

# Chapter 1 – Introduction

## A. Purpose

This update to the Middle Rogue Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a multi-modal transportation review of the existing plan designed to meet the anticipated 25-year transportation needs within the Middle Rogue Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) planning area boundary.

Regional transportation systems have significant and long-term impacts on economic well-being and quality of life. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity through accessibility to land. Furthermore, the performance of the transportation system affects public policy concerns such as air quality, environmental resource consumption, social equity, economic development, safety, and security.

Regional transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation and other societal goals. The planning process is more than merely listing highway and transit capital investments; it requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the regional transportation system in such a way to advance long-term goals.

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The development, adoption of, and updates to the RTP are required to ensure that the metropolitan planning area remains eligible to receive state and federal transportation funding. Federal rules requiring completion and adoption of the Plan include the federal transportation act Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) and the U.S. Clean Air Act amendments of 1990.

As a product of multi-jurisdiction collaboration, the RTP reflects local jurisdiction policy and planning. While it is consistent with local plans, the RTP horizon extends beyond the horizon of most other adopted plans to fulfill federal requirements. Many of the long-range analysis and conditions described here are not within the scope of existing local plans and, therefore, should not be interpreted as the conditions planned or anticipated by the local jurisdictions. Within the region, transportation policy and planning are directed at the jurisdiction level, and as timeframes for local plans advance, the RTP will be amended accordingly.

As a regional plan, this document lays out in sufficient detail the type and location of individual projects. Local projects that MRMPO jurisdictions build with local funds are not included in this plan.

The RTP uses projections for future growth and development that are based on current trends and approved land uses, policies, and ordinances. It identifies the basic land-use assumptions

through the year 2045, including forecasts of future population and employment, and the resulting demand on the region's arterial and collector street system. Future travel conditions were developed through travel demand modeling, using a peer-reviewed model developed in collaboration with the Oregon Department of Transportation's Transportation Planning and Analysis Unit (TPAU).

## 1. Planning Period

The RTP serves as a guide for the management of existing transportation facilities and for the design and implementation of future transportation facilities through 2045. The Plan provides the framework and foundation for the region's transportation future. Policies and project descriptions are provided to enable agencies and the public to understand and track projects that will be needed over the next 25 years. The Plan looks at different types of transportation opportunities

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that are available and potentially beneficial, and considers how these various elements could fit together to foster a coordinated system by improving system management and operation.

Although the RTP focuses on intra-regional (within the region) travel, it also addresses interregional (through-region) travel.

Ultimately, the Plan reflects the balance the region strikes between competing demands for funding and competing views as to the best course for development across the region. The funding resources identified in the financial section are only those upon which the region can rely, so the projects identified may be reasonably anticipated to occur with known funding.

## 2. Air Quality Conformity

The U.S. Congress approved amendments to the Clean Air Act on November 15, 1990. Shortly thereafter, urban airsheds were tested and classified on the basis of their attainment or non-attainment to National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS). The Grants Pass Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) was designated as a non-attainment area for particulate matter less than ten micrometers (PM<sub>10</sub>) and the Grants Pass Central Business District (CBD) non-attainment for carbon monoxide (CO). However, monitoring data since that time has shown that pollutant levels are decreasing. CO and PM<sub>10</sub> levels have steadily declined and continue to be far below the NAAQS.

- On October 30, 2000, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) redesignated the Grants Pass CO non-attainment area to attainment and approved the maintenance plan.
- On December 26, 2003, the EPA re-designated the Grants Pass PM<sub>10</sub> non-attainment area to attainment for the NAAQS for PM<sub>10</sub> and approved the maintenance plan.

### Current Carbon Monoxide (CO) and PM<sub>10</sub> Status

Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ) developed a CO and PM<sub>10</sub> Limited Maintenance Plan (LMP) for the Grants Pass area, which was submitted to EPA in April 2015

and will go into effect in September 2015. Based on ODEQ's review of the 2002-2005 CO and PM<sub>10</sub> emissions data for Grants Pass, the area meets the requirements for a limited maintenance plan.

As an area with a limited maintenance plan, the MRMPO is no longer required to perform emissions analysis for CO, but still must demonstrate conformity as discussed below. This is a considerable cost-savings to the MRMPO.

The 2045 RTP meets federal Clean Air Act requirements. Analysis shows that through the horizon of the Plan, under land-use conditions described and projects and policies that can be implemented within the current funding forecast, the region will meet standards for emissions of CO within the Grants Pass area, and PM<sub>10</sub> within the entire planning area. Information about this analysis and details about the process for meeting air quality requirements is contained in the *Air Quality Conformity Determination* developed for this Plan.

## **B. The Middle Rogue MPO Planning Area**

The MRMPO planning area includes the cities of Gold Hill, Grants Pass, Rogue River, and adjacent parts of Josephine and Jackson Counties which are anticipated to become urbanized over the 20 year planning horizon. In addition, the following agencies participate in the MRMPO planning processes: the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (ODEQ), Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

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Congress requires that metropolitan areas of at least 50,000 in population establish a metropolitan planning process that is continuing, collaborative, and comprehensive, in order for the region to continue receiving federal transportation funds. Currently there are over 400 metropolitan planning organizations in the nation. This Plan fulfills federal requirements that metropolitan areas develop and maintain long-range transportation plans.

**Figure 1-1: Middle Rogue MPO Planning Area**



The Grants Pass area reached the population threshold and was designated as an Urbanized Area (UA) after the 2010 Census. As a result, the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) was designated by the Governor of Oregon to staff the MRMPO on March 20, 2013. The RVCOG Board of Directors subsequently delegated responsibility for MRMPO policy functions to a Policy Committee of elected and appointed officials from all member jurisdictions.

Ultimately, MPOs provide the forum for the many jurisdictions and agencies within a particular metropolitan region to come together to address the transportation issues that confront them.

### **C. Regional Planning and Quality of Life**

Taking a regional approach to transportation planning gives communities the opportunity to look at projected future development and resulting travel demands and make decisions to avoid some of the unwelcome consequences of growth: sprawl development, traffic congestion and deteriorating air quality.

Thorough planning has become more significant as the cost of expanding roads to meet traffic demand has grown and the land on which to build has become scarcer and more valuable to the region for uses other than transportation. At the regional level, links between land use and roadway congestion may be more clearly seen and addressed. Through this Plan the public can see future transportation needs and take necessary steps now to address them efficiently and effectively.

The State and Federal regulatory framework that guides RTP development embodies many of the goals routinely brought forward by citizens when they talk about the region's future. None of the jurisdictions within the MRMPO exists in isolation: residents live in one jurisdiction, work in another, shop and recreate in others. Significant development in one jurisdiction is bound to affect conditions in other jurisdictions.

The RTP, like the regional transportation system, links the region's jurisdictions. It identifies a transportation need they all hold in common and offers a foundation for addressing that need as the region grows.

## **D. Keeping the RTP Current**

This is the first update to the regional transportation plan for the MRMPO. Because of the air quality conditions in the Grants Pass area (air quality “maintenance area”), the MRMPO must be able to show consistently that the region is in conformity with air quality standards for at least 20 years into the future. That conformity demonstration must be made at least every four years, and triggers an update of the RTP.

These updates give the MRMPO the opportunity to evaluate past projections for growth and anticipated use of the system. During the plan update process, the MRMPO compares the existing land use, recent development trends, and the use of the different modal components of the transportation system. This new perspective permits the MRMPO to refine growth projections and their implications for travel.



Aside from such updates, the RTP is routinely amended. Most commonly it is amended to include local projects that are newly nominated to receive federal funding. If a local project were set to receive such funding, the MRMPO would consider amending the RTP to include that project.

For a local project to receive federal funding it must be in this Plan. For a project to move forward to completion it must be included in the MRMPO's short-range funding programming document, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

## **E. Development Process**

The MRMPO 2045 RTP was developed through a collaboration of local governments, ODOT, citizens, and stakeholders, as well as special interest groups in the Grants Pass Urbanized Area. The Plan was adopted in March 2020.

The first step in the plan development process was establishing a vision and goals for the future transportation system of the Planning Area. Next, the existing conditions of the Middle Rogue MPO area transportation system were inventoried. The lists of projects and policies recommended in this plan are within the framework of the Plan Implementation contained in Chapter 6 and the Vision and Goals contained in Chapter 2.

The development of the Plan involved three cohesive and integrated tracks: a public participation and input process, technical analyses, and directives from the MRMPO Policy Committee.

The role of the public and the agency's efforts to engage the public in the development of the Plan are described in Chapter 3 – Public Involvement.

The technical track involved the work of the MRMPO's Technical Advisory Committee, comprised of public works and transportation staff of the member jurisdictions, staff of the MRMPO and ODOT.

The resulting technical work was prepared for review by the public and elected officials. Additionally, the technical track also retained applicable data analyses and modeling forecasts completed by ODOT's Transportation Planning Analysis Unit (TPAU).

Finally, the MRMPO Policy Committee steered the development of the Plan at the policy level. According to federal rules, the adoption of the Plan by the MRMPO Policy Committee constitutes the approval of a Transportation Plan for the MRMPO Planning Area.

## **F. Document Structure**

This introduction forms Chapter 1 of the document and Chapter 2 states the Plan's Vision and Goals. Chapter 3 provides detail on the public involvement process. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the Planning Area and the elements of the existing transportation system in the area. Chapter 6 presents how the plan will be implemented. Chapter 7 considers sustainability within the transportation sector, and Chapter 8 includes the Financial Plan for the MRMPO. Chapters 9 thru 11 include evaluation and system performance regarding air quality conformity and environmental considerations. Chapter 12 includes information about safety, such as a crash analysis and a discussion about security issues.

The appendices of the plan follow the main body of the document. Maps have been inserted at the end of each applicable chapter.

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**Map 1-1 – MRMPO Planning Area**





