

“The RTP provides the framework and foundation for the region’s transportation future.”

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLAN OVERVIEW

PURPOSE

The Rogue Valley Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a multi-modal transportation plan designed to meet the anticipated 25-year transportation needs within the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) planning area boundary.

Regional transportation systems have significant and long-term impacts on the economic well-being and quality of life. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity through accessibility to land. Furthermore, the performance of the transportation system affects such public policy concerns as air quality, environmental resource consumption, social equity, economic development, safety and security.

Regional transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation and other societal goals. The planning process is more than merely listing highway and transit capital investments. It requires developing strategies for operating, managing, maintaining and financing the regional transportation system in such a way as to advance long-term goals.

Development and adoption of an RTP is required to ensure that the area remains eligible to receive state and federal transportation funding. The federal and state rules requiring completion and adoption of the plan include federal legislation: Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act), the U.S. Clean Air Act amendments of 1990, and Oregon’s Transportation Planning Rule (TPR).

As a product of multi-jurisdictional collaboration, the RTP reflects local jurisdiction policy and planning. While it is consistent with local plans, the RTP horizon extends beyond the horizon of most other adopted plans to fulfill federal requirements. Many of the long-range analysis and conditions described here are not within the scope of existing local plans and, therefore, should not be interpreted as the conditions planned or anticipated by the local jurisdictions. Within the region, transportation policy and planning is directed at the jurisdictional level.

As a regional plan, this document does not provide designs for individual projects. Nor does it identify the smaller, local projects that RVMPO cities and the county build with local funds. Such details are not within the scope of a regional plan. Project design is

completed on a project-by-project basis, typically with close involvement of the immediate project areas.

The RTP uses projections for future growth and development that are based on current trends and approved land uses, policies and ordinances. It identifies the basic land-use assumptions through the year 2045, including forecasts of future population and employment, and the resulting demand on the regional arterial and collector street system. Future travel conditions were developed through travel demand modeling, using a peer-reviewed model developed by ODOT's Transportation Planning and Analysis Unit in collaboration with MPO and local jurisdictional staff.

PLANNING PERIOD

The RTP serves as a guide for the management of existing transportation facilities and for the design and implementation of future transportation facilities through 2045. The plan provides the framework and foundation for the region's transportation future. Policies and project descriptions are provided to enable agencies and the public to understand and track projects that will be needed over the next 25 years. The plan looks at different types of transportation opportunities that are available and potentially beneficial, and considers how these various elements could fit together to foster a coordinated system, improving system management and operation.

Although the RTP focuses on intra-regional (within the region) travel, it also addresses inter-regional (through-region) travel. Ultimately, the plan reflects the balance the region strikes between competing demands for funding and competing views as to the best course for development across the region. The funding resources identified in the Plan Implementation section are only those upon which the region can rely, so that the projects identified may be reasonably anticipated to occur with known funding.

AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY

The 2045 RTP also meets federal Clean Air Act requirements. Analysis shows that through the horizon of the plan, under land-use conditions described and projects and policies that can be implemented within the current funding forecast, the region will meet standards for emissions of carbon monoxide (CO) within the Medford area, and particulates less than 10 microns in size (PM₁₀) within the entire planning area. Information about the Air Quality Conformity analysis and details about the process for meeting air quality requirements are contained in the Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD) developed for this plan.

REGIONAL PLANNING AND ROGUE VALLEY'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Taking a regional approach to transportation planning gives communities the opportunity to look at projected future development and resulting travel demands and make decisions to avoid some of unwelcome consequences of growth, such as sprawl development, traffic congestion and deteriorating air quality.

Thorough planning has become more critical as the cost of expanding roads to meet traffic demand has grown and the land on which to build has become scarcer and more valuable to the region for uses other than transportation. At the regional level, links between land use and roadway congestion may be more clearly seen and addressed. Through this plan the public can see future transportation needs and take necessary steps now to address them efficiently and effectively.

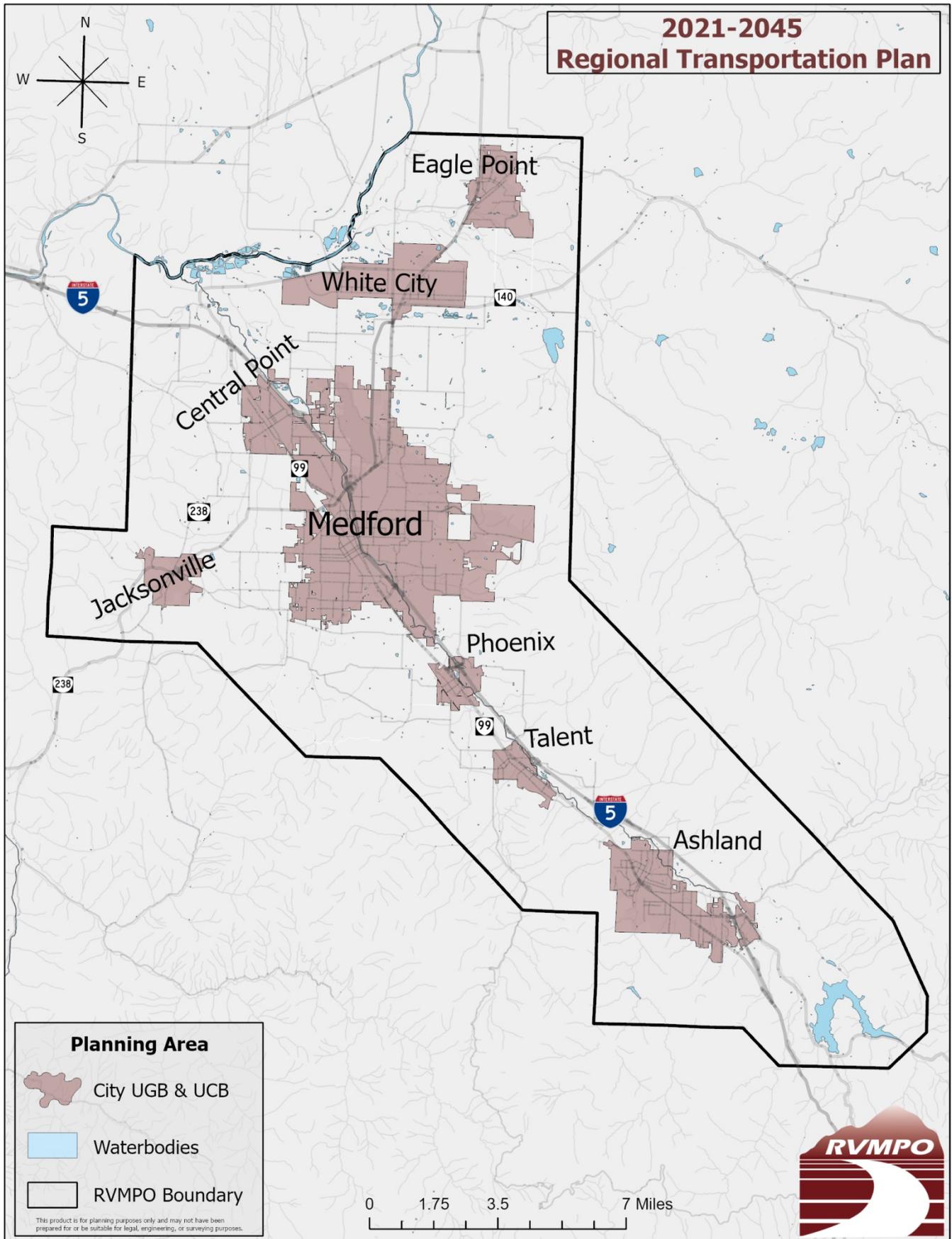
The state and federal regulatory framework that guides RTP development embodies many of the goals routinely brought forward by the public when they talk about the Rogue Valley area's future. None of the jurisdictions within the RVMPO exists in isolation: residents live in one city, work in another, shop and recreate in others. Significant development in one city is bound to effect conditions in other cities. The RTP, like the regional transportation system, links the region's communities. It identifies transportation needs they all hold in common and offers a foundation for addressing those needs as the region grows.

KEEPING THE RTP CURRENT

The RVMPO adopted its first regional plan in the mid-1990s. This 2045 update is part of a regularly occurring series of updates. Because of the Rogue Valley region's air quality conditions, the RVMPO must be able to show consistently that the region is in conformity with air quality standards for at least 20 years into the future. That conformity demonstration must be made at least every four years, and triggers an update of the RTP. The next such update will be required in Spring 2025. These updates give the RVMPO the opportunity to evaluate past projections for growth and anticipated use of the system. During the plan update process, the RVMPO looks at existing land uses, recent development trends, and the use of the different modal components of the transportation system to refine future growth projections and their implications for travel.

Although an RTP update occurs only every four years, it is routinely amended. Most commonly, it is amended to include projects where new funding has become available. In order for a project to receive federal funding it must be in this plan.

Map 1.1.1: RVMPO Planning Area

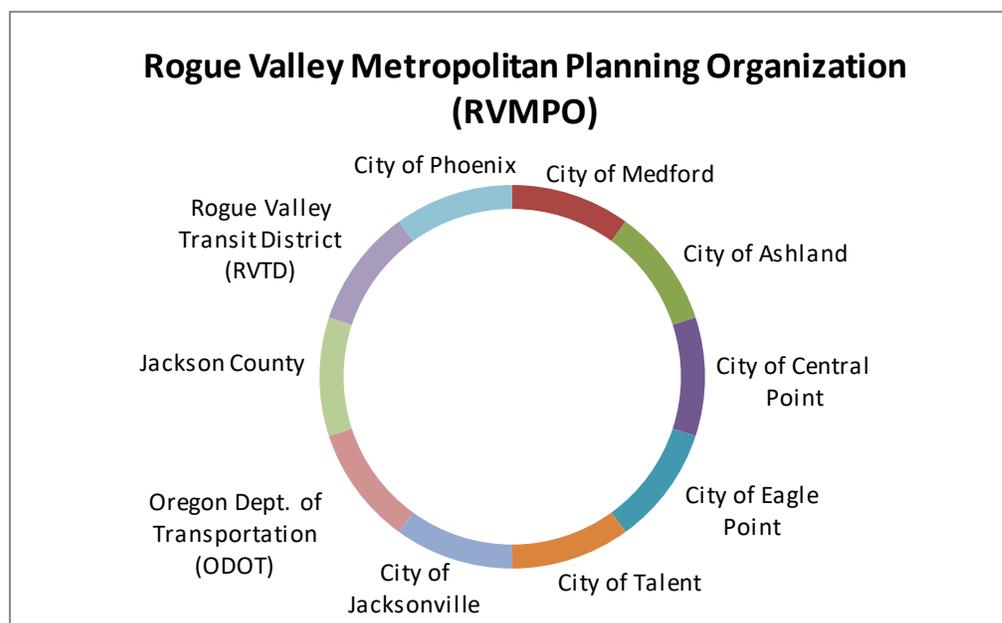


1.2 THE RVMPO

COMPOSITION

The RVMPO is a consortium of seven cities and the surrounding unincorporated area of Jackson County that is within or adjacent to the Medford urban area, plus the Oregon Department of Transportation and Rogue Valley Transportation District, the region's public transit provider. In addition, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency participate in the RVMPO process, including development of this plan. Congress requires that metropolitan areas with a population of at least 50,000 establish a metropolitan planning process that is continuing, collaborative and comprehensive, in order for the region to continue receiving federal transportation funds. Currently there are some 400 metropolitan planning organizations in the nation. This plan fulfills federal requirements that metropolitan areas develop and maintain long-range transportation plans.

Figure 1.1: RVMPO Consortium



The Medford area reached the population threshold and was designated a Metropolitan Statistical Area after the 1980 Census. As a result, the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) was designated by the Governor of Oregon as the Rogue Valley MPO (RVMPO) on July 27, 1982. The RVCOG Board of Directors subsequently delegated responsibility for RVMPO policy functions to a Policy Committee of elected and appointed officials from all member jurisdictions.

Local jurisdictions initially involved in the planning activities of the RVMPO were Central Point, Jackson County and Medford. Phoenix was added to the urbanized area (UZA) in 1990 and subsequently became a member of the RVMPO. The 2000 Census showed that the Medford urbanized area again expanded to include Ashland, Jacksonville and Talent, and the RVMPO was required under federal law to once again expand its boundary to include those jurisdictions. Eagle Point became a voluntary MPO member after the 2000 Census. The 2010 Census determined that the city was part of the Medford Urbanized Area, so no official boundary change resulted.

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THE COMMITTEE PROCESS

The RVMPO functions under the guidance and direction of three committees that meet regularly and address issues relating to metropolitan planning responsibilities. Each committee operates under its own set of bylaws. Committee makeup, roles and responsibilities are outlined below, and described more fully in the RVMPO's Public Participation Plan. Committee memberships are listed in the opening pages of this document.

POLICY COMMITTEE

The Policy Committee is the decision-making body for the RVMPO. It is composed of officials from each of the member jurisdictions: Medford, Central Point, Ashland, Talent, Jacksonville, Eagle Point and Phoenix, Jackson County, RVTD and ODOT. The Policy Committee meets monthly.

TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) makes recommendations to the Policy Committee and is responsible for gathering, reviewing, and validating technical information and data used in RVMPO functions, including this update of the RTP. The TAC includes staff from all member jurisdictions, as well as the Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), the Department of Land Conservation and Development (DLCD), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Staff members bring their individual community and agency issues to the technical review discussions. The TAC meets monthly.

PUBLIC ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Public Advisory Council (PAC) makes recommendations to the Policy Committee from the public's perspective on proposed long-range transportation plans and priorities for state and federal funding and other transportation issues. The PAC serves as a public sounding board for regional issues, and as such is a key public participation activity for the RVMPO. Membership is based on geographic area and special area of

interest, such as mass transit, freight, ect.. PAC members are appointed by the Policy Committee to serve two-year terms.

1.3 PLAN CONTENTS

PLAN REQUIREMENTS

The 2021-2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) updates the federally mandated multimodal plan that was first adopted by the Rogue Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (RVMPO) in 1995. Since adoption of the first plan, the RVMPO planning area has more than doubled in geographic area as a result of population growth. This plan update replaces the 2017-2042 RTP, which was updated in 2017. The 2021 update is intended to comply with current federal transportation legislation, Funding America's Surface Transportation Act (the FAST Act). Generally, transportation acts require the nation's metropolitan areas to adopt and maintain a plan that includes both long- and short-range strategies and actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods, addressing current and future transportation demands (23 CFR 450.322). Funding for all projects in the plan must be identified, and the plan must incorporate measures to assure that both project costs and anticipated revenue are reasonable.

In regions such as the Rogue Valley, where air quality is an issue, the RTP must be updated at least every four years and the plan must be accompanied by an air quality conformity determination. The air quality document must show that through the horizon of the plan, the National Ambient Air Quality Standards will be met. For the Rogue Valley, the document must show that transportation-related emissions of carbon monoxide (CO) within the Medford Urban Growth Boundary will not exceed the budget set in the Medford CO State Implementation Plan (SIP). Also, the RVMPO must show that transportation-related emissions of Particulate Matter less than 10 microns in size (PM₁₀) within the Medford-Ashland Air Quality Maintenance Area will not exceed the budget set in the Medford-Ashland PM₁₀ SIP.

"Funding for all projects must be identified, and the plan must assure that both project costs and anticipated revenue are reasonable."

Oregon's comprehensive land use planning law also shapes this plan, although adoption of the plan itself is not a land use action. The Oregon Transportation Planning Rule sets certain standards for jurisdictions within metropolitan planning areas. This plan contains provisions relating to those standards.

DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

This update of the RTP is presented in ten chapters. Each chapter reflects the plan's major components, or key steps in the plan's development.

The RTP chapters include:

Chapter 1, Introduction - Contains summary information about the RTP and the RVMPO, the planning process, and plan requirements.

Chapter 2, Goals and Policies - This is the policy framework that guides development, implementation and evaluation of the RTP.

Chapter 3, Public Involvement - Contains information on community outreach conducted related to the development of the 2021-2045 RTP.

Chapter 4, Planning Area Characteristics - Provides an overview of demographics, including employment characteristics and commute patterns.

Chapter 5, Regional Transportation System - The largest chapter in the RTP, it contains sections on Transportation System Management, roadways, transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, parking, Transportation Options, air and rail, waterways and pipelines, and multi-modal safety and security.

Chapter 6, Air Quality - The air quality conformity process required for regional transportation projects within the RVMPO area is described.

Chapter 7, Environmental Considerations - Various natural and man-made resource sites in the region are identified and their intersection with planned projects is discussed.

Chapter 8, Plan Implementation - Contains information on how and why projects are listed in the RTP; the criteria and considerations used by the RVMPO to fund projects; and contains the RTP Project List, listing projects by jurisdiction and timeframe of implementation (short, medium, long).

Chapter 9, Financial Plan - Contains details about cost and revenue forecasts and the funding needed to implement the RTP; includes the best available projections of local, state and federal transportation funds to pay for the projects identified in Chapter 8.

Chapter 10, Future Conditions - Describes results of travel demand modeling and predicting areas of future congestion, as well as other challenges related to transportation planning.

Appendix A - Transportation Planning Acronyms and Terms

1.4 PLAN CONSISTENCY

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM PLANS

In the Rogue Valley, the RTP also serves as the region's Transportation System Plan (TSP) as required under Oregon land-use law. Oregon's Statewide Planning Goal 12 and its implementing division, the Transportation Planning Rule (TPR) (OAR Chapter 660, Division 12) requires such a plan. By adopting the RTP the RVMPO Policy Committee is not taking a land-use action under state law. Rather, local jurisdictions

direct transportation policy and planning through adoption of their comprehensive plans and TSP's. The RTP draws projects from jurisdictions' TSPs, and so is consistent with those plans. The RTP will be implemented by local jurisdictions through the TSP's and local development-review processes. The RTP's 20-year horizon, as required by federal law, extends beyond the horizons of the local plans, so not all long-range projects and strategies that could be in the RTP are identified. This means that the system performance analysis should be considered only for this plan. As jurisdictions update their TSPs, new projects will be added to the RTP. The RTP's frequent update cycle (every four years) readily accommodates updates to local plans. The updates are intended to ensure that the regional plan can adapt to changing needs and circumstances.

Language in the TRP (OAR 660-012-0016) specific to consistency between the RTP and TSP's is provided below:

Coordination with Federally-Required Regional Transportation Plans in Metropolitan Areas

(2) When an MPO adopts or amends an RTP that relates to compliance with this division (Transportation Planning), the affected local governments shall review the adopted plan or amendment and either:

(a) Make a finding that the proposed RTP amendment or update is consistent with the applicable provisions of adopted regional and local transportation system plan and comprehensive plan and compliant with applicable provisions of this division; or

(b) Adopt amendments to the relevant regional or local TSP that make the RTP and the applicable TSP's consistent with one another and compliant with applicable provisions of this division. Necessary plan amendments or updates shall be prepared and adopted in coordination with the federally-required plan update or amendment. Such amendments shall be initiated no later than 30 days from the adoption of the RTP amendment or update and shall be adopted no later than one year from the adoption of the RTP amendment or update or according to a work plan approved by the commission (Land Conservation and Development Commission). A plan amendment is "initiated" for purposes of this subsection where the affected local government files a post-acknowledgement plan amendment notice with the department (Department of Land Conservation and Development) as provided in OAR Chapter 660, Division 18.

OTHER PLANS

The RTP also must be consistent with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) plans, including the Oregon Transportation Plan and the Oregon Highway Plan. The Oregon Transportation Commission adopted the multi-modal Oregon Transportation Plan (OTP) in 2006. The OTP provides a framework for policy objectives including expansion of ODOT's role in funding non-highway investments, maintaining the assets in place, optimizing the existing system performance through technology and better system integration, creating sustainable funding and investing in strategic capacity enhancements.

The OTP has four sections: (1) Challenges, Opportunities, and Vision; (2) Goals and Policies; 3) Summary of Financial and Technical Analyses; and (4) Implementation. The OTP meets a legal requirement that the OTC develops and maintains a plan for a multimodal transportation system for Oregon. The OTP also implements the federal requirements for a state transportation plan, and meets land use planning requirements for state agency coordination and the TPR. The transportation rule requires ODOT, the cities, and the counties of Oregon, as well as MPOs, to cooperate and to develop balanced transportation systems.

The Oregon Highway Plan establishes long-range policies and investment strategies for the state highway system. The Oregon Transportation Commission adopted the Oregon Highway Plan on March 18, 1999.

The plan contains the following elements:

- **Vision** – presents a vision for the future of the state highway system, describes economic and demographic trends in Oregon and future transportation technologies and demographic trends in Oregon and future transportation technologies, summarizes the policy and legal context of the plan, and contains information on the current highway system.
- **Policy** – contains goals, policies and actions in five areas: system definition, system management, access management, travel alternatives and environmental and scenic resources.
- **System** – contains analysis of state highway needs, revenue forecasts, descriptions of investment policies and strategies, implementation strategy and performance measures.