

**MEMORANDUM**

July 3, 2013

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

**Subject:** Transportation 2040 Update – Decision Point B: 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).

**SCOPE OF WORK**

In September 2012, PSRC'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 explicitly<sup>i</sup> designed to limit impacts of the Plan Update to those already described in the Transportation 2040 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS, 2010).<sup>ii</sup>

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 it 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."

**BOARD DECISION PACKAGE POINT B**

Since adoption of the Scope, PSRC staff has moved forward in implementing the Work Elements and Tasks and have developed a package of items referred to as the "Board Decision Package Point B" (Package). PSRC's Executive Board is scheduled to adopt this at its July 2013 meeting. The Package is comprised of three parts:

1. Core Elements: Transportation Project Prioritization; Maintenance, Preservation, and Operations (MP&O); and an Updated Financial Strategy.

These elements address the overall scale of the updated Plan, revenue estimates to implement the plan, and the distribution of investments among the constrained and unprogrammed portions of the plan. These elements may also prioritize projects that best support implementation of VISION 2040. Declines in overall revenue may affect the timing or reduce the number and scale of the investments that were already analyzed and the impacts disclosed in the FEIS.

2. 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.

These activities include better information and strategies to make the transportation system more efficient and multi-modal and to better integrate transportation with land use. Activities may include project or program revisions, however, the type and scale of these investments are likely to be minor and have net-positive effects through improved multi-modal accessibility, options, and mobility. A significant component of the existing plan is investments in transit service; until decisions on transit investments are made, the effect on impacts remains slightly unclear.

3. Supporting Information: Project List Changes; Public Involvement and Outreach; Land Use Inputs and Modeling Summary; and Summary of MAP-21 Provisions.

Some items are purely information. The project list changes increase overall expenditure by a small percent of total plan investments; however, total net lane miles decrease based on cancellations and decreases in project scopes. Updated land use inputs reflect new local growth targets based on requirements to use the "latest planning assumptions." Modeled effects from these inputs are anticipated to be minor and will be described when the draft Plan is released.

## **RELATIONSHIP TO TRANSPORTATION 2040 FINAL EIS**

The Decision Point B Package includes strategies that could affect the timing, distribution, prioritization and scale of projects and programs that were already analyzed and impacts released in the FEIS. Given the revenue estimates, the Package does not contain any major new investments that would significantly increase impacts to levels beyond what was described in the FEIS. A level of uncertainty remains about the impact of the Core Element decisions regarding the overarching approach to address the reduced financial revenue estimates.

## **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

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

<sup>i</sup> 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."

<sup>ii</sup> 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.