

**APPENDIX D:
PUBLIC AND AGENCY
COMMENTS & RESPONSE**

Reaching Out to the Public

There were many opportunities for public review and comment on draft elements and chapters of the Plan. APO staff held more than a dozen public forums, meetings, workshops, and hearings over the more than 2-year Plan development period. Many informal comments were received and it was those comments that helped guide the development of the Plan.

Besides reaching out to the general public, APO staff consulted with local, regional, State, and federal agencies and jurisdictions. Public review and comment notices for the draft 2035 Transportation Plan were sent to more than four dozen agencies and jurisdictions (see Appendix B). Comments received on the draft Plan are summarized below.

Plan Comments

Public Meeting Comments

February 22, 2007 – Public Meeting for SAFETEA-LU Compliance: Public Participation Plan

- No comments received

April 26, 2007 – Public Meeting for SAFETEA-LU Compliance: Environmental Mitigation, and Safety, Security, Public Transit-Human Services Coordination, and Public Participation Plans

- Ms. Shirley Thomas questioned the Stearns County Road 1 expansion project in the APO's Transportation Plan. She noted the importance of the Mississippi and Sauk Rivers in the vicinity of this roadway, the important Native American history, the historic Heim's feed mill, and overall scenic value of the area.
 - Mr. Mareck stated that there are no immediate plans to construct the Stearns County Road 1 expansion project.
 - Mr. Becker stated that federal law requires the APO to avoid, minimize and then mitigate sensitive environmental areas. It was also explained that many future opportunities to comment on this project will be available to those that are concerned about its implementation.
- Mr. Meyer stated that the Mississippi River should be studied in the Safety Plan; if the River gets contaminated so does the area water supply.
- Ms. Weihrauch questioned why all evacuation within a 10-mile radius of the Monticello Nuclear Power Plant is to the south; St. Cloud has a great medical community.
- Mr. Johnson stated that medical service capacity may be an issue in the St. Cloud Area, and therefore, plans call for moving people toward the Twin Cities Area.

May 24, 2007 – Public Meeting for SAFETEA-LU Compliance Amendment: Environmental Mitigation and Safety & Security Plans

- No comments received

January 24, 2008 – Public Meeting for SAFETEA-LU Compliance: Financial Plan Amendment

- No comments received

August 28, 2008 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan Chapters: Introduction, Public Participation, and Land Use

- Mr. Schlingmann stated that Haven Township does not look like what is depicted on the APO map shown.
- Mr. Frank stated that he would like a summary of what these changes mean for St. Joseph.
- Mr. Pullis requested that LeSauk Township be given an opportunity to review and comment on the map affecting their Township.
 - Mr. Mareck informed the Board that the draft APO land use map is not intended to take place of the local comprehensive plans, but instead, is a constrained land use map used for modeling future travel demands. He explained that the draft map before the APO Board was reviewed and approved by the APO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and has also been reviewed independently by city and county planners.
- Mr. Schaefer stated that township land use information is supplied through the County's Comprehensive plans to the APO.
- Mayor Rassier suggested waiting to approve the APO 2035 Land Use map until all the jurisdictions questions are addressed.
 - Mr. Becker indicated that staff would prepare blow up maps for each APO member to better illustrate the proposed land use in their communities. Staff will also follow up with the City of St. Joseph, LeSauk Township and Haven Township to address their specific questions.

**September 25, 2008 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan
Chapter: Land Use**

- Mr. Frank requested that APO staff follow up with the City of St. Joseph Administrator to make some minor adjustments.

**October 23, 2008 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan
Chapter: Air & Freight**

- Mr. Schlingman questioned what the time frame would be on this chapter.
 - Mr. Becker stated that further work would be put off until a new Transportation Planner is hired. Some significant changes for each element since the 2030 Plan include development of an Executive Summary and organized chapter information in a new format, discussions of SAFETEA-LU regulations, subject maps and consolidated some of the 2030 Plan strategies.
 - Mr. Becker stated that there are some unresolved issues at this time that include: revising or including some additional goals, objectives and performance measures; including a discussion of passenger air and rail; incorporating some of Mn/DOT's State Plan information, such as similar performance measures for freight; and incorporating feedback from local and regional passenger and freight stakeholders.
- Mr. Bill Towel, St. Cloud Regional Airport, overviewed the Airports Master Plan explaining what would be needed to make St. Cloud more attractive to freight air traffic. It would be very helpful if the APO would be willing to help support the need for an aviation area, crosswind runway, land acquisition, and a hanger. The Airport is in the process of adding on to the terminal, which helps things run more smoothly.
- Mr. John Maiers stated that moving the railroad yard toward the airport to open up more possibility of combined air/freight traffic would also help boost the region's economy. There is a need for an industrial park out by the airport, there is more land available for freight services and being that close to highway 10 the region could combine truck, rail and air for the most efficient freight movement.

- Mr. Sakry asked if Mr. Maiers is suggesting a Railroad spur line across Highway 10.
- Mr. Maiers stated that it would help the freight industry as well as the metro area as a whole.

January 29, 2009 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan: Financial Forecasts and Planning Policy

- No comments received

March 26, 2009 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan Chapter: Management & Operations

- No comments received

May 28, 2009 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan: Constrained Roadway Plan

- An individual from the general public (anonymous) asked what factors were used to develop the projects.
 - Mr. Becker indicated some of the significant factors considered in developing the list of federally funded projects to be included in the 50 percent expansion alternative included the following:
 - Constraining project costs within the overall 2035 financial forecast
 - Constraining project costs within short, medium and long-range Plan time frames & inflating project cost estimates to these projected time frames
 - Constraining earmark (illustrative) project costs, per new FHWA requirement
 - Considering the status of federal project development work for projects (Corridor Study, EA, EIS)
 - Considering the regional significance of projects (traffic volumes, facility type, system continuity, etc.)
 - Considering how certain projects may perform well together from an overall system perspective
 - Considering project priorities of APO member jurisdictions
 - Considering APO member jurisdiction equity

August 27, 2009 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan: Constrained Roadway Plan and Non-Motorized Chapter

- Citizen Dennis Dumphy spoke against plans to expand the University Drive Corridor, and in favor of plans to construct a 33rd Street River Crossing and connection to Trunk Highway 10. Mr. Dumphy also spoke in favor of a future Trunk Highway 15 freeway through the St. Cloud Metro Area.
- Mr. Schlingman stated that Haven Township is opposed to the 33rd Street Bridge being included in the APO's 2035+ Conceptual Plan, since it goes through the State designated Wild and Scenic River.
- Mayor Kroll asked if information was available regarding the cause of the 600 bicycle/pedestrian accidents identified.
 - Ms. Hanson stated that limited information is readily available to the public. One of the limiting factors is that many of the incidents do not have citations; therefore, it is difficult to determine the cause in all cases. The committee needs to raise awareness as to safety and sharing the road with bicycles and pedestrians.
- Citizen Lowell Olson complimented the APO for developing a transportation plan that invests in non auto based forms of transportation.

- Citizen Dean Loidolt also complimented the APO for adopting a Plan with more of a multi-modal focus for investments.
- Citizen Cindy Robertson commented that there are also benefits to motorists when bicycle and pedestrian facilities are constructed because it removes bicycle and pedestrian traffic from the motorized traffic lanes.
- Mr. Pullis indicated that a small linkage is missing in the proposed trail system near the Sauk Rapids Bridge.
 - Ms. Hanson stated that APO staff have spoken to Stearns County Public Works about this issue and a resolution is being developed; the County is determining whether or not an additional turn lane is required from County Road 1 to southbound 9th Avenue at that location; if a turn lane is necessitated, they will move into the grassy area, and a sidewalk would be added at that time. If no expansion is needed, a sidewalk can be added as an independent project.

September 24, 2009 – Public Meeting for 2035 Transportation Plan: Transit Services Chapter

- Mr. Landy asked how St. Cloud Metro Bus is funded.
 - Ms. Hanson stated that St. Cloud Metro Bus is funded through a combination of federal and state grants, a local property tax levy and fare box collections. Capital projects are also occasionally funded through earmarks from the federal government.
- Mayor Kroll asked what percentage of St. Cloud Metro Bus passengers are St. Cloud State University students?
 - Ms. Hanson stated that approximately 50 percent of St. Cloud Metro Bus passengers are St. Cloud State University students.
- Mr. Sakry asked what percentage of transportation funding in the St. Cloud Area is spent by St. Cloud Metro Bus compared to road and bridge projects?
 - Mr. Mareck indicated that historically transit has comprised approximately 20 percent of all transportation expenditures in the St. Cloud Metro Area.
- Mr. Loso requested St. Cloud Metro bus consider extending service to the St. Joseph area.
- Mr. Cruikshank indicated that St. Cloud Metro Bus has attempted to work with the City of St. Joseph in the past and residents have indicated that they are not interested in Metro Bus service. Perhaps in another 5-6 years this discussion could be reopened. With the growth in the St. Joseph area and having St. Ben's and St. John's Universities, St. Cloud Metro Bus service could perhaps prove to be beneficial.

October 22, 2009 – Public Meeting for Draft 2035 Transportation Plan

- Mr. Dennis Duffy, citizen, suggested a tunnel be built in the 33rd Street South corridor under the Mississippi River, instead of another bridge. This could be another thoroughfare for the region. Mr. Duffy presented a copy of a report completed by Gemini on behalf of Mn/DOT regarding the University Drive EA.
- Mr. Sakry inquired about the 33rd Street Bridge over the Mississippi, how it would be funded, and why it is not on any priority list at this time.
 - Mr. Becker indicated that funding would need to be a combination of local, State and federal dollars and indicated that there simply is not enough funding to include all of the desired projects in the Plan.

- Mike Landy stated that having the 33rd Street Mississippi River crossing on a map was important for future planning.
- Mr. Schlingmann noted Haven Township's objection to the 33rd Street Bridge crossing proposal.
- Mr. Landy wondered if all participating jurisdictions had updated their comprehensive land use plans and if that data had been provided to the APO.
 - Mr. Becker responded that each of the jurisdictions provided direct input for this process.
- Mr. Perske asked if there is a plan to preserve right-of-way at the 33rd Street Corridor.
 - Mr. Becker responded that a Scoping Document has identified a general corridor for the proposed 33rd Street South Bridge; however, additional environmental work would be necessary to select and preserve a specific alignment.
- Mayor Rassier commented that the APO 2035 Transportation Plan has been prepared through a very diligent and thoughtful planning process. This planning process has resulted in a good working regional transportation plan document. Without this document, it would be very difficult for individual communities to plan.

January 28, 2010 – Public Meeting for Draft 2035 Transportation Plan

- No comments received

Formal Written Comments

The only formal, written comments received were from the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT). A copy of the Mn/DOT letter has been provided. As the MPO for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area it is the responsibility of the APO to assure compliance with all federal requirements, therefore, additional information was included in the Plan to further clarify compliance with each of the federal requirements mentioned in the Mn/DOT letter.

No other written comments were received during or after the public review and comment period. The public review and comment period started Thursday, January 28, 2010 and ended Friday, March 26, 2010.



Minnesota Department of Transportation

Transportation Building

395 John Ireland Boulevard
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55155-1899

March 23, 2010

Scott Mareck
Saint Cloud Area Planning Organization
1040 County Road Four
Saint Cloud, Minnesota 56303

RE: APO 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan

Dear Mr. Mareck:

Thank you for the opportunity to review the St. Cloud 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan. With this plan update, St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO) has made considerable strides in several areas. Notable advancements were made in the development of performance measures, extensive public involvement, development of a balanced and financially constrained plan, and greater utilization of visualization techniques.

Mn/DOT's review of the Plan focused on two key areas – adherence to federal regulations and consistency with Minnesota's Statewide Transportation Policy Plan. Mn/DOT finds that the St. Cloud 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan meets most of the joint planning requirements under 23 CFR 450 and is consistent with the Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Plan and 20-year Highway Investment Plan.

To assist the APO completing the Plan, Mn/DOT has identified issues warranting further attention. (More detailed editorial comments were forwarded by email on March 10, 2010 for your consideration). The following section lists requirements of 23 CFR 450, and briefly describes how the Draft Plan might be modified to assure compliance with these requirements:

Needs Assessment:

- "Have the State and transportation operator validated data used in the Plan?" (CFR 450.322 e)

The FHWA final rule on this regulation state that "it is critical that the assumptions and data used in that planning study be considered valid by other planning partners and be consistent with data the MPO will employ to develop its travel models or otherwise develop growth projections in population, employment, land use, and other key factors that affect future travel demand." A more detailed discussion of the assumptions used for future land use as well as how needs were determined from the travel demand model would be useful. Also, a discussion of land use patterns (including residential density)

An equal opportunity employer

and demographics, as well as related trends and impacts to the transportation system, would be beneficial.

Multi-modal:

- “Do the short and long-range strategies lead to an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the movement of people and goods?” (CFR 450.322 b).
- “Does the Plan assess capital investments and other strategies to preserve the existing and future transportation system and provide for multimodal capacity increases?” (CFR 450.322 f).
- “Does the plan include design concepts and scope descriptions of existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail to provide cost estimates and complete conformity determinations (where required).” (CFR 450.322 f)

There is sufficient detail for proposed highway projects. Could this be expanded to the other modes to demonstrate improved modal integration?

Transit:

- “Does the Plan consider public transit needs?” (CFR 450.316 b)

A discussion of public transit needs will be required.

Public Involvement:

- “Was the participation plan developed in consultation with all interested parties?” (CFR 450.316 a)
- “Was there adequate public notice of opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points?” (CFR 450.316 a)
- “Were public meetings held at convenient and accessible locations and times?” (CFR 450.316 a)

It is our understanding that these requirements were met in the planning process. However, this is not clearly documented in the plan.

Year of Expenditure Dollars

- “Does the plan identify revenue and cost estimates for all projects in year of expenditure dollars? (Beyond the first 10 years, the Plan may use cost bands or ranges).” (CFR 450.322 f)

Revenue and cost estimates should be identified in the Year of Expenditure Dollars. If you have already done this, please note it in your Plan.

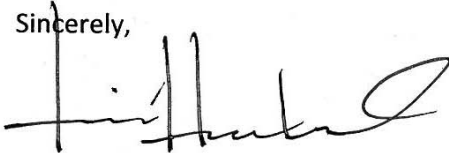
Mn/DOT finds that the St. Cloud 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan is consistent with the Statewide Transportation Policy Plan as well as the 20-year Highway Investment Plan. The Plan’s shift toward a more balanced investment strategy as well as its focus on key safety issues

are prime examples of this consistency. However, please consider the following comments which Mn/DOT believes would improve congruency between APO and Mn/DOT Plans in the future:

- **Performance Measures:** You have incorporated performance measures into your plan. In the future we would like to work with you to assure alignment between APO and Mn/DOT performance measures. We would also suggest that performance measures be used to track progress in meeting planned objectives.
- **Greater Minnesota Metropolitan and Regional Mobility:** This Statewide Transportation policy emphasizes planning for the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian systems. In future iterations of the St. Cloud Plan, these modes would benefit from an analysis of future needs and interconnections.

Thank you for your consideration of Mn/DOT's comments on the St. Cloud 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan. If you have any questions, please contact Sara Aultman at 651-366-3901 or Sara.Aultman@state.mn.us.

Sincerely,



Tim Henkel, Division Director
Modal Planning and Programming

cc:

Susan Moe, FHWA	Shawn Chambers, Mn/DOT OCPPM
Bill Wheeler, FTA	Steve Voss, Mn/DOT District 3
Marisol Simon	Sue Siemers, Mn/DOT District 3
Deborah Ellis, Mn/DOT Transit	Sara Aultman, Mn/DOT OSMP