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Administration Annex ~ 207 4th Avenue N ~ Kelso, WA 98626-4195
(360) 577-3041 ~ www.cwcog.org

Date: October 24, 2023

Subject: Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan for the Longview Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization; SEPA - Determination of NonSignificance

Comment Deadline: November 7, 2023

Agency Contact: Robert Stevens, AICP; Senior Transportation Planner

Attached is a SEPA threshold determination (Determination of NonSignificance) and related environmental checklist issued pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Rules (Washington Administrative Code Chapter 197-11) for Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan for the Longview Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization.

Please forward any comments to Robert Stevens, Senior Transportation Planner at CWCOG, 207 4th Avenue North, Administration Annex, Kelso, WA 98626-4195 or by email cwcog@cwcog.org. For questions please call (360) 577-3041. Comments on the DNS must be received by 5:00 p.m. on November 7, 2023.

If you need special accommodations to participate in this process, please call us at 360-577-3041 by 5:00 p.m. November 1, 2023. Ask for the ADA Coordinator. For TDD users, please use the state's toll-free relay service, (800) 833-6388, and ask the operator to dial 360-956-7575.

SEPA Checklist Distribution

via SEPA Register

Washington State Department of Ecology

via Email

Federal Agencies: Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration

State Agencies: Washington State Department of Transportation
Oregon Department of Transportation

Counties: Cowlitz County
Grays Harbor County
Lewis County
Pacific County
Wahkiakum County

Cities or Towns:	Aberdeen	Morton
	Castle Rock	Mossyrock
	Cathlamet	Napavine
	Centralia	Oakville
	Chehalis	Ocean Shores
	Cosmopolis	Pe Ell
	Elma	Rainier, Oregon
	Hoquiam	Raymond
	Ilwaco	South Bend
	Kalama	Toledo
	Kelso	Vader
	Long Beach	Westport
	Longview	Winlock
	McCleary	Woodland
	Montesano	

Tribal Governments: Chinook Nation
Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
Cowlitz Indian Tribe
Quinault Indian Nation
Shoalwater Bay Tribe

Neighboring RTPOs: Peninsula RTPO
Puget Sound Regional Council
Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Council
Thurston Regional Planning Commission
Yakima Valley Conference of Governments

via Web

www.cwco.org



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STATE ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

Determination of NonSignificance

October 24, 2023

Lead agency: Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments

Agency Contact: Robert Stevens, AICP; Senior Transportation Planner; rstevens@cwco.org; (360) 577-3041

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) provides an overarching vision for the next twenty-seven (27) years to guide future investment decisions impacting the multimodal regional transportation system serving the Longview Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SWRTPO).

The MPO and SWRTPO includes the entire geographic area of Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum Counties in Washington as well as the City of Rainier, Oregon.

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments is located at 207 4th Avenue North, Administration Annex, Kelso, WA 98626-4195 and maybe reach via phone at (360) 577-3041 or via email at cwcog@cwco.org.

The Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments has determined that this proposal will not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c). We have reviewed the attached Environmental Checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

This determination is based on the following findings and conclusions:

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) is a long-range plan for a geographic area encompassing five (5) counties in Southwest Washington (Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, Wahkiakum) as well as the City of Rainier, Oregon. Adoption of Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) is a nonproject action. There are many transportation projects identified in the M/RTP to implement the vision, guiding principles, goals, and policies of the plan. However, there is no requirement that any of these projects be implemented. When, or if, any project identified in the plan was to proceed forward toward implementation, a separate project-specific environmental review would need to occur. There are no direct, significant, adverse environmental impacts from adopting the M/RTP.

This DNS is issued under WAC 197-11-340(2) and the comment period will end on November 7, 2023.

Responsible Official: William A. Fashing

Position/Title: Executive Director

Phone: (360) 577-3041

Email: bfashing@cwco.org

Address: 207 4th Avenue North, Administration Annex, Kelso, WA 98626-4195

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

There is no agency appeal.

SEPA ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST

Purpose of checklist:

Governmental agencies use this checklist to help determine whether the environmental impacts of your proposal are significant. This information is also helpful to determine if available avoidance, minimization or compensatory mitigation measures will address the probable significant impacts or if an environmental impact statement will be prepared to further analyze the proposal.

Instructions for applicants:

This environmental checklist asks you to describe some basic information about your proposal. Please answer each question accurately and carefully, to the best of your knowledge. You may need to consult with an agency specialist or private consultant for some questions. You may use "not applicable" or "does not apply" only when you can explain why it does not apply and not when the answer is unknown. You may also attach or incorporate by reference additional studies reports. Complete and accurate answers to these questions often avoid delays with the SEPA process as well as later in the decision-making process.

The checklist questions apply to all parts of your proposal, even if you plan to do them over a period of time or on different parcels of land. Attach any additional information that will help describe your proposal or its environmental effects. The agency to which you submit this checklist may ask you to explain your answers or provide additional information reasonably related to determining if there may be significant adverse impact.

Instructions for Lead Agencies:

Please adjust the format of this template as needed. Additional information may be necessary to evaluate the existing environment, all interrelated aspects of the proposal and an analysis of adverse impacts. The checklist is considered the first but not necessarily the only source of information needed to make an adequate threshold determination. Once a threshold determination is made, the lead agency is responsible for the completeness and accuracy of the checklist and other supporting documents.

Use of checklist for nonproject proposals:

For nonproject proposals (such as ordinances, regulations, plans and programs), complete the applicable parts of sections A and B plus the SUPPLEMENTAL SHEET FOR NONPROJECT ACTIONS (Part D). Please completely answer all questions that apply and note that the words "project," "applicant," and "property or site" should be read as "proposal," "proponent," and "affected geographic area," respectively. The lead agency may exclude (for non-projects) questions in Part B - Environmental Elements – that do not contribute meaningfully to the analysis of the proposal.

A. Background

1. Name of proposed project, if applicable:

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan

2. Name of applicant:

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG)

3. Address and phone number of applicant and contact person:

Contact Person at CWCOG: Robert Stevens, AICP; Senior Transportation Planner
Address: 207 4th Avenue North, Administration Annex, Kelso, WA 98626-4195
Phone: (360) 577-3041

4. Date checklist prepared:

October 24, 2023

5. Agency requesting checklist:

Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments (CWCOG)

6. Proposed timing or schedule (including phasing, if applicable):

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan is scheduled for adoption consideration on November 16, 2023 by the CWCOG Board of Directors, the Metropolitan Planning Organization policy board. The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization is scheduled for adoption consideration on December 6, 2023.

7. Do you have any plans for future additions, expansion, or further activity related to or connected with this proposal? If yes, explain.

Yes. Updates to the Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan are required by the federal government every five years. Amendments to this plan after adoption are anticipated as outlined in Chapter 6 to update the System Performance Report and to update the Transportation Projects List (including priorities) as well as process for determining project prioritizations. Other amendments could be identified as a result of the biennial review required by the Revised Code of Washington (state law). The Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan is reviewed periodically at CWCOG Board of Directors or Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization board meetings. All board meetings are open to the public.

8. List any environmental information you know about that has been prepared, or will be prepared, directly related to this proposal.

In Chapter 4 of Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) it incorporates by reference a web map showing the approximate locations of the transportation projects included in the plan. Further, in said Chapter it mentions that there are layers available on the web map for demographic indicators (low income, seniors, language barriers, etc.) and Environmental Justice indices from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) EJSCREEN environmental justice screening tool. These layers allow a "first review" high-level screening of potential environmental constraints for each of the transportation projects included in the plan. Whenever a specific project included in the plan begins moving forward toward implementation a much more extensive individual environmental review will be completed. A detailed environmental review for each project would be beyond the scope of the

M/RTP. This interactive data presented on a web map that is part of the plan simply allows an initial review.

9. Do you know whether applications are pending for governmental approvals of other proposals directly affecting the property covered by your proposal? If yes, explain.

This question is not applicable since Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan is a long-range, regional plan for a large geographic area; the plan is not site-specific.

10. List any government approvals or permits that will be needed for your proposal, if known.

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan will be reviewed and approved by several federal and state agencies: 1) Federal Highway Administration, 2) Federal Transit Administration, 3) Washington State Department of Transportation, and 4) Oregon Department of Transportation.

11. Give brief, complete description of your proposal, including the proposed uses and the size of the project and site. There are several questions later in this checklist that ask you to describe certain aspects of your proposal. You do not need to repeat those answers on this page. (Lead agencies may modify this form to include additional specific information on project description.)

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) provides an overarching vision for the next twenty-seven (27) years (2024-2050) and is a guide for future investment decisions impacting the multimodal regional transportation system serving the Longview Urban Area (Longview and Kelso, WA; Rainier, OR) Metropolitan Planning Organization and the Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization (Cowlitz County, Grays Harbor County, Lewis County, Pacific County, Wahkiakum County). The M/RTP should be used to guide decisions addressing current and anticipated demands on the entire transportation system from roadways to trails or shared-use paths to the public transportation network to freight facilities.

12. Location of the proposal. Give sufficient information for a person to understand the precise location of your proposed project, including a street address, if any, and section, township, and range, if known. If a proposal would occur over a range of area, provide the range or boundaries of the site(s). Provide a legal description, site plan, vicinity map, and topographic map, if reasonably available. While you should submit any plans required by the agency, you are not required to duplicate maps or detailed plans submitted with any permit applications related to this checklist.

The Southwest Washington Regional Transportation Planning Organization includes the entire geographic area encompassed by Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum Counties. The Metropolitan Planning Organization includes the Cities of Longview and Kelso, Washington; the City of Rainier, Oregon; and certain unincorporated portions of Cowlitz County (Washington) and Columbia County (Oregon).

B. Environmental Elements

As stated on page one of this environmental checklist, lead agencies may exclude questions in Part B – Environmental Elements – that do not contribute meaningfully to the analysis of the proposal for non-project proposals. Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan is a non-

project proposal that plans for the future of the regional transportation system in Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Lewis, Pacific, and Wahkiakum Counties as well as the City of Rainier, Oregon. This plan is not specific to any one site and thus the responses to all questions in Part B would begin with this information. There are many transportation projects identified in the plan; however, each one will undergo a project-specific environmental review when, or if, it proceeds forward with implementation. It would be beyond the scope of the Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan to attempt a project-specific review of every project identified in the plan based on only basic project information. While some of the Part B questions could have additional, general information included in an answer, such an answer would not contribute meaningfully to the analysis of the proposal. For these reasons, the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments, as SEPA lead agency for Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan, is excluding all questions in Part B as allowed.

C. Signature

The above answers are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that the lead agency is relying on them to make its decision.

Signature: _____

Name of Signee: William A. Fashing

Position and Agency/Organization: Executive Director / CWCOG

Date Submitted: October 24, 2023

D. Supplemental sheet for nonproject actions

Because these questions are very general, it may be helpful to read them in conjunction with the list of the elements of the environment.

When answering these questions, be aware of the extent the proposal, or the types of activities likely to result from the proposal, would affect the item at a greater intensity or at a faster rate than if the proposal were not implemented. Respond briefly and in general terms.

1. How would the proposal be likely to increase discharge to water; emissions to air; production, storage, or release of toxic or hazardous substances; or production of noise?

Adoption of Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) will not increase discharge to water; emissions to air; production, storage, or release of toxic or hazardous substances; or production of noise. Future transportation projects and programs identified in the M/RTP, or others consistent with the M/RTP, have the potential to cause these impacts. Any project-specific impacts will be addressed during an environmental review conducted for the individual project as it is implemented by the state or local government agency.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce such increases are:

The M/RTP plans for a balanced, multimodal regional transportation system including strategies and projects to support non-polluting, non-motorized transportation modes. There are also strategies and projects identified in the M/RTP to improve efficiency in the existing transportation system operations. In the future as vehicle fleets are modernized, the result will be “cleaner” and less polluting vehicles. Before transportation projects are constructed, stormwater quality and quantity are addressed in project design and during a project-specific environmental review with mitigation measures identified as appropriate. Stormwater runoff can be treated with biofiltration swales, or other approved treatment facilities, prior to discharge into surface waters.

2. How would the proposal be likely to affect plants, animals, fish, or marine life?

The action of adopting Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) will not affect plants, animals, fish, or marine life. At the time a project identified in this plan, or others consistent with the plan, is implemented, the responsible agency will address this question regarding whether/how much flora and fauna are affected.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve plants, animals, fish, or marine life are:

Adoption of the M/RTP will not affect plants, animals, fish, or marine life. Measures to protect or conserve flora and fauna will be addressed during the project design phase.

3. How would the proposal be likely to deplete energy or natural resources?

The proposal to adopt an updated plan, Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP), will not deplete energy or natural resources. Some transportation projects identified in the plan, or others consistent with the plan, when implemented could deplete energy or natural resources. Vehicles are users of energy resources and a transportation project on a roadway could deplete natural resources. However, there are many projects identified in the plan that would implement Complete Streets features to make roadways safer and more accessible for all users not just drivers. Specific types of Complete Streets projects in the plan include projects to develop new bike lanes to encourage more people to use non-motorized transportation. By having these types of active transportation projects, the M/RTP encourages not depleting energy or natural resources. Further, there are also public transportation projects in the plan that could encourage more people to hopefully ride the bus rather than use roadways individually.

Proposed measures to protect or conserve energy and natural resources are:

During a project-level environmental review, when the details of the design are known and all environmental impacts are able to be fully known any mitigation measures will be able to be proposed.

4. How would the proposal be likely to use or affect environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection; such as parks, wilderness, wild and scenic rivers, threatened or endangered species habitat, historic or cultural sites, wetlands, floodplains, or prime farmlands?

Adoption of the M/RTP would not use, or affect, environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection. Transportation projects identified in the M/RTP, or others consistent with it, may traverse within or adjacent to areas designated as environmentally sensitive. The likelihood of any such projects using, or affecting, environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection cannot be determined in a long-range plan, but instead will be identified by the responsible jurisdiction during a project-level environmental review phase with project-specific SEPA environmental checklist.

Proposed measures to protect such resources or to avoid or reduce impacts are:

The adoption of the M/RTP would not use, or affect, environmentally sensitive areas or areas designated (or eligible or under study) for governmental protection; therefore, no mitigation measures are proposed or required. Further analysis of the possible impacts and measures to reduce impacts will be addressed as part of the environmental review of individual transportation projects.

5. How would the proposal be likely to affect land and shoreline use, including whether it would allow or encourage land or shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans?

The adoption of the M/RTP would not by itself affect land and shoreline use or allow or encourage land or shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans. The M/RTP has been developed in coordination with comprehensive plans for local agencies (including from two counties that are fully planning under the Growth Management Act); therefore, there is compatibility between the proposed transportation improvements identified in the M/RTP and proposed land use patterns. Further, the M/RTP emphasizes the importance of coordination between regional transportation and land use planning. CWCOG has a role in reviewing comprehensive plans for consistency with the M/RTP. There is no way in a long-term plan to evaluate the impact on land and shoreline use of all projects identified in the M/RTP. Projects identified in the M/RTP, or future ones consistent with the M/RTP, will be reviewed in a project-level SEPA process to understand the likelihood of affecting land and shoreline use, or allow or encourage land or shoreline uses incompatible with existing plans.

Proposed measures to avoid or reduce shoreline and land use impacts are:

The adoption of the M/RTP would not impact shorelines and land use therefore no mitigation measures are proposed or required. As implementation of the M/RTP progresses, individual transportation projects identified in, or consistent with, the plan will apply for, as necessary, all shoreline and other permits. These future permits will determine whether mitigation measures for shoreline and land use impacts are needed.

6. How would the proposal be likely to increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities?

The adoption of the M/RTP would not directly increase demands on transportation or public services and utilities. The M/RTP includes an emphasis on expanding access to transit and active transportation

(biking and walking), coordination between all modes of travel, and has a focus on expansion of EV (electric vehicle) chargers. As the plan is implemented, projects identified in the plan, or others consistent with the plan, that expand transit and active transportation opportunities may result in an increased use of public services and lower demand on the roadway network. A lower demand on the roadway network should offset increased use of public services from expanded transit and active transportation opportunities. Increased use of EVs and having an expanded vehicle charging network could increase demand for three-phase power locations. While this would not be expected to increase the overall demand on the power grid, it could increase demand on the number of locations where charging stations can be located.

Proposed measures to reduce or respond to such demand(s) are:

The action of adopting the M/RTP will not directly increase demand on transportation or public services and utilities; thus, no mitigation measures are needed. However, with one focus area of the M/RTP being on expanded transit and active transportation opportunities and coordination between all modes of travel, the M/RTP will be helping to reduce or respond to demand on transportation or public services.

7. Identify, if possible, whether the proposal may conflict with local, state, or federal laws or requirements for the protection of the environment.

Moving Forward 2050: A Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan (M/RTP) does not conflict with local, state, or federal laws, or requirements for the protection of the environment. The M/RTP was developed to meet all federal and state laws governing Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plans. This State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) checklist was completed as part of developing the M/RTP and distributed to relevant agencies and the public for review and comment.