

Introduction

Transportation is one of the most important factors to maintaining and enhancing our region's quality of life. During the next 25 years, the San Antonio-Bexar County Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) study area will welcome over 600,000 new residents, 450,000 jobs and build 280,000 homes increasing the estimated population to 2.2 million. This will result in 1.6 million travelers driving 60 million miles per day on the roadway system. In order to address the mobility challenges created from such growth an updated Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) with the horizon year of 2035 was developed. The plan aims to set forth a vision for a transportation system that better connects roadways, transit routes, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and provides easy access to get to and from home, work, school, hospitals, shopping centers and recreational facilities.

The long range transportation plan, or MTP, was developed in a continuing, comprehensive and coordinated manner and reflects the ongoing planning and project development efforts for implementation of transportation policies, programs and projects. The MTP is the basic framework for the MPO's continuous, comprehensive, and coordinated regional transportation planning efforts for the next 25 years. It serves as the region's blueprint for the efficient, safe and convenient transportation of people and goods in consonance with the metropolitan area's overall economic, social, energy and environmental goals. Special effort is made to provide improved access for all citizens to a variety of transportation choices including alternatives to single occupant vehicles; provision for an effective and efficient public transit system; and the continuous involvement of the public in the transportation planning process. The transportation improvement projects in the 2035 MTP focus on a multi-modal system and include roadway, transit, bicycle/pedestrian facilities and rideshare for the region.

Legislative Background for the Plan

Transportation planning by MPOs dates back to the passage of the Federal Highway Act of 1962, requiring urban areas with populations of 50,000 or more to develop and maintain a comprehensive, cooperative and continuing regional transportation planning process. Accordingly, in 1963, San Antonio, Bexar County and the Texas Department of Highways (now the Texas Department of Transportation, TxDOT) established the San Antonio - Bexar County Urban Transportation Study (SABCUTS). In August 1977, the Governor of Texas designated the SABCUTS Steering Committee as the official Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for San Antonio and Bexar County. The MPO serves as the forum for cooperative and regional transportation planning and decision-making by officials of the urban area's local governments and transportation agencies.

In 1991, the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) marked a significant change of the roles for MPOs and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The role of planning was strengthened and the MTP was designated to serve as the instrument for a centralized decision-making process for the development of metropolitan transportation systems. In 1998 Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) building on the initiatives established in ISTEA.

Building upon and strengthening previous legislation, in 2005 the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law. SAFETEA-LU continues the concepts established in ISTEA and TEA-21 and authorizes funding for various categories of transportation and specific projects. In addition, SAFETEA-LU establishes the requirements MPOs must follow to develop their long-range transportation plans.

SAFETEA-LU contains eight factors that must be considered in the development of a long range plan. The MPO's planning process is continuous, cooperative and comprehensive and meets the following federal guidelines:

1. Support Economic Vitality

One of the MTP's goals is to invest in the development of a regional transportation system that serves to increase mobility and efficiency of the movement of people and goods. Land use patterns influence transportation alternatives and strategies that, in turn, influence productivity, efficiency and the economic vitality of the region. Continued population and employment growth, as the San Antonio-Bexar County region is experiencing, will also influence the region's economic growth.

2. Increase Safety

Specific actions to increase the safety and security of non-motorized users that are recommended by the MTP include developing off-road bicycle facilities, and for pedestrians, to consider distance from curb, signage, drainage, slope, speed limits, pedestrian crossings and signals, and education of the traveling public. For both non-motorized and motorized users, coordinating traffic operations and implementing strategies to reduce travel demand at the regional and corridor levels will increase the safety of the traveling public. MPO staff has an on-going effort to review, on a quarterly basis, the state's Crash Records Information System (CRIS) data set and present safety related information to stakeholders.

3. Increase the Ability of the Transportation System to Support Homeland Security

The MTP includes transportation planning information related to the Congestion Management Plan (CMP) that helps identify, assess, promote and assist with implementation of intelligent transportation systems such as the TransGuide system. Additionally, other advanced technologies, such as the vehicle locating and communication systems on-board VIA Metropolitan's Transit's buses, provide an additional level of both safety and security both on the buses, and as a continually roving eye throughout the community. These technologies promote a more secure and functional transportation system and support Homeland Security goals and efforts.

4. Increase Accessibility and Mobility of People and Freight

The MTP includes other transportation modes such as the rideshare program and Bus Rapid Transit, which reduce the dependency on single occupant vehicles. Accessibility and mobility opportunities are enhanced by continuing to develop and upgrade bicycle and pedestrian facilities and other modes of transportation. The MPO has also assisted with funding the Rail Master Plan, the Rail relocation Study and Rail Adaptive Reuse Study. The MPO has also contracted with Global Insight to provide updated freight related data.

5. Protect and Enhance the Environment

The MTP encourages the implementation of strategies to protect and enhance the environment and quality of life. Specific strategies include encouraging denser development patterns, the development of multi-modal transportation modes such as improved transit service and encouraging non-motorized vehicle travel. Other efforts include conversion of fleets to alternative fuels, and specific activities that are implemented on Air Quality Health Alert Days.

6. Enhance the Integration and Connectivity of Intermodal Transportation

Integration and connectivity of the transportation system is enhanced by additional sidewalk construction; designating bicycle lanes or bicycle paths; providing accessible transit service; providing adequate levels of transit service; and providing passenger amenities to facilitate a transfer between transportation modes. Real time travel information for both roadway and transit travel can also greatly improve the usability of the transportation system.

7. Promote Efficient System Management and Operation

Through the Congestion Management Process (see Chapter 10), efficient system management and operation strategies are identified. Operational Management strategies included are the TransGuide System, Freight Management, and Corridor Management. Community campaigns include Rideshare programs, telecommuting, and trip planning. Policy Management strategies include Growth Management and Parking Management. Additionally, the MPO has funded several traffic signal re-timing studies as an effective strategy in managing the transportation system.

8. Emphasize Preservation of the System

Many of the strategies outlined previously are effective in promoting efficient preservation of the existing transportation system. Preservation of the existing transportation system can also be encouraged through preservation of rights-of-way, such as abandoned rail corridors, which may be needed for future transportation corridors

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Mission Statement

The San Antonio metropolitan area is served by an environmentally friendly transportation system where everyone is able to walk, ride, drive or wheel in a safe, convenient, and affordable manner to their desired destinations.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Goals

The following are goals adopted by the TPB and they reflect the goals and values of citizens and stakeholders and guide the development of the long range transportation plan for the region:

- Invest in the development of a regional transportation system that serves to increase the mobility and efficiency of the movement of persons and goods.
- Encourage the cost effective expansion of the regional transportation system to meet the growing mobility needs while ensuring good air quality; enhancing the safety of the traveling public; fostering appropriate land use patterns; advancing alternative modes of transportation; and, increasing accessibility for the traditionally under served segments of the community.
- Support systematic and coordinated maintenance programs, and make available the adequate resources to preserve existing roadways, bicycle and pedestrian facilities and transit systems.
- Increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system and decrease traffic congestion by coordinating traffic operations and developing and implementing strategies to reduce travel demand at both the regional and corridor levels.
- Invest in a public transit system that meets the existing and projected needs of the region by developing effective routes and schedules and constructing functional and attractive passenger amenities.
- Incorporate the spirit and intent of the Americans with Disabilities Act pertaining to mobility and accessibility into all levels of the transportation system.
- Enhance the effectiveness of the regional transportation system by addressing the social, economic, energy and environmental issues of the region in all transportation planning efforts.
- Improve the opportunities for alternative means of transportation that diminish the growth in single occupancy vehicles and improve air quality by providing bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Promote the development of a regional transportation system that recognizes the unique characteristics of the San Antonio-Bexar County area and ensures respect for neighborhoods, historic and archeological resources, the Edwards Aquifer, and other social and environmental issues.

- Promote the development of a regional transportation system that enhances economic activity; provides for employment growth; and encourages public-private partnerships.
- Facilitate the involvement and participation of individual citizens, neighborhood and other interested groups, business and community leaders, local governments, and state agencies in the transportation planning process.

How is the Plan Developed?

The MPO is charged with coordinating transportation planning for the region. The MPO is led by the Transportation Policy Board (TPB), and tasked with development of the long range transportation plan. The TPB provides coordination with regional stakeholders therefore making the MTP a collaborative effort between the MPO, public involvement and technical consultant teams, the Cities and County government, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), VIA Metropolitan Transit, the Alamo Regional Mobility Authority, community based organizations and interest groups, and the region's citizens.

The starting point for the development of the MTP is considering the impacts of future growth, land use and demands on the transportation system. Looking out to the year 2035 demographic data was examined and three possible growth scenarios, representing different types of development patterns were developed for the region. The growth scenarios look at how the region will change and develop, where people will live and work and where and how they will travel to and from their destinations. The growth scenarios aim to present the projected impacts of different types of development and emphasize the differences between the three scenarios.

The three growth scenarios include:

- **Current Trends:** generally based on existing growth trends and shows increased suburban development
- **Infill Development:** no additional development outside Loop 1604 other than what is projected through year 2015, infill concentrates residential development and employment
- **Transit Oriented Development:** higher density development at selected locations along potential high capacity transit corridors

The growth scenario development and analysis departs from the traditional development of previous long range transportation plans. The 2035 MTP reflects the desired growth and transportation goals and values for the region; and recognizes that growth and change will continue and all citizens, local entities and stakeholders can make

positive contributions toward preparing for that change. In order to ensure public input for the plan, a series of five “Mobility 2035” workshops were held across the region where citizens contributed their ideas for land use development and the future transportation system.

An important element of the MTP is to determine how billions of dollars in federal, state, and local transportation funds should be spent over the next 25 years. One of the findings during the MTP development is that population is expected to increase by 43 % between now and 2035 and employment is expected to increase by 60% between now and 2035. Therefore, even with billions of dollars of investment in transportation infrastructure and other surface transportation needs, the congestion levels will increase faster than available funding. Given that overall transportation needs far outweigh available funding sources, public input is essential to developing an acceptable list of transportation improvement projects for the community.

Consistency with Other Local Plans and Programs

The City of San Antonio’s Master Plan, Major Thoroughfare Plan, Mission Verde Plan and Neighborhood Plans, concepts from the Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan, VIA Metropolitan Transit’s High Capacity Transit Planning, the Advanced Transportation District goals, the Early Action Compact, the Congestion Management System/Process, bicycle and pedestrian plans, and actions of the San Antonio Mobility Coalition and the Bexar County Regional Mobility Authority were specifically considered in the development of the MTP. Table I-1 shows the MTP’s consistency with and support of these locally adopted plans and programs.

The document represents the planning efforts of numerous transportation agency staff working with technical and public involvement consultant teams, elected and appointed governmental officials, and community-based organizations and private citizens over a three-year period. The planning process has been continuing, comprehensive, coordinated and fully inclusive. The 2035 MTP aims to improve the transportation system through new and efficient connections and to better move people throughout the region. Transportation planning, projects and policies must be coordinated to avoid increasing traffic congestion, reducing mobility and decreasing quality of life. The MTP is a flexible and dynamic document, and amendable as regional conditions change. The document will be reviewed and updated every five years or as required by federal regulations.

