

SECTION 7

Recommendations and Conclusions

MTP Purpose

The purpose for developing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is to assess the existing transportation system, look at what can be expected in terms of growth and development, identify how the regional transportation system might perform in the future, and then develop a set of proposed programs and projects that can be reasonably funded during the next 23 years. The MTP is not a static document, but rather a dynamic document that adapts to ever changing conditions. The Plan must change and adapt over time as actual development occurs and new deficiencies and unanticipated travel patterns emerge. Also, changes will be reflected in the Plan as economic realities become apparent, such as the need for additional revenues to offset effects of inflation on preservation, maintenance and operations costs, as well as new capital construction.

Annual Updates

Given the dynamic nature of a growing metropolitan area, it is recommended that the Metropolitan Transportation Plan be updated annually, in conjunction with local jurisdictions' Comprehensive Plan amendment process. SRTC receives copies of Comprehensive Plan amendment requests, platting information, building permits and employment annually, along with the list of transportation projects that have been completed during the previous year. All of this information is used to determine how the transportation system is being impacted and, conversely, how the transportation system is impacting each community's development patterns. Updating the plan annually allows jurisdictions to maintain a pulse on the safe and efficient movement of people and goods into and through the metropolitan area, and support efforts to develop a multi-modal transportation system that encourages walking, biking, public transportation, and efficient freight and goods movement

Each year Congress and the Washington State Legislature and local elected officials have the potential to change the transportation dynamic in the region by advancing or delaying anticipated projects already contained within the plan. The timing and sequencing of those projects can materially affect both the timing of development/redevelopment of different regions in the metropolitan area and the travel patterns of motorists. When these conditions change, the MTP needs to be updated with the potential impacts of those changes in order to ensure the appropriate mix of programs and projects are included in the plan.

Conclusion

This MTP is a 23-year look into the future, based on a large number of both facts and assumptions developed during a snapshot in time. The MTP shows the regional transportation system's operation and maintenance can be reasonably

achieved during the planning horizon; however, additional transportation revenues will be necessary if the most significant deficiencies are to be addressed. The nearly flat rate of increase in Washington State Motor Vehicle Fuel Tax (MVFT) to local jurisdictions is not expected to offset the inflation rate for materials and services. Local options such as the vehicle registration fee will be necessary to ensure there are local funds to provide the local matching requirement to State and Federal Grants.

At the State and Federal level, grant programs cannot be relied on to meet the increasing local transportation needs of the region. With the growing state and national emphasis on bridges and the safe and efficient freight and goods movement, projects such as the North Spokane Corridor, I-90 widening, and S.R. 195 South, all of which are on the National Highway System, can reasonably be expected to fare well in the intense competition for limited resources. Diligence and focused attention on regionally significant projects such as these will be necessary in order to ensure they are advanced in a timely manner.

The next 23 years will also start a new era for bridges. Many of the region's bridges are either at or nearing the end of their functional or physical design life. Many of these bridges, such as Latah Creek, are historical and will therefore require significant time and attention in their rehabilitation or replacement. Other bridges, both large and small, provide a critical link in communities. The need to close or severely weight restrict bridges could have a significant impact on commerce and travel patterns in the region by redistributing trips to areas unprepared for the increase in both traffic and trucks. The rehabilitation and/or replacement will require a significant infusion of State or Federal funding. The upcoming federal transportation bill is expected to take a larger roll in the rehabilitation of the nation's transportation infrastructure.

Public transportation will be expected to take on a greater share of the growing demands placed on the region's transportation system. Increased congestion, higher fuel prices, and the continued densification of the region as a result of implementing the states' Growth Management Act is expected to motivate commuters and discretionary riders to seek public transportation choices along key corridors in the region. Further development of the public transportation system with transit centers, park and ride lots, along with service and system enhancements are expected to help Spokane Transit Authority achieve a greater portion of the transportation market.

Lastly, the Spokane region has spent the past 20 years developing and enhancing the regional pedestrian and bicycling network. Development of the Centennial Trail, Fish Lake Trail, Ben Burr Trail, and a whole host of connecting routes have helped Spokane to increase these modes of transportation to the same level of public transportation in the region. It is expected that improvements to the region's sidewalks and trails in conjunction with bike racks on buses, bicycle lockers at park and ride lots, and the integration of these

features into streets, roads, and highway design standards will further increase walking and bicycling utilization as part of the transportation solution for the region.

Land uses, plans, programs, and projects contained in the MTP will go a long way to addressing the region's transportation needs during the next two decades; however, they will not eliminate congestion. This plan will not be able to maintain the existing level of service on all of the region's transportation system. Managing the growth, making strategic transportation investments and making them in a timely manner will help offset the rate of increase, and potentially encourage the need to make better transportation choices in the region.