP includes an analysis of vehicle miles of travel (VMT), vehicle hours of travel (VHT) and vehicle hours of delay (VHD) as indicators of energy consumption. To meet congestion mitigation and air quality objectives, system improvements are planned so that total system VMT, VHT and VHD are optimized. While specific local energy conservation goals have not been adopted, system management and air quality improvement programs and projects support energy conservation. Key regional Transportation Control Measures (TCMs) include the signal coordination program, intersection improvements, expanded public transportation services and the trip reduction program. All air quality analysis years have shown a reduction of pollutants over the “no-action” scenario or over the Motor Vehicle Emissions Budget (MVEB).

5. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes for people and freight.

Access to the Reno/Tahoe and Stead airports, intermodal transportation facilities, freight distribution routes and recreation areas are addressed in the RTP. The RTC has prioritized projects that improve the bicycle and pedestrian access through the enhancement program. The Bicycle/Pedestrian Element of the RTP is

being reviewed and revised by the recently reorganized Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

6. Promote efficient transportation system management and operation.

The social, economic, energy and environmental effects of transportation decisions, including information describing safety, neighborhood/property disruption, impact on public and private revenues, vehicle miles of travel, congestion, emission levels, major investments and other effects of major transportation decisions, are included in the analysis of the RTP at various levels of detail. The parcel-specific impacts are identified as a project proceeds to the design phase. NDOT, RTC and local governments conduct public meetings to obtain public input on all major planning documents as well as additional public meetings to discuss individual roadway and transit projects. Public meetings are also held to obtain input on proposed public transportation service modifications.

The Congestion Management Process (CMP) adopted by the RTC ensures the most cost-effective, congestion-management investments are made and full use of system management improvements are part of any major investment decision. In addition, life-cycle cost analysis is used in all major capital investment decisions to ensure that public funds are used as effectively as possible.

7. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

For all facilities, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identifies the long-term roadway maintenance, rehabilitation and reconstruction needs for the region. For non-state maintained facilities, the needs are developed from the Pavement Management Systems (PMS) used by each jurisdiction. Pavement Condition Index (PCI) goals are set as inputs, with recommended maintenance activities output from the PMS. The RTC has made a major commitment of RTC fuel taxes to help reduce the backlog of roadways needing rehabilitation/reconstruction. Local governments have expended fuel taxes, property tax and general funds to assist in maintaining PCI standards.

The Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) Pavement Management System (PMS) monitors state-maintained facilities in Washoe County. The NDOT PMS also quantifies the backlog of pavement repairs on the state highway system network and identifies project priorities. The PMS is also used to identify NDOT's long-range funding needs to maintain the state highway network at a serviceable level. NDOT conducts a pavement condition survey annually. During this survey, a rating is provided for a section of each mile in each direction of all state-maintained highways. The severity and extent of the following pavement distress are measured and recorded in six different categories. Centerline mileage for each highway system is categorized into one of four repair strategies. The repair strategy recommendations are presented to management for funding annually.

8. Improve the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.

The RTP considers security of the transportation system as an important factor in the development of the objectives and policies for all modes of travel. The RTC's safety and security administrator regularly coordinates with the Department of Homeland Security and other emergency preparedness and law enforcement agencies to make sure the RTC is prepared at all times to manage security issues in the region and to help prevent major disasters from occurring in this region. The RTC has an extremely active security update program including the installation of surveillance cameras on buses, an AVL program on all agency vehicles as well as an ongoing security system update at all the agency facilities. Key RTC personnel have received initial incident command system (ICS) training with plans for continued training in the future. A freeway patrol system is in place on I-80 and US 395 and has proven quite successful. The Short Range Transit Plan (SRTP) addresses public transportation security needs funded through the RTIP. The perceived security of public transit is monitored through various user surveys. The design of transit facilities considers security as a major factor in determining the most appropriate design.

Planning Emphasis Areas

In addition to the eight planning factors, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) identify Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs) annually to promote priority themes for consideration, as appropriate, in metropolitan transportation planning processes. For the RTP, the following five planning themes have been identified as PEAs.

1. Safety in Transportation

SAFETEA-LU emphasizes the safety of transportation systems as a national priority and calls for transportation plans and strategies that "increase the safety and security of transportation systems."

The RTP contains specific goals and objectives pertaining to safety and accident reduction. The accident/severity index data developed by NDOT is considered in determining priority projects. Improved safety and emergency response are also critical considerations in development of the regional ITS improvements.

The SRTP addresses public transportation security needs funded through the RTIP. The perceived security of public transportation is monitored through various user surveys. The design of public transportation facilities considers security as a major factor in determining the most appropriate design.

2. Environmental Streamlining

SAFETEA-LU reflects the concerns of Congress and the transportation community that the planning and project development process are requiring too much time before solutions to serious transportation problems are ready for implementation. Developing and guiding projects through the planning and review process faster, without compromising environmental safeguards, are the goals of this emphasis area.

Many RTC primary planning documents and studies incorporate transportation planning while addressing regional environmental issues. As emphasized in this area, the RTC is working on streamlining environmental review to reduce the time between planning and implementation.

The planning process to develop the RTP includes the development of future transportation infrastructure that has been through an extensive environmental scan. This includes impacts to open space, regional parks and wetland areas. It also includes an analysis of vehicle miles of travel (VMT), vehicle hours of travel (VHT) and vehicle hours of delay (VHD) as indicators of energy consumption. To meet congestion mitigation and air quality objectives, VMT, VHT and VHD are optimized. While specific local energy conservation goals have not been adopted, system management and air quality improvement programs and projects support energy conservation. Key regional Transportation Control Measures (TCMs) include the signal coordination program, expanded public transportation services, intersection improvements, grade separated interchanges and trip reduction program.

3. Transportation System Management and Operations

The FTA and FHWA have established transportation system management and operations as a PEA to encourage innovation, promote national dialogue and advance the state of the practice.

Through the development of the RTP, the RTC has stressed the importance of Transportation System Management (TSM), Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and efficiencies in traffic operations. Areas of emphasis are contained in the signal coordination projects, the many intersection improvement projects and the SMART TRIPS program run by the RTC. The RTP has major sections dealing with access management and efficient traffic operations. The RTC maintains its air quality model that documents credits for TSM/TDM measures.

4. Transportation Equity and Public Involvement

Increasingly, concerns for compliance with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act have been raised by citizens and advocacy groups with regard to broad patterns of transportation investment impacts considered in metropolitan and statewide planning. While Title VI and environmental justice concerns have been

raised during project development, it is important to realize the law applies equally to the processes and products of metropolitan planning. To evaluate and identify regional environmental justice issues in the RTP, a chapter on environmental justice (Chapter 11) has been added.

SAFETEA-LU requires that the RTC develop and maintain a public participation plan pertaining to the MPO functions of the agency. Although the RTC did have a management policy pertaining to public participation, the development of a formal Public Participation Plan (PPP) was necessary and was noted as a corrective action during the TMA Certification Review in 2007. A draft PPP was used for development of the RTP and the final PPP was adopted by the RTC Board on September 19, 2008.

In developing the RTP, the RTC has undertaken a comprehensive public involvement process. Two public forums were held on the RTP. A web page specific to the project was available on the agency website. Surveys were available at open houses to provide public input. The entire RTP update process was led by a steering committee made up of people from all parts of the region. The committee met regularly from August 2007 to June 2008 to draft the plan. In addition, several public television and radio shows aired on the RTP planning process.

5. Coordination of Non-Emergency Transportation Services

Coordinating resources for transportation services can lead to increased service availability and more cost-effective transportation services to persons with limited access and special needs.

RTC provides transportation for people with special mobility needs and coordinates with other agencies to avoid duplication of services. RTC's ACCESS ADA paratransit service coordinates with social service agencies to provide transportation for some of their clients. This has enabled agencies, such as the Sierra Regional Center (SRC), to reduce their vehicle fleet, only transport their most severely disabled clients and allocate transportation funds to other needs.

In the early 1990s, RTC began partnering with the Northern Nevada Center for Independent Living (NNCIL) to provide free mobility training for hundreds of people with disabilities, enabling them to live more independently and, in many cases, to become employed. In FY 2000, RTC formed CitiCare, a 501(c)(3) fund-raising organization designed to augment the limited fiscal resources available for senior and disabled transportation. CitiCare recognizes that the present resource structure is not adequate to address the transportation needs of these rapidly increasing populations. CitiCare is applying for grants, seeking corporate and individual donations and exploring avenues of funding not available to RTC.

Over the past several years, RTC has implemented intercity public transportation. The result of these efforts was the initiation of the RTC INTERCITY service between Reno and Carson City. The purpose of this route is to provide

employment opportunities and medical access to the Reno/Sparks metropolitan area for the residents of Carson City.

- Assess capital investment measures and other measures necessary to make the most efficient use of existing transportation facilities.

Chapter 7 discusses TCM measures designed to make the most efficient use of existing transportation facilities.

- Indicate coordination of the RTP with the process for development of TCMs of the SIP required by the CAA.

Not applicable. No TCMs required in SIP according to Washoe County District Health Department.

- Indicate public participation process in development of the RTP.

In developing the RTP, the RTC has undertaken a comprehensive public involvement process. Two public forums were held on the RTP. A web page specific to the project was available on the agency website. Surveys were available at open houses to provide public input. The entire RTP update process was led by a steering committee made up of people from all parts of the region. The committee met regularly from August 2007 to June 2008 to draft the plan. In addition, several public television and radio shows aired on the RTP planning process.

- Indicate publication schedule of the RTP.

There were two published comment periods beginning on July 14, 2008, and ending on September 17, 2008. The draft document was available at RTC offices as well as on the agency website. A public hearing notice was also published for the public hearing held before the RTC Board on November 21, 2008.

The document will be published and distributed as required and posted on the agency website upon adoption by the RTC Board and receipt of a conformity finding from FHWA and FTA.

- Indicate that the RTP has at minimum a 20-year planning horizon.

The conformity determination planning horizon is from 2008-2030.

- Indicate that the RTP includes both long-range and short-range strategies that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the RTP are phased where possible by short-, medium- and long-range implementation timelines.

- Indicate the update schedule of the RTP.

The RTP must be updated every four years.

- Identify the projected transportation demand over the period of the plan.

Table A-1 shows the increase in population and employment between 2007 and 2040. Additional graphs and figures are included in Appendix A of the RTP that shows the transportation demand in the future.

- Identify adopted congestion management strategies.

Chapter 9 contains the Congestion Management Process that includes the congestion management strategies.

- Identify proposed pedestrian walkway and transportation facilities.

Chapter 5 identifies the existing and proposed pedestrian and bike facilities.

- Reflect the consideration given to the results of the management systems.

Chapter 7 discusses the TCM's that are the implementation strategies resulting from the management systems.

- Assess capital investment and other measures necessary to preserve the existing transportation system.

Chapters 3 and 4 assess the fully funded maintenance needs and measures through the year 2030 to preserve the street and transit systems. Chapter 8 addresses the funding mechanism of the proposed maintenance and preservation projects.

- Document design concept and scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates.

Chapters 3 and 4 of the RTP contain descriptions and cost estimates available for existing and proposed transportation facilities.

- Indicate a multimodal evaluation of the transportation socioeconomic, environmental and financial impact of the RTP.

Chapter 8 contains the financial impact of RTP implementation. Chapter 11 of the RTP focuses on the environmental justice requirements and describes in detail the process adopted by the RTC to address those requirements.

- Indicate where appropriate for major transportation investments for which analyses are not complete that the design concept and scope have not been fully determined and will require further analysis.

Not applicable.

- Document, to the extent that they exist, consideration of the area's comprehensive long-range, land-use plan and metropolitan objectives.

Chapters 1, 3 and 4 document the relationship between the RTP and local land-use plans.

- Indicate as appropriate proposed transportation enhancement activities.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 indicate enhancement activities.

- Include a financial plan that demonstrates the consistency of proposed transportation investments with available and projected sources of revenue.

Chapter 8 contains the financial impact of RTP implementation.

- Indicate a conformity determination of the RTP with the CAAA and the EPA conformity regulations.

Chapter 10 outlines the air quality conformity determination of the RTP in accordance with the CAAA and EPA requirements.

- Indicate as appropriate the horizon years for the RTP.

Chapters 1, 3 and 10 designate the appropriate horizon year requirements.

- Indicate demographic and employment factors influencing expected transportation demand.

Table A-1 indicates growth patterns projected for Washoe County that can be expected to influence transportation demand in the future.

- Document the highway and transit system in terms of the regionally significant additions or modifications to the existing transportation network envisioned to be operational in the horizon years.

Chapters 3 and 4 document the regionally significant transportation network for street and highway and transit for short-, medium- and long-range scenarios.

Indicate that the RTP is fiscally constrained.

Chapter 8 of the RTP contains only those existing and future revenue sources that can be reasonably expected over the life of the Plan.

- Indicate that the RTP is based upon the most recent planning assumptions in force at the time of the conformity determination.

The RTP is developed in conformance with the SAFETEA-LU requirements.

- Document that assumptions are derived from the estimates of current and future population, employment, travel and congestion most recently developed by the MPO or other agency authorized to make such estimates.

All assumptions contained in the RTP pertaining to population and employment is based upon the land-use data that was provided by the local agencies.

- Discuss how transit operation policies (including fares and service levels) and assumed transit ridership have changed since the previous conformity determination.

Chapter 4 represents the current public transportation policies.

- Determine that reasonable assumptions about transit service and increases in fares have occurred over time.

Chapter 4 contains a brief discussion on the Short Range Transit Plan, which is the primary public transportation planning document.

- Document the latest existing information regarding the effectiveness of TCMs that have been implemented.

Chapter 7 documents the effectiveness of TCMs.

- Document that the conformity determination is based on the latest emission estimation model available.

All air quality analysis for the RTP is based upon the latest Mobile Emissions model (Chapter 10).

- Document that the RTP has followed appropriate public involvement procedures established by the MPO.

In developing the RTP, the RTC has undertaken a comprehensive public involvement process. Two public forums were held on the RTP. A web page specific to the project was available on the agency website. Surveys were available at open houses to provide public input. The entire RTP update

process was led by a steering committee made up of people from all parts of the region. The committee met regularly from August 2007 to June 2008 to draft the plan. In addition, several public television and radio shows aired on the RTP planning process.

The recently adopted RTC Public Participation Plan (PPP) requires that the RTC hold a minimum thirty (30)-day public comment period before adoption of the RTP. There were two published comment periods beginning on July 14, 2008, and ending on September 17, 2008. The draft document was also posted on the agency website. No comments were received.

A public hearing notice was also published prior to the RTC Board hearing held on November 21, 2008.

- Indicate that the RTP provides for the timely implementation or completion of all TCMs.

Chapters 3 and 7 discuss the implementation and completion of TCMs.

- Indicate that the RTP does not interfere with the implementation of any TCM.

Chapter 7 lists all planned TCMs for Washoe County. The implementation of the plan does not interfere with implementation of the TCMs.