

RCW 46.68.290 Transportation partnership account—Definitions—

Performance audits. (1) The transportation partnership account is hereby created in the motor vehicle account. All distributions to the account from RCW 46.68.090 must be deposited into the account. Money in the account may be spent only after appropriation. Expenditures from the account must be used only for projects or improvements identified as 2005 transportation partnership projects or improvements in the omnibus transportation appropriations act, including any principal and interest on bonds authorized for the projects or improvements.

(2) The legislature finds that:

(a) Citizens demand and deserve accountability of transportation-related programs and expenditures. Transportation-related programs must continuously improve in quality, efficiency, and effectiveness in order to increase public trust;

(b) Transportation-related agencies that receive tax dollars must continuously improve the way they operate and deliver services so citizens receive maximum value for their tax dollars; and

(c) Fair, independent, comprehensive performance audits of transportation-related agencies overseen by the elected state auditor are essential to improving the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of the state's transportation system.

(3) For purposes of chapter 314, Laws of 2005:

(a) "Performance audit" means an objective and systematic assessment of a state agency or agencies or any of their programs, functions, or activities by the state auditor or designee in order to help improve agency efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Performance audits include economy and efficiency audits and program audits.

(b) "Transportation-related agency" means any state agency, board, or commission that receives funding primarily for transportation-related purposes. At a minimum, the department of transportation, the transportation improvement board or its successor entity, the county road administration board or its successor entity, and the traffic safety commission are considered transportation-related agencies. The Washington state patrol and the department of licensing shall not be considered transportation-related agencies under chapter 314, Laws of 2005.

(4) Within the authorities and duties under chapter 43.09 RCW, the state auditor shall establish criteria and protocols for performance audits. Transportation-related agencies shall be audited using criteria that include generally accepted government auditing standards as well as legislative mandates and performance objectives established by state agencies. Mandates include, but are not limited to, agency strategies, timelines, program objectives, and mission and goals as required in RCW 43.88.090.

(5) Within the authorities and duties under chapter 43.09 RCW, the state auditor may conduct performance audits for transportation-related agencies. The state auditor shall contract with private firms to conduct the performance audits.

(6) The audits may include:

(a) Identification of programs and services that can be eliminated, reduced, consolidated, or enhanced;

(b) Identification of funding sources to the transportation-related agency, to programs, and to services that can be eliminated, reduced, consolidated, or enhanced;

(c) Analysis of gaps and overlaps in programs and services and recommendations for improving, dropping, blending, or separating functions to correct gaps or overlaps;

(d) Analysis and recommendations for pooling information technology systems used within the transportation-related agency, and evaluation of information processing and telecommunications policy, organization, and management;

(e) Analysis of the roles and functions of the transportation-related agency, its programs, and its services and their compliance with statutory authority and recommendations for eliminating or changing those roles and functions and ensuring compliance with statutory authority;

(f) Recommendations for eliminating or changing statutes, rules, and policy directives as may be necessary to ensure that the transportation-related agency carry out reasonably and properly those functions vested in the agency by statute;

(g) Verification of the reliability and validity of transportation-related agency performance data, self-assessments, and performance measurement systems as required under RCW 43.88.090;

(h) Identification of potential cost savings in the transportation-related agency, its programs, and its services;

(i) Identification and recognition of best practices;

(j) Evaluation of planning, budgeting, and program evaluation policies and practices;

(k) Evaluation of personnel systems operation and management;

(l) Evaluation of purchasing operations and management policies and practices;

(m) Evaluation of organizational structure and staffing levels, particularly in terms of the ratio of managers and supervisors to nonmanagement personnel; and

(n) Evaluation of transportation-related project costs, including but not limited to environmental mitigation, competitive bidding practices, permitting processes, and capital project management.

(7) Within the authorities and duties under chapter 43.09 RCW, the state auditor must provide the preliminary performance audit reports to the audited state agency for comment. The auditor also may seek input on the preliminary report from other appropriate officials. Comments must be received within 30 days after receipt of the preliminary performance audit report unless a different time period is approved by the state auditor. The final performance audit report shall include the objectives, scope, and methodology; the audit results, including findings and recommendations; the agency's response and conclusions; and identification of best practices.

(8) The state auditor shall provide final performance audit reports to the citizens of Washington, the governor, the joint legislative audit and review committee, the appropriate legislative committees, and other appropriate officials. Final performance audit reports shall be posted on the internet.

(9) The audited transportation-related agency is responsible for follow-up and corrective action on all performance audit findings and recommendations. The audited agency's plan for addressing each audit finding and recommendation shall be included in the final audit report. The plan shall provide the name of the contact person responsible for each action, the action planned, and the anticipated completion date. If the audited agency does not agree with the audit findings and recommendations or believes action is not required, then the action plan shall include an explanation and specific reasons.

The office of financial management shall require periodic progress reports from the audited agency until all resolution has occurred. The office of financial management is responsible for achieving audit resolution. The office of financial management shall annually report by December 31st the status of performance audit resolution to the appropriate legislative committees and the state auditor. The legislature shall consider the performance audit results in connection with the state budget process.

The auditor may request status reports on specific audits or findings.

(10) For the period from July 1, 2005, until June 30, 2007, the amount of \$4,000,000 is appropriated from the transportation partnership account to the state auditors office for the purposes of subsections (2) through (9) of this section.

(11) During the 2021-2023 and 2023-2025 fiscal biennia, the legislature may direct the state treasurer to make transfers of moneys in the transportation partnership account to the motor vehicle account and the Tacoma Narrows toll bridge account. [2023 c 472 § 707; 2022 c 157 § 16; 2021 c 333 § 713; 2020 c 219 § 705; 2019 c 416 § 707; 2017 c 313 § 709; 2015 3rd sp.s. c 43 § 604; 2006 c 337 § 5; 2005 c 314 § 104.]

Effective date—2023 c 472: See note following RCW 43.19.642.

Effective date—2021 c 333: See note following RCW 43.19.642.

Effective date—2020 c 219: See note following RCW 46.68.310.

Effective date—2019 c 416: See note following RCW 43.19.642.

Effective date—2017 c 313: See note following RCW 43.19.642.

Effective date—2015 3rd sp.s. c 43: See note following RCW 46.68.030.

Effective date—2005 c 314 §§ 101-107, 109, 303-309, and 401: "Sections 101 through 107, 109, 303 through 310 [309], and 401 of this act are necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and take effect July 1, 2005." [2005 c 314 § 405.]

Part headings not law—2005 c 314: See note following RCW 46.68.035.