

# Executive Summary - DRAFT

---

## Background

Planning for the future transportation needs of this region requires a comprehensive look at the current transportation system, future demographics, and the anticipated available funding for the area for transportation projects. Although this seems like a simple exercise, there is an extensive work involved in improving the region's transportation infrastructure. The San Antonio metropolitan area's economy and environment depend heavily on the condition and efficient performance of the regional transportation system. Recognizing the mobility needs of the community and addressing those needs will eventually lead to improvements in the economy and quality of life. This update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan aims to take a step in that direction. Public involvement in the planning process is necessary to insure that transportation decisions are not made independently and that Federal tax dollars are used in accordance with legitimate public needs and desires.

In August 1977, the Governor of Texas designated the SABCUTS Steering Committee as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for San Antonio and Bexar County. This organization is the forum for cooperative transportation planning and decision-making by officials of the urban area's local governments and transportation agencies. The MPO Transportation Policy Board is comprised of eleven elected and eight appointed officials representing the following entities: state delegation, the Alamo Area Council of Governments, Bexar County, City of San Antonio, the Greater Bexar County Council of Cities, Northeast Partnership, the Texas Department of Transportation, and VIA Metropolitan Transit.

The passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) marked a significant change in the planning and development of metropolitan transportation systems. In its Declaration of Policy, ISTEA mandates "a National Intermodal Transportation System that is economically efficient and environmentally sound...and will move people and goods in an energy efficient manner." Specifically, "the National Intermodal Transportation System shall consist of all forms of transportation in a unified, interconnected manner . . . to reduce energy consumption and air pollution while promoting economic development . . ."

On May 22, 1998, Congress passed the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) authorizing highway, highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs for the next six years. TEA-21 builds on the initiatives established in ISTEA. TEA-21 combines the continuation and improvement of current programs with new initiatives to meet the challenges of improving safety as traffic continues to increase at record levels, protecting and enhancing communities and the natural environment, and

advancing America's economic growth and competitiveness domestically and internationally through efficient and flexible transportation.

To further build and strengthen TEA-21 legislation Congress passed the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005. SAFETEA-LU focuses on several of the current programs and initiatives put in place under TEA-21 and continues the authorization of highway, transit and other surface transportation programs. SAFETEA-LU is the largest transportation authorization bill passed into law and focuses on eight planning factors. This document was written based on the planning requirements of SAFETEA-LU. A new reauthorization bill has not been passed.

### **SAFETEA-LU Planning Factors**

When Congress passed SAFETEA-LU, one of the modifications from TEA-21 was including Support for Homeland Security. The eight planning factors, listed below, closely reflect the Metropolitan Transportation Plan Goals listed later in this section.

- 1) Support Economic Vitality
- 2) Increase Safety
- 3) Increase the Ability of the Transportation System to Support Homeland Security
- 4) Increase the Accessibility and Mobility of People and Freight
- 5) Protect and Enhance the Environment
- 6) Enhance the Integration and Connectivity of Intermodal Transportation
- 7) Promote Efficient System Management and Operation
- 8) Emphasize Preservation of the System

## **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.

## **Components of the Plan**

### Demographics and Scenario Planning

The basis of any effective planning effort rests primarily on a determination of the area's base year demographics (population, household size, employment, household income, and land use) and future projections of these demographics. The MPO used 2005 as the base year for this update of the MTP. For the future years, various federal and state government data sources were used for the population and employment forecast totals in five year increments to the year 2035. For the first time, the MPO engaged the public and policy makers in a discussion of alternative growth plans for the area.

### Public Involvement Process

The MPO believes in the proactive involvement of citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation,

and other interested parties in the development and updates of the MTP, the Transportation Improvement Program and significant transportation studies.

A proactive approach to an effective public involvement process requires several elements:

- Early, continuous, and meaningful public involvement;
- Reasonable public access to technical planning information;
- Collaborative input on transportation alternatives, evaluation criteria and mitigation needs;
- Transportation planning meetings that are open to the public; and
- Access to the planning and decision-making process prior to closure.

The MPO assembled an oversight committee consisting of partner agencies to assist in the update of the Plan. The general public was kept apprised of the plan update process through various visioning sessions, internet postings, articles in the MPO quarterly newsletter, and general public meetings. Members of the news media were invited to each of the MTP Update workshop sessions resulting in several articles in daily and weekly newspapers. Additionally, articles describing the plan update process were published in the MPO's weekly electronic newsletter and distributed to the MPO's e-mail list of more than 900 individuals and organizations.

The public has been involved in the planning process early, continuously, and in a meaningful way. Members of the public were provided reasonable technical information and collaboratively determined alternatives and solutions. This process made them true partners in creating the metropolitan area's updated long range transportation plan.

### Bicycle System

The San Antonio-Bexar County area does not have a long-standing history of implementing bicycle projects and promoting bicycle facilities, but the region has come together in the last five years and made some great strides and improvements to the system. Regional leaders now understand the importance of creating and maintaining a multi-modal transportation system. Various goals and objectives have been identified to ensure that this area continues to develop and implement a comprehensive bicycle network.

### *Vision Statement*

*San Antonio and Bexar County recognize bicycling as a clean, healthy and affordable form of transportation and recreation.*

*A comprehensive on-road and off-road bicycle network will*

*make our community a place where bicycling will be desirable for trips of all kinds by all segments of the population.*

The following achievable goals and objectives support the adopted vision for a bicycle friendly community.

- Goal 1 Institutionalize bicycling: recognize and incorporate bicycling as a significant and required element for all transportation, land use, and economic development planning.
- Goal 2 Build the network to increase ridership: develop a comprehensive on-road and off-road bicycle network throughout the region
- Goal 3 Find the funding: identify and secure local, state, federal, private and grant funding to expand and improve bicycle facilities and programs in the region.
- Goal 4 Make bicycling safer through education and enforcement: develop a program to educate elected officials and the general public concerning the opportunities, benefits, and safety aspects of bicycling in the region.

Bicycling is a cost effective, energy efficient, clean, and healthy way, to travel. With the growing concerns of congestion, air quality and the public interest in promoting alternative transportation modes, the adoption of policies that encourage alternate transportation modes will aid in reducing congestion, improving air quality, and enhancing the community's quality of life. The Regional Bicycle Master Plan and the City of San Antonio's adopted Master Plan and the Bicycle Map publication support this objective. The MPO will continue to work to accomplish these goals and implement the region's Bicycle Master Plan.

### Pedestrian System

There is a continued awareness and momentum toward improving pedestrian facilities, and public officials are responding to this need. This awareness began to develop in the early 1990s upon passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Roadway construction projects (capacity projects and rehabilitation projects) within the Urbanized Area often include accessible pedestrian facilities. In addition, in 2006 an analysis was completed by the City of San Antonio to look at the gaps in pedestrian facilities. As this momentum continues and is extended, we continue to get closer to a comprehensive pedestrian facilities system that will accommodate pedestrian mobility needs. The following goals were established to help meet increasing pedestrian mobility needs.

- Goal 1 Develop a regional pedestrian system
- Goal 2 Provide a safe pedestrian system.
- Goal 3 Employ accessible, barrier-free, state-of-the-art design
- Goal 4 Engage the public in the transportation planning process.
- Goal 5 Identify and efficiently use available funding

### Public Transportation Services

VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA) is a political subdivision of the State of Texas, authorized by State Enabling Legislation to receive locally-generated sales tax income at a rate not to exceed one percent and subject to approval by voters within the VIA service area. VIA currently collects sales tax income at a rate of one-half percent as approved in the November 1977 referendum that established VIA. VIA is also supported, to a much smaller degree, by fare box revenue, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding, advertising revenue, and interest income.

In 2003 the Texas Transportation Code legislating transit authorities was modified to allow the creation of an Advanced Transportation District. This new legislation allows transit authorities meeting specific criteria to call for an election to create an Advanced Transportation District and to impose a sales tax for the purposes of advanced transportation and mobility enhancements. On November 2, 2004, voters in Bexar County approved a ¼-cent sales tax increase to fund the Advanced Transportation District. The revenues from this sales tax are distributed as follows: 50% to the Advanced Transportation District (VIA Metropolitan Transit Authority), 25% to the participating municipality (City of San Antonio), and 25% to the Texas Department of Transportation. This funding gives the transportation community additional dollars to provide the citizens of this region with more transportation choices.

VIA is governed by an eleven member Board of Trustees. Five of the Trustees are appointed by the City of San Antonio, three by Bexar County and two by the Greater Bexar County Council of Cities. These appointed Trustees elect an eleventh person to serve as Board Chairman.

The VIA service area is 1,226 square miles in size, which is equivalent to 98% of Bexar County. It currently includes the City of San Antonio, thirteen suburban cities and the unincorporated areas of Bexar County. Suburban cities located within the service area are Alamo Heights, Balcones Heights, Castle Hills, China Grove, Converse, Elmendorf, Fair Oaks Ranch, Grey Forest, Helotes, Hollywood Park, Kirby, Leon Valley, Olmos Park, St.

Hedwig, Shavano Park, Terrell Hills, and portions of Cibolo, Schertz, and Selma. Cities entirely or partially located within Bexar County but which are not part of the VIA service area are Hill Country Village, Live Oak, Lytle, Somerset, Universal City, Windcrest, Grey Forest, Helotes, and Hollywood Park.

As of 2009, VIA serves nearly 7,000 bus stops and nine transit centers and park and ride facilities. VIA's operational fleet consists of 393 full-size buses, 22 small buses, 19 streetcars, for a total of 434 fixed route vehicles. For VIAtrans service, VIA operates 105 vans directly and 121 vans are operated by a private contractor. (Bus Operations Daily Report of Bus Availability for October 7, 2004). Since 1990 all transit vehicles purchased by VIA have been equipped with lifts or ramps to accommodate persons in wheelchairs VIA has also purchased low floor and kneeling vehicles to accommodate patrons who cannot negotiate steps. VIA's entire bus fleet was accessible by 2008.

The San Antonio region faces many challenges in the area of public transportation. While VIA has long been one of the most financially efficient transit systems in the country, its fiscal constraints and service area characteristics somewhat limit what it can offer. However, VIA is currently working on a long range comprehensive transportation plan for the region that looks at the needs of the region and how the region is best served with different modes of traditional transit and high-capacity transit.

### Roadway Needs

As population and employment continue to grow in the San Antonio metropolitan area, a greater burden will be placed on the transportation system. To accommodate traffic increases on the roadway system, additional lanes and operational improvements will be needed. In addition to congestion levels, factors considered when developing the future year roadway network included impacts to neighborhoods, acceptability by the public, environmental concerns and fiscal constraints.

The proposed roadway system improvements in the MTP are limited by the amount of funding available, or revenue that can be reasonably expected over the 25-year life of the MTP. While more improvements are necessary than funding available, the roadway projects selected address the most congested areas of the MPO study area. The future year (2035) roadway system was developed using an extensive public involvement process (see Chapter 3 Public Involvement) and technical analysis.

Even with the investment made over the next twenty-five years in transportation infrastructure, the local traffic congestion is expected to increase. Transportation demand management strategies will become increasingly important and, when implemented, can have an effect on growth, land use, travel patterns and travel behavior.

## Freight Movement

There has been a dramatic increase in goods movement across the United States via heavy duty trucks and an accompanying increase in truck traffic in the San Antonio region, especially along IH 35 and IH10. Truck traffic becomes predictable and knowledge of that local truck traffic becomes vital in planning efforts. A freight study was recently conducted for the San Antonio region showing a xx% increase in overall freight traffic and the need for infrastructure associated with that traffic.

NAFTA related trade as well as freight and good movements from the East and West coasts along IH-10 will continue to impact the San Antonio metropolitan area. The growth in freight movement and the growth in local population and employment will increase the level of service on local freeways. Planning agencies in this region understand that transportation planning efforts must increase the focus on freight movement in order to improve the area's transportation system.

## Environmental Concerns

Environmental issues in transportation planning continue are a priority. Environmental issues are required to be considered in the transportation planning process in order to mitigate negative impacts to valued resources including wildlife, water sources, agricultural land and floodplains. The Planning and Environmental Linkages guidelines underscore the importance of consideration for the environment.

Air quality issues also play a major role in metropolitan transportation planning. One of the main contributing factors to poor air quality is vehicle emissions. Although not yet designated "non-attainment for ozone" the MPO will need to ensure projects and programs are in place to meet federal air quality standards. MPOs must also ensure that emissions from transportation projects will not adversely impact the air quality in the region.

## Congestion Management Process

Although the San Antonio area is not considered one of the most congested cities in America, it has been identified as having one of the fastest growing congestion levels in the country. The average citizen in San Antonio spends more than 38 hours stuck in traffic each year, an increase of 58% over the past decade (Urban Mobility Study, Texas Transportation Institute, 2009). Congestion is a major contributor to the air quality concerns and to the overall efficiency of the area wide transportation system. With non-attainment of air quality standards imminent for this area, congestion management strategies and transportation control measures must be applied effectively toward relieving a substantial portion of these concerns.

Goals of the Congestion Management Process are to:

- Goal 1      Increase the efficiency of the existing transportation system and decrease traffic congestion through coordination of traffic operations and development of strategies to reduce travel demand at both the regional and corridor levels.
  
- Goal 2      Reduce congestion through a project implementation process that encourages the use of other modes of transportation.

The objectives of these goals can be found in the Congestion Management section (Chapter 10) of the MTP.

### Environmental Justice

The MPO is charged with planning for transportation and mobility at the regional level and including all members of the community in those plans. MPOs must assess the potential impacts to natural, cultural and socioeconomic resources including Title VI (environmental justice communities), air and water quality, land use and vegetation/agricultural implications at the planning and project development levels as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

Environmental Justice planning is applied throughout the entire MTP and considered in the development of the three planning scenarios, environmental concerns specifically air and water quality, public transportation services, the development of the roadway network and the cumulative and indirect effects of potential managed lanes and toll facilities in the region. Environmental Justice is part of overall public involvement and outreach efforts and is needed for effective transportation decision making.

### Technical Data and Analysis

For development of the MTP it becomes extremely important in planning to know the travel demand on the roadway system and to determine how people will travel throughout the region. Two computer models are used to analyze regional data for transportation planning purposes, the Travel Demand Model and the Mode Choice Model.

Geographic Information Systems or GIS uses computer hardware, software and data capturing to display geographically referenced information. GIS allows people to view, analyze and most importantly visualize data related to transportation programs and projects.

## Financial Constraint

The transportation system in the San Antonio-Bexar County study area requires maintenance and enhancement to meet the mobility needs of people and goods for the 25-year horizon of this plan. To meet the growing travel needs, it is necessary to identify reasonable and available federal, state, and local transportation funds, both public and private. Traditional transportation funds are available through a variety of sources, many of which contain restrictions on how they can be used and/or allocated. In addition, it is also necessary to estimate relevant expenses including capital for both maintenance and operation of the system.

A number of issues and events occurred that have brought great awareness to the state of transportation financing and future funding streams. Even with a multi billion dollar investment in otheregion for transportation infrastructure, the congestion levels will continue to increase at a faster rate than funding is made available. The fact remains that transportation needs far outweigh available funding resources, but as demand increases, it is essential to develop a fiscally constrained, prioritized and acceptable list of transportation improvement projects for the community.

## Revenue and Expenditure Summary

### Estimated Known Revenue Sources

Traditional Roadway Funding Total (State and Federal)-----	\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx
Traditional Transit Total (Federal) -----	\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx
Advanced Transportation District (Local) -----	<u>\$xxx,xxx,xxx</u>
Total Revenue -----	<u>\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx</u>

### Potential Additional Revenue Sources

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act-----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Transportation Enhancement Program-----	\$xx,xxx,xxx
Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ)-----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Texas Transportation Commission Strategic Priority Funding -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
FHWA Demonstration Funds -----	\$xx,xxx,xxx
FTA “New Starts” Program -----	\$xx,xxx,xxx
Private Sector Contributions -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Local Contributions -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
TIFIA Loans -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Rail Relocation Fund-----	\$xx,xxx,xxx,xxx
Bonding Capacity -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Total – Potential Funding Programs-----	<u>\$xx,xxx,xxx,xxx</u>

### Expenditures

Added Roadway Capacity (Non-Toll) -----	\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx
Added Roadway Capacity (Managed Lanes/Toll) -----	\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx
Roadway Maintenance/Preservation-----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Expressway Interchanges -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Rail Relocation-----	\$xx,xxx,xxx,xxx
Bus Transit-----	\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx
High Capacity Transit (intercity) -----	\$x,xxx,xxx,xxx
High Capacity Transit (intracity) -----	\$xxx,xxx,xxx
Stand Alone Bicycle Facilities-----	\$xx,xxx,xxx
Stand Alone Pedestrian Facilities -----	\$xx,xxx,xxx
Other Programs and Projects -----	\$x,xxx,xxx
Total Expenditures-----	<u>\$xx,xxx,xxx,xxx</u>

Transportation Project List:

With any MTP update the MPO coordinates with partner agencies throughout the region to develop a fiscally constrained list of transportation projects that are expected to be implemented by the year 2035. The funded list includes projects that aim to increase mobility and access, meet our growing travel demand and improve the overall quality of life throughout the region. Also, an unfunded list of bicycle, pedestrian, roadway and transit projects is included.

DRAFT

DRAFT