

VOLUME II, SECTION VI. J.
PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL (PSRC)
OVERVIEW AND STRUCTURE¹

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is an association of cities, towns, counties, ports and state agencies that serves as a forum for developing policies and making decisions about regional growth management, economic matters, and transportation issues in the central Puget Sound region.

The PSRC is designated under federal law as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett area. PSRC also functions as the Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) for King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties.² In addition to the four counties, the Council's members include 67 cities and towns in the region, three ports, and two state agencies -- the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the state Transportation Commission.³

Mission

The mission of the PSRC, as established in the Interlocal Agreement, is "to preserve and enhance the quality of life in the central Puget Sound area."⁴ To achieve this mission, the PSRC will:

- Prepare, adopt and maintain goals, policies, and standards for regional transportation and regional growth management based on local comprehensive plans of jurisdictions within the region; and
- Ensure that provisions of state and federal laws pertaining to regional transportation planning and regional growth management are implemented in the region.

Functions

The PSRC is a comprehensive planning agency that does not duplicate the activities of local and state operating agencies, but supports their needs with complementary planning and advocacy.⁵ The PSRC also serves as a center for the collection, analysis and dissemination of information vital to citizens and governments in the region.

¹ Sources include the PSRC promotional materials located at <http://www.psrc.org> and the *Enhanced Planning Review of the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett Metropolitan Area*, May 1996.

² State laws establish RTPOs to work on growth management as well as transportation issues. RTPOs are similar to MPOs, but also include rural areas.

³ Associate members of the Council are Island County, the Thurston Regional Planning Council, the Port of Bremerton, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and The Tulalip Tribes. State law requires that the PSRC include as members two state agencies – the Washington State DOT and the State Transportation Commission – as well as the Ports of Everett, Seattle and Tacoma. In addition, a memorandum of understanding with the region's six transit agencies outlines their participation in the Regional Council. Fifty percent of county and city elected officials who serve on the Regional council Executive Board must also serve on the transit board.

⁴ The Interlocal Agreement between PSRC and its member governments establishes the Council's responsibilities.

⁵ VISION 2020, for example, builds on countywide planning policies and comprehensive plans developed by member governments. "The approach to planning embodied in the GMA [Growth Management Act] and VISION 2020, and followed by PSRC, reflects the tradition in the state of "bottom-up" decision-making, in which local jurisdictions lead the process, which is coordinated at the regional level in

The PSRC's Interlocal Agreement with member governments establishes the organization's growth management, transportation, database, forum and technical assistance responsibilities. The Agreement highlights the following functions:

- Meet MPO responsibilities for the four counties, develop a regional transportation plan, review and approve expenditures of federal transportation funds, and identify short-range transportation system development needs and financial strategies.
- Fulfill RTPO requirements prescribed by state law for the four counties; ensure that regional transportation and land-use plans are integrated and that state, regional and local transportation plans are consistent.
- Maintain VISION 2020 as the adopted regional growth and transportation strategy, and prepare multicounty planning policies for the region.
- Develop and maintain a regional data base; forecast and monitor economic, demographic and travel conditions in the region
- Provide technical assistance to local governments, the state and federal governments, and business and community organizations.
- Provide a forum to discuss emerging regional issues.

Organization and Decision-Making

A General Assembly and Executive Board govern the PSRC. The Growth Management and Transportation Policy Boards advise the Executive Board.

The **General Assembly** is composed of member jurisdictions and agencies. The full General Assembly includes all council and commission members from member jurisdictions who cast 1150 votes, which are weighed proportionally according to the population of each jurisdiction. The Assembly meets at least annually to review and vote on key Executive Board recommendations such as those concerning the annual budget and major policy documents.

Executive Board members are appointed by their General Assembly constituents to represent the member governments on a proportional basis. The Board is chaired by the PSRC's president, meets monthly, and carries out delegated powers and responsibilities between meetings of the General Assembly.⁶

The **Operations Committee** is composed of Executive Board members and is chaired by the PSRC's vice president. The committee reviews and makes recommendations to the Executive Board on the budget and work program, and on contracts and other financial and personnel issues.

compliance with statewide policies.” *Enhanced Planning Review of the Seattle-Tacoma-Everett Metropolitan Area*, May 1996.

⁶ Executive Board membership includes the Washington State Transportation Commission and the Port of Seattle, but none of the area's transit authorities. Transit agency representation is provided, however, as a result of the requirement that one-half of the local elected officials serving on the Executive Board also be members of one of the areas' transit boards.

The **Transportation Policy Board** and **Growth Management Policy Board** include representatives of the PSRC's member jurisdictions, transit agencies and other appropriate representatives of regional business, labor, civic and environmental groups. The boards' responsibilities and composition are established by the Executive Board in accordance with the PSRC's Interlocal Agreement (Section VI.D), and the state's Growth Management Act (RCW 47.80).

Advisory Committees and Countywide Organizations

The PSRC relies on the work of key committees, and countywide groups in each of the four counties, to provide advice and recommendations on various regional issues. The **Regional Staff Committee**, which includes high-level staff from member jurisdictions and transit agencies, in approximate proportion to representation on the Executive Board, discusses key issues and may make recommendations to the policy boards, Operations Committee, and Executive Board. A number of **technical committees**, including the Transportation Operators, Regional Project Evaluation, and Transportation Enhancements Committees, support the Transportation Policy Board and the Regional Technical Forum supports both boards.

Countywide groups provide recommendations to PSRC on funding for transportation projects and other issues. Additionally, there are three subregional groups in King County that are cooperative efforts of local officials that coordinate issues of local, regional and state interest within their respective areas.

Budget and Funding Sources

For Fiscal Year 1999 (July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999), the PSRC's budget is approximately \$7.7 million. The PSRC has no taxing authority. Nearly 80 percent of the PSRC's revenue is derived from federal and state grants, and the remaining 20 percent is from dues paid by members and from other local sources. For FY 1999, these funds support a budget and work program staffed by 50.5 full-time employees.

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL (PSRC) - HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT

The central Puget Sound region has had a regional planning agency in existence since 1957. In that time, the agency had gone through several iterations and name changes. The Puget Sound Regional Council was created through a resolution and an interlocal agreement between member agencies on October 1, 1991, following the dissolution of its forerunner, the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG). Beyond a change in name, the new agency, PSRC, has a more clearly defined and narrowly focused mandate under federal transportation and air quality laws, and under the State Growth Management Act. PSRC's directive is limited to planning functions related to regional transportation and growth management.

In the Seattle region, the structure of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is a product of a restructuring effort initiated in the late 1980s. During this period of rapid growth in the Seattle region, concerns began to surface about the direction of the predecessor MPO, the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG). Elected officials had developed a long-range Vision 2020 Regional Plan, but found its implementation difficult to achieve with the existing MPO structure and process. Acting as catalysts for change, the State of Washington developed its statewide Growth Management Act while the federal ISTEA legislation was enacted. Thus, in the early 1990s, the MPO was restructured, with the following changes made:

- In order to provide better direction, a new director was appointed and the mission and functions of the MPO were changed to focus on regional transportation planning and regional growth management.
- In order to be more inclusive of the major transportation agencies in the region, representatives from the three major ports, the State DOT, and the State Transportation Commission were added to the Executive Board. Furthermore, transit representation was provided through a requirement that at least fifty percent of county and city elected officials who serve on the 26-member Executive Board must also serve on one of the six transit agency boards in the region.
- In order to create a more representative process, full-time weighted voting in proportion to jurisdictional population was instituted for both the General Assembly and the Executive Board. The General Assembly is composed of all elected officials representing the executive and legislative branches of cities, towns, counties, and tribal governments in the region, with the weight of each jurisdiction's vote proportional to the total population within the regional agency's jurisdiction. The 26-member Executive Board has proportional representation based on county or city status and population, and also has population-weighted voting. The result is that nearly one-half of the votes on both the General Assembly and the Executive Board are represented by the 4 counties in the region with nearly one-half of the votes represented by the 81 municipalities in the region. Additional votes are controlled by the major transportation agencies in the region. (See table 1 on next page.)

PSRC Board Membership Voting Distribution

<u>County</u>	<u>Jurisdiction</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Votes</u>
King County	County	4	4
	Largest city (Seattle)	3	3
	Other cities/towns	3	3
Kitsap County	County	1	0.5
	Cities/towns	1	0.5
Pierce County	County	2	2
	Largest city (Tacoma)	2	1.5
	Other cities/towns	1	1.5
Smohomish County	County	2	2
	Largest city (Everett)	1	1
	Cities/towns	1	1
	TOTALS	21	19

Table 1

- In order to foster a more cooperative transportation planning process between counties and municipalities, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) project selection process was changed to include both a regional process and a countywide process. The countywide process is conducted by a countywide organization of county, city, State DOT, transit, and other groups in the county developing criteria, scoring and ranking projects, and submitting projects for final approval by the Transportation Policy Board of the Regional Council.
- To symbolize the new structure and process of the MPO, the name was changed from the Puget Sound Council of Governments (PSCOG) to the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).

In Seattle MPOs, the more effective institutional structures and decisional processes took a long time to develop. Major restructuring efforts were necessary to develop a stronger comfort level within the region concerning the purpose and direction of the MPO.

VISION 2020 is the growth management and transportation strategy under state and federal laws for the four-county central Puget Sound region. Adopted by the cities and counties in the region in 1990, the PSRC modified VISION 2020 in 1993 to bring it into conformance with the state Growth Management Act (GMA), and updated it in 1995.

Available from PSRC is a *Historical Profile of Transportation Revenues and Expenditures* by Porter & Associates (60 pages) that compares transportation revenues and expenditures for the period 1989 through 1994. Printed in 1996.

Another publication that discusses ISTEA legislation and its implementation in the Puget Sound Region is *ISTEA at Work: Implementing Regional Transportation in the Central Puget Sound Region* (1996).

PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL (PSRC) WORK PRODUCT

Regional Transportation Planning

Federal laws, including the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act and Clean Air Act, and state laws, including the Growth Management Act (GMA), require this region to have a regional growth management strategy and transportation plan. The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) provides a 25-year look at the region's transportation needs as identified by cities, counties and other agencies. The MTP provides baseline information on the current performance and projections of future performance of the transportation system. In addition, it discusses ways to preserve and maintain the existing system, and to manage it and make it more efficient. The MTP provides the basis for beginning the discussion of how to finance future transportation improvements. The MTP also is used to evaluate the consistency and compatibility of local comprehensive plans in achieving the regional growth and transportation strategy, and the potential impact of improving (or not improving) the system. The MTP encompasses the detailed transportation policies in VISION 2020 and allows the region and its jurisdictions to remain eligible to receive federal transportation funds.

VISION 2020 is the growth management and transportation strategy for the four-county central Puget Sound region. The GMA requires multicounty policies on growth and transportation issues extending beyond the boundaries of an individual city or county. VISION 2020 includes policies affecting urban growth areas, rural areas, housing, economics, and transportation, and establishes a monitoring system to help evaluate whether VISION 2020 is achieving its desired results.

VISION 2020 is the region's policy framework for directing transportation investments that improve mobility, support growth management and encourage economic vitality. VISION 2020 also establishes a process to periodically monitor whether regional policies and transportation system investments are helping achieve desired land development patterns and transportation system performance.

The GMA requires consistency among local and regional plans, and the PSRC works with cities and counties to ensure consistency, including the Executive Board's formal action certifying that the transportation elements of their comprehensive plans are consistent with the region's transportation plan and GMA requirements. The PSRC uses VISION 2020 and the MTP as guidance for decisions on how to spend federal transportation funds in the region. In addition, all other major transportation improvements in the region must be consistent with VISION 2020 and the MTP. The Regional council links plan certification with decisions on federal transportation funds.

Documents that address the MTP and VISION 2020 include:

- The *1995 Metropolitan Transportation Plan: the Transportation Element of VISION 2020, the Region's Growth Management, Economic and Transportation Strategy* contains the final adopted version of the transportation element of VISION 2020.⁷
- *Vision 2020 1995 Update: Growth Management, Economic and Transportation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region.* Long-range plan that includes the policies and key actions necessary to implement the overall strategy.
- The *1996 Amendment to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan for the Central Puget Sound Region* is amendatory language adopted by the PSRC General Assembly on July 11, 1996.
- The *Metropolitan Transportation Plan 1998 Progress Report Long-Range Transportation Financing* updates the financial component of the MTP to ensure that the region's long-range financial strategy remains valid and reflects the most current information available.
- *1998 REGIONAL REVIEW Monitoring Change in the Central Puget Sound Region.*⁸ This is the second in a series of reports tracking patterns and progress in meeting the objectives of the state GMA and VISION 2020.

Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

- *Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): 1998-2000* as approved by PSRC Executive Board in 1997.⁹
- *Policy Framework for 1999 TEA-21 TIP Process*, as adopted by the Executive Board in February 1999, provides regional guidelines and policy intent for how the PSRC will manage, administer and approve projects to be programmed and selected under the Surface Transportation Program (STP), the Congestion Management and Air Quality Program (CMAQ), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Program.

Congestion Management System (CMS)

A few of the publications available on CMS are:

- *Congestion Management System Baseline System Performance Report (1995)* comprehensively documents the region's multimodal transportation system performance with respect to traffic congestion.
- *CMS Development Program: Case Study (1996)* documenting the ongoing effort by the PSRC, in cooperation with the Washington State Dept of Transportation, to develop the region's Congestion Management System as required by ISTEPA.

⁷ Published 1995. 194 pages.

⁸ December 1998. The report contains regional maps and discussion of policies and other tools to manage growth. (96 pages). E-mail infoctr@psrc.org or view at <http://www.psrc.org/regrev98.htm>.

⁹ As developed September 28, 1997, and as amended through PSRC Amendment 98-01, and as corrected through 2/3/98. 460 pages.

- *Strategies for Managing Traffic Congestion* (1996) describes a wide range of strategies that can be considered for application within a CMS to manage traffic congestion.
- *1997 System Performance Report (1999)* documents performance of the region's transportation system and compares information from the 1995 CMS Baseline Report.

Annual Reports and Work Program

- *1998 Annual Report* (1999).
- *Annual Budget and Work Program: Fiscal Year 1999 (July 1998-June 1999)*.¹⁰

Public Participation

Public Participation Plan for the Puget Sound Regional Council. (1994). A plan establishing consistent, minimum procedures to ensure early and continuous public notification about and participation in major actions and decisions by the PSRC.

Other Publications

The PSRC maintains an extensive array of publications available to the public upon request.¹¹

¹⁰ Printed in 1998. 94 pages.

¹¹ The PSRC Information Center listing of publications is found at <http://www.psrc.org/publist.htm>. Many of the documents are available on-line or by order from the Center at a nominal cost (phone 206-464-7532).