

EVALUATION REPORT
OF THE
2001/02 CALIFORNIA
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS

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California Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation Planning



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Evaluation Report of the 2001/02 California Regional Transportation Plans

Prepared by

California Department of Transportation
Division of Transportation Planning
Office of Regional and Interagency Planning

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Caltrans Staff

Sharon Scherzinger – Supervising Transportation Planner

Garth Hopkins – Senior Transportation Planner

Stan Rubinstein – Associate Transportation Planner

Susan Brewer - Associate Transportation Planner

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Executive Summary

Background

Section 14032 of the California Government Code requires the California Department of Transportation (Department) provide a review and evaluation of the regional transportation plans (RTPs) to the California Transportation Commission (CTC). This RTP Evaluation Report provides an evaluation of the last cycle of RTPs adopted in 2001 and 2002 by the 43 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs) in California.

The evaluation centered on how well the MPOs and RTPAs addressed the requirements for developing these plans as identified in a document titled: "Regional Transportation Plan Guidelines" adopted by the CTC in 1999. The last RTP Evaluation Report was completed in 1994.

This RTP Evaluation Report primarily discusses two central issues:

- Overall, how well did the MPOs/RTPAs address and utilize the requirements for preparing their RTPs as identified in the RTP Guidelines. The RTPs were evaluated collectively, individual RTPs were not identified as inadequate or not fulfilling the requirements as presented in the RTP Guidelines.
- What recommendations should be discussed by the CTC to improve the current RTP process.

RTP Process

Development of the RTP is viewed as a long-term (20-year) region-wide, continuous, coordinated and comprehensive process. It involves all levels of government, public and private participation, as well as consultation with Native American Tribal Governments, all working together in a collaborative process to develop an effective plan.

The RTP serves as the long-range transportation plan for the region and has three primary functions:

1. Serve as a foundation for the programming of projects by the CTC. The RTP accomplishes this requirement by providing details of regional need to support the funding of transportation projects.
2. To meet state and federal requirements for other planning and funding activities. A well-developed RTP provides critical information that addresses regional issues that are impacted by transportation such as future land use, the location of housing, and the preservation of environmentally sensitive areas.
3. To serve as a decision-making document for local, state and federal purposes. The RTP serves as a nexus that identifies, integrates and balances a multiple of competing goals and objectives within the region.

The preparation of RTPs involves a considerable amount of time and effort. These plans also are expensive to prepare; on the average, RTPs may cost approximately \$150,000 for a smaller rural RTPA and over \$1 million for the larger MPOs. The state requirement for the preparation of RTPs is primarily located in California Government Code §65080 and applies to RTPAs and MPOs. The federal RTP requirement is primarily directed at MPOs.

Evaluation of the RTPs

Each RTP was evaluated on how well it adhered to the 1999 RTP Guidelines, Appendix A. This appendix is commonly referred to as the RTP checklist. This evaluation report provides an item-by-item discussion of how the RTPs addressed the checklist, this detailed discussion is located in Appendix B of this report.

Not one RTP addressed every item identified in the RTP checklist. For example, most of the plans omitted the analysis of land use and transportation related to projected housing, employment and the environment. Some MPOs/RTPAs developed their own primary RTP format, thus making it difficult to conduct an analysis of the RTPs in relation to other plans.

Recommendations to Improve the RTP Process

As a result of reviewing the current cycle of RTPs and through a series of discussions with experts both inside and out of the Department, this report set forth the following 19 recommendations to be considered by the CTC. These recommendations are discussed in Chapter 6 and divided into two categories: 1) Short-term recommendations that could be completed in approximately one year, and 2) Long-term recommendations that would take more than one year to complete.

<p>1. <u>Prepare a supplement to the RTP Guidelines</u> – California Government Code §65080(3)(d) require the MPOs submit their next adopted RTP to the CTC and Department by Sept. 1, 2004. RTPAs must submit their RTP by Sept. 1, 2005. This supplement would address the issues listed below and would be provided to the MPOs by December 2003.</p>
<p>2. <u>Lack of Uniformity in RTP Format</u> – The format and content of the RTPs varies widely. Some MPOs/RTPAs developed their RTP to fit their own regional needs. This makes it difficult to obtain a statewide perspective. An expanded RTP checklist should be included with the supplement identifying the federal and state required items in the RTP. Each MPO/RTPA would be required to specify where these required items are located within their RTP.</p>
<p>3. <u>Interagency Coordination</u> – Overall, communication and coordination between neighboring MPOs/RTPAs could be improved. Many of these regional agencies cease any transportation planning efforts at their jurisdictional boundaries. Efforts should be made by the CTC and the Department to strengthen communication and coordination between these agencies. These efforts should be documented and evaluated in the RTP.</p>
<p>4. <u>Delay in Preparation and Adoption of RTPs</u> – A number of the RTPs from the last cycle were not adopted and submitted to the CTC by the statutory deadline of September 1, 2001. State law requires MPOs to submit their next RTP by September 1, 2004. RTPAs must submit their RTP by September 1, 2005. The CTC should notify these agencies their RTPs may not be approved if the RTPs are not current and adopted.</p>
<p>5. <u>Communication/Coordination with Native American Tribal Governments</u> – Although many of the RTPs undertaken efforts to communicate with the tribal governments located within their region, further efforts should be made to strengthen this process. These efforts should be documented and evaluated in the RTP.</p>
<p>6. <u>Public Involvement in the RTP Process</u> – Engaging the public in the RTP process has been a challenge for many MPOs and RTPAs. The CTC and the Department should</p>

assist the MPOs/RTPAs in the area by providing examples of success efforts by other agencies. Public involvement activities should be documented and evaluated in the RTP.

7. Private Sector Involvement in the RTP Process – Some MPOs and RTPAs could improve their efforts in bringing the goods movement and business industry into the long-term transportation planning process. The CTC and the Department should stress the importance of inviting these groups to be involved in the RTP development process. These efforts should be documented and evaluated in the RTP.

8. RTP Environmental Impact Report – The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is an important and required component of the RTP. The RTP EIR describes the projected environmental impacts of the transportation projects identified in the RTP and efforts to mitigate those impacts. The supplement and future updates of the RTP Guidelines should provide additional direction on what type of information these EIRs should include.

9. Identification of Transportation Control Measures (TCMs) – Federal air quality regulations require TCMs to be identified in the air quality management plan (AQMP) for nonattainment and maintenance areas. These TCM's should be listed in the RTP. Many RTPs did not identify TCM's. The supplement and an update of the RTP Guidelines should contain a requirement that RTPs in air quality nonattainment or maintenance with approved AQMPs should specifically identify their TCMs.

10. Project Intent Statements (Purpose and Need) in the RTP – Project Intent Statements are critical to successful project development in providing justification for project project funding. The CTC should update the RTP Guidelines to provide more emphasis on the development of plan level Project Intent Statements. The development of a standard format for these statements should also be addressed.

11. Include Unconstrained Transportation Needs in the RTP – RTPs are required to identify projects that are financially constrained. However recent legislation (AB 631 & ACR 32) required the CTC to prepare an assessment of the unmet transportation needs in California. An update of the RTP Guidelines should require the MPOs/RTPAs to provide a separate list of the un-funded transportation projects in the RTP.

Long-Term Recommendations That Would Take More Than One Year to Complete

12. Prepare an Update of the RTP Guidelines – The current RTP Guidelines were adopted by the CTC in December 1999. The document should be updated to include changes in legislation and recent CTC requirements. The Guidelines would explain in more detail any information provided in the recommended supplement.

13. Outdated Planning Documents – RTPs are just one of the planning documents produced by local and regional agencies impacting transportation. Other documents include Circulation and Housing Elements of general plans, Airport Land Use Compatibility Plans and AQMPs. For example, 42% of all general plans in California are more than 10 years old. The CTC and the Department should work with other state agencies such as the Office of Planning and Research (OPR), Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and the air quality regulatory agencies to explore methods to possibly update these various documents.

<p>14. <u>Statewide Financial Information Coordination</u> – Presently, each MPO and RTPA is required to prepare their own individual estimate of federal, state and local transportation funds available during the 20-year life of the RTP. The CTC and Department should develop a financial forecasting framework to be adopted by the CTC that will assist the MPOs/RTPAs in their RTP funding forecasts.</p>
<p>15. <u>Transportation Security and Safety</u> – California should be prepared to address federal safety and security issues as they may impact the transportation planning process. The CTC, MPOs/RTPAs and the Department should continue to monitor federal transportation reauthorization and anticipate future directions and funding directed for safety and security.</p>
<p>16. <u>Varying Timeframes of Various Planning Documents</u> – Often planning documents are prepared during different times and with different timeframes. This makes it difficult for MPOs/RTPAs to prepare an RTP that includes information from these various date sources.</p>
<p>17. <u>Performance Measurement</u> – The 1999 RTP Guidelines stated each RTP should identify a set of transportation performance measures reflecting the RTPs goals and objectives. Some RTPs did not identify any performance measurements. The updated RTP Guidelines should provide more specific direction on developing transportation performance measures.</p>
<p>18. <u>Environmental Stewardship</u> – The goal of Environmental Stewardship is to identify environmental concerns early in the project planning/development process in order to reduce potential delays. The CTC MPOs/RTPAs and the Department should determine how this issue is addressed in the updated RTP Guidelines.</p>
<p>19. <u>Update California Statutes Relating to the RTP Process</u> – The CTC and the Department should conduct a review of current statutes relating to RTPs to determine if any are out of date, or require clarification. California RTP statutes should also conform with federal requirements relating to RTPs.</p>