



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

MAYORS ADOPT NEW TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR MIDDLE TENNESSEE

2035 Plan Emphasizes Community Revitalization, Economic Development, Quality-of-Life, Responsible Land Use, and Modernization of the Region's Transportation System

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

NASHVILLE— Local elected officials made history today when the Executive Board for the Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization adopted a new Regional Transportation Plan—a significant document that will guide the allocation of nearly \$6 billion in federal, state, and local funds throughout a seven-county area over the next 25 years.

In preparing this Plan over the past three years, the MPO —which is comprised of political leadership and planning experts from its city and county member jurisdictions across the region— has listened to thousands of citizens and business leaders, looked at what other metropolitan areas throughout the nation are doing to improve their transportation systems, and conducted a detailed trends analysis of where Middle Tennessee is headed in terms of population growth, traffic congestion, and land development patterns.

Through the year 2035, MPO plans and programs will draw on four broad **principles**, or strategies for future growth:

- ✦ **Livability**— Enhance quality-of-life by supporting increased opportunities for affordable housing, education, jobs, recreation, and civic involvement without increasing the burden on citizens to enjoy their community;
- ✦ **Prosperity**— Contribute to regional economic well-being through transportation solutions that reduce the cost of living and doing business, increase access to education, jobs and amenities, and attract new investment;
- ✦ **Sustainability**— Support growth and prosperity without sacrificing public health, natural and socio-cultural resources, or the financial stability of this or future generations;
- ✦ **Diversity**— Recognize the multitude of needs and variety of perspectives and backgrounds of Middle Tennessee's citizenry by promoting a range of transportation choices designed with sensitivity to the desired context.

“The MPO mayors, working in partnership with their constituents, the business community, state and local agencies, transit authorities, and planning experts from across the region, have accomplished something remarkable in today's adoption of this Plan,” said MPO Director Michael Skipper. “We're now better prepared to absorb the population growth that accompanies continued efforts to grow our local economies —bringing us new jobs and additional prosperity—without sacrificing Middle Tennessee as we know it today. Diversifying our transportation investment strategies —to more *seriously* support alternative modes, such as transit, walking and biking— will help us to conserve open space and fuel, manage congestion, and connect *people* with the *places* they want to go: work, school, shopping, or entertainment.”

Resting on these guiding principles, transportation projects selected for inclusion in the 2035 Regional Transportation fall under three major policy initiatives:

1. A BOLD NEW VISION FOR MASS TRANSIT. *Under this policy initiative, the Plan provides:*

- ✦ A first-of-its-kind vision for transit services [MAP] across Middle Tennessee's ten counties to communicate the region's intentions for the long-term;
- ✦ Funding for upcoming corridor & circulator studies to layout more specific strategies to implement the vision;
- ✦ A call to re-organize the existing RTA to take advantage of new legislation;

- ✦ A call to establish dedicated funding for transit to improve operational capacity of existing agencies, and to help build out the vision;
- ✦ \$950 million in federal transit funds for the continued maintenance and modest expansion of urban transit, ridesharing, and vanpool services;
- ✦ \$30 million for continued support for the JARC and New Freedom programs;
- ✦ **Ten percent** of future funding for urban roadway projects flexed to support transit projects.

2. INCREASED SUPPORT FOR ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION¹ AND WALKABLE COMMUNITIES.

Under this policy initiative, the Plan provides:

- ✦ A regional, comprehensive vision for future walking and bicycling facilities–
 - ✓ Infrastructure recommendations include expansion of greenways, regional network of 1100+ miles of on-road bicycle accommodations, and the creation of sidewalks on all major thoroughfares;
- ✦ Guidance for roadway design standards to accommodate non-motorized modes of transportation;
- ✦ Support for ongoing education of local law enforcement & the public to increase safety of walking & cycling;
- ✦ A new emphasis on accommodations for non-motorized modes, with:
 - ✓ 75 percent of proposed roadway projects submitted by MPO member jurisdictions having included a sidewalk, bicycle lane, or shared-use lane (due to new MPO project scoring criteria)
 - ✓ **15 percent** of future funding for urban roadway projects flexed to support active transportation facilities
 - ✓ Guidance for utilizing other available grants such as Safe Routes to School and Transportation Enhancements.

3. PRESERVATION & ENHANCEMENT OF STRATEGIC ROADWAY CORRIDORS.

Under this policy initiative, the Plan provides:

- ✦ A regional, comprehensive approach to long-term transportation programming;
- ✦ Guidance for local implementation of “complete streets” policies;
- ✦ More than \$3.2 Billion in Roadway Projects:
 - ✓ \$2.7 billion for roadway widening
 - ✓ \$291 million for interchanges/ intersections
 - ✓ \$100 million for new roadways
 - ✓ \$85 million for roadway reconstructions
 - ✓ \$24 million for Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) & other enhancements, with **five percent** of all future urban roadway funds flexed to improve the efficiency of the transportation system through innovative management and operations upgrades (technology etc).
- ✦ **Seventy percent** of the MPO’s future allocation of urban roadway funding will be awarded to projects that **expand the multi-modal capacity** of the regional roadway system, in order to manage congestion, accommodate a growing population, and address goals for increased safety and security.

The federal government mandates that the nation’s 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**. The 2035 Plan provides a balanced, financially-feasible set of transportation improvements that can be constructed or implemented over the next 25 years with nearly \$6 billion in expected federal, state, and local revenues. Proposed improvements are intended to help alleviate traffic congestion, provide more transportation choices, improve system operations, and meet the region’s air quality goals over the next quarter century.

The cost of the full set of Middle Tennessee’s transportation needs, as well as full funding of the Regional Transit Vision laid out in the Plan, is likely double or triple anticipated revenues. As such, the Plan presents a discussion of illustrative projects, where funding has not yet been identified, as well as other strategies that could be implemented to **reduce the gap** between what the region can *afford*, and what it actually needs.

¹ ‘Active transportation’ refers to any self-propelled form of travel (ex., walking, bicycling, in-line skating, using a wheelchair, riding a skateboard).

The establishment of a vision, however, is a critical step toward the region being awarded competitive federal funds. To qualify for competitive **transit** infrastructure funds, the region must next begin exploration of how to address the present lack of dedicated local or regional funding for mass transit – funding that would ensure stability in the operations of *existing* (and proposed) levels of transit service, and enable the region to compete against other U.S. metro areas for grant dollars to build modern transit infrastructure in the future, when Middle Tennessee is expected to see *significant* population growth and demographic shifts (increased diversity, aging Baby Boomers, more young professionals).

Remaining stagnant in our transportation planning efforts will prove to be enormously costly: the Texas Transportation Institute estimates the cost of congestion to the metro-Nashville area, in lost fuel and productive time, could be as much as \$10.6 billion between now and 2035.

The Plan document in its entirety, maps, project lists, and other relevant information can be found online at NashvilleMPO.org/2035.



PHOTO CAPTION: Nashville Mayor Karl Dean and MPO Director Michael Skipper (seated right to left, in front) with the board of directors for the Regional Transit Authority at today's adoption hearing for the 2035 Regional Transportation Plan, Music City Central, downtown Nashville.

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.