

MEMORANDUM

January 2, 2014

From: Ivan Miller, Program Manager, Growth Management Planning, SEPA Responsible Official

Subject: Transportation 2040 Update Draft Plan Release: SEPA Background Memorandum

OVERVIEW

The Puget Sound Regional Council is updating the region's long-range transportation plan, *Transportation 2040*. The update process includes action on a Scope of Work (Decision Point A), action on a set of proposed investments and strategies for analysis (Decision Point B), release of a draft updated Plan (Decision Points C and D), and final action to adopt the Plan at the Regional Council's General Assembly in the spring of 2014 (Decision Point E). In January, PSRC's Boards are scheduled to release a Draft Updated Plan for public comment (Decision Point C).

SCOPE OF WORK (DECISION POINT A)

In September 2012, the Regional Council's Executive Board approved a Scope of Work (Scope) to define the focus and limit the range of issues to be included in the Transportation 2040 Plan Update (Plan Update). The Scope includes a set of Principles, Work Elements and Support Tasks that were explicitlyⁱ designed to limit impacts of the Plan Update to those already described and disclosed in the Transportation 2040 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS, 2010).ⁱⁱ

The Scope does not include new alternatives, nor does it allow project or program changes that would have significant impacts exceeding those contained in the FEIS. Further, key components of the Transportation 2040 FEIS, such as the Purpose and Need Statement, are not being revised.

At the time of action on the Scope, an initial SEPA Background Memorandum was released. The memorandum was not a formal SEPA Action, but did provide information to decision-makers regarding the relationship of the Scope to the FEIS. The memorandum concluded that "Based on the items in the Draft Scope, PSRC anticipates that the net marginal effects [of potential Plan Update changes] will reduce significant adverse environmental impacts and be within the levels described in the Transportation 2040 FEIS."

PROPOSED ACTIONS AND STRATEGIES FOR ANALYSIS (DECISION POINT B)

In July 2013, the Regional Council's Executive Board approved a package of project and policy strategies for analysis (Board Decision Package Point B, or "Package"). The Package consisted of Core Elements, Statutory and Ongoing Planning Activities, and Supporting Information.ⁱⁱⁱ These components impact the overall scale of the updated Plan, revenue estimates to implement the plan, and the distribution of investments. They also include better information and strategies to make the transportation system more efficient and multi-modal and to better integrate transportation with land

use. Importantly, project list changes are minor and lead to a net reduction in total lane miles compared to the FEIS.

At the time of action on Decision Point B, a second SEPA Background Memorandum was released. The memorandum was not a formal SEPA Action, but did provide information to decision-makers regarding the relationship of the Decision Package to the FEIS. The memorandum concluded that "Given the revenue estimates, the Package does not contain any major new investments [or proposed strategies] that would significantly increase impacts to levels beyond what was described in the FEIS."

RELEASE OF DRAFT UPDATED PLAN (DECISION POINT C)

Since July, PSRC's Boards have been focused on finalizing the content of the draft updated plan. The draft update plan that is scheduled for release in January 2014 includes the following major components:

Core Elements

- **Updated Financial Strategy to balance revenues and expenses:** The impacts of the economic recession means there is less revenue than in the 2010 plan. To meet federal requirements, this component moves projects from the Constrained portion of the plan to the Unprogrammed as well as moving the region toward more sustainable revenue sources. This work results in a net reduction of almost 60 lane miles, and approximately 80 projects moving out of the financially constrained portion of the plan. These changes are likely to constrain impacts such as vehicle miles traveled and delay.
- **Project Prioritization:** The updated plan uses this new tool to balance the financial strategy by identifying projects to move from Constrained to Unprogrammed. The projects being moved are those that scored the lowest in terms of implementing VISION 2040. This means that, in general, these projects have lower environmental, economic and social benefits.
- **State of Good Repair:** This is a high priority in the plan update. To support this, the plan includes better information on a variety of assets - including pavements, stormwater needs, and local transportation operations - and reflects longer-term lifecycle costs that provide better estimates of future investment needs. Maintaining existing infrastructure has, at a plan level, fewer environmental impacts than constructing new facilities.

Statutory Activities

- **Active Transportation Plan:** This component establishes a regional bike network with a focus on regional growth centers. The plan identifies critical connections to transit stations, encourages enhanced health through active transportation, promotes safety, and includes an implementation strategy. These actions are likely to increase the share of non-motorized trips and thereby reduce fuel consumption, travel times on congested facilities and increase health related benefits for users of these facilities.
- **Air Quality & Climate Change:** These updated materials document recent air quality and climate change trends, update the climate change strategy, and provide a status report on compliance with federal standards (especially for PM 2.5 in Pierce County). The plan also

includes a discussion of new federal CAFÉ (Corporate Average Fuel Economy) standards which are part of the region's climate change strategy. This component reflects progress to date on strategies and actions to reduce air quality impacts from the transportation plan.

- **Coordinated Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan):** The coordinated plan updates demographic data for special needs populations, provides an updated inventory of services, includes updated goals and strategies, identifies gaps and needs, and outlines actions and investments to address needs. These actions will increase access for these populations to the transportation system and regional destinations.
- **Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Action Plan:** Managing demand and efficient use of the transportation system are two key elements of region's transportation strategy. This new Action Plan provides a better understanding of TDM and its value by highlighting key activities in the region; describes the strategic priorities that TDM implementers across the region continue to pursue; and recommends regional implementation actions to support and augment the work happening at the local level.
- **Growing Transit Communities Program:** Over the coming years Sound Transit will invest \$15 billion in regional rapid transit. The Growing Transit Communities program is designed to help make the most of this investment by locating housing, jobs, and services close to transit, making transit a viable travel option for many people. If done right, more people will have a faster and more convenient way to travel and, by locating housing near transit, have the potential to decrease travel times and vehicle miles traveled and increase transit mode shares.
- **Rural Transportation Study:** This study examines transportation trends, issues, and opportunities in the rural parts of the region. This study is informational and helps define key issues and investment needs in the rural part of the region.

Supporting Information

- **Modeling Inputs:** To provide the best available information, PSRC's suite of modeling tools has been updated. This includes improvements to the travel model and EPA-mandated changes to the air quality emissions software. To clarifying and describe the effect of these modeling changes, the base year and adopted plan are re-calibrated using the new modeling framework. Results show marginal changes in emissions and regional transportation system indicators; these are shown in the draft updated plan.

RELATIONSHIP TO TRANSPORTATION 2040 FINAL EIS

As noted in previous SEPA Background Memorandum, the 2014 update of Transportation 2040 has been explicitly designed to limit impacts to those already disclosed in the 2010 FEIS. As the plan update has matured, and proposed actions and strategies developed and implemented, this initial agreement in the Scope has been retained. The major elements of the updated plan focus on system preservation, sustainable transportation revenue sources, inclusion of projects with higher social and environmental benefits, and multimodal transportation strategies. Further, they focus on linking land use and transportation, public health, access for special needs populations, and strategies to promote an efficient use of the transportation system.

Combined, the net marginal effects of the update plan are likely to reduce significant adverse environmental impacts and be within the levels described in the Transportation 2040 FEIS. As such, PSRC will issue an Addendum to the 2010 Transportation 2040 FEIS, per Revised Code of Washington 43.21C and Washington Administrative Code 197-11, in the spring of 2014 to support Executive Board action on the 2014 update of Transportation 2040.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information or to discuss this memorandum, please contact Ivan Miller, AICP, Program Manager and SEPA Responsible Official, at imiller@psrc.org or (206) 464-7549

NOTES

- i Explicit statements to limit Plan Update impacts to those disclosed in the FEIS are found throughout the Scope.
 - The Scope's Principles state: "The Update will not include new or expanded projects, programs, or strategies which would have any significant impacts exceeding those contained in the Transportation 2040 Final EIS."
 - The Scope's SEPA Process discussion states: "Requirement for the 2014 Plan Update: keep impacts and analysis within the framework and scope of the 2010 Transportation 2040 FEIS."
 - The Scope's Limited Call for Projects included a criterion that "...at a plan level, probable and significant adverse environmental impacts are not introduced that would exceed the scope of the original Transportation 2040 Final EIS."
- ii The Transportation 2040 FEIS contained information on a range of options including a future baseline alternative (no action), five future action alternatives, and the preferred alternative. The FEIS addressed both constrained and unprogrammed projects, programs, and investments.
- iii Components of the Board Decision Package B include the following items:
 - Core Elements: Transportation Project Prioritization; Maintenance, Preservation, and Operations (MP&O); and an Updated Financial Strategy.
 - Statutory and Ongoing Planning Activities: Active Transportation Plan/Bicycle-Pedestrian Plan; Air Quality and Climate Changes Summary; Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan; Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Commute Trip Reduction (CTR); Transit Oriented Development (Growing Transit Communities); and Rural Transportation Study.
 - Supporting Information: Project List Changes; Public Involvement and Outreach; Land Use Inputs and Modeling Summary; and Summary of Map-21 Provisions.