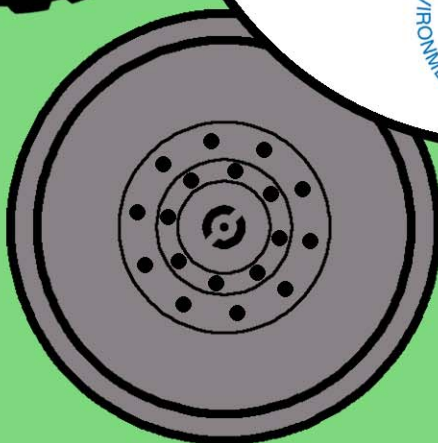
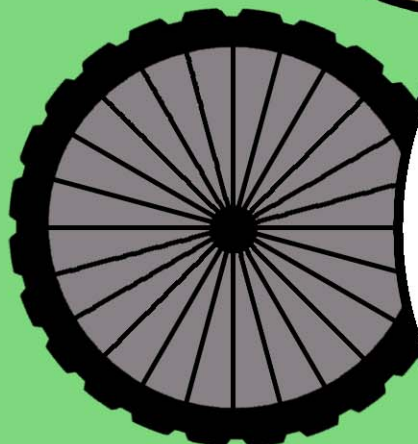
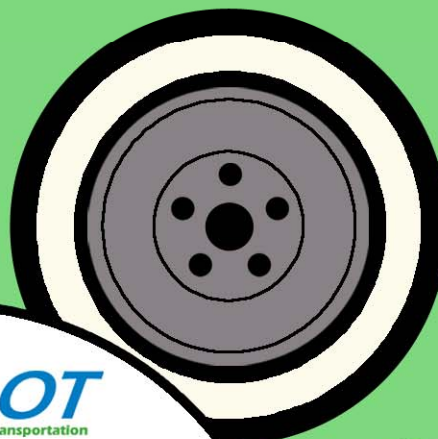


# INTRODUCTION

I



# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. DOCUMENT OVERVIEW AND REQUIREMENTS**

### **A.1 Regional Transportation Plan Overview**

The 2012 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) document addresses each of the major modes of transportation within the Central Massachusetts planning region (Figure I-1). It is considered both a *multimodal* and an *intermodal* document. The RTP provides an inventory of the major modes, identifies challenges & needs, and also provides a series of recommendations. Project-specific, major transportation improvements need to be reflected in the RTP in order to be eligible for federal-aid funding through the region's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

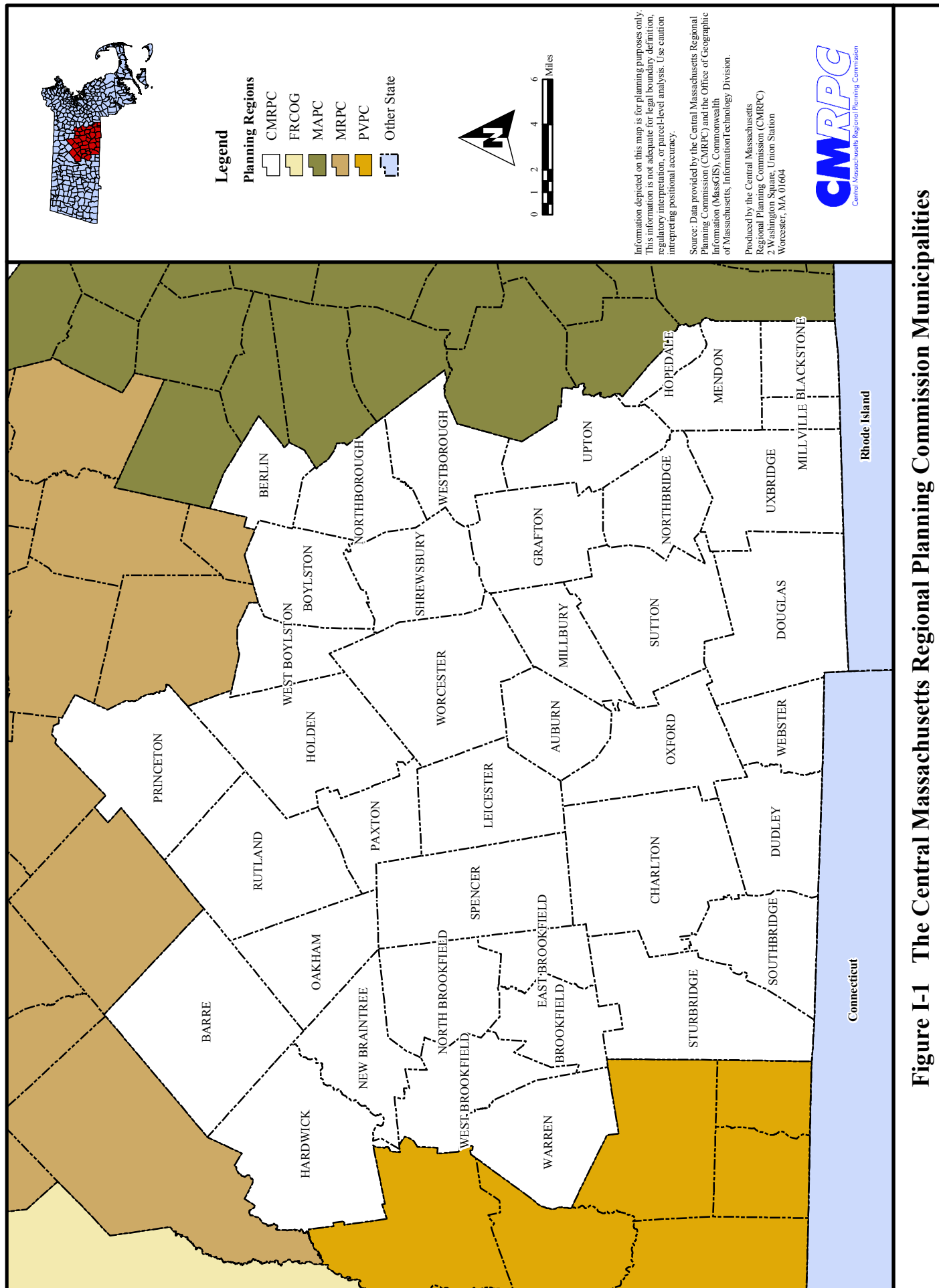
Throughout the development of the RTP, a strong effort is made to involve the general public, including those representing minority and low-income populations, state & local officials and various transportation providers. The development of the 2012 RTP document also included outreach to a number of the region's modal experts and stakeholders.

The FHWA and FTA have provided additional guidance in the new focus areas of Climate Change and Livability. Materials reflecting the themes and intent of these areas are included in the Environmental chapter, and as needed throughout. Statewide planning and policy initiatives are also included throughout and reflected as is pertinent in the themes and content of this document.

The major goal of this effort is the continued development of an integrated, intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods throughout the region.

### **A.2 SAFETEA-LU Requirement for a Regional Transportation Plan**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) is the national transportation legislation that authorized the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009. It has since been extended several times while new authorizing legislation waits for proper consideration. SAFETEA-LU reiterated the long-standing requirement for the preparation of a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) document every four years within regions defined as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs).



## **B. SCOPE OF THE PLANNING PROCESS**

### **B.1 SAFETEA-LU Requirements**

The implementing regulations for the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) state that the planning process it authorizes and requires shall be continuous, cooperative and comprehensive. Transportation planning in the region is conducted in this manner. It addresses required planning factors described below in its consideration and implementation of projects, strategies and transportation services. This plan considers these factors in its formulation of goals and objectives.

### **B.2 Factors That Are Addressed in Planning Activities**

- (1) Support the *economic vitality* of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- (2) Increase the *safety* of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- (3) Increase the *security* of the transportation system for motorized and non- motorized users;
- (4) Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- (5) 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;
- (6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- (7) Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- (8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

## **C. MPO EMPHASIS & PRIORITIES**

### **C.1 State Policies and Initiatives Considered for Inclusion**

In 2008, MassDOT launched the *youMove Massachusetts* planning and public outreach initiative, which engaged the public to develop a high-level statewide vision for transportation. Based on input received at public workshops across the Commonwealth and through an interactive website, ten core themes were developed for future planning, design, and operation of the transportation system. These ten themes are listed below along with additional descriptive text.

- 1) Improve Transportation System Reliability – *Consumers want a more reliable transportation system where delays are minimized and travel times are consistent.*
- 2) Focus More Attention on Maintaining Our Transportation System – *The Commonwealth’s transportation assets need to be managed to extend their useful life and thereby maximize the benefits of past investments.*
- 3) Design Transportation Systems Better – *Transportation facilities and operations should be better informed by real-world conditions faced by system users.*
- 4) Encourage Shared Use of Infrastructure – *With so many different users competing for space, we must find better ways to share out roadways through engineering, education, and enforcement.*
- 5) Increase Capacity by Expanding Existing Facilities and Services – *Expansion of transportation capacity, both through the more efficient management of existing corridors and through new capital investments, is necessary to meet future transportation needs.*
- 6) Create a More User-Friendly Transportation System – *Consumers want a more user-friendly transportation system, where information is easier to access, and the travel experience is more comfortable and welcoming.*
- 7) Broaden the Transportation System to Serve More People – *The transportation network and transportation services should be broadened to serve more and different users in more locations.*
- 8) Provide Adequate Funding and Collect Revenue Equitably – *In an era when our transportation funding falls far below our needs, it is imperative that both new funds and new efficiencies be identified, and that the burdens placed on systems users is fair and appropriate.*
- 9) Minimize Environmental Impacts – *Make our transportation system environmentally sustainable.*
- 10) Improve Access to Our Transportation System – *People need more and better access to our transportation system.*

MassDOT’s *youMove Massachusetts* themes were used as the basis for formulating public outreach plans, formats and suggestions. Public input was generated and evaluated in setting thematic goals and strategies for the Plan.

Additionally, MassDOT is moving forward with the development of a new and timely Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan. This new Strategic Transportation Plan will link the *youMove Massachusetts* themes with a rigorous, data-driven planning tool that can help MassDOT identify and prioritize its major initiatives across modes over the next decades. The Strategic Transportation Plan will also help to more fully clarify MassDOT policy positions on major issues and describe how those policies can inform the modal divisions’ decision-making at all levels. Further, it will provide a blueprint and a resource for MPO members and for the general public to understand the project priorities and programmatic goals for the Commonwealth’s transportation network, as well as help guide the development of future MPO Regional Transportation Plans.

## **C.2 CMMPO Emphasis and Priorities**

The CMMPO considered the following possible local priority areas at the beginning of the document process:

- Maintenance
- Equity
- Security
- Congestion
- Safety
- Access & Connectivity
- Livability
- Climate Change
- Planning
- Technology

Public and CMMPO Advisory Committee feedback indicated that maintenance, congestion, access & connectivity and livability were the most preferred areas to which attention and funding should be directed.

## **D. CURRENT MASSDOT INITIATIVES**

### **D.1 Capital Investment Plan**

Among the requirements of recent transportation reform legislation in Massachusetts are those of Section 11 that requires MassDOT to prepare and publish a five-year capital investment plan beginning with the period of fiscal years 2011 through 2015. The following is a summary of the other major elements of Section 11:

- Every five calendar years, beginning not later than April 30, 2010, MassDOT must publish in the Massachusetts Register a comprehensive state transportation plan for the five succeeding years.
- The plan must ensure a safe, sound, and efficient public highway, road, and bridge system, to relieve congestion, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and improve the quality of life in the Commonwealth by promoting economic development and employment.
- The plan must cost-effectively meet the transportation needs of all residents, including urban, suburban and rural populations.
- The plan must be based on objective engineering assessments of condition, safety, and service and provide for at least 5% of the annual estimated construction, reconstruction, and repair needs of the highways and bridges of the Commonwealth.

- The distribution of funds and projects in the plan must ensure that not less than 75% of the annual percentage of the total statewide collections of motor vehicle fuel tax generated by each MassDOT highway district is spent in the district where generated, except that the minimum percentage is 85% in any district in which the revenue generated by registered vehicles that have a Fast Lane transponder exceeds the average revenue generated by such vehicles statewide.

The first five-year investment plan was completed in September of 2010. Given current TIP/STIP development schedules, the first three years of this plan reflect decisions made in mid-late 2009, and reflect the priorities of the MPOs and the Commonwealth based upon information related to need, readiness, and available financial resources at that time. Programs and projects included in the Capital Investment Plan may themselves change as a result of the new FFY 2011-2014 STIP to be finalized by October 1, 2010. In addition to the programs and projects from the existing STIP, the capital investment plan also includes programmatic federal funding assumptions for FFYs 2014 and 2015. These years have not yet been programmed through the state and MPO processes and, as such, less specificity about project selection exists. It remains to be seen how, when and to what degree decisions made in the State capital planning process will affect and influence Regional Transportation Plans and the regional planning process itself.

## **D.2 GreenDOT Directive**

On June 2, 2010, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) launched the GreenDOT Policy Directive, a comprehensive environmental responsibility and sustainability initiative intended to make MassDOT a national leader in “greening” the state transportation system. MassDOT will promote sustainable economic development, protect the natural environment, and enhance the quality of life for all of the Commonwealth’s residents and visitors through the full range of its activities, from strategic planning to construction and system operations. This will enable MassDOT to use resources in a manner that serves its existing customers while preserving resources for future generations. GreenDOT will be driven by three primary goals: reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; promote the healthy transportation options of walking, bicycling, and public transit; and support smart growth development.

GreenDOT calls for MassDOT to incorporate sustainability into all of its activities, from strategic planning to project design and construction to system operation. The initiative includes greenhouse gas reduction targets mandated under the Global Warming Solutions Act.

The transportation sector generates more than one-third of the total greenhouse gas emissions produced in Massachusetts. GreenDOT sets a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions over 2 million tons by 2020, a reduction of about 7.3 percent below 1990 transportation sector emission levels. If left unchecked, 2020 transportation emissions would increase by 19.0 percent over 1990 levels. Instead, the GreenDOT initiative, combined with other state and federal government policies, is expected to reduce 2020 transportation emissions by almost 30 percent below this “business as usual” level. The GreenDOT initiative will achieve the greenhouse gas reductions through a range of measures. In cooperation with regional planning agencies, MassDOT will set statewide greenhouse gas reduction targets, and meet these targets by balancing highway system expansion projects with other projects that

support smart growth development and promote public transit, walking and bicycling. Examples include transit and rail projects, complete streets planning that includes bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, and investments in greener, more efficient fleet vehicles and renewable power.

## **E. REGIONAL GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

### **E.1 CMMPO Guides Development of the RTP**

Federally required, the RTP is developed through a cooperative effort of the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO). The CMMPO is the body that determines transportation policy and the priority of improvement projects in the Central Massachusetts planning region. Membership of the CMMPO is comprised of the CMRPC, the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (DOT) and its Highway Division, the Worcester city manager, and selectmen from each of five surrounding subregions. Lending direction to the compilation of the 2012 RTP document throughout the development process, the CMMPO, cognizant of the federal requirement to maintain financial constraint, worked to prioritize the region's competing transportation needs.

### **E.2 Regional Transportation Plan Vision**

The 2007 CMMPO Regional Transportation Plan vision, largely continued intact for this current effort, follows:

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) believes that a safe, efficient, and well-maintained transportation system, along with prudent land use planning and economic development, is an essential component of sustainable public policy aimed at improving people's lives. The CMMPO envisions Central Massachusetts in 2030 as a region of 40 well-connected, livable communities with minimal traffic congestion and improved air quality. Alternative, creative transportation methods that integrate multiple travel modes through the use of technology will safely and efficiently move people between homes, jobs, and services and move products between places of manufacture and sale.

As part of this vision, the CMMPO Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) strives for social and geographic equity for the people of Central Massachusetts while identifying and planning for critical improvements to the region's transportation system. The CMMPO recognizes that funding limitations will continue to challenge the ability to expand and enhance transportation infrastructure and travel options while simultaneously maintaining the public investment in existing facilities and services. However, like other metropolitan areas across the nation, the CMMPO has developed this long-range plan to describe the desired future of transportation for the region as well as provide prioritized action items for achieving it.

### **E.3 Goals & Objectives of the Transportation Planning Program**

The following Goals and Objectives further define the desired future vision.



*Goal I. Attain a safer more secure & better-maintained transportation system across all modes and for all populations*

Objective I-A. Define and maintain acceptable conditions and optimal functionality of the region's transportation assets.

Objective I-B. Identify and improve critical locations of safety concern in order to achieve a reduction in the number of injuries and fatalities occurring as people and freight move throughout our region's transportation system.

Objective I-C. Utilize the management systems, travel demand model, and other regional data to identify and prioritize areas of need to better inform selection of projects.

Objective I-D. Continue to encourage coordination among transportation security agencies, expand on identified risks to transportation infrastructure, and prepare evacuation analyses for the region under various scenarios.

*Goal II. Promote livable communities and improved air quality through context-sensitive design and reduced traffic congestion*

Objective II-A. Improve and encourage the use of public transit, ridesharing services, and pedestrian and bicycle facilities so as to achieve a reduction in the percentage of commuter trips utilizing single-occupant vehicles (SOVs), as measured in the 2010 US Census Journey-to-Work data and American Community Survey annual data. Develop/assess alternative strategies to help reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) and that address issues of climate change.

Objective II-B. In conjunction with the MassDOT-Highway District Offices, assist communities that propose potential TIP projects with utilization of the Massachusetts Project Development and Design Guidebook, which outlines a multi-modal and context-sensitive approach to roadway design.

Objective II-C. Ensure consistency of recommended and implemented transportation improvement projects with local and statewide growth management and economic development plans by reviewing available planning documents and maintaining coordinated communication with community stakeholders throughout the development of major local land use projects and the CMMPO RTP and TIP.

*Goal III. Develop an alternative, creative transportation system that integrates multiple travel modes and includes the use of technology*

Objective III-A. Monitor the connectivity of the physical regional infrastructure within and across the regional planning boundary so that it can be better incorporated in the prioritization and selection of transportation improvement projects.

Objective III-B. Seek out appropriate uses of technology for improving the management of existing transportation infrastructure. Review all project proposals for appropriate technology consideration. Provide an ongoing forum for communication and coordination between

appropriate transportation-related agencies in order to deploy the Central Massachusetts Regional ITS Architecture.

*Goal IV. Maintain and improve the existing coordinated transportation planning process*

Objective IV-A. Review and update, as needed, the CMMPO Public Participation Program to open up the transportation planning process and further respond to public concerns to encourage an increase in the number of people and communities that regularly participate.

Objective IV-B. Account for geographic equity by tracking the number of projects programmed and funding expended within each planning subregion and adjusting planning activities and project priorities as appropriate.

Objective IV-C. Review and update, as needed, the Memorandum of Understanding Relating to the Comprehensive, Continuing, Cooperative Transportation Planning and Programming Process for the Central Massachusetts Region to clarify and document the roles and responsibilities of the CMMPO and the CMMPO Advisory Committee.

Objective IV-D. Provide a forum at the planning level to coordinate system maintenance, operation, and management to improve the efficiency of the existing transportation system.

## **F. PROACTIVE PUBLIC OUTREACH**

### **F.1 CMMPO & Advisory Committee**

#### ***F.1.1 CMMPO Meetings***

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) is the region's transportation policy and programming body. As required by *SAFETEA-LU*, the CMMPO oversees the development and update of a Regional Transportation Plan document, every four years in the Central Massachusetts planning region.

The CMMPO discussed the development of the updated 2012 Regional Transportation Plan at nearly all their monthly meetings starting in March 2010 and continuing to the present. The CMMPO has ten voting members and major decisions often require a written summary of the action along with a signature sheet indicating endorsement by the group.

The regular meetings of the CMMPO were held at the offices of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in Worcester.

#### ***F.1.2 CMMPO Advisory Committee Meetings***

The CMMPO Advisory Committee is a group founded by the CMMPO to provide input on a wide range of both technical and non-technical subjects. The Advisory Committee consists of a number of

individuals from a variety of backgrounds with expertise in both transportation and transportation-related topics such as land use and conservation.

As directed by the CMMPO, the Advisory Committee discussed the development of the updated 2012 Regional Transportation Plan at nearly all their monthly meetings starting in March 2010 and continuing to the present. The Advisory Committee, often through general consensus, advanced a number of suggestions for consideration by the CMMPO throughout the 2012 RTP update effort. The group was particularly active in the confirmation of the RTP's classic transportation planning goals and the development of newly refined RTP objectives.

The meetings of the CMMPO Advisory Committee were held at the offices of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) in Worcester.

## **F.2 Subregional Public Meetings**

Public outreach meetings for the RTP are traditionally held in different communities throughout the region. These meetings, depending on location, allow the CMMPO to gain urban, suburban and rural perspectives on local transportation challenges and potential improvement projects. For the preparation of the 2012 RTP document, public outreach meetings were held in the communities of Warren, Sutton, Shrewsbury, Oxford and Princeton, as well as in the city of Worcester, thus covering all of the area's subregions.

For detailed information concerning the subregional meetings - legal advertisements, public notices, agendas, minutes, attendance listings - please refer to the 2012 RTP's extensive *Technical Appendix*.

## **F.3 Public Input Summary**

Listed below is a summary of the various comments received during the public outreach process. They are organized by individual meeting locations and dates. More detailed information is available in the Technical Appendix document. Finally, included below is an attempt to boil down comment received into broader general suggestions and concerns - concepts that we saw repeated in one form or another in many locations and with respect to several particular situations, local and regional. Section F.3.7 provides this overall summary of comments.

### ***F.3.1 West Subregion: Shepard Municipal Building, Monday, June 7, 2010***

*Major Comment: Access Pike from envisioned Route 19 interchange*

*General Sentiment: Congestion on routes leading easterly to Worcester*

*Other Comments:*

- A meeting attendee stated that he has commuted to Worcester every day for the past 10-12 years and the congestion on the roadways has increased significantly. There is a need to reduce congestion.
- People need to be made aware of alternative roads available. Another commenter noted that when one road backs up, others follow suit.
- High schools located on major routes are often high-traffic destinations that are one of the many reasons for slow travel times and congestion.

- The number of access points to the MassPike is limited. The once-considered idea of a MassPike interchange with Route 19 could be a major benefit to the community.
- Park & Ride lots are needed to serve WRTA Route #33 along Route 9.
- Concern about the general condition of local transportation infrastructure, including MassPike and other bridges that appear to be in bad condition. Bridges in the region are deteriorating too rapidly, and need to be repaired soon. Some are believed to be not very safe.
- Passenger rail line along the MassPike (I-90) corridor was suggested.
- Current improvement projects may not benefit local communities optimally in the future. New economic development can greatly affect the surrounding area and it is difficult to plan for that.
- Pavement is generally in bad condition, and that it should last longer than it appears to do. It was suggested to use shredded tire material in the pavement mix.
- There is a perceived need for improved north-south highway routes in the West Subregion.

### ***F.3.2 Southeast Subregion: Sutton Municipal Center, Wednesday, June 16, 2010***

*Major Comment: Route 146/Boston Road issues, need for passenger rail*

*General Sentiment: Need to implement planned BRV Bikeway, like RI*

Other Comments:

- Safety, congestion, and maintenance are major concerns
- Over the long term, the Route 146/Boston Road flyover is top priority (affects safety and congestion), then the Blackstone Valley Bikeway, then access roads for Route 146.
- Passenger rail between Providence and Worcester is important. Increased passenger rail would take more cars off of the road and decrease the need for maintenance. The development of planned commuter villages along train lines could connect people to work and other services so they wouldn't need a car unless they wanted one.
- Transit travel along Route 9 west into Worcester could be enhanced with designated parking for transit riders.
- Land Use and Transportation Planning need to be more coordinated:
  - There is a need for sidewalk/walkability planning in the development process, especially for school areas
  - The fee to ride school buses and the increase of available parking at schools has led to more traffic in school zones. This affects the pavement conditions and congestion (especially at beginning and end of school day) in proximity to schools. Instead of bus fees, charge parking fees and subsidize bus trips.
  - There is a need for appropriate siting for senior centers – i.e. walkable infrastructure and topography. It does not make sense to place senior centers in locations that are inaccessible except by vehicle.
  - There is a need for mixed-use zoning and planning. Current zoning prevents walkable communities.
  - Abandoned industrial buildings that grew up along freight lines could be converted to housing for commuter rail stop, transit-oriented communities.
- Route 146 is important as a connector from the state of Rhode Island to the city of Worcester and its importance in economic development in the Blackstone Valley. There is a need for increased affordable and accessible commuter bus trips between Worcester and Providence as well as public awareness of those services. There is a need for increased coordination between Massachusetts and Rhode Island to focus on the Worcester/Providence connection.

- The proposed changes to Boston Road/Route 146 interchange are not enough, and will result in funding poorly spent. All the work for the flyover should be done at once, instead of piecemeal.
- At the Route 146/Boston Road intersection, congestion on either side of Boston Road is amplified at peak travel time due to signal timing.
- Infrastructure maintenance is top priority. We cannot allow small problems to develop into large problems. The road network needs to be serviceable and easily maintained despite the economic climate.
- In terms of equity, the urban/rural distinction is grey now that highway, rail, bike, and bus have connected the two.
- Because the number of cars on the road is increasing, there is a need to focus on other modes of transportation. Increased freight rail between Worcester and Providence would reduce freight truck traffic along Route 146. Need for more open discussion with freight stakeholders between Worcester and Providence.
- There needs to be greater equity across all modes of transportation, especially for bike. Bikeways in the Southeast subregion benefit economic development as they draw recreation and tourism. In areas where it makes sense, bikeways for commuting should be an investment. Bikeways are an important safety and lifestyle issue. Bikeways should be created for all non-motorized transportation (foot, bike, horse, rollerblade, skateboard, etc) and separated from the roadways.
- Older road structures and New England climates make maintenance a top priority.
- Route 146 should be a limited-access throughway with minimal curb cuts. Access roads at each exit should be the focus for economic development.
- A study should be completed to increase east-west movement in the southeast subregion. An east-west bikeway should be considered along with an east-west connector road. There is a need for an east-west connector road between I-395 and I-495. This will create a “grid” with I-395, Route 146, and I-495. Also, areas for economic development should be focused along this anticipated route to keep higher traffic off of local roads.
- Bus transit along Route 146 should connect workers to jobs. Education, awareness, and new GPS technology investment could increase WRTA ridership.
- Public transportation needs a “destination.” A southeast subregional park could create such a destination for regional employers. The towns could share revenue and bus transit would have a destination in the southeast subregion. There also would be a need for “origins,” such as transit hubs or park-and-rides.
- There is a need to coordinate bus and commuter rail schedules for efficiency.
- There is a need for increased funds for transportation through increased taxes or other sources.
- There is a need for more discussion across state lines where transit, commuter villages, etc are already successful. This type of conversation could give the CMRPC region some guidance for these initiatives in our region.

### ***F.3.3 Northeast Subregion: Shrewsbury Town Hall, Thursday, June 17, 2010***

*Major Comment: Route 9 congestion*

*General Sentiment: Need for increased state aid for local roadway repair*

*Other Comments:*

- Road maintenance is important and a balance must be struck between using funds to preserve existing roads and create new roads.
- Congestion varied by town, but is most significant along Route 9; transit along Route 9 might be helpful; congestion is also significant on I-290 during AM commute.
- Safety and connectivity are important; more North-South roadways are needed.
- The land use patterns of the area favor car travel rather than foot travel.
- ITS might be helpful to improve congestion on major roads.
- Future studies might explore the relationship regarding congestion along both Route 20 and Route 9.

#### ***F.3.4 Southwest Subregion: Oxford Senior Center, Monday, June 21, 2010***

*Major Comment: Regional traffic leads to congestion on local roadways*

*General Sentiment: Need for ongoing maintenance activities; particularly for roads & bridges*

*Other Comments:*

- Congestion is occurring along roads that were built as local roads, but are now being used as inter-community connecting roads, sometimes to avoid even greater congestion on main roads; particularly in the case of “gateway” communities like Auburn, Oxford and Charlton
- Need more recent traffic count data for Route 20
- Automobile is primary means of travel
- Large-scale development creates pressure for large volumes of inter-community travel; need to better coordinate land development and transportation planning; more local development might help to decrease travel distances
- Need to include sidewalks in roadway planning to encourage more walking
- Auburn has a lot of highways, sometimes creating barriers between adjacent land uses
- Park n’ Ride lots may help encourage more use of transit
- Commuter rail service should be extended into Spencer and trolley service might be applicable for shorter distances between towns
- Need to connect Worcester Airport and Union Station
- Need to study having more bike paths to connect sub-regions, particularly using existing utility corridors (tool-kit for community planners)
- Use ITS for better management of Route 20
- Restrict heavy trucks wherever possible to higher capacity roadways

#### ***F.3.5 Central Subregion: CMRPC’s Union Hall, Union Station, Wed., June 23, 2010***

*Major Comment: Sustainability, Livability & Economic Development*

*General Sentiment: Need to plan for public transit, alternative modes*

*Other Comments:*

- Make it easier to use public transit (technology on buses, access and connectivity for buses, improved security, continued maintenance to save money, and moving the WRTA HUB to Union Station from City Hall).
- Union Station could become foundation for Smart Growth in the area (intermodal, economic development, and housing opportunities).
- Attempt to tie economic development, housing and transportation together

- Importance of maintenance and safety of existing roadways and structures.
- Supported proposed upgrading of existing rail system in Central Massachusetts for future rail development with possible commuter rail system, as well as more trips to and from Boston.
- Discussion of improved access using Route 9 to the west, as well as combining the Route 9 congestion project with airport access needs.
- Improving bike and pedestrian safety. Should encourage educational efforts to ‘share the road’.
- Maintaining sustainability, livability and access as new projects such as the CSX expansion develop.
- Increase availability of commuter rail.
- Signage for Canal District on highways should be considered.
- Make Kelly Square safer.
- Growth of bike paths observed and encouraged.
- Additional commuter trains will help allow coordination with bus schedules in the city (especially if Union Station becomes a hub).
- Encourage use of transit buses (offering “perks” to those who leave car at home and ride WRTA).
- Do not expand city parking; create reasons for people to live and visit the city without cars.
- Idea of “zip-cars” would allow alternative to use of personal vehicles.
- “Car-less society” – adopting alternative methods of transportation.
- Need for Park and Ride facilities.
- Combined use of technology, Park and Rides, and ITS will create better transportation options thus creating better economic development in the long run.
- Educating the surrounding communities, schools, social organizations, and employers that not using a personal vehicle will not only help with emissions but will help the local economy.
- Finding destinations and creating clear paths for pedestrians.
- Consider closing select roads to vehicular traffic to allow increased pedestrian activity.

### ***F.3.6 North Subregion: Princeton Town Hall Annex, Wednesday, June 30, 2010***

*Major Comment: Access between I-190 and Route 68*

*General Sentiment: Bicycle and pedestrian accommodation*

**Other Comments:**

- Consider increasing the number of entry points at major arterials such as Laurel St in order to reduce congestion on I-190
- Commuters from Rutland need an access on I-190 north of Holden
- There is a growing interest in expanding the role of transit in the North subregion; access to convenient rail should be a long-term vision, including passenger rail to the Holden Industrial Park via the Fitchburg Branch loop to the Town of Holden and the City of Worcester.
- For the short-term, alternatives are needed to improve the efficiency of the existing highway infrastructure such as investments in 1) High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes, 2) Park and Ride Lots at strategic intermodal sites, and 3) Transit Service to high employment sites such as the technology parks
- More funding is needed for sidewalks
- Design roads for all users rather than building exclusive bike lanes

- Should consider using higher quality asphalt pavement on roads to reduce the need for frequent repairs
- Need to look at fixing Route 56 north to Route 122A
- Local engineering costs of 10-15% are not affordable by many communities

### ***F.3.7 Overall Summary***

- General; Fiscal Constraint
  - *Secure funding for large projects*
  - *Secure additional funding for transit options*
  - *Secure funding for intelligent system use*
- Maintenance
  - *Maintain current infrastructure sufficiently*
  - *Improve alternatives like sidewalks*
  - *Build better initially, thus needing less maintenance*
- Equity
  - *Allocate/obtain more funding for transit and rail*
  - *Remember there are 40 communities when planning bus routes and roadways*
- Security
  - *Use ITS for security as well as for improved operations*
- Congestion
  - *Congestion hurts the economy- it's more than an inconvenience to commuters*
  - *The towns immediately surrounding Worcester suffer most*
  - *More access to I-190 could help alleviate congestion*
  - *Local roads can be improved to carry regional traffic better*
  - *Coordination with school authorities in solving drop-off /pick-up effects*
- Safety
  - *Kelly Square in Worcester needs to be improved*
  - *Pedestrian safety: provide education, better and more pavement markings*
  - *Bike safety: provide and disseminate education to bikers and motorists*
- Access & Connectivity
  - *Link public transit with other modes as well as with its own internal uses*
  - *Do more than install a hub concept – connect outside the city*
  - *More local passenger rail is needed (over time)*
  - *E/W connectivity across Worcester and south of the city is sorely lacking*
  - *Worcester airport and various park & ride locations need connections*
  - *Walkability is popular and in demand*
- Livability
  - *Promote connectivity and linkage between modes*



- *Assist communities in implementation*
- *Bikeway opportunities exist and should be taken advantage of*
- *Complete streets are indeed encouraged and sought*
- Planning
  - *Work with communities*
  - *Encourage and support economic development coordination*
  - *Encourage mixed-use zoning*
  - *Regionalization – work together*
- Technology
  - *Bus equipment should be upgraded as much as possible for trip planning*
  - *Signal coordination is desirable on major arteries for public transit*

#### **F.4 Stakeholder Meetings**

A series of meetings were held with transportation stakeholders in the region throughout the RTP update and development process. This allowed staff to learn what issues and challenges the existing multi-modal transportation network presents to the stakeholders while also seeking a vision for the future. This proactive outreach allowed for interaction with a broad range of participants from a variety of expertise and backgrounds. A listing of the stakeholders is provided below. The RTP's accompanying Technical Appendix includes further detail on the meetings that were held.

##### **Annual Environmental Consultation Session, CMRPC, July 2010**

- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR)

##### **Environmental & Climate Change**

- Regional Environmental Council (REC)
- John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission (JHCBRVNHCC), November 2010

##### **Environmental Justice**

- Common Pathways
- TPAG Elderly & Disabled Transportation Task Force
- Mass. Mobility Task Force (United We Ride Program)
- WRTA Transit Consumer Advocacy Committee
- Regional Workforce Development

##### **Freight**

- Growth Options for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (GO21), railroad advocacy group, Pamela Mann, spokesperson, January 2010
- New England Rail Expo, Grafton & Upton Railroad presentation, March 2010
- State Rail Plan public meetings, April & September 2010

- Providence & Worcester Railroad 166<sup>th</sup> Annual Shareholder meeting, April 2010 (held at CMRPC offices)
- MassCentral Railroad Ribbon Cutting Ceremony, South Barre, September 2010
- New England Automotive Gateway (NEAG) intermodal facility, East Brookfield/Spencer, George Bell, operator, October 2010
- Regional Freight Advisory Committee meetings

## **Health**

- Mass. In Motion

## **Bicycle & Pedestrian**

- Bicycle & Pedestrian Task Force

## **Economic Development**

- Worcester Office on Economic Development
- Regional Planners Forum
- Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce
- Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce

## **Legislative**

- U.S. Congressional Delegation, including Representative James McGovern
- Central Massachusetts Legislative Delegation

## **Academic Institutions**

- Clark University

## **Homeland Security**

### ***F.4.1 Environmental Justice Neighborhood Conversations***

CMRPC staff partners with Common Pathways, a Massachusetts Department of Public Health Community Health Network, which is a local coalition of public, non-profit and private sectors working together to build healthier communities in Massachusetts through community-based planning and health promotion. Located in central Massachusetts, Common Pathways creates shared learning by diverse residents and key institutional stakeholders on vital issues of the day, as identified by indicators. Their process promotes effective citizen and organizational discourse leading to informed action, facilitates broad-based resident/organizational representation in identifying a common set of community indicators, and proactively assures access to participation in the local democratic process for diverse groups and individuals.

In the summer of 2010, Common Pathways held “Neighborhood Conversations” with a broad group of stakeholders, as shown below. As part of the proactive RTP outreach process, CMRPC staff on the Transportation Subcommittee requested Common Pathways to include general transportation need questions as part of the Neighborhood Conversations.

### *Neighborhood Conversations Participants*

- Albanian Relief Organization
- Belmont Hill Seniors
- Children's Friend: School Age Mothers Program
- Iraqi Women's group
- Kennedy Community Health Center / Burmese families
- Parent/Professional Advocacy League
- Women Together

### ***F 4.2 Submitted Public Comment***

Further, all submitted public comment and other materials associated with the update and development of the 2012 RTP document is included in the accompanying Technical Appendix.

### **F.5 Online Survey**

In addition to public and stakeholder meetings, an online survey was conducted. A news article was prepared to encourage participation and the online survey was promoted at all public and stakeholder meetings. The number of people who participated was smaller than that of a similar survey held in conjunction with the 2007 RTP. However, this input, while not the result of a scientifically designed or statistically balanced sample, is still considered a valuable addition to input received in other venues.

Highlights of the results are as follows:

- Somewhat surprisingly, 77% of the respondents were 40 years of age or older.
- Approximately 70% travel primarily by auto and generally find that the reliability of their commute, level of traffic congestion, level of safety and quality of traffic signaling and signage are at least average or better.
- Just under 20% travel by public transit; however, in total, 55% of respondents are not satisfied with the availability of transit, which may indicate that many people are using autos when they would like to have the option to use transit.
- Similarly, 42% were not satisfied with the availability of sidewalks.
- When asked where resources should be preferably allocated, 30% suggested improving public transit/commuter rail, 25% indicated maintenance of existing infrastructure, and 10% each selected congestion alleviation, improvements in bike and pedestrian facilities, and the provision of access to and connectivity within all modes of transportation.

## **G. DETAILED SAFETEA-LU GUIDANCE**

The following excerpt from early SAFETEA-LU guidance specific to the preparation of the RTP is indicative of the broad scope of both the document and the required outreach effort. Full text is provided here for reference.

#### **§ 450.322 Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan**

- (a) The metropolitan transportation planning process shall include the development of a transportation plan addressing at least a 20-year planning horizon as of the effective date. In nonattainment and maintenance areas, the effective date of the transportation plan shall be the date of a conformity determination issued by the FHWA and the FTA. In attainment areas, the effective date of the transportation plan shall be its date of adoption by the MPO.
- (b) The transportation plan shall include both long-range and short-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods in addressing current and future transportation demand.
- (c) The MPO shall review and update the transportation plan at least every four years in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas and at least every five years in attainment areas to confirm the transportation plan's validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions and trends and to extend the forecast period to at least a 20-year planning horizon. In addition, the MPO may revise the transportation plan at any time using the procedures in this section without a requirement to extend the horizon year. The transportation plan (and any revisions) shall be approved by the MPO and submitted for information purposes to the Governor. Copies of any updated or revised transportation plans must be provided to the FHWA and the FTA.
- (d) In metropolitan areas that are in nonattainment for ozone or carbon monoxide, the State air quality agency shall coordinate the development of the transportation control measures (TCMs) in a State Implementation Plan (SIP) with the MPO. For TCM substitutions or additions made under section 176(c)(8) of the Clean Air Act (42 U.S.C. 7506(c)(8)), the MPO, State air quality agency, and the EPA must concur on the equivalency of any substitute TCMs and the addition of new TCMs to the SIP.
- (e) The transportation plan update process shall include a mechanism for ensuring that the MPO, the State(s), and the public transportation operator(s) agree that the data utilized in preparing other existing modal plans providing input to the transportation plan are valid. In updating the transportation plan, the MPO shall base the update on the latest available estimates and assumptions for population, land use, travel, employment, congestion, and economic activity. The MPO shall approve transportation plan contents and supporting analyses produced by a transportation plan update.
- (f) The metropolitan transportation plan shall, at a minimum, include:
  - (1) The projected transportation demand of persons and goods in the metropolitan planning area over the period of the transportation plan;
  - (2) Existing and proposed transportation facilities (including major roadways, transit, multimodal and intermodal facilities, pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities, and intermodal connectors) that should function as an integrated metropolitan transportation system, giving emphasis to those facilities that serve important national and regional transportation functions over the period of the transportation plan. In addition, the locally preferred alternative selected from an Alternatives

Analysis under the FTA's Capital Investment Grant program (49 U.S.C. 5309 and 49 CFR part 611) needs to be adopted as part of the metropolitan transportation plan as a condition for funding under 49 U.S.C. 5309;

- (3) Operational and management strategies to improve the performance of existing transportation facilities to relieve vehicular congestion and maximize the safety and mobility of people and goods;
- (4) Consideration of the results of the congestion management process in TMAs that meet the requirements of this subpart, including the identification of SOV projects that result from a congestion management process in TMAs that are nonattainment for carbon monoxide or ozone;
- (5) Assessment of capital investment and other strategies to preserve the existing and projected future metropolitan transportation infrastructure and provide for multimodal capacity increases based on regional priorities and needs;
- (6) Design concept and design scope descriptions of all existing and proposed transportation facilities in sufficient detail, regardless of funding source, in nonattainment and maintenance areas for conformity determinations under the EPA's transportation conformity rule (40 CFR part 93). In all areas (regardless of air quality designation), all proposed improvements shall be described in sufficient detail to develop cost estimates;
- (7) A discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the metropolitan transportation plan. The discussion shall be developed in consultation with Federal, State, and Tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies. The MPO may establish reasonable timeframes for performing this consultation;
- (8) Pedestrian walkway and bicycle transportation facilities in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 217(g);
- (9) Transportation and transit enhancement activities, as appropriate; and
- (10) A financial plan that demonstrates how the adopted transportation plan can be implemented, while operating and maintaining existing facilities and services. For the purpose of developing the transportation plan, the MPO, public transportation operator(s), and State shall cooperatively develop estimates of funds that will be available to support metropolitan transportation plan implementation, as required under § 450.314(a)(1). All necessary financial resources from public and private sources that are reasonably expected to be made available to carry out the transportation plan shall be identified. The financial plan shall include recommendations on any additional financing strategies to fund projects and programs included in the metropolitan transportation plan. In the case of new funding sources, strategies for ensuring their availability shall be identified. In developing the financial plan, the MPO shall take into account all projects and strategies proposed for funding under title 23, U.S.C., title 49, U.S.C., Chapter 53, or with other Federal funds; State assistance; local sources; and private participation. For nonattainment and maintenance areas, the financial plan shall address the specific financial strategies required to

ensure the implementation of TCMs in the applicable SIP. In addition, the financial plan may include, for illustrative purposes, additional projects that would be included in the adopted transportation plan if additional resources beyond those identified in the financial plan were available.

- (g) The MPO shall consult, as appropriate, with State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation concerning the development of the transportation plan. The consultation shall involve, as appropriate:
  - (1) Comparison of transportation plans with State conservation plans or maps, if available; or
  - (2) Comparison of transportation plans to inventories of natural or historic resources, if available.
- (h) The metropolitan transportation plan should include a safety element that incorporates or summarizes the priorities, goals, countermeasures, or projects for the MPA contained in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan required under 23 U.S.C. 148, as well as (as appropriate) emergency relief and disaster preparedness plans and strategies and policies that support homeland security and safeguard the personal security of all motorized and non-motorized users.
- (i) The MPO shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan using the participation plan developed under § 450.316(a).
- (j) The metropolitan transportation plan shall be published or otherwise made readily available by the MPO for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web.
- (k) A State or MPO shall not be required to select any project from the illustrative list of additional projects included in the financial plan under paragraph (f)(9) of this section.
- (l) In nonattainment and maintenance areas for transportation-related pollutants, the MPO, as well as the FHWA and the FTA, must make a conformity determination on any updated or amended transportation plan in accordance with the Clean Air Act and the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93). During a conformity lapse, MPOs can prepare an interim metropolitan transportation plan as a basis for advancing projects that are eligible to proceed under a conformity lapse. An interim metropolitan transportation plan consisting of eligible projects from the most recent conforming transportation plan and TIP may proceed immediately without revisiting the requirements of this section, subject to interagency consultation. An interim metropolitan transportation plan containing eligible projects that are not from the most recent conforming transportation plan and TIP must meet all the requirements of this section.