

PLANNING BLUEPRINT

This chapter includes a discussion of the (Plan) planning process/purpose, transportation asset management, Plan policies and strategies, and performance measures to judge the effectiveness of proposed planning alternatives in meeting area policies. The policies established in this chapter set the direction for helping determine how federal money should be spent and on what projects and activities to provide the most benefit.

Planning Process

As the designated MPO for the St. Cloud Area, the APO provides the information, tools and public input necessary for elected officials to make informed decisions regarding improvements to the urban transportation system. Specifically, the questions that APO staff help transportation stakeholders answer include the following:

- What will be the magnitude of population and economic activities in the future?
- Where will these activities be located?
- How many trips will these activities generate?
- Where will the trips go?
- Which modes will the trips use?
- Which routes will the trips use?
- What is the best transportation system to meet the area's needs and priorities?

Transportation planning in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area is a collaborative process led by the APO and other key stakeholders in the urban transportation system. Key state and federal agencies directly involved in the APO transportation planning process include the Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT), the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA), St. Cloud Metro Bus, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). There are many other regional, local, state and federal agencies directly or indirectly involved in the APO transportation planning. Some of the parties involved are mentioned to the right.

The transportation planning process is designed to foster involvement by all interested parties, such as the business community, community groups, environmental organizations, and the general public, through a proactive public participation process conducted by the APO in conjunction with Mn/DOT and St. Cloud Metro Bus. Refer to Chapter 2: Community Engagement or Appendix B: Public Participation Process & Materials for additional information.

Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to determine a vision for transportation in the St. Cloud Metropolitan area over the next 20+ years. That vision will help provide the basic framework for the APO's metropolitan planning process and focus the direction of the Plan. That direction will help determine how future federal, state and local funds will be spent in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, and subsequently determine what types of projects are funded. Chapter 6: Financial Understanding & Evaluation discusses in more detail the financial investment approach for this Plan.

Federal, State & Local Agencies/Jurisdictions Involved in APO Transportation Planning (directly or indirectly):

- **Federal**
 - Department of Homeland Security
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
 - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
 - U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT)
 - U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- **State**
 - Minnesota Department of Agriculture
 - Minnesota Department of Health
 - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (Mn/DNR)
 - Minnesota Department of Public Safety
 - Driver and Vehicle Services
 - Homeland Security & Emergency Management
 - Pipeline Safety
 - State Fire Marshall
 - State Patrol
 - Traffic Safety
 - Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT)
- **Local**
 - Counties of Benton, Sherburne & Stearns
 - Cities of Rockville, Sartell, Sauk Rapids, St. Augusta, St. Cloud, St. Joseph, St. Stephen, St. Wendel, & Waite Park
 - Townships of Brockway, Haven, Minden, LeSauk, Sauk Rapids, St. Wendel, & Watab
 - Sauk River Watershed District
 - Metro Bus
 - Other Transit Providers & Stakeholders
 - Freight Stakeholders
 - Bike & Pedestrian Stakeholders
 - Central Minnesota Transportation Alliance
 - Area Chambers of Commerce

Types of eligible infrastructure or infrastructure related projects include:

- System Expansion
- System Preservation
- Transit
- Safety
- Operations
- Bicycle/Pedestrian
- Right-of-way

Furthermore, creation of policies and strategies were developed taking into account existing/future challenges and opportunities, Mn/DOT Statewide Transportation Policy Plan policies and SAFETEA-LU planning factors (see Figure 3-1). Throughout the Plan development, APO staff reviewed the Mn/DOT Plans below to incorporate specific information to the APO planning area.

- Minnesota Statewide Transportation Policy Plan: 2009-2028
- Minnesota Strategic Highway Safety Plan
- Mn/DOT District 3 20-Year Highway Investment Plan
- Minnesota Comprehensive Freight-Rail Plan

Transportation Asset Management

When setting priorities and making recommendations for projects evolving from products of the APO planning process, such as the Transportation System Management Plan (TSM), the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), corridor studies or the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), it is important that the APO and its planning partners place a significant emphasis on transportation asset management. Transportation Asset Management (TAM) is a strategic framework for making cost effective decisions about allocating resources and managing infrastructure. It is based on a process of monitoring the physical condition of assets, predicting deterioration over time, and providing information on how to invest in order to maintain or enhance the performance of assets over their useful life.

As the stewards of federal transportation funding in the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, good asset management within each of the core functions of the APO planning process is a critical first step in assessment. Specifically steps for APO asset management include:

1. Establish expectations for transportation system performance and use these expectations to guide the analytical process, as well as the decision-making framework.
2. Inventory the transportation system to determine existing performance and determine what improvements are needed in the short and long-term.
3. Use analytical tools such as benefit/ cost and travel/ demand models to determine strategies that best meet performance measures.
4. Evaluate individual projects based upon how well they meet long-range transportation plan policies and goals.
5. Select transportation improvements and implement them.
6. Reevaluate the process every four years when a new long-range plan is developed.

Figure 3-1 - SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors

| Planning Factor | Description |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Metropolitan Vitality | Support economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency |
| Safety | Increase safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users |
| Security | Increase security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users |
| Accessibility & Mobility | Increase accessibility and mobility of people and for freight |
| Energy & Environment | Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns |
| System Connectivity | Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight |
| System Management | Promote efficient system management and operation |
| System Preservation | Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system |

Note: Action Items are discussed in Chapter 13: Implementation how to address and meet planning factors, beyond objectives/strategies mentioned in each Plan chapter



*Sauk Rapids Bridge and Benton Drive under Construction
Fall 2007*

A recent TAM assessment yielded results much different from previous Plans. The assessment indicated a need for a more balanced transportation system. Spending additional money to maintain existing transportation infrastructure and improve safety while investing in more multi-modal solutions to address capacity issues would help create a more balanced system. But the assessment also indicated the need to continue funding roadway capacity expansion alternatives, primarily because of the growth the St. Cloud metropolitan area is and will be experiencing over the next 20-years.

Because of the TAM assessment results, a 2-part “round table” exercise was completed to assess the 2030 Plan goals and objectives, brainstorm on the potential for new focus areas and develop new policies and strategies. Representatives included engineers and planners from all local area jurisdictions, Mn/DOT and St. Cloud Metro Bus.

Representatives were organized into three groups and asked to complete the exercise. Instructions were provided to consider the following information presented in Table 3-1 when making an assessment and developing new policies.

Following the exercise, results (Table 3-2) were presented at a public meeting for review, comment and approval. Once approved, the new policies and strategies give the 2035 Plan a new direction, and a new focus with a balanced transportation approach that includes roadway capacity improvements, user and system safety, preservation of the existing roadway system, operational improvements and multi-modal options (bike/pedestrian and transit).

**Table 3-1
Information Considered During Plan Policy/Strategy Development
Exercise**

Develop policies/strategies that incorporate:

- Increase system safety & security
- Increase safety for multi-modal users, including bike/pedestrian & transit
- Protect and enhance the environment
- Improve quality of life for people living, working, and utilizing metro area
- Promote energy conservation for support of positive changes affecting climate change
- Support economic growth and competitiveness
- Provide for system connectivity
- Promote efficient management and operations
- Emphasize system preservation
- Take into account transportation systems across all modes and users including air, freight & passenger rail, truck freight, transit, bike/pedestrian

Policies and Strategies

The basic framework for the metropolitan transportation planning process is shaped with clearly identified policies and strategies. Policies provide an overall direction for planning and are broad general statements toward which the Metropolitan Area strives. Strategies are specific statements on how each Policy can be achieved. Table 3-2 illustrates the Policies and Strategies for the 2035 Plan. Each Policy has been developed to meet SAFETEA-LU planning factors and other federal criteria.

Example

The Policy to “Improve Access and Mobility of the Entire Transportation System” was developed not only to address the Access & Mobility planning factor but also six of the other seven planning factors. Encouraging smart land use planning and sound access management, while improving system connectivity and capacity for all modes helps make the system safer, supports economic vitality by making the network more efficient, and protects and enhances the environment by reducing air quality impacts.

Performance Measures

To better judge the effectiveness of proposed planning alternatives in meeting area policies, a set of performance measures have also been included in Table 3-2. These indicators provide a means of evaluating whether system investments are having positive or negative results.

Table 3-2
2035 Transportation Plan: Policies, Strategies and Performance Measures

| Policies | Strategies | Performance Measures (1) |
|--|--|---|
| Improve Access and Mobility of Entire Transportation System | Provide improved system connectivity | Reduction of congested lane miles from 2035 Base Reduction of VMT from 2035 Base Reduction of VHT from 2035 Base % of APO target spent on roadway capacity improvements (50% goal) |
| | Provide additional system capacity | |
| | Encourage sound access management | |
| | Address the most congested facilities | |
| | Encourage smart land use planning | |
| Maximize Transportation Investments for Movement of People and Freight | Advance investment strategies of the MN freight & passenger rail plan | Progress towards implementing Northstar to St. Cloud |
| | Provide improved system connectivity & improved system capacity | Reduction of congested lane miles, VMT & VHT from 2035 base |
| Promote and Support Multi-Modal Solutions | Invest in multi-modal solutions including bike, pedestrian & transit | Increase in bus route service hours/passengers % of APO target spent on transit, bike, ped projects (10% goal) |
| Improve the Safety of All Transportation Modes and Users | Implement low-cost safety improvements | % of APO target invested in safety projects |
| | Implement intersection safety improvements from TSM Report | # of TSM projects implemented |
| | Increase HSIP, SRTS, HES & HRRR safety investments | # of HSIP, SRTS, HES & SRR projects implemented |
| Minimize Social, Economic and Environmental Impacts | Choose transportation solutions that incorporate multiple modes and minimize SEE impacts | # of successfully completed NEPA processes by cities, counties and Mn/DOT in APO Area |
| Promote System Preservation | Increase system preservation investments | % of APO target invested in road preservation projects (40% goal) |

(1) Progress to be measured during development of the 2040 Transportation Plan