

Summary

2030 Transportation Policy Plan

Transportation at the Crossroads

More people, more trips

Since 1970, the population of the Twin Cities metropolitan area has grown by 767,000, or more than 40 percent. During this same period, the region has seen:

- More women entering the workforce. Between 1970 and 2000, the proportion of women in the Twin Cities workforce increased from 48.8 percent to 71.4 percent. Among the largest 25 metropolitan areas, the Twin Cities ranks the highest in both male and female workforce participation.
- Dramatic growth in auto ownership. In 1970, a third of the households in the Twin Cities metropolitan area had two cars. By 2000, the figure had increased to 62 percent. In 2000, there was slightly more than one car for every licensed driver in the metro area.
- Increased suburbanization and decentralization. In 1970, 54 percent of the region's households were outside of Minneapolis and St. Paul. By 2000, the figure had risen to 73 percent. Similarly, the share of the region's jobs located outside of the central cities grew from 44 percent in 1970 to 69 percent in 2000.

Today, more people are making more trips and traveling longer distances, with suburb-to-suburb commutes exceeding those from the suburbs to the central cities.

By 2030, the region is expected to add nearly 1 million people, 470,000 households and 560,000 jobs. This will generate an additional 4 million daily trips, a 37 percent increase in travel on our region's roadways.

Slowing the growth in congestion

While growth is a good thing, it poses challenges, as anyone who has traveled in peak hour traffic can attest. In 1990, 30 percent of the region's freeway lanes were congested during peak periods; by 2000, the figure had grown to 60 percent. In the Council's 2003 survey of metro area residents, traffic congestion ranked as the No. 1 concern, outpacing crime, education and housing.

There are no "silver bullets" that will eliminate congestion. But the Council's *Transportation Policy Plan* contains policies and strategies designed to slow the growth in congestion and improve mobility. Consistent with the *2030 Regional Development Framework* – the umbrella chapter of the Council's metropolitan development guide – the *Transportation Policy Plan* calls for:

- Planning and investing in multi-modal transportation choices based on the full range of costs and benefits.
- Encouraging mixed-use development in centers along transportation corridors that better links housing, jobs and amenities, and reduces the need for single-destination trips.
- Making more efficient use of the regional transportation system by encouraging flexible work hours, telecommuting, ridesharing and transit ridership.
- Focusing highway investments first on maintaining and managing the existing system, and second on slowing congestion.
- Building transit ridership by expanding the current bus system and developing a network of dedicated rail and/or bus “transitways.”
- Encouraging local communities to implement a system of fully interconnected arterial and local streets, pathways and bikeways.

Three scenarios for highways

The *TPP*'s highway plan – developed in close coordination with the Minnesota Department of Transportation – focuses investments on maintaining and managing the existing 657-mile highway system, removing bottlenecks and adding capacity where possible.

How far and how fast the region can go in improving the highway system hinges on the success of proposals to increase federal and state funding. Because of the political uncertainties, the plan outlines three scenarios:

Constrained Plan Scenario: Based on current funding levels, this scenario estimates about \$283.5 million a year will be available. Of this total, \$162 million would be needed to maintain and manage the current highway system. Another \$29.5 million would be needed for other purposes, leaving just \$92 million for expansion projects. Based on current cost estimates, the region would be able to build by 2030 only those expansion projects previously planned for construction by 2025.

Unconstrained Plan Scenario: This scenario illustrates the magnitude of highway investments required to hold congestion on the metropolitan highway system at the same level that existed in 1998. Its implementation would require about a 425 percent increase in highway funding over the current levels, admittedly an unlikely prospect.

Constrained Plus 30% Plan Scenario: This scenario assumes a 30 percent increase in highway funding over the Constrained Plan Scenario. Of the \$368.5 million in annual resources, nearly \$200 million would be available for expansion projects. This scenario would accelerate by 10 years the improvements planned by 2030 under the Constrained Plan scenario. In addition, it would provide funds to expand the entire I-494/694 beltway to six lanes, and expand and upgrade certain minor arterials.

Growing the transit system

The transit plan is intended to increase ridership by 50 percent, or 36 million riders per year, by 2020 – with the goal of doubling ridership by 2030. The strategies for achieving the 2020 target include:

- Adding new express bus routes, limited-stop routes, improved frequency and longer hours of service, as well as additional passenger amenities such as transit centers, bus stop shelters and park-and-ride lots.
- Funding enhancements such as bus-only shoulders, ramp meter bypasses and signal priority that give buses travel-time advantages in mixed traffic.
- Providing additional fare incentives such as the Metropass now available through employers and the U-Pass available to University of Minnesota students.
- Developing a network of dedicated “transitways” – including bus rapid transit, light rail and/or commuter rail – with mode choices based on a careful cost-benefit analysis. The region now has two such transitways in place or nearing completion: bus rapid transit on I-394 and LRT in the Hiawatha corridor. Five additional transitways should be added between 2005 and 2020, with work done to advance three more.

The cost of implementing the transit plan: \$500 million in capital investments to grow the bus system and \$800 million to \$1.4 billion to build the transitways, with an additional \$120 million a year for operating costs by 2020.

More resources are needed

While there are many demands competing for scarce public resource, existing revenue streams simply will not be adequate to implement this plan and meet the region’s transportation needs.

Maintaining highway funding at current levels will result in significant increases in traffic congestion, delaying the movement of people and goods, reducing the region’s economic competitiveness and harming our quality of life. Transit service improvements, which could help ease the pressure on our highways, will not be possible at current funding levels. Indeed, current funding levels will not be adequate to maintain transit service at current levels.

Working with the Governor, the Legislature, the business community and other stakeholders, the Metropolitan Council will actively pursue an adequate level of funding to address the region’s unmet transportation needs.

The Transportation Policy Plan also addresses issues dealing with aviation, freight, bicycling and walking.

About the Metropolitan Council

The Metropolitan Council is a 17-member body appointed by the governor. It was created by the Legislature in 1967 to ensure the coordinated, orderly and economical development of the seven-county Twin Cities metropolitan area – consisting of Anoka, Carver, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey, Scott and Washington Counties.

In addition to its planning functions, the Council operates a regional transit system that carries about 150,000 passengers a day, provides wastewater collection and treatment services for 103 communities, and oversees a regional parks system that attracts more than 30 million visitors a year.