

1.0 Introduction

1.1 A Transportation Plan for the Next 25 Years

The primary purpose of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), also known as the long range transportation plan (LRTP), is to provide an overarching vision and set of actions for satisfying the existing and future demands on the transportation system serving the Nashville metropolitan area in a way that enhances the livability, sustainability, prosperity, and diversity of the region. Prepared by the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the plan spans the next quarter century through the year 2035.

Working as part of a regional coalition comprised of local governments, non-profit organizations, the business community, and public citizens, the MPO recently adopted four guiding principles to align its decision-making with the multi-faceted needs and desires of the region:

- **Guiding Principle #1: *Livability*** - Work to enhance the quality of life in the region by supporting initiatives that increase opportunities for affordable housing, education, jobs, recreation, and civic involvement without increasing the burden on citizens to enjoy their community.
- **Guiding Principle #2: *Sustainability*** - Strive to support growth and prosperity without sacrificing the health, environment, natural and socio-cultural resources, or financial stability of this or future generations.
- **Guiding Principle #3: *Prosperity*** - Contribute to the continued economic well-being of the greater Nashville area by investing in transportation solutions that increase access to education, jobs, and amenities, reduce the cost of living and doing business, and attract new investment to the region.
- **Guiding Principle #4: *Diversity*** - Recognize the multitude of needs and the variety of perspectives and backgrounds of the people that live and work in the greater Nashville area by promoting a range of transportation choices that are designed with sensitivity to the desired context.

In its first major effort to help the region in its pursuit of those four guiding principles, the MPO has developed the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan with a focus on three major transportation policy initiatives:

- **#1: Create a Bold, New Vision for Mass Transit** to help guide the expansion and modernization of the region's mass transit system in preparation for the increasing competitive global economy and to more proactively address the growing concerns about the health of our environment, worsening congestion, and the sprawling land development pattern that has began to encroach upon the area's cherished rural countryside.
- **#2: Support Active Transportation and the Development of Walkable Communities** to improve connectivity between people and places within the urbanizing area of the region, foster healthier activity for the region's citizens, and to serve as the backbone of investments in mass transit.
- **#3: Preserve and Enhance Strategic Roadway Corridors** with a focus on repairing an aging roadway and bridge network to ensure the safety and security of the traveling public and an emphasis on using technology to make roadway corridors more efficient and ready for the vehicle fleet of the 21st century.

A Fiscally-Constrained Plan with Illustrative Needs

The 2035 RTP provides a balanced, financially-feasible set of transportation improvements that can be constructed or implemented over the next 25 years with expected federal, state, and local revenues. Those proposed improvements are intended to help alleviate traffic congestion, provide more transportation choices, improve transportation system operations, and meet the region's air quality goals over the next quarter century.

The RTP presents projects over the span of three planning horizons including a short-term horizon (2011-2015), a mid-term horizon (2016-2025), and a long-term horizon (2026-2035). Projects included in the short-term horizon also comprise the MPO's regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which is presented in more detail by a separate document.

As important as those proposed projects are to the region's future, it is important to realize that the cost of the full set of transportation needs identified within the metropolitan area far outpaces the expected revenue. As such, this document presents a discussion of illustrative projects where funding has not yet been identified, as well as other strategies that could be implemented to reduce the gap between what the region can afford and what it really needs.

This document reflects an emphasis on transportation planning and project programming that is consistent with the most recent federal transportation legislation, The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) passed by the United States Congress in 2005, and the *Clean Air Act Amendments* (CAAA) of 1977 and 1990. SAFETEA-LU continues the metropolitan transportation planning provisions of its predecessor, TEA-21, that reinforce and complement the Clean Air Act Amendments air quality conformity provisions.

1.2 About the Nashville Area MPO

The Nashville Area MPO, serving as lead author of the 2035 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 role of the MPO is to help the region create its desired future through transportation investments that are consistent with regional goals for growth.

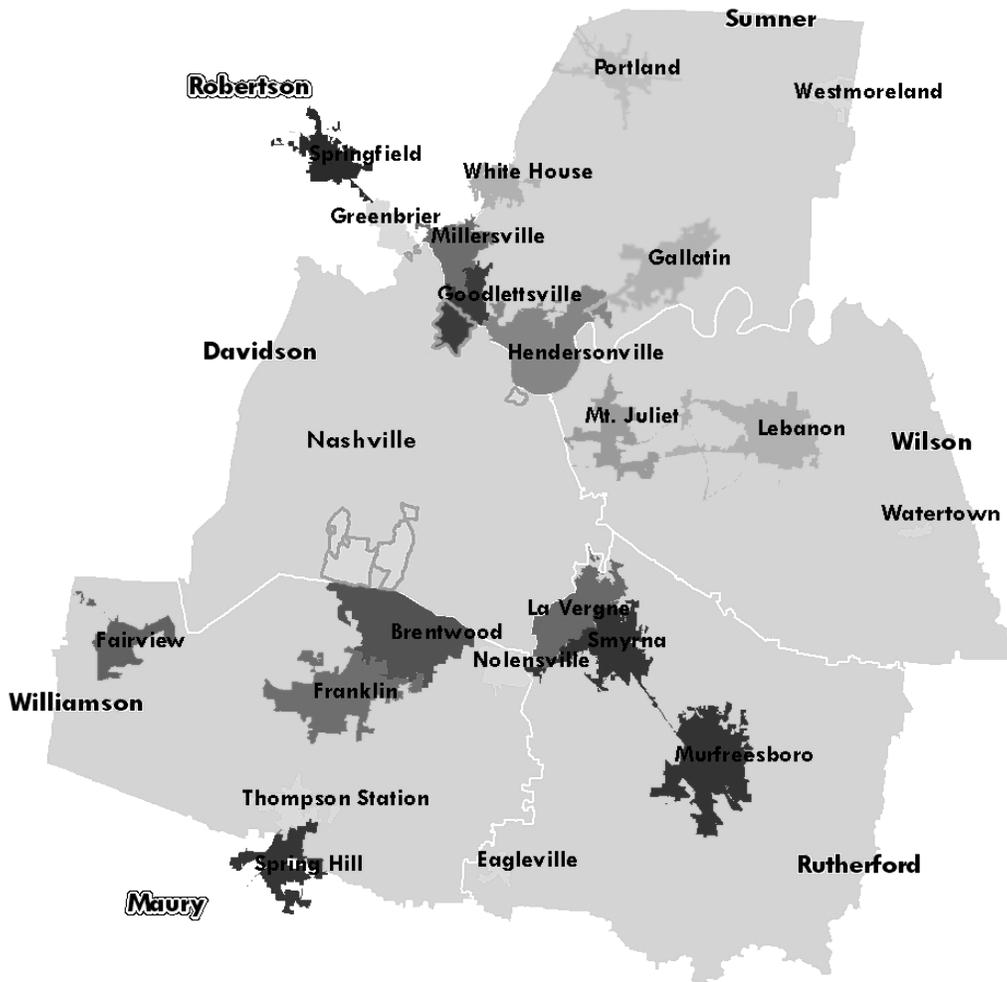
The MPO is the federally-designated transportation planning agency for over 2800 square miles and more than 1.5 million people throughout Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson and parts of Maury and Robertson counties. The MPO is funded by grants from the U.S. Department of Transportation and the Tennessee Department of Transportation, and by local governments through regional dues.

Serving 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 five-plus 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 health.

The MPO is committed to providing leadership to the region in the planning, funding, and development of a regional multi-modal transportation system; one that promotes personal and social economic prosperity while encouraging sustainable growth and development practices to protect and preserve valuable community and natural assets.



Figure 1. MPO Planning Area Map



1.3 Metropolitan Planning Requirements

Since the 1960's, the federal government has required that metropolitan areas (defined as urbanized areas with populations greater than 50,000) undertake a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process. Legislation also requires that all surface modes of transportation be considered during the planning process. In Tennessee, this process is administered through the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) and carried out by the MPO.

Specifically, the MPO is 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; and
- 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.

In carrying out its requirements, SAFETEA-LU calls for the MPO to inherit the following eight factors to ensure consistency with national goals and objectives for transportation planning:

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.

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 at the MPO’s website (NashvilleMPO.org), by calling the MPO at (615) 862-7204, or by visiting the MPO offices at 800 Second Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee, 37201.

Regional Transportation Plan

The Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is 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; major investment studies; congestion management systems plans; interstate interchange justification studies; and environmental impact studies.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a four or five-year work program that lists all regionally significant and federally funded projects and transportation services in the MPO planning area including highway and street projects, public transit projects, and bicycle/pedestrian enhancement projects. Any project included in the TIP must be consistent with, or be selected from an approved regional transportation plan. Additionally, the TIP must be fiscally constrained by estimated future revenues. As such, the TIP can be amended to account for changes in funding or need.



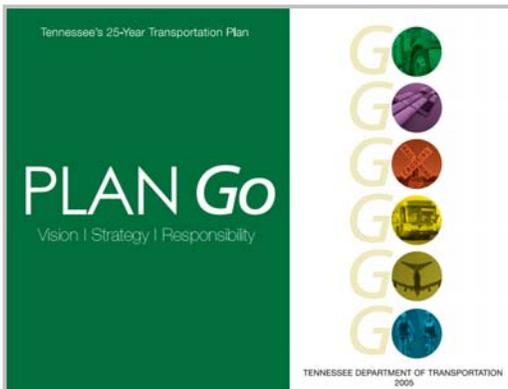
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a one or two-year plan developed to focus work efforts of staff and consultants using planning funds in the upcoming fiscal year. All federally funded planning activities must conform to federal planning requirements and be listed in the UPWP.

1.4 Statewide Transportation Planning & Programming

While the primary purpose of the Nashville Area MPO is to provide coordinated long and short-term transportation planning within the greater Nashville region, the Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) performs both long and short-term planning across the entire state, taking a lead in rural areas, and working with MPOs in urban areas.

Tennessee Long-Range Transportation Plan



In order to support a growing population, Tennessee needs a strong economy. A dynamic and reliable transportation system helps to create jobs, and so economic success directly depends on transportation planning.

Beginning in January 2004, TDOT worked to identify the transportation challenges facing Tennessee, determine the state's modal needs, find the opportunities that exist to make improvements, and investigate potential funding scenarios. From this data, goals, objectives and performance measures were developed, as well as a set of draft policies. An update of the

state's Aviation Plan was completed, and a statewide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was created. Finally, a financial plan, strategic investments program and project evaluation system were developed.

Tennessee's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), also known as PLANGo, brings together the needs for all modes of transportation, including rail, transit, ports and waterways, aviation, pedestrians and bicycles in addition to highways. Although TDOT has developed transportation plans in the past, this is the first multimodal plan that strives to integrate all modes of transportation into a seamless system. PLANGo is available on the web at www.tdot.state.tn.us/plango/home.htm or by contacting TDOT at (615) 741-2848.

State Transportation Improvement Program

As part of the federal requirements for transportation planning, TDOT develops a 4-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 Transportation Improvement Program. Upon adoption, each project within the Nashville Area MPO's TIP, within the years 2011-2014, will become, without exception, a part of the larger STIP. Funding amounts for projects included in federal fiscal year 2015 of the TIP are shown for illustrative purposes only. The STIP is available on the web at www.tdot.state.tn.us/programdev/ or by contacting TDOT at (615) 741-2848.

