



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

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AREA MAYORS AND TRANSPORTATION OFFICIALS VOTE TO ADOPT A UNIFIED, REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Middle Tennessee Connected has been adopted by the Nashville Area MPO board, formally allocating \$8.5 billion in federal funds for infrastructure investments over the next 25 years.

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – Today, the mayors, county executives and transportation officials of the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) executive board voted to adopt Middle Tennessee Connected, the 2016-2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for a seven-county area that includes Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties. This vote completes more than three years of work to update the plan last adopted in 2010, and represents the collective transportation investment goals of city and county governments, transit agencies, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT).

“Today’s vote is another step forward in improving the region’s transportation network and protecting our quality of life,” said Portland Mayor Ken Wilber, who serves as the MPO executive board chairman. “Stakeholders throughout the region have worked hand-in-hand with the MPO staff to develop this plan, and great attention has been given to the selection of projects to ensure that our limited transportation funds make the greatest impact across the region.”

The federal government mandates that the nation’s metropolitan areas plan 20 plus years into the future, and account for all regionally-significant road, transit, freight, technology, and walking and biking projects in their respective MPO planning areas. Middle Tennessee Connected provides a balanced, financially-feasible set of transportation improvements that can be constructed or implemented over the next 25 years with nearly \$8.5 billion in expected federal, state, and local revenues. Revenue forecasts are based on a conservative growth rate for present-day funding levels from the federal government. Proposed improvements are intended to help alleviate traffic congestion, provide more transportation choices, improve system operations, and meet the region's economic development goals over the next quarter century.

The plan rests on the view that transportation infrastructure is more than just a tool to improve mobility - it is a significant contributor to the overall health, sustainability, prosperity, and character of a place - be that a small community or a large metropolitan region. With that perspective in mind, the investment recommendations in the plan are aligned with four main goals:

- Maintain a safe and reliable transportation system for people and goods;
- Help local communities grow in a healthy and sustainable way;
- Enhance economic competitiveness by improving private sector performance; and

- Spend public funds wisely by ensuring a return on investment.

“The collaborative process used to develop Middle Tennessee Connected identified and documented local and regional transportation needs over the coming decades,” said Doug Demosi, Rutherford County planning director and chairman of the MPO’s Technical Coordinating Committee. “As such, the plan contains a long-term vision to expand and modernize transit options, create more walkable and active communities, and reimagine regional corridors with integrated technology.”

The development of the plan is interconnected with other local and statewide transportation planning underway across the region. In fact, it serves as the gateway for federal transportation funding for roadway and transit recommendations that come out of local community planning or studies conducted by the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The plan places a growing emphasis on directing more of the anticipated revenue to major transit projects. For the first time, the MPO leadership has elected to dedicate a portion of the formula grant funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to help engineer and construct fixed-guideway transit along major corridors connecting Nashville with Franklin, Murfreesboro, and Gallatin.

MPO executive board member and Nashville MTA CEO, Steve Bland commented, “It is not only exciting, but encouraging to see that mayors and county executives from around the region understand the important role of transit as part of our transportation network, but they are actively supporting increased investment to execute the vision for mass transit. With the funds designed in this plan the MTA and RTA are now better positioned to implement the recommendations that will come from the nMotion process.”

There are nine major capital projects identified by local communities and transit agencies that top the list of priorities for the region. The plan allocates significant funding to these projects, but a few will require additional revenue to be fully implemented. Collectively, those projects will:

- Upgrade the aging interstate loop in downtown Nashville;
- Incorporate rapid transit technology into the corridors between Nashville and Franklin, Murfreesboro, and Gallatin;
- Modernize the commuter rail service between Davidson and Wilson counties,
- Provide a new transit option to serve commuters between Nashville and Clarksville which would also benefit the residents in North Nashville; and
- Improve state routes in fast growing areas of Maury, Robertson, Williamson, and Wilson counties.

Beyond the top priorities, there are approximately 200 projects proposed for implementation throughout the life of the plan. These improvements are scheduled in either a short-term horizon (2016-2020), a mid-term horizon (2021-2030), or a long-term horizon (2031-2040) based on funding availability. While many of these projects are needed today to address safety, traffic congestion, or economic development needs, they will have to wait years due to funding shortfalls, adding to their overall cost as inflation takes its toll.

“While \$8.5 billion sounds like a significant amount of funding, it is important to note that there were another 100 projects submitted by local jurisdictions that cannot be implemented at current funding levels,” said Michael Skipper, the MPO’s executive director. “And, many of the projects scheduled for the next 10 to 20 years are improvements that were needed yesterday. In order to

speed up project delivery and to address more of our transportation challenges, legislators at all levels of government must work to plug the gap in revenue.”

Also a first for the regional transportation plan, the MPO has created a Technology Fund which will help accelerate the deployment of innovative solutions aimed at improving traffic operations and parking management, and offering greater access to real-time traveler information. The MPO will commission a study in the coming months to develop recommendations for how to invest those technology funds.

An executive summary of Middle Tennessee Connected, as well as the full plan document, additional information on regional trends and issues, project lists and technical documentation can be found online at **Connected2040.org**.

ABOUT THE NASHVILLE AREA MPO:

The Nashville Area MPO is the lead transportation policy, planning, and programming agency for Middle Tennessee and serves more than 1.5 million people throughout Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties. Acting as a regional partnership among the local elected leadership, transit agencies, Tennessee Department of Transportation, and federal agencies, the MPO represents a forum for the business community and citizens across the seven-county area to help decide how federal and state funds will be used to improve roads, bridges, public transit, and walking and bicycling conditions. The MPO leads in the development of the metropolitan area’s long-range transportation plan and near-term investment program, and contributes to ongoing conversations about economic development, land use, the environment, and public health. To learn more, visit NashvilleMPO.org.

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