

**CHAPTER 3**  
**REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**  
**REVISED JUNE 2025**  
**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<u>GENERAL</u> .....	3-3
<u>REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS</u> .....	3-4
<u>STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM</u> .....	3-5
<u>CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM</u> .....	3-6
<u>SPECIAL STUDIES</u> .....	3-7
<u>FUNDING</u> .....	3-8
<u>OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES</u> .....	3-8

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

## CHAPTER 3

### REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

#### 1. GENERAL.

- a. The purpose of regional transportation planning is to prepare and provide for the region's mobility in a fiscally and environmentally responsible manner, consistent with the needs, preferences, and sensibilities of the community.
- b. Regional transportation planning considers statewide and local perspectives in developing a long-range, multimodal approach to solving transportation issues within California regions.
- c. Regional transportation planning is primarily conducted by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Caltrans Districts, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and Regional Transportation Planning Agencies (RTPAs).
- d. Regional transportation planning is based on the "3Cs" in federal transportation law: continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive. All modes of transportation, including pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, should be considered (23 United States Code [USC], Section 134 and Title 49, Sections 5303 and 5304 USC).
- e. Regional transportation planning involves a wide range of entities in the development of a shared mobility vision, which includes improving the transition among modes in the multimodal transportation system and incorporation of new transportation technologies.
- f. The focus of regional transportation planning is Caltrans' interaction with MPOs and RTPAs, in regard to Overall Work Programs and Regional Transportation Plans (RTPs).
  - (1) An MPO is a forum for cooperative transportation decision-making. An MPO has an urbanized area of more than 50,000 in population, and a single MPO may serve more than one urbanized area. In California, MPOs are generally known as councils of government or associations of government.
  - (2) The RTPAs are created pursuant to California Government Code (GC) Section 29532 and, although state law does not define an RTPA, Section 65080 GC identifies some RTPA responsibilities: to adopt an RTP, and prepare and adopt a regional transportation improvement program (RTIP). In California, most RTPAs are known as local transportation commissions, county transportation commissions, councils of government, and/or

associations of government. Among the regional transportation planning entities in California, there are 18 MPOs and 26 RTPAs. Every county in California is served by an RTPA, and every county with at least one urbanized area is also served by an MPO.

g. Information regarding planning entities, including the current copy of the Regional Transportation Plan guidelines, can be found on the Caltrans website: [Caltrans Regional and Community Planning](#).

h. The MPOs and RTPAs are the entities who receive state and/or federal transportation planning funds to implement projects.

i. The RTPAs influence regional planning and programming of transportation projects, and prioritize 75 percent of the funded projects in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). It is important for California Highway Patrol (CHP) Division and Area personnel to participate in the projects at the regional level.

(1) By being involved, CHP commanders will stay informed of local transportation issues and projects, and can assist the RTPAs by providing expertise in transportation safety, traffic enforcement, and security issues.

(2) Participating promotes consideration of departmental responsibilities in user safety and security, motorist convenience, enforcement operations, and resource management.

## 2. REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANS.

a. In accordance with state and federal planning requirements, RTPAs are responsible for the development of a continuing, coordinated, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process. The RTPs are prepared on a biennial basis by all RTPAs.

(1) For rural regions, generally, Caltrans is responsible for preparing the RTP unless the region specifically decides to prepare the plan.

(2) Provisions allow nonurban RTPAs (serving populations of less than 50,000) to request Caltrans develop their RTPs.

b. The plan must be action-oriented and practical in considering transportation needs in both the short- and long-term.

c. The plan is required to present clear and concise policy guidance to local and state officials.

d. The RTPs must include a policy element, an action element, and a financial element.

(1) Policy Element. Within the policy element, the plan is required to address measures of safety and security, which are under the purview of safety-conscious planning. Safety-conscious planning is a proactive approach for the prevention of motor vehicle crashes and unsafe transportation conditions.

(2) Action Element. The action element identifies programs and actions to implement the RTP.

(3) Financial Element. The financial element summarizes the cost of implementing the RTP based on realistic financial assumptions.

e. Urbanized areas must include an adopted Congestion Management Program (CMP), a bicycle program, and an airport ground access improvement program.

f. The RTP must consider the plans of adjacent cities, counties, special districts, private organizations, and state and federal agencies.

g. An Environmental Impact Report, a public hearing, and a civilians' participation program are required for the development of the RTP.

h. Considering the extensive planning involved for transportation projects, it is important for CHP field personnel to maintain close contact with RTPAs. Participation in the planning process should go beyond just sharing enforcement concerns and may also include safety and design suggestions.

### 3. STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.

a. The STIP is a multiyear plan adopted by the California Transportation Commission (CTC), combining the RTIP with the Caltrans Interregional Transportation Improvement Program (ITIP), for future allocations of certain state transportation funds for state highway improvements, intercity rail, and regional highway and transit improvements. State law requires the CTC to update the STIP biennially, in even-numbered years, with each new STIP adding two new years to prior programming commitments.

b. Each STIP includes projects proposed by regional agencies in their RTIPs and by Caltrans in its ITIP.

(1) Regional Transportation Improvement Program. The RTIP is a five-year program of projects prepared by the RTPAs and county transportation commissions.

(a) Each RTPA is required to biennially review its RTIP which serves as a programming document for transportation projects.

(b) The RTIP includes transportation projects to be funded from the State Highway Account and the Public Transportation Account during the succeeding four years.

(c) The RTIP projects (75 percent of STIP fund) are needed to improve mobility within the region and selected by the regions in their RTIPs. Regional improvement projects include, but are not limited to:

- 1 State highways and local roads.
- 2 Rail and other transit capital improvements.
- 3 Bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- 4 Grade separations.
- 5 Transportation system management projects.
- 6 Transportation demand management projects.
- 7 Soundwall projects.
- 8 Intermodal facilities.
- 9 Safety improvements.

(2) Interregional Transportation Improvement Program. Included in the STIP, the ITIP is a five-year list of projects prepared by Caltrans, in consultation with RTPAs.

(a) Projects included in the interregional program shall be consistent with the Interregional Transportation Strategic Plan and relevant adopted RTPs.

#### 4. CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.

a. Section 65089(a) GC requires every county that includes an urbanized area to adopt a CMP.

- (1) The CMP includes every city and county.
  - (2) The CMP is prepared by the designated congestion management agency.
  - (3) The CMP's purpose is to improve the relationship between land use, transportation, and air quality.
  - (4) It allows transportation planners to assess congestion issues and determine how a balanced, multimodal program will be addressed.
  - (5) The CMP assists air quality planners in achieving the transportation performance standards of the California Clean Air Act and assists land use planners in dealing with land development decisions.
- b. The CMP is updated annually to address congestion issues in a coordinated and cooperative manner with other agencies. The CMPs are comprised of the following five components:
- (1) An element defining the level of service standards for the highway portion of the system based on the amount of delay and maneuverability.
  - (2) A performance element to measure highway and transit success in moving people and goods.
  - (3) A travel demand element that promotes alternative transportation methods such as carpools and park-and-ride lots.
  - (4) A program for analyzing the impacts of land use decisions.
  - (5) A capital improvement program.

## 5. SPECIAL STUDIES.

- a. Wide ranges of transportation planning studies are conducted to improve a region's understanding of transportation needs and appropriate solutions. The results of these studies are incorporated into future RTPs and RTIPs.
- b. Examples of major RTPA planning activities include:
  - (1) Collection and analysis of existing population and transportation characteristics and the projection of long-range population and travel demand changes.
  - (2) Transportation studies assessing the needs of various modes of the regional transportation system.

(3) Transportation studies of individual corridors or subareas which identify specific corridor issues and recommend needed multimodal improvements.

(4) Transportation financing studies which evaluate existing and potential funding strategies in order to ensure needed transportation improvements can be implemented.

6. FUNDING.

a. Regional transportation planning activities conducted by the RTPAs are funded primarily from federal, state, and local sources. Federal funds for transportation planning are available to MPOs through the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.

b. Federal funding available for transportation planning is approximately one half of 1 percent of state and federal transportation funds.

7. OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES.

a. In urban areas, RTPAs are required to work in partnership with the state in identifying transportation solutions consistent with community values. This continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process relationship is a federal requirement and precondition for receiving federal funding for transportation projects.

b. The coordination between regional planning and Caltrans' system planning process is important in identifying and prioritizing projects for more specific project development studies. The Caltrans Districts are increasingly relying on transportation modeling and the databases of the regional agencies for use in project development.