

Transportation

Goal: *The region has a sustainable, equitable, affordable, safe, and efficient multimodal transportation system, with specific emphasis on an integrated regional transit network that supports the Regional Growth Strategy and promotes vitality of the economy, environment, and health.*

VISION 2050 provides a framework for long-range transportation planning in the region. A safe and efficient transportation system is essential to the region’s quality of life and serves as the backbone of the economy. As the region continues to grow and the travel needs of people change over time, improving mobility will be a challenging task.

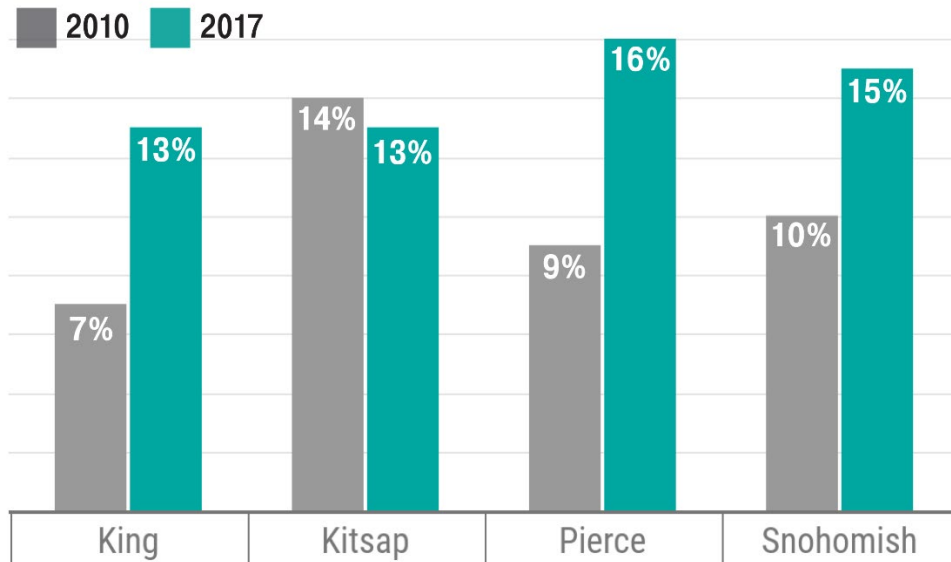
The region is making historic investments in transit that include light rail, heavy rail, bus rapid transit, and ferries. Voters have approved measures authorizing \$54 billion to build out the region’s light rail network, which will extend from Seattle to Everett, Tacoma, Redmond, and Issaquah. When complete, the region’s light rail system will be among the largest in the nation. In addition, 28 new or extended bus rapid transit lines are planned across all four counties through 2040. Passenger-only ferry routes are also expanding, with four routes currently operating as of 2019 and new routes being studied for the future. Further investment in commuter rail service is also occurring.

Over the last decade, transit ridership has experienced robust growth, with the central Puget Sound region being one of only four regions across the country with consistent growth in transit boardings. While COVID-19 has caused sudden and dramatic drops in transit ridership and revenue and has perhaps accelerated the acceptance of remote work environments, transit will continue to be a critical element for mobility as the region grows over the next 30 years. The region’s investment in high-occupancy toll lanes and other capital improvements are supporting this growth in transit, particularly the performance of bus rapid transit lines. VISION 2050 incorporates a renewed focus on locating growth near current and future high-capacity transit facilities, with a goal for 65% of the region’s population growth and 75% of the region’s employment growth to be located in regional growth centers and areas within walking distance of high-capacity transit.

The region’s historic investment in transit, and continued investments across modes, are critical due to the increases in congestion and travel delay seen in the region over the past decade. Since 2010, the region has grown by over 440,000 residents and 381,000 jobs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, delay on the region’s freeway corridors had increased more than 50% since 2014, and the average travel time to work had continued to steadily increase across all modes, averaging around 30 minutes. Notably, the share of commuters with travel times over 60 minutes increased steeply and was higher than the share of commuters with travel times less than 10 minutes. This was true in each of the four counties.



Figure 30 – Share of Commuters, Travel Time Greater Than 1 Hour, 2010-2017



Source: 2010-2017 American Community Survey

People want shorter travel times and greater options, yet the costs of providing new transportation capacity continues to increase at rates greater than inflation. At the same time, the future value of the fuel tax – the primary source for funding transportation investments – is limited. Advances in vehicle fuel economy, increasing construction costs, and erosion of purchasing power due to inflation have demonstrated the need to find other ways to pay for transportation investments.

With scores of local and state agencies responsible for implementing separate parts of the overall system, a coordinated regional approach to building and funding the transportation system is critical. If the region is to sustain its high quality of life and continue to support innovation, continued investments are necessary to complete, operate, and maintain the system.

VISION 2050 establishes the long-range regional policy direction for meeting this challenge and provides a basis for the more detailed planning and investment strategies in the Regional Transportation Plan, and at the local level. As the region’s designated Metropolitan Planning Organization and state Regional Transportation Planning Organization, PSRC is responsible for developing and maintaining a long-range multimodal transportation plan that provides a regional perspective for transportation that coordinates across jurisdictions and recognizes the critical link between transportation, land use planning, economic development, and the environment.



The Regional Transportation Plan

The [Regional Transportation Plan](#) shows how the region intends to catch up and keep pace with expected growth. It identifies how the region’s transportation system will be sustained and improved to better connect residents with employment centers, educational opportunities, major military installations, and other destinations such as the region’s many recreational and cultural opportunities. It outlines unprecedented investments the region is making to improve highway, transit, rail, ferry, bicycle, and pedestrian systems to support the safe and efficient movement of people and goods. The plan describes how billions of dollars of federal, state, and local transportation funding will make improvements to the region’s highway system, local roads, freight mobility, bicycle and pedestrian accessibility, and transit options.

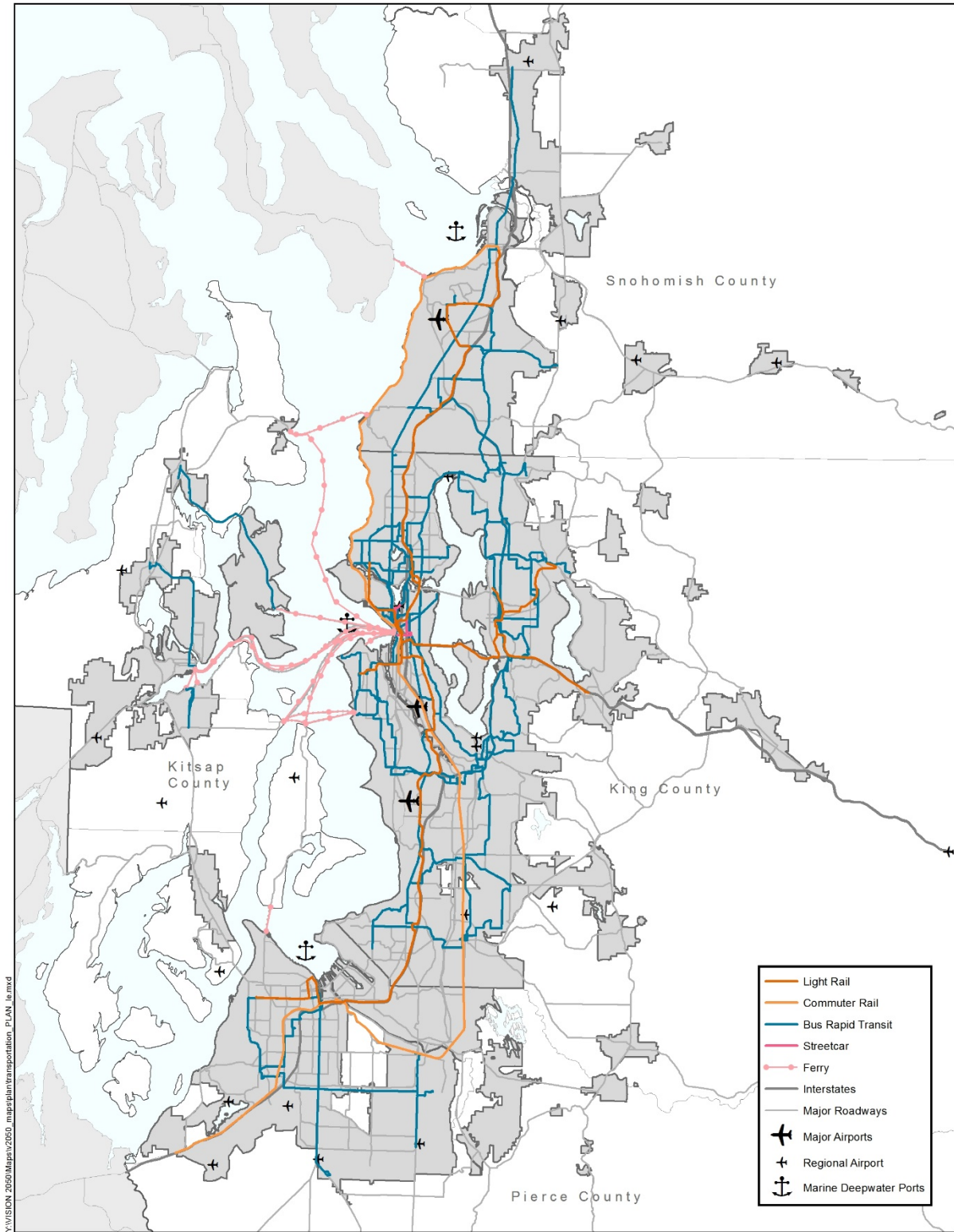
Under federal transportation planning and funding statutes and regulations, PSRC is responsible for programming and maintaining a four-year regional Transportation Improvement Program, and for selecting projects to receive certain funds from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, usually on a two-year cycle. The policies guiding the competitive distribution of these funds are based on implementing the priorities identified in VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. Specific policies about prioritization of PSRC’s federal funds can be found in the Regional Collaboration chapter. While an important source, federal funds managed by PSRC represent a small percentage of total funds invested in transportation projects annually in the region. Other federal, state, and local funds support most transportation investments in the region.

Together, VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan serve to coordinate transportation planning and project implementation across jurisdictions and at the local level. The 2018 Regional Transportation Plan identifies investments through the year 2040. The 2022 update to the plan will provide an opportunity to consider the types of investments necessary to serve an additional decade of growth to 2050. The local comprehensive plans and transportation agency plans that follow will identify specific improvements, projects, and programs for those later years.

Under the Growth Management Act, the state, local jurisdictions, and other transportation agencies are responsible for implementing transportation investments. They do so through projects that maintain, improve, and create new roadways, transit service, and pedestrian, bicycle, and freight infrastructure. Working together to consider mobility and access needs both within and beyond the borders of individual jurisdictions is critical to building the efficient, multimodal system described in the Regional Transportation Plan.



Figure 31 – Regional Transportation System Map



Supporting the Regional Growth Strategy

Continued growth of people and jobs will increase pressure on the region's transportation system. The Regional Growth Strategy is built around the concept that additional transportation infrastructure and services will be prioritized for areas expected to accommodate the most growth. This includes investments to support continued growth in local and regional centers and around high-capacity transit station areas. Supporting the Regional Growth Strategy will require a commitment to developing a highly efficient multimodal transportation system throughout the region. VISION 2050 transportation policies guide and coordinate actions to build strong regional and local integration of land use and transportation.

Supporting People

Continued growth in the region increases the need for accessible, affordable, and convenient mobility for all people in the region. Everyone should have equitable access to goods, services, and jobs. Yet with a booming economy and rising housing costs, many of the region's residents find themselves priced out of major employment centers, increasing commute distances and the financial burden of transportation. This hits the region's lowest-income households the hardest. The resulting disconnect between where people live and work has contributed to record levels of freeway congestion, and historic ridership and crowding on transit. These challenges are already imposing costs that are likely to increase in the future without meaningful action to provide more accessible transportation choices and improving the jobs-housing balance.

An equitable transportation system supports broad mobility and connectivity, prioritizes an effective and affordable public transportation network that supports transit-dependent communities, and provides access to core services and amenities, including employment, education, and health and social services. It includes providing access to transportation choices for all, ensuring that travel times to key destinations are reasonable for all people, and requires assessing how the region can better connect places that have low access to opportunity to places that have more opportunity.

Mobility and Accessibility

As the region continues to grow and becomes more congested, transportation investments that improve mobility are key. These include completing a regional high-capacity transit network with seamless connections to local transit systems and creating robust multimodal access to the overall transit network. It also includes continued mobility for freight and goods movement, as well as improvements to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, multimodal and passenger-only ferries, aviation and intercity rail systems that connect to other states and countries, and critical highway links. VISION 2050 calls for the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system that supports all of these needs, and ensures access to goods, services, and amenities that will help people and the economy thrive.



Supporting the Economy

The region’s economy depends on a robust, resilient transportation system that efficiently connects people to jobs, schools, and services, and moves freight and goods. Nearly all products in the region are transported using a complex system of roads, rail lines, and sea and air routes, as well as the intermodal terminals that connect them. As one of the world’s global gateways and major entry points into North America, the freight system in the Pacific Northwest reaches far beyond the region’s boundaries and involves a mix of public and private ownership. The transportation system investments supported by VISION 2050 will help grow the region’s economy.

A Sustainable Transportation System

A sustainable transportation system will address the important task of preserving and maintaining existing transportation assets and making the current system work more efficiently and safely. Investments to encourage a shift from driving alone by providing convenient, safe and accessible options are critical to achieving this vision. The region supports investments that work to achieve the state's Target Zero goal of zero deaths and serious injuries on roads and highways by 2030. Priorities also focus on developing a secure and resilient transportation network, being prepared for potential impacts from natural disasters and other catastrophes and planning for recovery. As traditional sources of revenues supporting transportation become less reliable, the pursuit of alternative transportation financing mechanisms such as roadway pricing and other user fees will be key to developing and managing a sustainable transportation system into the future.

Protecting the Environment

The regional transportation system should be planned and designed to keep the region's air and water healthy, sustain the region's overall environment, assist in coordinated efforts to protect and restore the health of the region's watersheds, and reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions to address climate change. Untreated stormwater from transportation infrastructure has contributed to the degradation of Puget Sound and other water bodies, and inadequate or missing culverts have prevented fish passage to spawning areas. As new transportation infrastructure is developed, there is an opportunity to improve water quality and habitat.

The Regional Transportation Plan sets the region on course to significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions through a flexible and balanced approach of land use, pricing, choices, and technology. One important element – among many – will be to advance the adoption of electric vehicles across the region and support the necessary infrastructure to achieve this transition. VISION 2050's Climate Change chapter highlights the importance of taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Innovation and Transformation

Rapidly developing technological innovations have the potential to disrupt and transform the way we think about transportation systems. These changes range from improvements to existing technologies, including Intelligent Transportation Systems, to shared mobility, improved traveler information tools, and connected or autonomous vehicles. These innovations could have an enormous influence on how and where people live, shop, work, and play, and how the region develops and designs roadways and other transportation infrastructure. The expanding shift towards on-demand mobility services and new technologies supporting those fleets has the potential to change trends in private car ownership and usage, local and regional parking needs, and the use of public right-of-way for pick-up and drop-off zones. Similarly, the rise in e-commerce and urban delivery will have impacts on both the transportation system and land uses throughout the region. However, the rapid pace of change in technology makes it hard to predict when new technologies will mature and become widespread, and what the impacts will be on the system. The region must prepare for this potential transformation and ensure those changes support the region's communities and vision for the future.

Transportation Policies

The Regional Transportation Plan

MPP-T-1

Maintain and operate transportation systems to provide safe, efficient, and reliable movement of people, goods, and services.

MPP-T-2

Protect the investment in the existing system and lower overall life-cycle costs through effective maintenance and preservation programs.

MPP-T-3

Reduce the need for new capital improvements through investments in operations, pricing programs, demand management strategies, and system management activities that improve the efficiency of the current system.

MPP-T-4

Improve the safety of the transportation system and, in the long term, achieve the state’s goal of zero deaths and serious injuries.

MPP-T-5

Develop a transportation system that minimizes negative impacts to, and promotes, human health.

MPP-T-6

Pursue alternative transportation financing methods, such as user fees, tolls, and other pricing mechanisms to manage and fund the maintenance, improvement, preservation, and operation of the transportation system.

MPP-T-7

Fund, complete, and operate the highly efficient, multimodal system in the Regional Transportation Plan to support the Regional Growth Strategy. Coordinate WSDOT, regional, and local transportation agencies, in collaboration with the state legislature, to build the multimodal system.

MPP-T-8

Strategically expand capacity and increase efficiency of the transportation system to move goods, services, and people consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. Focus on investments that produce the greatest net benefits to people and minimize the environmental impacts of transportation.



MPP-T-9

Implement transportation programs and projects that provide access to opportunities while preventing or mitigating negative impacts to people of color, people with low incomes, and people with special transportation needs.

MPP-T-10

Ensure mobility choices for people with special transportation needs, including persons with disabilities, seniors, youth, and people with low incomes.

MPP-T-11

Design, construct, and operate a safe and convenient transportation system for all users while accommodating the movement of freight and goods, using best practices and context sensitive design strategies.

MPP-T-12

Emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel and increase travel options, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers.

MPP-T-13

Increase the proportion of trips made by transportation modes that are alternatives to driving alone, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers, by ensuring availability of reliable and competitive transit options.

MPP-T-14

Integrate transportation systems to make it easy for people and freight to move from one mode or technology to another.

MPP-T-15

Prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the urban growth area that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development.

MPP-T-16

Improve local street patterns – including their design and how they are used – for walking, bicycling, and transit use to enhance communities, connectivity, and physical activity.

MPP-T-17

Promote and incorporate bicycle and pedestrian travel as important modes of transportation by providing facilities and navigable connections.

MPP-T-18

Promote coordination among transportation providers and local governments to ensure that joint- and mixed-use developments are designed in a way that improves overall mobility and accessibility to and within such development.



MPP-T-19

Design transportation programs and projects to support local and regional growth centers and high-capacity transit station areas.

MPP-T-20

Promote the preservation of existing rights-of-way for future high-capacity transit.

MPP-T-21

Design transportation facilities to fit within the context of the built or natural environments in which they are located.

MPP-T-22

Avoid construction of major roads and capacity expansion on existing roads in rural and resource areas. Where increased roadway capacity is warranted to support safe and efficient travel through rural areas, appropriate rural development regulations and strong commitments to access management should be in place prior to authorizing such capacity expansion in order to prevent unplanned growth in rural areas.

Supporting the Economy

MPP-T-23

Make transportation investments that improve economic and living conditions so that industries and skilled workers continue to be retained and attracted to the region.

MPP-T-24

Improve key facilities connecting the region to national and world markets to support the economic vitality of the region.

MPP-T-25

Ensure the freight system supports the growing needs of global trade and state, regional and local distribution of goods and services.

MPP-T-26

Maintain and improve the existing multimodal freight transportation system in the region to increase reliability, efficiency, and mobility, and prepare for continuing growth in freight and goods movement.

MPP-T-27

Coordinate regional planning with rail line capacity expansion plans and support capacity expansion that is compatible with state, regional, and local plans.

MPP-T-28

Promote coordinated planning and effective management to optimize the region's aviation system in a manner that minimizes health, air quality, and noise impacts to communities, including historically marginalized communities. Consider demand management alternatives as



future growth needs are analyzed, recognizing capacity constraints at existing facilities and the time and resources necessary to build new ones. Support the ongoing process of development of a new commercial aviation facility in Washington State.

Protecting the Environment

MPP-T-29

Support the transition to a cleaner transportation system through investments in zero emission vehicles, low carbon fuels and other clean energy options.

MPP-T-30

Provide infrastructure sufficient to support widespread electrification of the transportation system.

MPP-T-31

Advance the resilience of the transportation system by incorporating redundancies, preparing for disasters and other impacts, and coordinated planning for system recovery.

MPP-T-32

Reduce stormwater pollution from transportation facilities and improve fish passage, through retrofits and updated design standards. Where feasible, integrate with other improvements to achieve multiple benefits and cost efficiencies.

Innovation

MPP-T-33

Prepare for changes in transportation technologies and mobility patterns, to support communities with a sustainable and efficient transportation system.

MPP-T-34

Be responsive to changes in mobility patterns and needs for both people and goods, and encourage partnerships with the private sector, where applicable.



Transportation Actions

Regional Actions

T-Action-1

Regional Transportation Plan: PSRC will update the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) to be consistent with federal and state requirements and the goals and policies of VISION 2050. The RTP will incorporate the Regional Growth Strategy and plan for a sustainable multimodal transportation system for 2050. The plan will identify how the system will be maintained and efficiently operated, with strategic capacity investments, to provide safe and equitable access to housing, jobs, and other opportunities, as well as improved mobility for freight and goods delivery. Specific elements of the RTP include the Coordinated Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan and continued updates to the regional integrated transit network (including high capacity transit, local transit, auto and passenger ferries), the Active Transportation Plan, regional freight network, aviation planning and other important system components.

T-Action-2

Funding: PSRC, together with its member jurisdictions, will advocate for new funding tools to address the gap in local funding identified in the Regional Transportation Plan.

T-Action-3

Transportation Technology and Changing Mobility: PSRC will continue to conduct research and analysis on the potential impacts from emerging technologies and changes in mobility patterns, including ongoing improvements to PSRC modeling and analytical tools. PSRC will build relationships among a diverse set of stakeholders and facilitate discussions to assist member organizations to become prepared for these changes in transportation mobility and to address consequences to and from local decision making. Outcomes could include guidance, best practices and future policies.

T-Action-4

Electric Vehicles: PSRC will work with partner agencies on regional collaboration to support electric vehicles and associated infrastructure issues. PSRC will engage with partners on distribution of best practices for local governments.

T-Action-5

Changing Technology: PSRC will conduct research and analysis on the potential impacts from emerging technologies which impact housing, land use, job distribution, or other applicable topics. PSRC will serve as a resource to assist local jurisdictions in preparing for these changes.

T-Action-6

Freight Mobility: PSRC will continue to conduct research, data collection and analysis of the growth and impacts of freight and goods movement and delivery, including updating baseline inventories and identification of mobility and other issues. PSRC will continue collaboration with stakeholders to address key freight issues as part of the next RTP update.



T-Action-7

Climate: PSRC will continue to monitor and advance the implementation of the adopted Four-Part Greenhouse Gas Strategy - or future versions thereof - to achieve meaningful reductions of emissions throughout the region from transportation and land use. This will include ongoing collaboration with a variety of partners on each element, for example regional coordination on electric vehicle infrastructure, roadway pricing, transit-oriented development and others. This will also include continued development of regional analyses and research of additional options for reducing emissions.

T-Action-8

Aviation Capacity: PSRC will continue to conduct research and analysis of the region's aviation system to assess future capacity needs, issues, challenges, and community impacts to help ensure that the system can accommodate future growth while minimizing community impacts, including historically marginalized communities, and to set the stage for future planning efforts. PSRC will work in cooperation with the state, which will play a lead role in addressing future aviation capacity needs.

Local Action

T-Action-9

VISION 2050 Implementation: Counties and cities, with guidance and assistance from PSRC, will update local plans to support implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan and address the Regional Growth Strategy, including addressing changes related to technology, freight and delivery, and the needs of all users.

