

Transportation Planning Facts

Planning to ensure a mobile region

The Metropolitan Council is charged under state and federal law with overall planning for the seven-county metro region's transportation system, including highways, transit, aviation, bicycles and pedestrians. Because moving people and goods efficiently supports a healthy economy, a well-functioning transportation system is essential to a prosperous regional future.

The Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan details regional transportation goals, plans and investment priorities to ensure a robust, efficient transportation system as the region's population grows. The plan is updated periodically to take into account new studies, funding realities and other data; the most recent update was approved in November 2010.

The plan is developed by the Council's Metropolitan Transportation Services (MTS) division. It is implemented by MnDOT and regional transit providers, including Metro Transit, suburban transit authorities, and counties and their regional railroad authorities.

Planning and programming involves local elected officials

Federal law and regulations require that all communities with more than 50,000 residents have a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to coordinate transportation planning in order to receive federal transportation funding. The Council is the designated MPO for the seven-county Twin Cities area.

The Minnesota Legislature established the 33-member Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) in 1974 to fulfill federal requirements that the MPO include local elected officials and significant transportation providers in the continuing, cooperative and comprehensive regional transportation planning and funding processes. The TAB provides formal review of regional and state transportation plans; solicits, evaluates and selects projects to receive federal transportation funds; and conducts public hearings and adopts the region's Transportation Improvement Program.

Highway strategy targets active management, focus improvements

Forecasts show that most of the region's highway system will experience congestion during peak hours by 2030, and constrained financial resources will prevent building many new lane miles. To address this congestion, the Council's 2030 Transportation Policy Plan focuses on the people-moving capacity of the highway system, combined with strategies to minimize future demand on the system. Key strategies include:

- Use active traffic management system-wide to reduce the impact of congestion and incidents on the highway system.
- Construct lower-cost, high-benefit highway improvements to improve traffic flow while addressing safety hazards.
- Develop a system of managed lanes (and priced MnPASS lanes) to provide congestion-free travel options for transit riders, car and van pools and solo drivers willing to pay.
- Implement capacity expansion in strategic locations, specifically for land continuity or unfinished segments of the highway system.



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The Council's vision for transit includes growth in overall annual regional ridership from 73 million in 2003 to 147 million by 2030.

Expanding the regional transitway network, along with a long-term, sustainable funding plan, is critical to achieving the vision.

- Improve non-freeway trunk highways, with special emphasis on applying active traffic management, and making preservation and safety investments.

The Council assists local units of government to acquire and preserve right-of-way for future metropolitan highways. In 1982, the Legislature authorized the Council to levy a regional property tax to provide funds to make interest-free loans to counties, towns and cities to purchase property within certain future highway corridors. Before construction begins, MnDOT buys the property from the local partners, who then repay the Council for the loans. The Council, with regional stakeholders, is evaluating this program. Recommendations are anticipated in 2012.

Transit vision calls for big growth in transit ridership

Transit is already a major contributor to regional mobility, providing 91 million rides in 2010. The Council's vision for transit is to grow overall regional ridership to 147 million by 2030.

Planning to expand the regional transitway network is critical to achieving the vision. Transitways – like light rail (LRT), commuter rail, bus rapid transit (BRT) and express buses – connect regional employment centers and attract new riders because service is faster, more reliable and has more amenities.

The Council's transportation policy plan identifies 7 transitways in operation, under construction or in engineering; 8 corridors under study for dedicated LRT, BRT or commuter rail; 9 corridors for arterial BRT on existing roads; and 12 express bus corridors with transit advantages. The Council partners with county transit planners and railroad authorities to plan and implement these corridors.

Planning for aviation and other transportation modes

The transportation policy plan, which includes the first major update of the aviation system plan since 1996, addresses impacts and opportunities facing the industry, such as the economic and security issues that have emerged since 2001. The plan incorporates new long-term comprehensive plans for the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport and six of its reliever airports.

The Council provides planning guidance on issues related to bikeways and walkways, and with the TAB allocates federal funds to bicycle and pedestrian projects. The policy plan continues to support and coordinate efforts to strengthen these modes.¹

The plan also acknowledges the multimodal freight movement system that connects the region to the rest of the nation and the world. The Council's plan proposes to continue to monitor the issues confronting the freight industry, working closely with MnDOT to support the economic vitality of the region.

For more information

For more information about the Council's transportation planning activities, visit www.metrocouncil.org or call MTS at 651-602-1758.

Related fact sheets include [Regional Transit Services](#); [Metro Mobility](#); [Metro Transit](#); [Transit Link](#); [Hiawatha Light Rail](#); and [Employer and Community Outreach](#).