



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

Middle Tenn. Access to High-Speed Rail Furthered by Georgia DOT & TDOT

Southeast U.S. Corridor Spanning Atlanta—Chattanooga—Nashville—Louisville Takes a Major Step Forward

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Media Contact: Mary Beth Ikard, APR
615.880.2452 | ikard@NashvilleMPO.org

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – A major objective of the Nashville Area MPO’s 2035 Regional Transportation Plan has been helped along significantly by the Georgia Department of Transportation, in partnership with the Tennessee Department of Transportation. The Georgia DOT announced today its application for \$34 million in federal funding to accelerate development of high-speed rail service from Atlanta to Chattanooga, Tenn. – continuing to Nashville and eventually on to Louisville, Kentucky.

One of the Nashville Area MPO’s Major Objectives –as stated in the current draft of its 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan (NashvilleMPO.org/2035), for submission to the federal government this October– is to work to ensure that Middle Tennessee is given priority consideration in national plans for high-speed rail. The MPO seeks to identify opportunities to coordinate regional rail planning efforts with super-regional and national efforts to invest in rail infrastructure. The federal government mandates that MPOs plan 20+ years into the future, and account for all regionally-significant road, transit, freight, ITS, walking and biking projects in that plan, regardless of how they’re funded.

A national map charting a high-speed rail vision for America was released by the Obama administration in 2009. Early editions of this map did not include corridor routing to service Middle Tennessee. Ongoing, intergovernmental efforts in support of a regional vision for sustainable transportation that fosters livability has helped put Middle Tennessee back on the Federal Railroad Administration’s map of the Southeast U.S.



“With Middle Tennessee now much better positioned to be considered as a priority for a high-speed rail corridor in this national vision, state and local officials now have a great deal of work yet to do on coordinated regional planning efforts. Regional cooperation and coordination of long-term planning efforts will be critical to aligning us accordingly to further weight our priority for high-speed rail access and routing, as the federal government begins to pursue implementation of this vision,” said Michael Skipper, executive director of the Nashville Area MPO.

To that end, the Nashville Area MPO plans to host a regional symposium this fall, with mayors and other key stakeholders invited, to discuss the greater Nashville area's prospects for high-speed rail access, and the likely process moving forward. "State and local officials will help determine the pace on specifics," said Skipper.

Earlier this summer, the Federal Railroad Administration said states could apply for federal funds under the US High Speed Intercity Passenger Rail (HSIPR) program created by Congress last year. Funds would be used to plan and implement high-speed service along approved corridors.

With FRA approval, Georgia DOT and TDOT would continue environmental planning and engineering between Atlanta and Chattanooga, design approved stations along the corridor, and create a comprehensive plan for high-speed service to the public that **could one day stretch from Florida to Chicago**. TDOT would manage planning along the extension from Chattanooga to Nashville.

The application received written support from key transportation partners, including the Atlanta Regional Commission (Metro-Atlanta's MPO) which will cooperate on livable communities planning, AMTRAK, and numerous cities and organizations in Georgia and Tennessee – including the Nashville Area MPO and Metropolitan Government of Nashville.

Georgia DOT Commissioner Vance C. Smith, Jr. thanked co-applicant TDOT Commissioner Gerald Nicely for his strong support, and gave specific credit to Rep. Zach Wamp R-TN, and the Georgia Congressional Delegation. These leaders, he said, were instrumental in securing nearly \$14 million in federal funds last year for the Atlanta-Chattanooga HSGT Project.

About the Nashville Area MPO:

The Nashville Area MPO is the federally-designated transportation planning agency for over 2800 sq. mi. and more than 1.5 million people throughout Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson, and parts of Maury and Robertson counties. Serving as a regional partnership among the U.S. DOT, Tennessee DOT, local elected leadership, local planning and public works directors, the business community, and citizens across the five-plus county planning area, the MPO leads in the development of the region's long-range transportation plan and short-range Transportation Improvement Program, and contributes to ongoing conversations about issues such as land use, economic development, climate change and the environment, safety and security, and health. For more information, visit our website at NashvilleMPO.org; find us at facebook.com/NashvilleMPO or on Twitter [@NashvilleMPO](https://twitter.com/NashvilleMPO).