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1.1 A Unified Plan for the Next Five to 25 Years

Middle Tennessee is growing, fast. Since 2010, the seven-county Nashville area has welcomed about 150,000 new people, or roughly 30,000 new residents per year. In Metropolitan Nashville-Davidson County alone, 2014 was a record year for building permits issued for new construction. As the region emerges from the great recession in a position of strength, local conversations have turned to concerns about the rapid pace of development, and specifically, what is being done to manage the traffic congestion that has come along with that growth.

Transportation planning is a complex process that involves many organizations charged with making coordinated decisions that will have a lasting impact on quality of life in Middle Tennessee. The 2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is intended not only to help clarify the process, but also to provide transparency on how the State of Tennessee and local agencies intend to invest in the region's roadways, bridges, transit systems, sidewalks, and bicycle routes to meet the increased demands of the rapidly growing metropolitan area.

Prepared by the Nashville Area MPO on behalf of its member jurisdictions, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), titled *Middle Tennessee Connected*, spans the next quarter century and represents the collective transportation goals of city and county governments, transit agencies, and the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT). Its purpose is to identify how those partners intend to direct state and federal grants to projects that improve mobility across Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties.

Transcends Mobility to Achieve Broader Community Goals

The plan rests on the following guiding principles which recognize that improving regional mobility is a key strategy in achieving other community goals and objectives.

- **Livability** - Enhance quality-of-life by prioritizing initiatives that increase opportunities for housing, learning, employment, recreation, and civic involvement while maintaining affordability.
- **Prosperity** - Contribute to the region's economic well-being by targeting solutions that attract talent, connect workforce with jobs, and reduce the cost of doing business and leverage additional investment.
- **Sustainability** - Support growth and prosperity without sacrificing health, the natural environment, historical and cultural assets, or financial stability of this or future generations.
- **Diversity** - Respect the multitude of backgrounds and variety of perspectives of Middle Tennesseans by pursuing an array of strategies that are customized to local community needs and character.

Priorities of TDOT and Middle Tennessee Cities, Counties, and Transit Agencies

The RTP serves as the official gateway to federal transportation grants that are distributed through the United States Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) and its Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The plan also represents the region's top priorities for state funding as the Tennessee Governor and TDOT prepare the annual three-year work program for the Tennessee General Assembly. Projects identified in the plan are generated by city and county governments, public transit agencies, and TDOT who each have submitted their requests for funding through a call-for-projects issued by the MPO in 2014.

A Fiscally-Constrained Plan with Illustrative Needs

The RTP includes a balanced budget. It presents a list of transportation improvements that can be constructed or implemented over the next 25 years with anticipated federal funding, based on current annual appropriations. There are approximately 200 individual projects scheduled for implementation throughout the life of the RTP. 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, many will have to wait years due to funding shortfalls, adding to their overall cost as inflation takes its toll.

There are another 100 projects submitted by local jurisdictions that cannot be implemented at current levels of funding during the 25-year span. In order to speed up project delivery and to address more of our transportation challenges, legislators at all levels of government should consider the following options for plugging the gap between revenue and costs. The existing federal and state gasoline tax rates have not been adjusted in more than 20 years.

Keeps TDOT and Local Agencies Eligible for Federal Construction Grants

Since the 1962 Federal-aid Highway Act, federal legislation has required metropolitan area transportation plans to be developed through a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process. This plan serves to satisfy federal regulations outlined in Title 23, Part 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450) and ensures that TDOT, transit agencies, and local governments are eligible to use federal transportation funds to construct or implement improvements to roadways and transit routes.

Supersedes the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

The MPO is required by federal law to update its regional transportation plan every five years to account for changes in transportation needs that result from shifts in the demographics, market preferences, real estate development trends, funding availability, and public policies. The 2040 RTP supersedes the 2035 RTP which was adopted in December 2010.

Plan Contents and Organization

The 2040 RTP document is divided into nine separate chapters and accompanied by technical appendices. The following describes the contents as provided through chapters two through nine and the appendices.

- **Chapter 2. Regional Issues and Thinking:** Identifies current issues framing transportation decisions, related planning efforts, and public opinions and attitudes towards transportation.
- **Chapter 3. Trends and Forecasts:** Provides population and employment projections, land development forecasts, and commodity forecasts used in freight planning.
- **Chapter 4. Transportation System:** Describes existing transportation infrastructure including roadways, bridges, intersections, public transit, and walking and bicycling facilities.
- **Chapter 5. Conditions and Performance:** Presents maps and statistical information to illustrate how transportation system performance is expected to change over the next 25 years based on the region's continued growth and development.
- **Chapter 6. Vision, Goals, and Priorities:** Lays out regional goals and objectives, a long-term vision for a multi-modal transportation system, and describes the region's transportation priorities.
- **Chapter 7. Tools and Options:** Offers a set of strategies to assist in the implementation of the long-term vision.
- **Chapter 8. Scheduled Investments and Financial Plan:** Presents the MPO's formal revenue forecast, a summary of the cost of all identified transportation needs, an overview of the process to evaluate and select projects for available funding, a list of cost-feasible projects, and a discussion of additional investment options.
- **Chapter 9. Monitoring Impacts:** Describes how proposed transportation projects could potentially impact vulnerable populations and the natural environment along with a discussion of mitigation strategies, and presents a discussion of how the region should track its progress towards implementing the Plan.
- **Technical Appendices:** Provides documentation related to regional planning models, the MPO's call-for-projects and project evaluation process, projects proposed on congested corridors, projects with potential social or environmental impacts, public comments documented during the development of the plan, and key terms and acronyms commonly used in the transportation planning process.

1.2 About the Nashville Area MPO

The Nashville Area MPO, serving as lead author of the 2040 RTP, has respectfully prepared the plan for and on behalf of a broad set of public and private stakeholders with an interest in creating a sustainable future for Middle Tennessee. The MPO is the federally-designated transportation planning agency for over 3,000 square miles and more than 1.6 million people throughout Davidson, Maury, Robertson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, and Wilson counties. The MPO is funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and by local governments through regional dues.

Governed by an executive board comprised of local city and county mayors and state and federal officials, the MPO serves as a regional partnership among the U.S. DOT, Tennessee DOT, local elected leadership, local planning and public works directors, the business community, and citizens across the seven-county planning area. The MPO leads in the development of the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range transportation improvement program and contributes to ongoing conversations about issues such as land use, economic development, climate change and the environment, safety and security, and public health.

The MPO's *Prospectus & Organizational Bylaws* provides more information about the MPO's organizational structure, decision-making process, and a description of other regional partners who share a role in carrying out those requirements. The organizational bylaws specify the governance structure and responsibilities of the MPO's Executive Board. The document can be found online at About.NashvilleMPO.org.

1.3 Federal Requirements and State Coordination

The Nashville Area MPO serves as the lead transportation planning and programming agency for the seven-county Middle Tennessee region and conducts its efforts in compliance with federal transportation planning requirements, working closely with TDOT who performs both long and short-term planning across the entire state, taking a lead in rural areas, and working with MPOs in the state's eleven metropolitan areas.

Federal Transportation Planning Requirements

Since the 1960's, the federal government has required that metropolitan areas undertake a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process. Legislation requires that all modes of surface transportation be considered during the planning process including private automobiles, public transit, walking and bicycling, as well as movements of people and goods.

In 2012, the U.S. Congress passed and the President Obama signed into law the transportation act entitled, *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century* (MAP-21). This federal legislation defines eight specific planning factors to be considered when developing transportation plans and programs in a metropolitan area to ensure consistency with national goals and objectives:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Across the U.S., this federally-required planning process is administered through state departments of transportation and carried out by the appropriate MPO. In Tennessee, TDOT is responsible for ensuring compliance with the federal requirements carried out by eleven MPOs including the Nashville Area MPO. MPOs are responsible for:

- Monitoring the conditions of the existing transportation network;
- Identifying existing capacity or safety problems through detailed planning studies to develop candidate transportation improvements;
- Forecasting future population and employment growth for the region;
- Evaluating the effects that future land use plans will have on transportation infrastructure within major growth corridors throughout the region;
- Developing alternative growth scenarios to evaluate the affects that land use and transportation choices made today will have on the region's future;
- Estimating the impact that an expanding transportation system will have on air quality;
- Developing a financial plan that identifies the costs and revenues associated with the continued operation and maintenance, and future expansion of the region's transportation system; and
- Working with the public and stakeholders to determine the region's priorities for improving the transportation system with the anticipated revenue.

In order to carry out its responsibilities, the MPO produces three major work products: a Regional Transportation Plan (also known as a long range transportation plan), a Transportation Improvement Program, and a Unified Planning Work Program. MPO plans and programs are available to the public and interested parties online at NashvilleMPO.org, by calling (615) 862-7204, or by visiting the MPO offices at 800 Second Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee, 37210.

- **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP):** a long-range, twenty-five-year multimodal strategy and capital improvement program developed to guide the effective investment of public funds in transportation facilities to help manage congestion, increase regional mobility options, and conform to national air quality standards. The RTP is updated every four or five years and may be amended as a result of changes in anticipated federal, state, and local funding; as well as major investment studies, congestion management systems plans, interstate interchange justification studies, and environmental impact studies.
- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** a four-year work program that lists all regionally-significant and federally funded transportation projects and services in the MPO planning area. This includes highway and street projects, public transit projects, as well as bicycle and pedestrian projects that are implemented by TDOT or local governments, or transit agencies. All projects included in the TIP must be consistent with, or selected from the adopted regional transportation plan. Additionally, the TIP must be fiscally constrained by federal appropriations or estimated revenues.
- **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):** updated annually, the UPWP provides citizens and stakeholders the necessary transparency to understand how federal transportation planning funds are being used by the MPO, local governments, transit agencies, and TDOT in order to meet federal metropolitan planning requirements. The UPWP is developed by MPO staff in consultation with partner agencies and input from local citizens and stakeholders. It may be amended to account for changes in funding or project needs.

Federal regulations require that the FHWA and FTA of the U.S. DOT jointly review and evaluate the transportation planning process carried out by MPOs in areas with an urbanized area population of 200,000 or more people, no less than every four years. The Nashville Area MPO was last reviewed and certified by the FHWA Tennessee Division Office and Region IV Office of the FTA on August 4, 2014.

Tennessee Transportation Planning and Programming



TDOT's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is an important document for the Department and its stakeholders, as the Plan allows TDOT to make key long-term funding and policy decisions about transportation investments throughout Tennessee, today and in the future. The current LRTP brings together the needs for all modes of transportation, including rail, transit, ports and waterways, aviation, pedestrians and bicycles in addition to highways. TDOT is currently in the process of updating the LRTP in order to assist with its goal of providing the best multimodal transportation system in the nation over the next 25 years. As part of the effort, the plan will provide a strategic investment program that will identify funding priorities for the next 10 years.

More information is available online at <http://www.tn.gov/tdot/topic/transportation-plan>.

As part of the federal requirements for transportation planning, TDOT develops a four-year short-term improvement program called the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). To develop the STIP, TDOT works directly with the Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs) and MPOs throughout the State to determine project needs. For urban areas, the state participates in the metropolitan planning process to ensure the inclusion of state projects in the appropriate MPO TIP. Upon adoption, each project within the Nashville Area MPO's TIP becomes, without exception, a part of the TDOT's STIP.

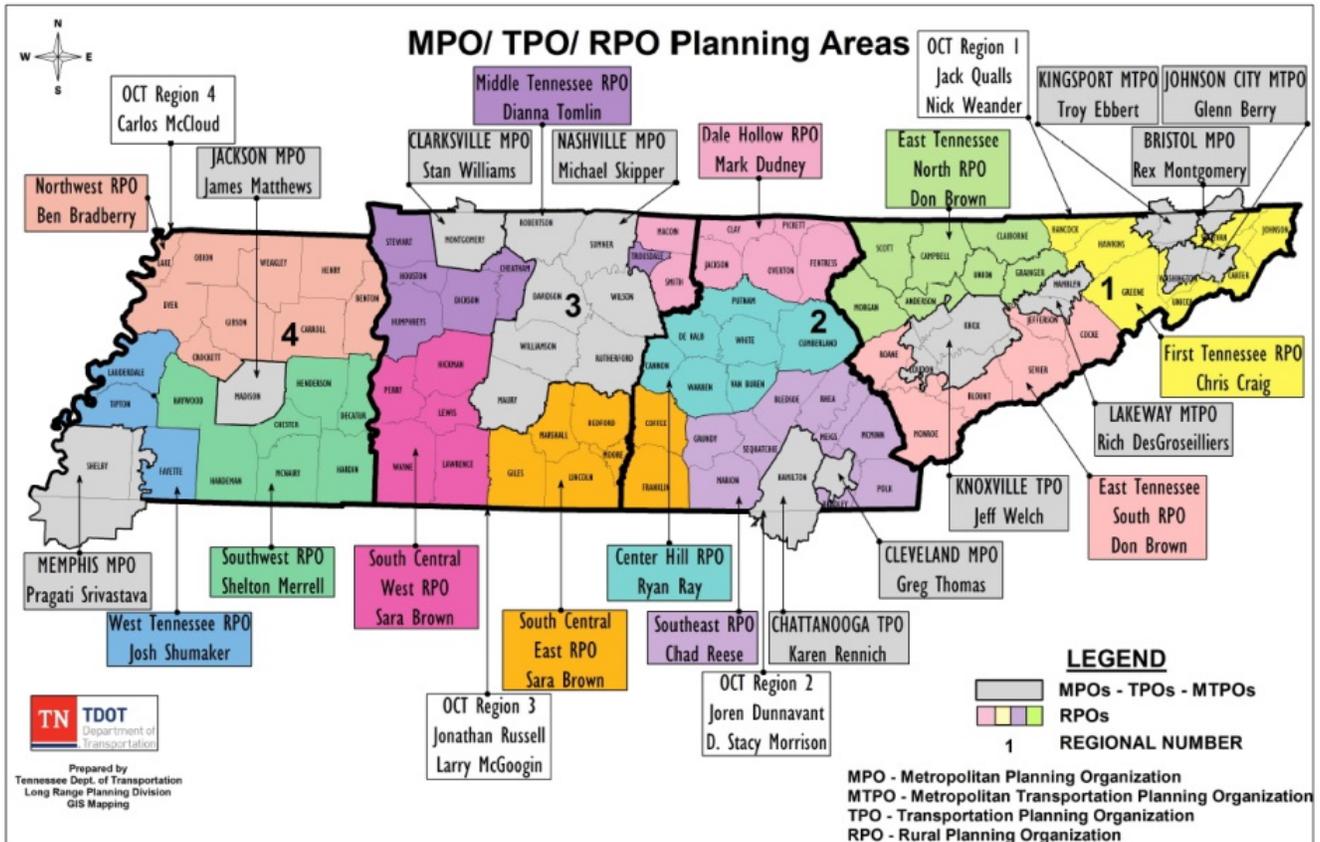
The 4-year STIP is updated by TDOT every three years. The current STIP spans federal fiscal years (FY) 2014 through 2017 and is scheduled to be updated in 2016 to cover FYs 2017 through 2020.

The STIP is available online at <http://www.tn.gov/tdot/topic/program-developmentdot.state.tn.us/programdev/>.

Transportation Planning Areas across Tennessee

Federally-mandated transportation planning and programming responsibilities in Tennessee fall to the eleven MPOs and TDOT. Within Middle Tennessee, the Clarksville Urbanized Area MPO and the Nashville Area MPO take the lead in regional planning and programming for their respective metropolitan areas in coordination with TDOT. For rural areas that fall outside of the MPO boundaries, TDOT works through rural planning organizations (RPOs) to establish priorities for state and federal transportation funding.

Figure 1-1 Transportation Planning Areas across Tennessee



1.4 Public Involvement Opportunities

Public involvement is a critical element of all planning that is done through the Nashville Area MPO. Such involvement ensures the planning process conforms to the vision, goals, and objectives of the region. Over the last three years the MPO has engaged the community through a variety of forums with the strategic objective to engage a broad and diverse audience with specific efforts to target the following:

- General public;
- Traditionally-underserved populations including low-income and minority groups;
- Governmental partners including local, state, and federal agencies;
- Local and regional transit agencies and private transit operators;
- State and local political leadership;
- Business community including area chambers of commerce and economic developers;
- Non-profit community including quality growth advocacy groups; and
- Freight shippers and transportation providers.

In order to engage those audiences in the most effective way, the MPO used a variety of tools and techniques to augment the standard public workshops that are often used in public planning.

- **MPO Website:** The MPO's website at www.NashvilleMPO.org provides an overview of the MPO, its responsibilities, staff contacts, executive board leadership, regional planning efforts, regional data and forecasts, meeting information, and items for public review and comment. The website also contains a multi-media section which houses videos, PowerPoint presentations, photo slideshows, and a public involvement section containing access to social media outlets.
- **Print, Radio, and Television Media:** Throughout the past three years, the MPO has used the media to communicate its proposed plans and programs and to encourage public participation at regional events and local workshops. During the development of the 2040 plan, MPO staff and board leadership contributed to numerous newspaper articles and conducted several radio and television interviews.
- **Social Media:** The MPO uses social media platforms to engage community members in the planning process, gather feedback and provide information relevant to the region's economic prosperity. The MPO's twitter account reaches more than 2,600 followers and its Facebook page over 1,000. Since 2010, the reach of the MPO's social presence has expanded significantly making these platforms a vital part of the organization's public engagement.
- **Regional Symposiums and Summits:** Annually, the MPO hosts or sponsors regional events to educate the public and stakeholders about important issues including context sensitive solutions, complete streets, school-siting, regional transit development, and regional growth and development. In 2014, the MPO hosted its first annual meeting to kick-off the planning process for the 2040 RTP and extend the organization's ability to communicate its accomplishments to the public.
- **Speaker's Bureau:** MPO staff members have been active over recent years providing presentations aimed at communicating proposed plans and programs as well as soliciting input through facilitated conversations. The MPO continues to receive presentation requests from regional organizations on a regular basis.
- **Survey Research:** In recent years, the MPO has conducted various telephone and web-based surveys to measure attitudes and perceptions towards transportation policy. The largest of the efforts included statistically valid telephone survey of 1,100 residents from across the 10-county Middle Tennessee region.
- **Videos and other Visualizations:** The MPO has invested significantly in recent years to produce visualization tools in order to increase the public's understanding of proposed plans and programs. To kick-off the RTP planning process to the public, the MPO produced an eight-minute video which debuted during the MPO's annual meeting and has since been viewed online communicating the purpose and process of the RTP.
- **Related Planning Efforts:** The MPO's process is built upon local planning efforts. As such, public involvement and participation in city and county comprehensive planning efforts and transit agency strategic plans are coordinated with the development of MPO plans and program. In addition, the MPO carries out a variety of regional and corridor technical studies that offer opportunities for public involvement in the formation of recommendations.

Call-for-Projects and County Workshops

The official launch of the plan began with a formal call-for-projects in July 2014 to solicit proposals from MPO member jurisdictions including TDOT, local city and county governments, and public transit agencies. The Call remained open through the end of September 2014. During the Call, MPO members were asked to complete an application and submit a detailed narrative and budget for each project through online software housed at Apply.NashvilleMPO.org. In all, more than 400 projects were submitted by 25 different agencies totaling more than \$9 billion worth of work.

Following the formal call-for-projects period, MPO staff held three rounds of workshops with MPO members to review the project evaluation process, discuss project proposals, and determine local priorities. For each round, one workshop was held in each of the seven counties of the MPO. All workshops were open to the general public and included mayors, county executives, city managers, and representatives from TDOT, transit agencies, local planning departments, local public works departments, local chambers of commerce and economic and community development officials. The following provides a brief recap of each.

- **Round 1, November through December 2014:** Served to create common understanding of the current and future challenges of the regional transportation system and the projects submitted through the call-for-projects. MPO staff reviewed growth and development forecasts, traffic projections, and other key transportation performance issues. The group discussed the RTP policy framework endorsed by the MPO Executive Board on November 4, 2014, and the anticipated fiscal constraints of the plan. Finally, each member jurisdiction shared brief remarks regarding the purpose and need of each project submitted during the call-for-projects.
- **Round 2, May through June 2015:** Focused on the MPO's project evaluation methodology and initial results. More than 400 projects were evaluated and scored during the process. These included roadway capacity and safety projects as well as transit and non-motorized facility improvements.

- **Round 3, August 2015:** Used to discuss fine details of individual projects and big picture initiatives of the RTP including strategies to communicate transportation priorities. The conversation included general discussion about the need for increased federal, state, and local revenue to fund transportation projects, with a specific emphasis placed on the need for dedicated funding to improve transit and to address the long-term high capacity transit needs along the major corridors.

Formal Interagency Consultation and Public Review

During the 30-day period of public review copies of the 2040 RTP will be made available on the MPO’s website and at local branch libraries throughout the MPO region. Several workshops and meetings will be held around the region to provide an opportunity for members of the public and stakeholder groups to evaluate the proposed policies, programs, and projects.

In addition, local, state, and federal agencies involved in natural resources, land use management, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation will also be given an opportunity to review the draft plan to ensure adequate interagency consultation has yielded a plan that is consistent with the goals and objectives of other public agencies that are affected by transportation plans, programs, and policies.

Key Dates of the Public Review and Comment Period

- October 2015 through January 2016 – Draft plan reviewed by state and federal partners.
- December 9, 2015 – Plan recommendations endorsed by the MPO Executive Board.
- January 15, 2016: Draft copies of the plan document placed on website and in area libraries.
- January - February 2016: Formal public workshops in counties throughout the MPO region.
- February 3, 2016: First public hearing.
- February 17, 2016: Second public hearing and formal adoption.

Written comments received through the public involvement period will be provided to the MPO Executive Board prior to adoption and included in Appendix D, along with documentation of MPO’s public noticing of the draft plan.