Regional Transportation Planning Organizations of Washington State

The following was also sent to:
Senator Marko Liias, Senate Transportation Committee Chair
Representative Jake Fey, House Transportation Committee Chair
Senator Curtis King, Senate Majority Leader
Representative Andrew Barkis, House Majority Leader
Debbie Young, Washington Transportation Commission Chair
Roger Millar, Secretary of Transportation
Derek Young, WA State Association of Counties Director
Deanna Dawson, Association of Washington Cities Director
Shelly Baldwin, Washington Traffic Safety Commission Chair

November 15, 2024

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

In support of the Growth Management Act of 1990, the Washington Legislature established Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) under RCW 47.80, declaring that:

> *"Transportation planning, at all jurisdictional levels, should be coordinated with local comprehensive plans. Further, local jurisdictions and the state should cooperate to achieve both statewide and local transportation goals. To facilitate this coordination and cooperation among state and local jurisdictions, the legislature declares it to be in the state's interest to establish a coordinated planning program for regional transportation systems and facilities throughout the state."*

This letter is sent on behalf of all Washington's RTPOs to request a funding increase to $11.7 million per biennium to restore and sustain the intended capacity of RTPOs as established by the Legislature.

Over the past several decades, RTPOs have played a crucial role in engaging both the public and private sectors in collaborative planning efforts that support transportation infrastructure in regions across the state. This is particularly important for the more rural regions that do not have metropolitan planning organizations established. Among other activities, RTPOs:

- Ensure that local and state governments, transportation agencies, and tribal governments collaborate and coordinate decision-making on growth, infrastructure, service levels, and investment needs.
- Ensure regional business groups, citizens and community advocates have access to the planning and decision-making that impacts their communities;
- Conduct transportation project planning, data collection and coordination to ensure the most effective projects are identified and advanced within our respective regions;
- Support the development and certification of local comprehensive plan updates that promote land use decisions that align with state goals;
- Establish a coordinated regional vision and long-range plan to set a road map for the future of each region.
- Provide coordinated representation of regional voices, which state agencies rely on for policy guidance, statewide planning recommendations, and funding priorities.

Each biennium, the Legislature allocates funds to the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) for distribution to RTPOs to support their regional planning efforts mandated by state law. In the original 1991-93 biennium, the Legislature appropriated $3.4 million to fund 15 RTPOs. Thirty-four years later, in the current biennium, the allocation is $4.9 million to support 17 RTPOs. The value of $3.4 million in 1991 is equivalent to $7.8 million today.

Washington RTPO's have communicated with WSDOT and legislators for several years on the increasingly urgent need to align funding with the increased number of RTPOs, increased responsibilities, and over 20 years of decreasing purchasing power of provided funding. Today, a base funding of $400,000 per RTPO per biennium is needed to operate at a level consistent with RCW 47.80. This funding level supports at least one full-time position along with basic operational expenses.

During recent legislative sessions, RTPOs were considered for additional responsibilities. As a group, the Statewide RTPO's are willing to play a stronger planning role in emerging issues including safety, complete streets, implementation of the HEAL Act, and building partnerships among state and local governments for maintenance, preservation, and operations. RTPOs cannot take on these new responsibilities, however, without additional capacity.

Therefore, it is requested that funding for RTPOs be increased by $6.8 million per biennium for a total of $11.7 million per biennium, with periodic adjustments for inflation, providing a minimum increase per A funding formula is used to distribute existing RTPO funds to recognize that some regions are more complex or coordinate planning for larger populations. The RTPO's have historically worked cooperatively to maintain a formula for distribution. We anticipate the continuation of this process with the assistance of a facilitating agency if needed.

RTPOs appreciate the work of the Legislature and recognize there are funding challenges faced in Washington. As a collective, we strongly believe in the role of RTPOs to ensure that sound planning and project prioritization occur within our regions and to responsibly support the Legislature in addressing 21st-century challenges.

Sincerely,

Marc Daily, Executive Director
Thurston Regional Planning Council

Lois Bollenback, Executive Director
Spokane Regional Transportation Council

md:bl

Attachments

cc: Megan Cotton, Senior Policy Advisor, Transportation
The Office of the Governor

PENINSULA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

RESOLUTION 03-2024

Supporting an Increase in Statewide Funding for Regional Transportation Planning Organizations

Recitals

WHEREAS, the Peninsula Regional Transportation Planning Organization (PRTPO) is the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for the Peninsula region and is in good standing with the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) in its agreements and certifications; and

WHEREAS, PRTPO receives state funds appropriated by the Legislature from the Motor Vehicle Account and distributed by WSDOT to carry out state-mandated activities described in RCW 47.80, and is unable to accept or use federal funds if offered; and

WHEREAS, the $4.9 million currently appropriated by the Legislature for RTPO funding statewide is little changed since 2004 and is inadequate for carrying out the basic activities of RCW 47.80; and

WHEREAS, RTPOs cannot fulfill their state responsibilities with what is appropriated for this purpose, much less prepare for the emerging challenges and uncertainties we face in the 21st century, hence eroding the capacity for regional collaboration when it is needed most; and

WHEREAS, core RTPO responsibilities entail at least the equivalent of one full-time staff for basic functions, or a minimum of $400,000 per biennium for staffing and necessary operational expenses; and

WHEREAS, rural RTPOs like PRTPO do not receive additional planning funds from FHWA and FTA like large urban regions do, which helps backfill deficits in planning funds in urban regions but not in rural regions, exacerbating the impact of RTPO funding deficits for rural regions; and

WHEREAS, RTPOs are a valuable forum for the hundreds of cities, counties, tribes, transit agencies, ports, WSDOT regions, and other stakeholders that work together around regional tables in every corner of the state to coordinate transportation planning in an on-going and cooperative way as envisioned by the Legislature, thus meriting an adequate level of base funding support.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD OF THE PENINSULA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION:

THAT state funds appropriated by the Legislature for regional transportation planning should be increased to $11.7 million per biennium and adjusted periodically for inflation, to support core RTPO work program requirements as laid out in RCW 47.80.

APPROVED, this 18th day of October 2024.

ATTEST:

Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin, Chair

ATTEST:

Ben Thomas, Vice-Chair

Tri-County
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

BEFORE THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS
TRI COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT /
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

IN THE MATTER OF SUPPORTING EFFORTS TO INCREASE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM PROGRAM FUNDING

RESOLUTION 2024-002

WHEREAS, the Tri County Economic Development District, as the Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (NEWRTPO), is the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Ferry, Pend Oreille and Stevens Counties; and

WHEREAS, in 1991-1993, the Washington State Legislature appropriated $3.4 million to fund fifteen (15) RTPOs; and

WHEREAS, thirty years later, an allocation of $4.9 million supports seventeen (17) RTPOs; and

WHEREAS, the current funding allocation has not kept up with inflation, noting that $3.4 million in May 1991 has the same purchasing power as $7.8 million in 2024; and

WHEREAS, program funding has not increased to account for additional responsibilities required of RTPOs; and

WHEREAS, the current funding levels are inadequate for many Washington RTPOs to fully participate with local and state partners as envisioned by the Legislature, eroding the capacity for collaboration; and

WHEREAS, increasing funding to the RTPO program to provide each RTPO with $400,000 per biennium, which is enough to support the workload of one full-time equivalent position, including fixed overhead expenses, is vital to ensuring capacity to meet current requirements; and

NOW, THEREFORE, IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the Tri County Economic Development District and Northeast Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization Board of Directors supports efforts to increase Washington State's RTPO funding by $6.8 million, bringing the RTPO program funding to $11.7 million and, thereafter, periodically adjusting the funding allocation for inflation.

APPROVED AND ADOPTED in Colville, Washington, this 28th day of August 2024.

ATTEST:

Robert Dean, Chairman

Robert Rosencrantz, Secretary

BUSINESS & FINANCE ASSISTANCE
986 S. Main, Suite A • Colville, WA 99114 • (509) 684-4571 • Fax (509) 684-4788

whatcom council of governments

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-02

SUPPORT FOR INCREASED FUNDING FOR WASHINGTON STATE'S REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNNING PROGRAM

WHEREAS the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG) is the federally-recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and the state-designated regional transportation planning organization (RTPO) for the Whatcom County, Washington, transportation planning area, and

WHEREAS in 1991-93 the Washington State Legislature established the Regional Transportation Planning program with a $3.4 million biennial appropriation to support 15 regional transportation planning organizations (RTPOs), and

WHEREAS today, 30 years later, a $4.9 million appropriation supports 17 RTPOs, and

WHEREAS this current appropriation is critically insufficient to support the legislated planning activities and local and state coordination functions assigned to RTPOs (RCW 47.80), having been diminished by decades of inflation, addition of two RTPOs, and legislated additions of RTPO responsibilities, and

WHEREAS increasing state RTPO funding to provide each RTPO with a minimum of $400,000 per biennium, which supports the one full-time position and overhead costs, can ensure the needed capacity to meet RTPO requirements state-wide, therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the WCOG, supports the increase of Washington State's RTPO biennial funding to $11.7 million with subsequent periodic adjustment for inflation.

Adopted this eleventh day of December 2024, in the City of Bellingham, Washington, a quorum being present.

DocuSigned by:
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Greg Hansen, Secretary/Treasurer

Signed by:
C0BEC771DAE745D...

Hugh Conroy, Director

BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Regional Planning Agency for Benton & Franklin Counties

Benton-Franklin Metropolitan Planning Organization • Regional Transportation Planning Organization
Benton-Franklin Economic Development District

RESOLUTION 04-24

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF THE BENTON-FRANKLIN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (BFCOG) TO SUPPORT INCREASING WASHINGTON STATE'S REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FUNDING

WHEREAS; the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments (BFCOG) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Tri-Cities urbanized area and state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for Benton and Franklin Counties; AND

WHEREAS; in 1991-1993, the Washington State Legislature appropriated $3.4 million to fund fifteen (15) RTPOs; AND

WHEREAS; thirty years later, an allocation of $4.9 million supports seventeen (17) RTPOs; AND

WHEREAS; the current funding allocation has not kept up with inflation, noting that $3.4 million in May 1991 has the same buying power as $7.8 million in 2024.; AND

WHEREAS; funding has not increased to account for additional responsibilities required of RTPOs; AND

WHEREAS; the current funding levels are inadequate for many Washington RTPOs to participate with local and state partners as envisioned by the Legislature, eroding the capacity for collaboration; AND

WHEREAS; increasing the RTPO funding program to provide each RTPO with $400,000 per biennium, which is enough to support the workload of one full-time equivalent position, including fixed overhead expenses, is vital to ensuring capacity to meet requirements; NOW THEREFORE

BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments supports efforts to increase Washington State's RTPO funding by $6.8 million, bringing the RTPO funding program to $11.7 million and, thereafter, periodically adjusting the funding allocation for inflation.

ADOPTED by the Benton-Franklin Council of Governments Board by affirmative vote at the regularly scheduled Board meeting held on the 19th day of July 2024.

By: _____; and
VICKI GORDON, Chair

By: _____.
KATE MORAN, Vice Chair

Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization (WWVMPO/SRTPO) A Resolution to Support Increasing Washington State's Regional Transportation Planning Organization's Program Funding

RESOLUTION NO. 11-2024

WHEREAS, the Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization (WWVMPO/SRTPO) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization as well as the state-designated Regional Transportation Planning Organization; and

WHEREAS; in 1991-1993, the Washington State Legislature appropriated $3.4 million to fund fifteen (15) RTPOs; and

WHEREAS; thirty years later, an allocation of $4.9 million supports seventeen (17) RTPOs; AND

WHEREAS; the current funding allocation has not kept up with inflation, noting that $3.4 million in May 1991 has the same buying power as $7.8 million in 2024.; and

WHEREAS; funding has not increased to account for additional responsibilities required of RTPOs; and

WHEREAS; the current funding levels are inadequate for many Washington RTPOs to participate with local and state partners as envisioned by the Legislature, eroding the capacity for collaboration; and

WHEREAS; increasing the RTPO funding program to provide each RTPO with a minimum of $400,000 per biennium, which is enough to support the workload of one full-time equivalent position, including fixed overhead expenses, is vital to ensuring capacity to meet requirements.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WWVMPO/SRTPO POLICY BOARD, supports efforts to increase Washington State's RTPO funding by $6.8 million, bringing the RTPO funding program to $11.7 million and, thereafter, periodically adjusting the funding allocation for inflation.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 4th of September 2024.

Signed:

Ron Dunning, Chair
WWVMPO/SRTPO Policy Board

Attested:

Andres Gomez, Executive Director
WWVMPO/SRTPO

Approved as to Form:

Jared Hawkins, WWVMPO/SRTPO Legal Counsel

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG)
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization

A Resolution Supporting a State-wide)
Request to Increase Funding for the Regional) RESOLUTION 24-18
Transportation Planning Organization Program)

WHEREAS, The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments is federally designated as the regional Metropolitan Planning Organization and serves as the lead agency for state-designated Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO) serving the five counties of Southwest Washington; and

WHEREAS, in the 1991-1993 biennium the Washington State Legislature appropriated $3.4 million to fund fifteen (15) Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) and thirty-four (34) years later an allocation of $4.9 million supports seventeen (17) RTPOs; and

WHEREAS, the current funding allocation has not kept up with inflation, noting that $3.4 million in May 1991 has the same buying power as $7.8 million in 2023; and

WHEREAS, funding has not increased to account for the additional responsibilities required of RTPOs and are inadequate for many Washington RTPOs to participate with local and state partners as envisioned by the Legislature, eroding the capacity for collaboration and support of local agencies responsible for local transportation infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, increasing the RTPO funding program to provide each RTPO with a base of $400,000 per biennium, which is enough to support the workload of one full-time equivalent position, including fixed overhead expenses, is vital to ensuring capacity to meet requirements; and

WHEREAS, the SWRTPO has specifically worked to coordinate the development of bicycle and pedestrian facilities to make regional connections through a Bicycle Trail Assessment and Regional Trails Plan as one of its specific improvements to regional planning, and

WHEREAS, elected and appointed representatives serving from Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific and Wahkiakum Counties engage in the work of the SWRTPO;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the SWRTPO Board supports efforts to increase Washington State's RTPO funding by $6.8 million, bringing the total state-wide RTPO program funding to $11.7 million per biennium and, thereafter, periodically adjusting the funding allocation for inflation.

PASSED AND APPROVED this 11th day of September 2024.

William A. Fashing, Executive Director

Lee Tischer, SWRTPO Chair